

Monergism

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE



OF REGENERATION

EDITED BY JOHN HENDRYX

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Preface

Monergistic Regeneration (the new birth as the work of God alone and not a cooperation of man and God) is a redemptive blessing purchased by Christ and applied by the Spirit to those the Father has given the Son (1 Pet 1:3, John 6:37, 39; John 17:9). This grace works independently of any human cooperation and conveys that power into the fallen soul whereby the person who is to be saved is effectually enabled to respond to the outward gospel call (Acts 2:39, 1 Cor 1:2, 9, 24, Rom 8:30 John 1:13, Acts 13:48). It is that supernatural power of God alone whereby we are granted the spiritual ability and desire to comply with the conditions of the covenant of grace; that is, to apprehend the Redeemer by a living faith, to come up to the terms of salvation, to repent of idols and to love God and the Mediator supremely. The Holy Spirit, in quickening the soul, mercifully capacitates and inclines God's elect to the spiritual exercise of faith in Jesus Christ (John 6:44, 1 John 5:1). This instantaneous and intensely personal work of God is the means by which the Spirit brings us into living union with Him.

Since faith is infinitely beyond all the power of our unregenerated human nature, it is only God who can give the spiritual ears to hear and eyes to see the beauty of Christ in the gospel. God alone disarms the hostility of the sinner turning his heart of stone to a heart of flesh (2 Cor 4:4-6). It is God, the Holy Spirit, alone who gives illumination and understanding of His word that we might believe; It is God who raises us from the death of sin, who circumcises the heart; unplugs our ears; It is God alone who can give us a new sense, a spiritual capacity to behold the beauty and unsurpassed excellency of Jesus Christ. The apostle John recorded Jesus saying to Nicodemus that we naturally love darkness, hate the light and WILL NOT come into the

light (John 3:19, 20). And since our hardened resistance to God is thus seated in our affections, only God, by His grace, can lovingly change, overcome and pacify our rebellious disposition. The natural man, apart from the quickening work of the Holy Spirit, will not come to Christ on his own since he is at enmity with God and cannot understand spiritual things (1 Cor 2:14). Shining a light into a blind man's eyes will not enable him to see, because eyesight first requires a set of healthy eyes. Likewise, reading or hearing the word of God alone cannot elicit saving faith in the reader (1 Thess 1:4, 5) unless God plows up the fallow ground of our hearts and the Spirit "germinates" the seed of the word, opening our eyes to see Christ's true beauty and excellency and uniting us to Him through a Spirit-wrought faith. So the problem of conversion is not with the Word or God's Law but with man's prideful heart. The humility required to submit to the gospel is, therefore, not prompted by man's will but by God's mercy (Rom 9:16) since no one can believe the gospel unless God grants it (John 6:63, 65). As an example of how the Spirit uses the means of the spoken word to disarm closed hearts, the Book of Acts records the work of the Holy Spirit during the preaching of the apostles and, in one instance, states that "the Lord opened her [Lydia's] heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul," (Acts 16:14). The Spirit must likewise give all His people spiritual life and understanding if their hearts are to be opened and thus respond to Christ in faith. Jesus Christ is fount of every blessing, even the blessing of giving us a new heart to believe (Deut 30:6).

For those who are concerned about spending too much time talking to each other about all things theological, my response is that we are to preach the whole counsel of Scripture . Jesus talks about this doctrine with unbelievers EXTENSIVELY. Consider John 6 alone "All that the father gives to me WILL come to me (v 37) The Spirit gives life the flesh counts for ...nothing...no one can come to me unless God grants it (v 63 &.65) .If Jesus thinks this is appropriate then so should we. Monergistic regeneration (grace alone) strips man of all possible hope in himself. Yes indeed we call all people to believe the gospel. But as Jesus said to Peter when he answered

correctly about who he was, "flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven" --- The examples are endless. Both need to be preached from the pulpit or we are picking and choosing.

The following are carefully selected essays and sermons from the history of the church which demonstrate that this is the silver thread of orthodoxy which God has revealed in his Scriptures to His faithful throughout the centuries. May God be glorified and the saints be edified in the reading of them.

Man's Utter Inability to Rescue Himself

Thomas Boston

The following article has been extracted from Boston's classic work Human Nature In Its Fourfold State (Chapter 3, pp. 183-197).

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Romans 5:6

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. John 6.44

We have now had a view of the total corruption of man's nature, and that load of wrath which lies on him, that gulf of misery into which he is plunged in his natural state. But there is one part of his misery that deserves particular consideration; namely, his utter inability to recover himself, the knowledge of which is necessary for the due humiliation of a sinner. What I design here, is only to propose a few things, whereby to convince the unregenerate man of this his

inability, that he may see an absolute need of Christ and of the power of His grace.

A man that is fallen into a pit cannot be supposed to help himself out of it, but by one of two ways; either by doing all himself alone, or taking hold of, and improving, the help offered him by others. Likewise an unconverted man cannot be supposed to help himself out of his natural state, but either in the way of the law, or covenant of works, by doing all himself without Christ; or else in the way of the Gospel, or covenant of grace, by exerting his own strength to lay hold upon, and to make use of the help offered him by a Saviour. But, alas! the unconverted man is dead in the pit, and cannot help himself either of these ways; not the first way, for the first text tells us, that when our Lord came to help us, 'we were without strength,' unable to recover ourselves. We were ungodly, therefore under a burden of guilt and wrath, yet 'without strength,' unable to stand under it; and unable to throw it off, or get from under it: so that all mankind would have undoubtedly perished, had not 'Christ died for the ungodly,' and brought help to those who could never have recovered themselves. But when Christ comes and offers help to sinners, cannot they take it? Cannot they improve help when it comes to their hands? No, the second text tells, they cannot; 'No man can come unto me,' that is, believe in me (John 6.44), 'except the Father draw him.' This is a drawing which enables them to come, who till then could not come; and therefore could not help themselves by improving the help offered. It is a drawing which is always effectual; for it can be no less than 'hearing and learning of the Father,' which, whoever partakes of, come to Christ (verse 45). Therefore it is not drawing in the way of mere moral suasion, which may be, yea, and always is ineffectual. But it is drawing by mighty power (Eph. 1:9), absolutely necessary for those who have no power in themselves to come and take hold of the offered help.

Hearken then, O unregenerate man, and be convinced that as you are in a most miserable state by nature, so you are utterly unable to recover yourself any way. You are ruined; and what way will you go

to work to recover yourself? Which of the two ways will you choose? Will you try it alone, or will you make use of help? Will you fall on the way of works, or on the way of the Gospel? I know very well that you will not so much as try the way of the Gospel, till once you have found the recovery impracticable in the way of the law. Therefore, we shall begin where corrupt nature teaches men to begin, namely, at the way of the law of works.

Sinner, I would have you believe that your working will never effect it. Work, and do your best; you will never be able to work yourself out of this state of corruption and wrath. You must have Christ, else you will perish eternally. It is only 'Christ in you' that can be the hope of glory. But if you will needs try it, then I must lay before you, from the unalterable Word of the living God, two things which you must do for yourself. If you can do them, it must be yielded that you are able to recover yourself; but if not, then you can do nothing this way for your recovery.

1. 'If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments' (Matthew 19:17). That is, if you will by doing enter into life, then perfectly keep the ten commandments; for the object of these words is to beat down the pride of the man's heart, and to let him see an absolute need of a Saviour, from the impossibility of keeping the law. The answer is given suitably to the address. Our Lord checks him for his compliment, 'Good Master' (Matthew 19:16), telling him, 'There is none good but one, that is God' (Matthew 19:17). As if he had said, You think yourself a good man, and me another; but where goodness is spoken of, men and angels may veil their faces before the good God. As to his question, wherein he revealed his legal disposition, Christ does not answer him, saying, 'Believe and thou shalt be saved;' that would not have been so seasonable in the case of one who thought he could do well enough for himself, if he but knew 'what good he should do;' but, suitable to the humor the man was in, He bids him 'keep the commandments;' keep them nicely and accurately, as those that watch malefactors in prison, lest any of them escape, and their life be taken for those which escape. See then,

O unregenerate man, what you can do in this matter; for if you will recover yourself in this way, you must perfectly keep the commandments of God.

(1) Your obedience must be perfect, in respect of the principle of it; that is, your soul, the principle of action, must be perfectly pure, and altogether without sin. For the law requires all moral perfection; not only actual, but habitual: and so condemns original sin; impurity of nature, as well as of actions. Now, if you can bring this to pass you will be able to answer that question of Solomon, so as never one of Adam's posterity could yet answer it, 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean?' (Prov. 20:9). But if you cannot, the very want of this perfection is sin, and so lays you open to the curse and cuts you off from life. Yea, it makes all your actions, even your best actions, sinful: 'For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' (Job 14:4). And do you think by sin to help yourself out of sin and misery?

(2) Your obedience must also be perfect in parts. It must be as broad as the whole law of God: if you lack one thing, you are undone; for the law denounces the curse on him that continues not in every thing written therein (Gal 3:10). You must give Internal and external obedience to the whole law, keep all the commands in heart and life. If you break any one of them, that will ensure your ruin. A vain thought, or idle word, will still shut you up under the curse.

(3) It must be perfect in respect of degrees, as was the obedience of Adam, while he stood in his innocence. This the law requires, and will accept of no less (Matthew 22:37), 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' If one degree of that love, required by the law, be wanting, if each part of your obedience be not brought up to the greatest height commanded, that want is a breach of the law, and so leaves you still under the curse. A man may bring as many buckets of water to a house that is on fire, as he is able to carry, and yet it may be consumed, and will be so, if he bring not as many as will quench the fire. Even so, although you should do what you are able, in keeping

the commandments, if you fail in the least degree of obedience which the law enjoins, you are certainly ruined for ever, unless you take hold of Christ, renouncing all your righteousness as filthy rags. (See Rom 10:5; Gal. 3:10).

(4) It must be perpetual, as the man Christ's obedience was, who always did the things which pleased the Father, for the tenor of the law is, 'Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them! Hence, though Adam's obedience was, for a while, absolutely perfect; yet because at length he failed in one point, namely, in eating the forbidden fruit, he fell under the curse of the law. If a man were to live a dutiful subject to his prince till the close of his days, and then conspire against him, he must die for his treason. Even so, though you should, all the time of your life, live in perfect obedience to the law of God, and yet at the hour of death only entertain a vain thought, or pronounce an idle word, that idle word, or vain thought, would blot out all your former righteousness, and ruin you; namely, in this way in which you are seeking to recover yourself.

Now, such is the obedience which you must perform, if you would recover yourself in the way of the law. But though you would thus obey, the law stakes you down in the state of wrath, till another demand of it be satisfied.

2. You must pay what you owe. It is undeniable that you are a sinner; and whatever you may be in time to come, justice must be satisfied for your sins already committed. The honor of the law must be maintained, by your suffering the denounced wrath. It may be you have changed your course of life, or are now resolved to do it, and to set about keeping the commands of God: but what have you done, or what will you do, with the old debt? Your obedience to God, though it were perfect, is a debt due to him for the time wherein it is performed, and can no more satisfy for former sins, than a tenant's paying the current year's rent can satisfy the landlord for all arrears. Can the paying of new debts acquit a man from old accounts? Nay,

deceive not yourselves; you will find these laid up in store with God, and sealed up among his treasures (Deut. 32:34). It remains then, that either you must bear that wrath, to which for your sin you are liable, according to the law; or else you must acknowledge that you cannot bear it, and thereupon have recourse to the Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me now ask you, Are you able to satisfy the justice of God? Can you pay your own debt? Surely not: for, as He is the infinite God, whom you have offended, the punishment, being suited to the quality of the offence, must be infinite. But your punishment, or sufferings for sin, cannot be infinite in value, for you are a finite creature: therefore, they must be infinite in duration or continuance; that is, they must be eternal. And so all your sufferings in this world are but an earnest of what you must suffer in the world to come.

Now, sinner, if you can answer these demands, you may recover yourself in the way of the law. But are you not conscious of your inability to do any of these things, much more to do them all? yet if you do not all, you do nothing. Turn then to what course of life you will, you are still in a state of wrath. Screw up your obedience to the greatest height you can; suffer what God lays upon you; yea, add, if you will, to the burden, and walk under all without the least impatience: yet all this will not satisfy the demands of the law; therefore you are still a ruined creature. Alas, sinner I what are you doing, while you strive to help yourself, but do not receive, and unite with, Jesus Christ? You are laboring in the fire, wearying yourself for very vanity; laboring to enter into heaven by the door which Adam's sin so bolted, that neither he, nor any of his lost posterity, can ever enter by it. Do you not see the flaming sword of justice, keeping you off from the tree of life? Do you not hear the law denouncing a curse on you for all you are doing, even for your obedience, your prayers, your tears, your reformation of life, and so on; because, being under the law's dominion, your best works are not so good as—it requires them to be under the pain of the curse? Believe it, sirs, if you live and die out of Christ, without being actually united to Him as the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit, and without coming under the covert of His atoning blood, though you should do the utmost that any man

can do, in keeping the commands of God, you will never see the face of God in peace. If you should, from this moment, bid an eternal farewell to this world's joys, and all the affairs thereof, and henceforth busy yourselves with nothing but the salvation of your souls; if you should go into some 'wilderness, live upon the grass of the field, and be companions to dragons and owls; if you should retire to some dark cavern of the earth, and weep there for your sins, until you had wept yourselves blind; if you should confess with your tongue, until it cleave to the roof of your mouth; pray, till your knees grow hard as horns; fast, till your body become like a skeleton, and, after all this, give it to be burnt; the word is gone out of the Lord's mouth in righteousness and cannot return, that you shall perish for ever, notwithstanding all this, as not being in Christ (John 14:6), 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me (Acts 4:12), 'Neither is there salvation in any other.' (Mark 16:16), 'He that believeth not shall be damned!

Objection: But God is a merciful God, and He knows that we are not able to answer these demands; we hope therefore to be saved, if we do as well as we can, and keep the commands as well as we are able.

Answer 1: Though you are able to do many things, you are not able to do one thing right: you can do nothing acceptable to God, being out of Christ (John 1:5), 'Without me ye can do nothing.' An unrenewed man, as you are, can do nothing but sin, as we have already proved. Your best actions are sin, and so they increase your debt to justice: how then can it be expected they should lessen it?

Answer 2: Though God should offer to save men, upon condition that they did all they could do, in obedience to His commands, yet we have reason to think that those who should attempt it would never be saved: for where is the man that does as well as he can? Who sees not many false steps he has made, which he might have avoided? There are so many things to be done, so many temptations to carry us out of the road of duty, and our nature is so very apt to be set on fire of

hell, that we surely must fail, even in some point that is within the compass of our natural abilities. But,

Answer 3: Though you should do all you are able to do, in vain do you hope to be saved in that way. What word of God is this hope of yours founded on? It is founded on neither law nor Gospel; therefore it is but a delusion. It is not founded on the Gospel; for the Gospel leads the soul out of itself to Jesus Christ for all; and it establishes the law (Rom 3:31). Whereas this hope of yours cannot be established but on the ruins of the law, which God will magnify and make honorable. Hence it appears, that it is not founded on the law neither. When God set Adam working for happiness to himself and his posterity, perfect obedience was the 'condition required of him; and the curse was denounced in case of disobedience. The law being broken by him, he and his posterity were subjected to the penalty for sin committed; and withal were still bound to perfect obedience. For it is absurd to think, that man's sinning, and suffering for his sin, should free him from his duty of obedience to his Creator. When Christ came in the room of the elect, to purchase their salvation, the terms were the same. justice had the elect under arrest: if He is desirous to deliver them, the terms are known. He must satisfy for their sin, by suffering the punishment due to it; He must do what they cannot do, namely, obey the law perfectly, and so fulfill all righteousness. Accordingly, all this He did, and so became 'the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth' (Rom 10:4). And do you think that God will abate these terms as to you, when His own Son got no abatement of them? Expect it not, though you should beg it with tears of blood; for if they prevailed, they must prevail against the truth, justice, and honor of God (Gal 3:10). 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. (Gal. 3:12), 'And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them.' It is true, that God is merciful: but cannot He be merciful unless He save you in a way that is neither consistent with His law nor His Gospel? Have not His goodness and mercy sufficiently appeared, in sending the Son of His love, to do 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the

flesh?' He has provided help for those who cannot help themselves: but you, insensible of your own weakness, must needs think to recover yourself by your own works, while you are no more able to do it than to remove mountains of brass out of their place.

Wherefore I conclude, that you are utterly unable to recover yourself, in the way of works, or by the law. O that you would conclude the same concerning yourself!

Let us try next what the sinner can do to recover himself, In the way of the Gospel. It may be you think that you cannot do all by yourself alone, yet Jesus Christ offering you help, you can of yourself embrace it, and use it for your recovery. But, O sinner, be convinced of your absolute need of the grace of Christ: for truly, there is help offered, but you cannot accept it: there is a rope cast out to draw shipwrecked sinners to land, but, alas they have no hands to lay hold of it. They are like infants exposed in the open field, who must starve, though their food be lying by them, unless some one put it in their mouths. To convince natural men of this, let it be considered,

1. That although Christ is offered in the Gospel, yet they cannot believe in Him. Saving faith is the faith of God's elect, the special gift of God to them, wrought in them by His Spirit. Salvation is offered to them that will believe in Christ, but how can you believe? (John 5:44). It is offered to those that will come to Christ; but 'no man can come unto Him, except the Father draw him.' It is offered to those that will look to Him, as lifted on the pole of the Gospel (Isa. 45:22); but the natural man is spiritually blind (Rev. 3:17); and as to the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). Nay, whosoever will, he is welcome; let him come (Rev. 22:17); but there must be a day of power on the sinner, before he can be willing (Ps. 110:3).

2. Man naturally has nothing wherewithal to improve, for his recovery, the help brought in by the Gospel. He is cast away in a state of wrath, and is bound hand and foot, so that he cannot lay hold of

the cords of love thrown out to him in the Gospel. The most cunning artificer cannot work without tools; neither can the most skilful musician play well on an instrument that is out of tune. How can anyone believe, or repent, whose understanding is darkness (Eph. 5:8), whose heart is a stony heart, inflexible, insensible (Ezek. 36:26), whose affections are wholly disordered and distempered, who is averse to good, and bent to evil? The arms of natural abilities are too short to reach supernatural help; hence those who most excel in them are often most estranged from spiritual things (Matthew 11:25), 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent!

3. Man cannot work a saving change on himself; but so changed he must be, else he can neither believe nor repent, nor ever see heaven. No action can be without a suitable principle. Believing, repenting, and the like, are the product of the new nature and can never be produced by the old corrupt nature. Now, what can the natural man do in this matter? He must be regenerate, begotten again unto a lively hope; but as the child cannot be active in his own generation, so a man cannot be active but passive only, in his own regeneration. The heart is shut against Christ: man cannot open it, only God can do it by His grace (Acts 16:14). He is dead in sin; he must be quickened, raised out of his grave; who can do this but God Himself? (Eph. 2:1-5). Nay, he must be 'created in Christ Jesus, unto good works' (Eph. 2:10). These are works of omnipotence, and can be done by no less a power.

4. Man, in his depraved state, is under an utter inability to do any thing truly good, as was proved before at large: how then can he obey the Gospel? His nature is the very reverse of the Gospel: how can he, of himself, fall in with that plan of salvation, and accept the offered remedy? The corruption of man's nature infallibly includes his utter inability to recover himself in any way, and whoso is convinced of the one, must needs admit the other; for they stand and fall together. Were all the purchase of Christ offered to the unregenerate man for one good thought, he cannot command it (2 Cor. 3:5), 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves! Were it

offered on condition of a good word, yet 'how can ye, being evil, speak good things?' (Matthew 12:35). Nay, were it left to yourselves to choose what is easiest, Christ Himself tells you (John 15:5), 'Without me, ye can do nothing'!

5. The natural man cannot but resist the Lord's offering to help him; yet that resistance is infallibly overcome in the elect, by converting grace. Can the stony heart choose but to resist the stroke? There is not only an inability, but an enmity and obstinacy in man's will by nature. God knows, O natural man, whether you know it or not, that 'thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass' (Isa. 48:4), and cannot be overcome, but by Him who hath 'broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.' Hence, humanly speaking, there is such hard work in converting a sinner. Sometimes he seems to be caught in the net of the Gospel; yet quickly he slips away again. The hook catches hold of him; but he struggles, tin, getting free of it, he goes away with a bleeding wound. When good hopes are conceived of him, by those that travail in birth for the forming of Christ in him., there is oft-times nothing brought forth but wind. The deceitful heart makes many contrivances to avoid a Saviour, and cheat the man of his eternal happiness. Thus the natural man lies sunk in a state of sin and wrath, utterly unable to recover himself.

Objection 1: If we be under an utter inability to do any good, how can God require us to do it? Answer: God making man upright (Eccl. 7:29), gave him a power to do everything that He should require of him; this power man lost by his own fault. We were bound to serve God, and do whatever He commanded us, as being His creatures; and also, we were under the superadded tie of a covenant, for that purpose. Now, we having, by our own fault, disabled ourselves, shall God lose His right of requiring our task, because we have thrown away the strength He gave us whereby to perform it? Has the creditor no right to require payment of his money because the debtor had squandered it away, and is not able to pay him? Truly, if God can require no more of us than we are able to do, we need no more to

save us from wrath, but to make ourselves unable for every duty, and to incapacitate ourselves for serving God any manner of way, as profane men frequently do. So the deeper a man is plunged in sin, he will be the more secure from wrath, for where God can require no duty of us, we do not sin in omitting it; and where there is no sin there can be no wrath. As to what may be urged by the unhumbled soul, against the putting our stock in Adam's hand, the righteousness of that dispensation was explained before. But moreover, the unrenewed man is daily throwing away the very remains of natural abilities, that rational light and strength which are to be found amongst the ruins of mankind. Nay, further, he will not believe his own utter inability to help himself; so that out of his own mouth, he must be condemned. Even those who make their natural impotency to good a covert to their sloth, do, with others, delay the work of turning to God from time to time, and, under convictions, make large promises of reformation, which afterwards they never regard, and delay their repentance to a death-bed, as if they could help themselves in a moment; which shows them to be far from a due sense of their natural inability, whatever they pretend.

Now, if God can require of men the duty they are not able to do, He can in justice punish them for their not doing it, notwithstanding their inability. If He has power to exact the debt of obedience, He has also power to cast the insolvent debtor into prison, for his not paying it. Further, though unregenerate men have no gracious abilities, yet they want not natural abilities which nevertheless they will not improve. There are many things they can do, which they do not; they will not do them, and therefore their damnation will be just. Nay, all their inability to do good is voluntary; they will not come to Christ (John 5:40). They will not repent, they will die (Ezek. 18:31). So they will be justly condemned, because they will neither tam to God, nor come to Christ, but love their chains better than their liberty, and darkness rather than light (John 3:19)

Objection 2: Why do you then preach Christ to us, call us to come to Him, to believe., repent, and use the means of salvation? Answer:

Because it is your duty so to do. It is your duty to accept of Christ, as He is offered in the Gospel, to repent of your sins, and to be holy in all manner of conversation; these things are commanded you of God; and His command, not your ability, is the measure of your duty. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are the means that God is pleased to make use of, for converting His elect, and working grace in their hearts: to them, 'faith cometh by hearing' (Rom 10:17), while they are as unable to help themselves as the rest of mankind are. Upon very good grounds may we, at the command of God, who raises the dead, go to their graves, and cry in His name, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light' (Eph. 5:14). And seeing the elect are not to be known and distinguished from others before conversion, as the sun shines on the blind man's face, and the rain falls on the rocks as well as on the fruitful plains, so we preach Christ to all, and shoot the arrow at a venture, which God Himself directs as He sees fit. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are not altogether in vain, even to those who are not converted by them. Such persons may be convinced, though they be not converted: although they be not sanctified by these means, yet they may be restrained by them from running into that excess of wickedness, which otherwise they would arrive at. The means of grace serve, as it were, to embalm many dead souls, which are never quickened by them; though they do not restore them to life, yet they keep them from putrefying, as otherwise they would do. Finally, though you cannot recover yourselves, nor take hold of the saving help offered to you in the Gospel, yet even by the power of nature you may use the outward and ordinary means, whereby Christ communicates the benefit of redemption to ruined sinners, who are utterly unable to recover themselves out of the state of sin and wrath. You may and can., if you please, do many things that would set you in a fair way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ. You may go so far on, as not to be far from the kingdom of God, as the discreet scribe had done (Mark 12:34), though, it should seem, he was destitute of supernatural abilities. Though you cannot cure yourselves, yet you may come to the pool, where many such diseased persons as you are

have been cured; though you have none to put you into it, yet you may lie at the side of it:

‘Who knows but the Lord may return, and leave a blessing behind Him?’ as in the case of the impotent man (recorded in John 5:5-8). I hope Satan does not chain you to your houses, nor stake you down in your fields on the Lord’s day; but you are at liberty and can wait at the posts of wisdom’s doors if you will. When you come thither he does not beat drums at your ears, that you cannot hear what is said; there is no force upon you, obliging you to apply all you hear to others; you may apply to yourselves what belongs to your state and condition.. When you go home, you are not fettered in your houses) where perhaps no religious discourse is to be heard, but you may retire to some separate place, where you can meditate, and exercise your consciences with suitable questions upon what you have heard. You are not possessed with a dumb devil, that you cannot get your mouths opened in prayer to God. You are not so driven out of your beds to your worldly business, and from your worldly business to your beds again, but you might, if you would,, make some prayers to God upon the case of your perishing souls. You may examine yourselves as to the state of your souls, in a solemn manner, as in the presence of God; you may discern that you have no grace, and that you are lost and undone without it, and you may cry to God for it. These things are within the compass of natural abilities, and may be practiced where there is no grace. It must aggravate your guilt, that you will not be at so much pains about the state and case of your precious souls. If you do not what you can, you will be condemned, not only for your want of grace, but for your despising it.

Objection 3: But all this is needless, seeing we are utterly unable to help ourselves out of the state of sin and wrath. Answer: Give not place to that delusion, which puts asunder what God has joined, namely, the use of means and a sense of our own impotency. If ever the Spirit of God graciously influence your souls, you will become thoroughly sensible of your absolute inability, and yet enter upon a vigorous use of means. You will do for yourselves, as if you were to

do all, and yet overlook all you do, as if you had done nothing. Will you do nothing for yourselves because you cannot do all? Lay down no such impious conclusion against your own souls. Do what you can; and, it may be, while you are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what you cannot. 'Understandest thou what thou readest?' said Philip to the eunuch; 'How can I,' said he, 'except some man should guide me?' (Acts 8:30-31). He could not understand the Scripture he read, yet he could read it: he did what he could, he read; and while he was reading, God sent him an interpreter. The Israelites were in a great strait at the Red Sea; and how could they help themselves, when on the one hand were mountains, and on the other the enemy in pursuit; when Pharaoh and his host were behind them, and the Red Sea before them? What could they do? 'Speak unto the children of Israel,' said the Lord to Moses, 'that they go forward' (Ex. 14:15). For what end should they go forward? Can they make a passage to themselves through the sea? No; but let them go forward, saith the Lord: though they cannot turn the sea to dry land, yet they can go forward to the shore. So they did; and when they did what they could) God did for them what they could not do.

Question 1: Has God promised to convert and save those who, in the use of means, do what they can towards their own relief? Answer: We may not speak wickedly for God; natural men, being strangers to the covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12), have no such promise made to them. Nevertheless they do not act rationally unless they exert the powers they have, and do what they can. For, I. It is possible this course may succeed with them. If you do what you can, it may be, God will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves. This is sufficient to determine a man in a matter of the utmost importance, such as this is (Acts 8:22), 'Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.' (Joel 2:14), 'Who knoweth if he will return?' If success may be, the trial should be. If, in a wreck at sea, all the sailors and passengers betake themselves each to a broken board for safety, and one of them should see all the rest perish, notwithstanding their utmost endeavor to save themselves, yet the very possibility of escaping by that means would determine that one

still to do his best with his board. Why then do not you reason with yourselves, as the four lepers did who sat at the gate of Samaria? (2 Kings 7:3-4). Why do you not say, 'If we sit still,' not doing what we can, 'we die;' let us put it to a trial; if we be saved, 'we shall live;' if not, 'we shall but die?'

Question 2: It is probable this course may succeed; God is good and merciful; He loves to surprise men with His grace, and is often 'found of them that sought him not' (Isa. 65:1). If you do this, you are so far in the road of your duty, and you are using the means, which the Lord is wont to bless for men's spiritual recovery: you lay yourselves in the way of the great Physician, and so it is probable you may be healed. Lydia went, with others, to the place 'where prayer was wont to be made;' and 'the Lord opened her heart' (Acts 16:13-14). You plough and sow, though nobody can tell you for certain that you win get so much as your seed again: you use means for the recovery of your health, though you are not sure they will succeed. In these cases probability determines you; and why not in this also? Importunity, we see, does very much with men. Therefore pray, meditate, desire help of God, be much at the throne of grace, supplicating for grace, and do not faint. Though God regard you not, who in your present state are but one mass of sin, universally depraved, and vitiated in all the powers of your soul, yet He may regard prayer, meditation, and the like means of His own appointment, and He may bless them to you. Wherefore, if you will not do what you can, you are not only dead, but you declare yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

In conclusion then, let the saints admire the freedom and power of grace, which came to them in their helpless condition, made their chains fall off, the iron gate to open to them, raised the fallen creatures, and brought them out of the state of sin and wrath., wherein they would have lain and perished, had not they been mercifully visited. Let the natural man be sensible of his utter inability to recover himself. Know, that you are without strength: and cannot come to Christ, till you be drawn. You are lost, and cannot help yourself. This may shake the foundation of your hopes, if you

never saw your absolute need of Christ and his grace, but think to contrive for yourself by your civility, morality, drowsy wishes, and duties, and by a faith and repentance which have sprung out of your natural powers, without the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ. O be convinced of your absolute need of Christ, and His overcoming grace, believe your utter inability to recover yourself, that so you may be humbled, shaken out of your self-confidence, and lie down in dust and ashes, groaning out your miserable case before the Lord. A proper sense of your natural impotence, the impotence of depraved human nature, would be a step towards a delivery.

Thus far of man's natural state, the state of entire depravity.

I Can't Repent

Ichabod S. Spencer

ONE of the most solemn assemblies that I have ever seen, was convened on the evening of the Sabbath, in a private house. It was an inquiry meeting; at which more than a hundred persons were present, the most of them young or in middle life. The structure of the house was rather peculiar. There was a spacious hail, about ten feet wide and about forty feet long, extending from the front door along the side of three parlors which opened into it, as well as into each other; and at the rear part of this hail was a staircase extending to the second story of the house. Moveable benches were introduced into this hail, and placed along each side of it, to afford seats for those who attended this meeting, and who could not all be accommodated in the parlors. After the meetings had been continued in this place for a few weeks; it became manifest, that the hail was the preferred place. As the different persons came in and took their seats 'where they pleased, the seats in the hail would be filled, and then the stairs would be used as seats entirely to the top, and then

the upper hail would be occupied, and finally the parlors I was accustomed to stand, while addressing the assembly, in one of the doors opening from the hail into the parlor, where my eye had a full view of all those in the hail, on the stairs and in one of the parlors. Besides a general exhortation, it was my ordinary custom to speak to each individual, passing from one to another. And all those in the hail and on the stairs could hear every word, which I uttered in this conversation, and the most of what any one said to me. And for these reasons, as I supposed, the persons who resorted there would choose the hall or the stairs. This listening of others, to what passed in conversation betwixt any one individual and myself, was never very pleasant to me. I should greatly have preferred to converse with each one alone; as there would have been less restraint on their part, and on my own, more certainty, that what I was saying would be truly applicable and would not be applied by any one, for whom it was not intended. And besides this, individuals would sometimes make expressions to me so erroneous, that I was unwilling others should hear them, lest they might be injured by it. To avoid this, I used to speak in a low tone of voice; and if the expressions of any individual were becoming such, as I feared might be injurious; I usually broke off the conversation suddenly, by saying, I will call and see you tomorrow.

On the evening, to which I now allude; all the seats were filled, and three persons were seated on each stair entirely to the top, and many had found their place in the hail above. It was a calm and mild summer evening; and perfect stillness reigned over the crowd assembled there, unbroken except by the long breathing or the deep sigh of some pensive soul. I thought I had never seen so still, so solemn, and thoughtful an assembly. I closed the front door, after all had entered, and took my stand in my accustomed place. I hesitated to speak. I was afraid to utter a word. It seemed to me, that anything I could say would be less solemn, impressive, instructive, than that tomb-like silence in an assembly of so many immortal souls, each visited by the Holy Spirit. I stood, for some time, in perfect silence. The power of that silence was painful. The people sat before me, like

statues of marble, — not a movement, — not a sound. It appeared as if they had all ceased to breathe. I broke the silence by saying slowly and in a low voice: — “Each one of you is thinking of his own immortal soul and of his God.” Again I paused for the space of an entire minute; for I was overawed, and knew not what to say. Then falling on my knees, I commenced prayer. They all spontaneously knelt. After a short prayer, I proposed to speak a few words to each one of them, as far as it was possible; and requested all of them, except the individual with whom I should be conversing, to be engaged in reflection or in silent prayer to God. Passing rapidly from one to another, I had spoken to all those in the parlors and in the hall, till I had reached about the middle of it, where every word spoken could be heard, by the whole assembly. Coming to a man, about thirty years of age, whom I had seen there three times before, I said to him: — “I did not expect to see *you* here to-night. I thought you would have come to repentance, before this time; and would have no occasion any longer to ask, what shall I do to be saved?”

“I can’t repent,” said he, (with a sort of determined and despairing accent, and so loudly as to startle us all.) Instantly, I felt sorry for this expression. But I thought it would not do to avoid noticing it, and leave it sounding in the ears of so many impenitent sinners. I immediately answered, as I stood before him, as gently and yet solemnly as I could: — “What an awfully wicked heart you must have! You can’t repent! You love sin so well; that you cannot be sorry for it — you cannot forsake it — you cannot hate it! — You must be in an awful condition indeed! You are so much the enemy of God; that you cannot be sorry for having offended him — you cannot cease to contend against him — and even now, while you are sensible of the impropriety and unhappiness of it, you cannot cease to resist the Holy Spirit, who strives with you to bring you to repentance! — You must have an awfully depraved heart!”

“I *can’t repent*,” said he again, (with an accent of grief and intolerable vexation) — “I can’t repent, with such a heart!”

“That means,” said I, “that you have become too wicked to desire to become any better; for nothing but wickedness makes repentance difficult. And then, you just plead one sin, as an excuse for another — the sin of your heart, as an excuse for the continued sin of your heart!”

Still he insisted. “I can’t repent! I should if I could!” — (and the tears rolled down his cheeks, of which he seemed to be utterly unconscious, as well as unconscious of the presence of any one but myself.)

“You would if you could,” said I, “is only a self-righteous and self-justifying excuse. Your deceitful heart means by it, that you are not so wicked as to continue in your impenitence willingly. It means that you are willing to repent, but you cannot. You are deceived. You are not willing. You think you are, but you are in an error. You never *will* be willing, unless God shall verify in you the promise, ‘My people shall be willing in the day of my power.’ In that power lies your only hope, as I have told you before, when I urged you to pray. If you are willing to repent, what hinders you? I am willing you should repent. All of us here are willing. Every angel in heaven is willing you should repent. Christ who died to redeem you is willing. God the Father is willing. The Holy Spirit is willing, who, at this moment strives with you to bring you to repentance. What hinders you, then? Yourself only! And when you say you can’t repent, you mean that you are not to be blamed for coming here to-night with an impenitent heart. You are woefully deceived! God blames you! The whole Bible blames you! Your own conscience, though you strive to silence it, blames you! — This excuse will not stand!”

“I can’t repent!” said he again, (in a harsh, vociferating voice, as if in anger.)

“Then God can’t save you,” said I; “for he cannot lie, and he has said the impenitent shall be destroyed! You say you cannot repent. He has not said so. He commands you to repent.”

He replied, with much agitation, but in a subdued tone: — “I am sure I have tried long; and my mind has been greatly tormented. All has done no good. I do not see as I *can* repent!”

“Other people have repented,” said I. “There are a great many penitents in the world. I find there are some here to-night, who think they have come to repentance, since they were here last Sabbath evening. One of them told me then, very much the same thing you tell me now, that it did not seem to him he ever could turn from sin; but he has found out he can. As to your having tried so long, the length of time will not save you if a man has got his face turned the wrong way, the longer he goes on, the worse off he becomes. He would do well to stop, and turn about. Such is the call of the Bible: ‘Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.’ Other people have turned to God, and you ought to. But your mind has seized on the idea of your trying and your trouble, and you make an excuse and a self-righteousness of them.”

“Do you think I am self-righteous?” said he.

“I know you are. That is your grand difficulty. You have been trying to save yourself. You are trying now. When you tried to repent, your heart aimed after repentance, as something to recommend you to God, and constitute a reason why he should forgive and save you. It was just an operation of a self-righteous spirit. It was just an attempt to save yourself, to have your religion save you, instead of relying by faith upon Jesus Christ, to be saved from wrath through him. This is precisely the case with every impenitent sinner. The error is one. The forms of it may be various; but in all cases it is substantially the same thing. St. Paul has given a perfect description of it: ‘going about,’ (from one thing to another, from one device or attempt to another,) ‘going about to establish a righteousness of their own, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God; for Christ is the

end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.’ One man tries to establish a righteousness of his own, out of his reformations; another one, out of his duties; another, out of his painful attempts or painful convictions; as you just now mentioned your own torments of mind. It is evident, that you are trying to be righteous before God, through your pain — and your attempted penitence. And if you should find any peace of mind in that way; it would only be a deception, not an item of religion in it. You ought to betake yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, a poor, guilty, undone sinner, to be saved by him alone — saved by grace. You ought to go to him, just as you are, to be washed in his blood, to be clothed in his righteousness, to be sheltered from the thunders of God’s eternal law, in the security of his all-sufficient atonement. You ought to flee to Christ, like the man-slayer to the city of refuge, before he is cut down by the sword of the avenger of blood. You ought to go instantly, like the prodigal to his father, in all his poverty, starvation, and rags, as well as guilt. You ought to cry, like Peter sinking in the waves, “Lord, save me.” But instead of this, you are just looking to yourself, striving to find something, or make something in your own heart, which shall recommend you to God. And in this miserable way, you are making salvation a far more difficult matter, than God has made it. You have forgotten the free grace of the gospel, the full atonement of Jesus Christ, by the sacrifice of himself.”

“But,” said he, “I can’t repent and come to Christ, *of myself*.”

“I certainly never said you could; and never wished you to think you could. In *my* opinion, God does not wish you to think so. And if you have found out, that you cannot repent of yourself, aside from divine aid, I am glad of it — you have found out an important truth. Most certainly God does not tell you to repent *of yourself*. He tells you, that ‘Christ is exalted to give repentance.’ He says to every sinner, ‘Thou hast destroyed thyself, in me is thy help: let him take hold on my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.’ On the ground that they need it, he has promised ‘the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.’ God never expects you to repent,

without divine aid, but with it. He knows you are too wicked to do it, that you are without strength, helpless, undone, a *lost* sinner! — And here lies the very heart of your error. You have been trying to repent, in a way that God never told you, just by your own powers, instead of trying to get God to have mercy upon you, and save you by his help. You have been looking to the powers within you, instead of looking to the aid above you. You have trusted to yourself, instead of trusting yourself to the grace of Christ. And that is the very reason why you have failed; and now you complain, that you cannot repent; while, in reality, you have exactly the same sufficiency, as the penitent all around you. What has been their help, may be your help. And the sooner you are driven off from all that self-seeking and self-reliance, the better it will be for you. You are in the double error of undervaluing the character of God, and over-valuing your own. God is more merciful and more gracious, than you think him to be. He is more ready to save you. And when he commands you to repent, he does not wish you to forget, that all your hope lies in the immediate aid of his Holy Spirit. Nor does he wish you to attempt to dispense with that proffered assistance, by your not believing, that you are as utterly helpless as you really are. He does not tell you to rely upon your own shattered strength; but you have done so. And when you have failed, you then turn round and complain, that you ‘can’t repent.’ You reject his offered help — the help of the omnipotent Spirit. And for this reason, you will be the more criminal, if you do *not* repent. That Divine Spirit is your only hope. If he leaves you to yourself, you are lost — eternally lost! Tread softly, my dear friend! The ground whereon thou standest is holy ground! Let not the Holy Spirit, who presides over the souls here this evening, bear witness against you in the day of the final judgment, — ‘because I have called and ye refused!’ You *can* repent; just in the way that others repent; just because God is your help. Trust him; and rely upon yourself no longer.”

As I was saying these things, he appeared to become much less affected, but much more thoughtful. His tears and his agitations ceased; and he seemed to hang upon my lips, as if he was listening to

some new wonder. When I had done, all was hushed as death; and in a deliberate, subdued, and solemn tone, he broke that expressive silence, saying: — “I hope, my God will help me.”

“Let us pray,” said I; — and a short prayer, pleading for God’s help, closed the exercises of the evening.

I afterwards found numerous reasons for believing, that that was one of the most profitable religious exercises, that I ever attended. Among others was the case of my friend, whose expression had drawn me somewhat out of my proposed mode of conducting the exercises of the evening. He became, as he hoped, a true believer. He stated to me the exercises of his mind, his repentance, his faith in Christ, his peace and hope, and his reliance upon the Holy Spirit. His mind appeared to seize upon the great truths of the gospel, almost without emotion. He had no ecstasy, no exultation, no joy. He had only peace and hope. He told me, that his agitations had all been useless to him; that they were not faith and did not lead to faith; and that he thought “sinners ought to attend to the calls of God, in a believing and business manner.” And when I asked him what had kept him from Christ so long, he replied: “I was trying to make myself better — to have a religion instead of trusting in Christ. What you said to me that night, showed me my mistake; and I went home with a deeper sense of my dependence, and a clear view of the free grace of God to sinners, through the redemption of Christ.”

About six months after this he united with the church, and has continued to manifest an established and uniform faith.

To cut off the sinner from all reliance upon himself, his merits and his powers; and throw him, naked and helpless, into the hands of the Holy Spirit to lead him to Christ in faith; should be the one great aim of the ministry.

Sinners certainly ought to repent, for God commands them to repent. But in my opinion, he does not design to have them understand his command, as having respect only to their own ability to repent, and not having respect to the proffered aids of the Holy Spirit. Such aids constitute one grand ground on which his command is obligatory, and sweep away every possible excuse. No man ever did repent without the Holy Spirit, or ever will; and this is no small amount of proof that no man ever can. Nothing seems to be gained by making a sinner believe that he is able to repent without divine assistance. Such a belief will be very likely to mislead him to a reliance upon his own shattered strength. And as to his conviction of criminality for *not* coming to repentance, surely there is strong ground for such conviction, since God offers him all the ability he needs, — *in me is thy help, — let him take hold on my strength that he may make peace with me.*

The Necessity of Regeneration

by Stephen Charnock

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—John iii. 3,5

These words contain the foundation of all practical religion here, and happiness hereafter. It is the principal doctrine Christ, as a prophet, came to teach, and as a king to work in the heart. It is an answer to Nicodemus his compliment, who came to him with some veneration of him. His description is in ver. 1: 'There was a man of the pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.' 1. By his profession or sect, a pharisee. 2. His name, Nicodemus. 3. His quality, a ruler of the Jews; "Argoon", a prince, one of the great Sanhedrin, who had the supreme power in all affairs which concerned religion, even under the Roman government. His coming to Christ is described, ver. 2 'The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.' Where we have (1.) the time of his coming, by night; (2.) the manner of coming and speaking to him with reverence, Rabbi, a title of honour. He comes to Christ; therefore is to be commended. He comes by night; has some failure in his respect to Christ, afraid publicly to own him. Nicodemus was one of the member which believed Christ for his miracles, John ii. 28. He comes hereupon to discourse with him about divine things. He acknowledges him a prophet sent by God. The reason of his acknowledgement is the consideration of his miracles, which manifested a divine power, both in the greatness and multitude of them. For he knew that God would not set the seal of his power, to one that had not his commission. Miracles are the credential letters,

to signify the divine authority of any person sent upon any new dispensation by God.

Observe,

1. God doth not force any man's belief, but gives such undeniable evidences of his will and mind, that not to believe is flat contradiction to him. When he sent Moses to deliver and give a new law to the Israelites, he attended him with a miraculous power, to testify it to be his will, that what Moses delivered should be entertained. So it was with our Saviour, and in the primitive times, at the first promulgation of the gospel in several places. But when a doctrine is settled and a church established, God forbears those extraordinary works, as he did the raining down manna after the Israelites' entrance into Canaan, where they might have provision in an ordinary way of providence; and they had miracles afterward in a more scanty measure, now and then. We have now rational ways to introduce us to a belief of the Christian doctrine; and though there are no sensible miracles as before, yet there has been in all ages, and is still, a miracle kept up in the world, greater than wrought by Christ upon the bodies of men. And that is the conversion of many obstinate sinners, and subduing them on a sudden, which in Christ's account, was the chiefest miracle he wrought when he was upon the earth: Luke vii. 22, 'Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard: how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.' Christ had cured many in their sight; but he added in the end of the enumeration, 'To the poor the gospel is preached,' "Ptochoi euangelidzontai". The poor are evangelised, brought into a gospel frame, a renewed state for the kingdom of heaven, which is greater than the raising a man from a natural death to a natural life.

Nicodemus comes by night. He is fond of his own honour, loath to impair it by a free and open confession. He was a master in Israel. Had he come by day, his reputation had suffered in the vulgar opinion, who might well wonder that he, a pharisee, of a profound

knowledge, should come to receive instruction from the son of a carpenter, a man despised by his fellows of the Sanhedrin. Yet he comes, though by night.

Observe,

1. It is a hard matter for us to perform a duty we are convinced of, without a flaw in it. Nicodemus is convinced by the miracles of Christ's divine authority; but he forbears an open acknowledgement of him. He creeps to him in the night, unwilling to be seen with him in the day. If Christ were not a prophet, why should he be acknowledged at all? If a prophet, why not in the day as well as in the night? Strange not to consult him in the day, whom he confesses to have his commission from God! How weak is the faith of the best at first! How staggering between Christ and self.

2. Our own reputation will be apt to mix itself in our religious services. It is his fear of the loss of this makes him choose the darkness. This greatest piece of old Adam in us will be rising in various forms, when we are in the most spiritual exercises. What a contest is there between religion and reputation! He was willing to gratify the one, but not displease the other.

3. Ambition is the great hindrance of a thorough conversion. Nicodemus had a mind to speak to Christ, but his reputation bears too much sway in him against a thorough giving up himself to him. He was ashamed to be taken notice of in this little address he made: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which comes from God only?'

4. Men may have a high esteem of Christ, yet not such an esteem as amounts to a saving faith. Nicodemus acknowledges him a teacher, and that sent from God; but not the teacher, the great prophet Moses had spoken of, Deut. xviii. 15. He confesses him a prophet, but not the Messiah. Look to your estimations of Christ; see whether they be supreme, superlative, the Saviour, the mediator, the Lord and King.

5. Convictions may be a long time before any appearance of conversion. If we consider Nicodemus here, only as one convinced of the divine authority of Christ, and not a thorough convert at this time; for he seems by his questions, verse 4 and 9, to be rather a malcontent, than a convert; yet the seed then sown by our Saviour's discourse sprung up at last in fruit. He does upon a signal occasion plead Christ's cause before a council of pharisees, probably the great Sanhedrin, yet but faintly: John vii. 50, 51, 'Doth our law judge any man before it hears him, and knows what he does?' Before, he would have no witness of his coming to Christ. Here he takes his part, as he might have done any man's upon a common principle of justice and equity, that he should not be condemned before he was heard. But there is more generous fruit afterwards, where he joins with Joseph of Arimathea in doing honour openly to our Saviours crucified body: John xix. 39, 'And there came also Nicodemus (which at the first came to Jesus by night), and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.' What grace he had seems to be in a long sleep, but is very vigorous upon its awaking.

6. True grace does one time or other discover itself most contrary to that which was the natural crime before. In both these places, fear had been his sin. It is now overmatched by confidence. The Holy Ghost takes notice of it, 'which at the first came to Jesus by night.' He came by night before, now he comes by day. He and another never named before, Joseph of Arimathea, who being possessed with the same passion of fear, was a disciple in secret,—John xix. 38, 'Being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews,'—own him publicly at his death, when those that had been familiar with him in his life forsook him. Christ will make timorous hares to own his cause, when those that think themselves courageous lions turn their backs upon him.

Paul had the most transcendent affection to the church, who before was guilty of the smartest persecution. And Peter, after the coming of the Spirit, was as courageous as before he was cowardly in his Master's cause.

We have seen the pharisee. Let us consider our Saviour's answer: ver. 3, 'Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

Some think that Nicodemus asked a question which is not expressed, but may be gathered out of Christ's answer, and seems to be this, What was requisite to a man's entrance into the kingdom of heaven? Whereupon Christ tells him, that there was a necessity of being born again. Others think that Nicodemus asked no question, and that these words are a very proper reply to Nicodemus.

1. Christ answers not his compliment, but uses his authority, acknowledged by Nicodemus, of a teacher to inform him. Since you acknowledge my commission from God to be a teacher, I will teach you what I have to declare. The great design of my coming is to bring men to the kingdom of God; and the great means to this is a new birth, which can only fit you for evangelical truths here, and eternal happiness hereafter. He acknowledges Christ to be a teacher, and Christ in his reply would teach him how to become a Christian.

2. Christ frames his answer according to the pharisee's corruption. Nicodemus came by night, out of love to his credit, that might be impaired by his coming in the daytime. What would the people think? Surely this man, and the rest of his tribe, are not so knowing as they pretend to be, since he comes to Jesus to be taught, and out of fear of the pharisees, who thereby might be offended.

Christ's answer therefore very well suits him. You must become a new man, if you would have acquaintance with evangelical mysteries. Sway with your old notions, and pharisaic pride. Deny your honour, credit, and whatsoever partakes of the name of self. A legal frame, and a pharisaic righteousness, will not advance you to the kingdom of God. The Jews were proud of being Abraham's children, and thought the gates of heaven could not be shut against any of that relation.

John had touched them before for this: Mat. iii. 9, 'And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.' Christ does tacitly here do the same, and puts him in mind of another birth, and the falseness and deceitfulness of his bottom of legal righteousness.

3. Christ frames his answer according to his weakness and ignorance. Nicodemus acknowledged him a teacher, not the Messiah. Christ would bring him to the knowledge of himself as the Messiah. Christ therefore by his answer would lift up his thoughts higher, and puts him in mind of the kingdom of God, which the Jews in their common discourse signified the kingdom of the Messiah by, and have entitled it in ages since, the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven. So that Christ would bring him to the knowledge of himself as the Messiah, not only as an extraordinary prophet.

These three things evidence what relation this speech of Christ has to that of Nicodemus.

Observe from the relation of this to Nicodemus his speech:

1. We shall gain nothing by our applaudings and praises of Christ, without a renewed nature. Nicodemus comes with much reverence, gives Christ the title of rabbi, confesses him to be sent of God, owns the divinity of his miracles. Christ does not compliment him again, takes no notice of his civility, but falls roundly to his work, acquaints him with the necessity of regeneration, without which he could not see the kingdom of God, for all his fine praises of him. A glavering reverential religion is insignificant with Christ. A new birth, a likeness to Christ in nature, a conformity to him, is accounted by Christ an higher estimation of him, than all external applauses given to him.

2. No natural privilege under heaven can entitle us to the kingdom of grace or glory. It is not our carnal traduction from the best man. It is no natural birth, with the choicest privileges, gives us a right to either of them. Not the honour of having the law from God's own mouth,

the glory of an outward covenant, the treasure of the oracles of God, the seal of circumcision borne in the body, that can instate this Nicodemus into this felicity. It is a birth of a higher strain, from an higher principle, a change of nature, and a removal from the old stock.

See how strangely Nicodemus replied upon this discourse of our Saviour. How strangely astonished is this great ruler in Israel at the doctrine which is absolutely necessary to an entrance into the kingdom of heaven! ver. 4, 'Nicodemus says unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' What a childish conception has he of this most heavenly doctrine! Can such an ancient man as I return to my first principles, dig a way into my mother's womb? It is strange that Nicodemus, being a pharisee, and so well versed in Scripture, should be so ignorant, or at least guilty of so much inadvertence, as not to think of that place, Ezek. xxxvi., and other places, which speak of 'a new heart,' and 'an heart of flesh.' He might have considered the design of the legal purifications, which were to represent the inward holiness which ought to be in the persons so purified. Yet he hears him discourse, but does not comprehend him. His carnal notion bears sway against spiritual truths.

Observe,

1. A man may have great knowledge in the letter of the Scripture, and yet not understand the necessary and saving doctrines in it. The doctrine of regeneration was laid down in the whole Old Testament, though not in that term. Let us take heed how we read the Scriptures; not to trouble our heads with needless and curious questions, but with the main mysteries of religion. What could all Nicodemus his knowledge profit him, if it had been ten thousand times more, without the knowledge of this doctrine, and the experience of it!
2. Nothing is more an enemy to the saving knowledge of gospel mysteries than a priding ourselves in head knowledge. Nicodemus

his coming by night was not only from fear, but pride, that he might not be thought ignorant by the people. Humble men have the soundest knowledge: 'The meek will he teach his way,' Ps. xxv. 9.

3. How low was the interest of God in the world at that time! How had ignorance and error thrust the knowledge of God out of other parts of the world, when it languished so much in the church! How simple must the poor people be when the students in Scripture were no wiser! It is a thing to be bewailed amongst us, that wrangling knowledge has almost thrust out spiritual. And when Christians meet, their discourses are more about unnecessary disputes than these saving mysteries of Christianity, which might produce elevations of heart to heaven.

To this exception of Nicodemus Christ makes his reply; where observe,

1. A fresh assertion of it, with an explanation: ver. 5, 'Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' In the third verse, Christ lays down the necessity of the new birth; in ver. 6, the necessity of the cause, 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit.' In the first speech, he lays down the doctrine; in this, he explains the principle and manner of it, to remove his false apprehensions, wherein he might mean the transmigration of souls, which seems to be an opinion amongst the Jews.

2. A reason to back it: ver. 6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and can be no more by that principle, for the effect cannot be better than the cause; but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, i.e. has a spiritual nature.

Flesh is taken for man corrupted: Gen. vi. 3, 'For he also is flesh,' degenerate into flesh, grown a mere sensual creature by the loss of original righteousness. For upon the parting of original

righteousness, the soul of man was as a body without life; a spiritual carcass, as the body is without a soul.

Flesh signifies the whole nature, as in that place, Mat. xvi. 17, 'Flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee,' &c. The incarnation of the Son of God, which is the foundation of all evangelical administrations, is above the sphere of nature to discover. Man in his natural generation is but mere nature, and cannot apprehend, cannot enjoy that which is only apprehensible and enjoyable by a spiritual nature; but man regenerated by the Spirit is spiritual, and is advanced above mere flesh, for he is made partaker of the divine nature. So that Christ's argument runs thus: No flesh can enter into the kingdom of God; but every man naturally is flesh, unless born again of the Spirit; therefore no man, unless born again of the Spirit, can enter into the kingdom of God. If you could enter into your mother's womb, and be born again, the matter would not be mended with you; you would still be but flesh, and rather worse than better; therefore that is not the birth that I mean, for the impediment would be as strong in you as before.

These two verses are an answer to Nicodemus his objection. Nicodemus understands it of a carnal birth. No, no, says Christ, it is a spiritual birth I intend; one that is wholly divine and heavenly. That which you mean brings a man into the light of the world; that which I mean, brings a man out of the world, into the light of grace. That forms the flesh to an earthly life; this forms the soul to an heavenly. That makes you the son of man; this the son of God.

All the difficulty lies in ver. 6, in that expression of water, &c. Some, as the papists, understand it of the elementary water of baptism, and from this place exclude all children dying without baptism from salvation. Others understand it of a metaphorical water, whereof Christ speaks, John iv. 14, 'The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.'

Let us first see why by water cannot be meant the baptismal water.

Regeneration is the mystery and sense of that sacred ceremony. It is indeed signified, represented, and sealed in baptism; how, and in what sense, is not my present work.

1. It is strange, that when all agree that the birth here spoken of is spiritual and metaphorical, that the water here should be natural.

2. None could be saved, unless baptised, if this were meant of baptism. As if these words, John vi. 53, 'Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,' were meant of the supper, none could be saved unless they did partake of it. Whereas Christ lays not the stress upon baptism, but upon faith: Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believes, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believes not, shall be damned.' He does not say, He that is not baptised shall be damned, but he lays damnation wholly upon the want of faith. Many have been saved without baptism, none without faith. It is true to say, He that does not believe shall be damned; but it is not true to say, He that is not baptised shall be damned. Christ says the first, but not the second, though his discourse had obliged him to say so, had it been true, or had he meant this speech to Nicodemus of baptismal water. The Spirit is not tied to baptism, but he may act out of the sacraments as well as in them. Understand this of the bare want of baptism, not of the contempt or wilful neglect of it. If it were meant of baptism, it was true then, that none could be saved without it. How did the thief upon the cross enter into paradise, which Christ promised him? So that one may enter into heaven without baptism by water, though not without the baptism of the Spirit.

3. Baptism was not then instituted as a standing sacrament in the Christian church. The institution of it we find not till after Christ's resurrection: Mat. xxviii. 19, 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them.' And it is not likely Christ would discourse to Nicodemus of the necessity of an institution that was not yet expressly appointed by him, and which he did not appoint till after his resurrection; for he discourses of that which was of present

necessity. And if this were meant of baptism, and of that absolute necessity the papists would lay upon it from these words, then all that died before the institution of baptism by our Saviour, unbaptised, could not enter into the kingdom of heaven, though believing. Can anything be necessary before the precept for it be given? It could not be necessary before, as a means, because it is not a natural, but an instituted means. It must be therefore necessary by virtue of a command; therefore not absolutely necessary before the command, and at the time Christ spoke these words. Some say that Christ meant it, not of an absolute necessity at that time, but that it should be so after his death. That is to give our Saviour the lie, for he spoke it of the present time, some years before his death. Besides, it wrongs the goodness of our Saviour (if he had meant it of baptism), to defer the institution of it so long after, when it was at present necessary for Nicodemus his salvation. It wrongs his wisdom, too, to speak of that to be at present necessary, which was not in being, nor could be till after his death.

4. It is strange that our Saviour should speak to Nicodemus of the necessity of baptism before he had informed him of the mysteries of the gospel, whereof it is a seal. To speak of the seal before he speaks of that which is to be sealed by it, is not congruous. For the sacraments being founded upon the doctrine on which they depend, to begin by a sacrament the instruction of a man, is to begin a building by the tiles and rafters, before you lay a foundation; and against the order expressed by our Saviour to the apostles, which puts teaching before baptising, and was always practised in the primitive times, and is to this day in all Christian churches, to the adult and grown up. As circumcision was, amongst the Jews, not administered to any proselyte before his turning proselyte, and instruction in those laws he was to observe, and then, and not till then, his children had a right to circumcision.

5. Those that understand it of the baptismal water, and so make that of absolute necessity, do by another assertion accuse their own exposition of a falsity; for they say that the baptism of blood supplies

the want of that of water, and that if either infants or adult persons be hurried away to a stake or gibbet, or killed for the Christian cause, they are certainly saved; which cannot be, if the baptism of water were to be understood in this place, and so absolutely necessary. It is water that is expressed and blood is not water. One of these assertions must be false. A martyr dying unbaptised must be damned, and cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, if this place be meant of the water of baptism.

6. It may also be observed that Christ, in the progress of his discourse, makes no more mention of water, but of the Spirit: 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;' not born of water and the Spirit, which had been very necessary, if water had been of an equal necessity with the Spirit to the new birth. And since Christ mentions it positively, that he that is born of the Spirit is spirit, will it be said, that if any be born of the Spirit, without water, he is still but flesh?

Water then here is to be taken mystically. Some by water understand the whole doctrine of the gospel; as the waters mentioned through the whole 47th of Ezekiel signify the doctrine of the gospel. To drop, in Scripture, signifies to teach, Amos vii. 16; Ezek. xx. 46, 'Drop thy word toward the south.' Others, by water, understand the grace of regeneration as the principle, the Spirit as the cause, as Titus iii. 5, 6, 'He has saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' What washing he means is expressed in the renewing of the Holy Ghost; that is, that renewing which is wholly spiritual, as proceeding from the Spirit of God, whence this grace does flow.

By water and the Spirit are signified one and the same thing, the similitude of water showing the cleansing and generating virtue of the Spirit, as fire and the Spirit are put together, Mat. iii. 11, to signify the refining quality the Spirit has (as fire has to separate the dross from the good metal). Fire and the Spirit, i. e. a spirit of fire, of the force and efficacy of fire.

This water is the same which God had promised: Isa. xlv. 8, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty;' and Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you;' and ver. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you.' He there explains water to be the Spirit: 'I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.' And in Ezekiel he joins water and the Spirit; i. e. the water of my Spirit, or my spiritual water, my gospel grace. And Isa. xii. 18, 19, God speaks of the admirable fruitfulness of this water. This shall renew you, and make you fructify in the kingdom of my Son, where none shall be received who is not born of this divine principle.

Now our Saviour having to do with a pharisee, who was acquainted with those oracles, to make him understand this truth, uses those words which the prophets had used, and ranks them in the same order; first water, then the Spirit, that the latter might clear the sense and nature of the former, to hinder Nicodemus from imagining that to be a natural water which was spiritual and mystical. Water and the Spirit signifies the water of the Spirit, or a spiritual water, as 1 Thes. i. 5, 'Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost;' that is, in the power of the Holy Ghost.

The Spirit is compared to water in respect of its generative virtue. No fruitful plant but is produced by moisture. Water contains in it the seeds of all things. It was from water and the earth that all things in the lower world were in the first creation produced. Water is put here as exegetical of the effect of the Spirit; water being the cause of generation by its moisture, uniting the parts together.

Our Saviour in both places uses an asseveration, Verily, verily, which is spoken,

1. To show the infallible necessity of it, the certainty of the proposition.
2. To urge a special attention. Men press those things in discourse which they would have retained.

It is to be believed because of its necessity; it is to be considered because of its excellency.

Born again. "Anothen" signifies properly from above; but sometimes it is taken for again. Nicodemus understands it so by his reply, of entering again into his mother's womb, and not of a heavenly birth.

Man was born in nature, he must be born in grace. He was born of the first Adam; he must be born of the second Adam. It is expressed in Scripture by various terms: a resurrection to life, a quickening, a new creation, the new man, the inward man, a dying to the world. It is indeed a putting off the old man, the principles and passions, the corrupt notions and affections which we derive from Adam, to devote ourselves to God, to live to Christ, to walk in newness of life.

The kingdom of God, which is sometimes taken, (1) for the kingdom of glory, (2) it is sometimes taken for the gospel state. And the same thing is signified by the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven. What is called by Matthew 'the kingdom of heaven,' Mat. iv. 17, is called by Mark, relating the same story, 'the kingdom of God,' Mark i. 16. And the gospel is called 'the gospel of the kingdom of God,' Mark i. 14. It is called the kingdom of God;—

1. Because it sets up the rule and government of God in the world above the devil's. The devil had been so long the God of the world, that the interest of God seemed to be overmatched by a multitude of unclean spirits, and abominable idols; and the true God was not known to be the governor of it. The gospel discovers the true governor of the world, and sets up his rule and authority.

2. It sets up the righteousness of God, above a legal and fleshly righteousness, much in vogue among Jews and Gentiles; but they were wholly ignorant of the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 3.

3. This kingdom is framed and set up by the Son of God; the other kingdom, under the law, was settled by God, but by the hand of Moses, a man. This is administered by him through his Spirit, his

vicegerent. His royalty did not so eminently appear as in the times of the gospel.

The Father appoints the gospel state in his wisdom, the Son lays the foundation of it in his blood, the Spirit carries it on in the world by his power.

4. In respect of the service, it is high and heavenly; a serving God in spirit. The service under the legal administration was carnal; the service under the gospel administration is more spiritual, and so more suitable to the perfections of God.

5. In the end and issue of it. It is a translating us into the kingdom of Christ, Col. i. 13. The legal ceremonies could not fit men of themselves for glory; they could not make the comers thereunto perfect. But this kingdom of grace prepares us for the kingdom of glory.

Cannot see the kingdom of God. In verse 5. he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. He cannot,

1. By reason of God's appointment.

2. In the nature of the thing itself; he has no fitness for heaven or heavenly mysteries.

See. Seeing is taken sometimes for enjoying; not a bare sight, but fruition: John iii. 36, 'He that believes not the Son shall not see life;' that is, shall not enjoy life. And Heb. xii. 14, 'Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;' they may see him in his pronouncing the sentence, but shall not see him in a way of glorious enjoyment of him.

To have a communion with Christ in a gospel state, to have an enjoyment of Christ in eternal glory, it is necessary we be stripped of the corruption of our first nature, and be clothed with another by the Spirit of God.

Observe in the verse,

1. The infallibility of the proposition: Verily, verily.
2. The necessity of regeneration: except.
3. The extension of it in regard of the subject.

(1.) Subjectum quod recipit: man, i. e. every man.

(2.) Subjectum in quo recipitur: man, i. e. the whole man, every faculty.

4. The excellency of it implied: they cannot see the kingdom of God. If he be born again, he shall enjoy the kingdom of God.

Doct. Regeneration of the soul is of absolute necessity to a gospel and glorious state.

By regeneration, I mean not a relative, but a real change of the subject, wrought in the complexion and inclinations of the soul, as in the restoring of health there is a change made in the temper and humours of the body.

As mankind was changed in Adam from what they were by a state of creation, so men must be changed in Christ from what they were in a state of corruption. As that change was not only relative but real, and the relative first introduced by the real, so must this. The relation of a child of wrath was founded upon the sin committed Without a real change there can be no relative. Being in Christ, as freed from condemnation, is always attended with a walking in the Spirit; and walking is not before living. For the better understanding this point, I shall lay down,

I. Propositions concerning the necessity of it.

II. I shall show that it is necessary,

1. To a gospel state.

(1.) To the performance of gospel duties.

(2.) To the enjoyment of gospel privileges.

2. To a state of glory.

I. Propositions concerning the necessity of it.

Prop. 1. There are but two states, one saving, the other damning; a state of sin and a state of righteousness; and all men are included in one of them. All men are divided into two ranks. In regard of their principle, some are in the fiery, some in the Spirit, Rom. viii. 8, 9; in regard of their obedience, some walk after the flesh, some after the Spirit, Rom. viii. 1; some are slaves to the flesh, others are led by the Spirit; some live only to self, some live to God. In regard of the exercise of their minds, their nobler faculty, some mind the things of the flesh, others the things of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 5; some swinishly wallow in sin, others place the delights of their spirits upon better and higher objects.

The Scripture mentions no other. A state of enmity, wherein men have their inclinations contrary to God; a state of friendship and fellowship, wherein men walk before God unto all well-pleasing, and would not willingly have an inward motion swerve from his will. One is called light, the other darkness: Eph. v. 8, 'You were sometimes darkness, but now are you light;' one the children of wrath, the other the children of God. There is no medium between them, every man is in one of these states. All believers, from the bruised reed to the tallest cedar, from the smoking flax on earth to the flaming lamp in heaven, from Thomas, that would not believe without seeing, to Abraham, who would believe without staggering, all are in a state of life; and all, from the most beautiful moralist to the most venomous toad in nature's field, from the young man in the gospel, who was not far from the kingdom of heaven, to Judas, who was in the very bottom of hell, all are in a state of death. Mere nature, though never

so curiously garnished, can place a man no higher; faith, though with many infirmities, puts us in a state of amity; unbelief, though with many moralities, continues us in a state of enmity. All men are either the object of God's delight or of his abomination. The highest endowments of men remaining in corrupted nature cannot please him. The delight of God then supposes some real change in the object which is the ground of that delight, for God is wise in his delight, and could not be pleased with anything which were not fit for his complacency. Since original nature in a man cannot displease God unless it be changed by some fault, because it was his own work, so our present nature cannot please God unless it be changed by some grace, though it be otherwise never so highly dignified. Whatsoever grows up from the old Adam is the fruit of the flesh, whatsoever grows up by the new Adam in us is the offspring of the Spirit; and upon one of these two stocks all men in the world are set. Since, therefore, one is utterly destructive, and cannot please God (Rom viii. 8, So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God), though never so well garnished (for being utterly contrary to him it cannot be approved by him), the other is absolutely necessary to salvation.

Prop. 2. It is necessary upon the account of the fall of man and the consequents of it. In Adam we died: 1 Cor. xv. 22, 'As in Adam all died,' therefore in Adam he sinned: Rom. v. 19, 'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.' Man cannot be supposed to sin in Adam unless some covenant had intervened between God and Adam, whence there did arise in the whole human nature a debt of having righteousness transfused from the first parent to all his posterity. The want of this grace wherein his posterity are conceived is a privation, and a crime which was voluntary in the root and head. This privation of righteousness must be removed. The institution of God stands firm, that Adam and his posterity should have a pure righteousness. It is not for the honour of God to enjoin it so strictly at first, and to have no regard to it afterwards. Now this privation of righteousness, and the unrighteousness which has taken place in the sons of Adam, cannot be removed without the infusion of grace; for without this grace he would always want righteousness, and yet he

always under an obligation to have it; he would be under desires of happiness, but without it under an impossibility of attaining it.

Were there an indifference in the soul of man, were it an *abrasa tabula*, the writing of moral precepts upon it by good education would sway it to walk in the paths of virtue, as an ill education does cast it into the ways of [vice]. This is not so; for take two, let them have the same ways of education, the same precepts instilled into them, as Esau and Jacob had by their father, who were equally taught, yet how different were their lives! Esau's bad, Jacob's not without flaws. Education had not the power to root corruption out of both, no, nor out of any man in the world without a higher principle. There is some powerful principle in the soul, which leads it into by-paths contrary to those wholesome rules instilled into it. Hence arises a necessity of some other principle to be put into the heart to over-sway this corrupt bias. Man goes astray from the womb, as it is in Ps. lviii. 3, 'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born.' There must be something to rectify him, and expel this wandering humour.

By the fall of man there was contracted,

(1.) An unfitness to any thing that is good. Man is so immersed in wrong notions of things, that he cannot judge fully of what is good: Titus i. 16, 'To every good work reprobate.' The state of nature, or the old man, is described, Eph. iv. 22, to be 'corrupt, according to deceitful lusts;' deceitful, seducing us from God, drawing us into perdition, by representing evil under the notion of good, which evidences our understandings to be unfit to judge without a new illumination; inward and spiritual lusts, which are most deceitful, being accounted brave and generous motions; lusts or desires, which show the corruption of the will by ill habits. Lust and sin is the mere composition of corrupted nature; the whole man is stuffed with polluting principles and filthy appetites.

What was preternatural to man in a state of innocence became natural to him after his depraved state. He is 'carnal, sold under sin,' Rom. vii. 14. The spring being already out of order, cannot make the motion otherwise than depraved, as when a clock is out of order, it is natural to that present condition of it to give false intelligence of the hour of the day, and it cannot do otherwise till the wheels and weights be rectified. Our end was actively to glorify God in the service of him and obedience to him; but since man is fallen into this universal decay of his faculties, and made unfit to answer this end, there is a necessity he should be made over again, and created upon a better foundation, that some principle should be in him to oppose this universal depravation, enlighten his understanding, mollify his heart, and reduce his affections to their due order and object.

(2.) Not only an unfitness, but unwillingness to that which is good. We have not those affections to virtue as we have to vice. Are not our lives for the most part voluntarily ridiculous? Had we a full use of reason, we should judge them so. We think little of God; and when we do think of him, it is with reluctance. This cannot be our original state, for surely, God being infinitely good, never let man come out of his hands with this actual unwillingness to acknowledge and serve him; as the apostle says, in the case of the Galatians' errors, Gal. v. 8, 'This persuasion comes not of him which calls you,' this unwillingness comes not from him that created you. How much, therefore, do we need a restoring principle in us! We naturally fulfil the desires, or "thelemata" 'of the flesh,' Eph. ii. 3. There is then a necessity of some other principle in us to make us fulfil the will of God, since we were created for God, not for the flesh. We can no more be voluntarily serviceable to God while that serpentine nature and devilish habit remains in us, than we can suppose the devil can be willing to glorify God, while the nature he contracted by his fall abides powerful in him. It is as much as to say that a man can be willing against his will. Nature and will must be changed, or we for ever remain in this state.

Man is born a wild ass' colt, Job xi. 12. No beast more wild and brutish than man in his natural birth, and like to remain in his wild and wilful nature without grace, a new birth can only put off the wildness of the first.

(3.) Not only unfitness and unwillingness, but inability to good. A strange force there is in a natural man, which hurries him, even against some touches of his will, to evil.

How early do men discover an affection to vice! How greedily do they embrace it, notwithstanding rebukes from superiors, good exhortations from friends, with the concurrence of the vote of conscience, giving its *amen* to those dissuasions! and yet carried against those arguments, deceived by sin, slain by sin, sold under it, Rom. vii. 11, 14. This is the miserable state of every son of nature.

Do we not find that men sometime wrapped up in retirement, in consideration of the excellency of virtue, are so wrought upon by their solitary meditations, that they think themselves able to withstand the strongest invasion of any temptation! Yet we see oftentimes that when a pleasing temptation offers itself, though there be a conflict between reason and appetite, at length all the considerations and dictates of reason are laid aside, the former ideas laid asleep, and that committed which their own reason told them was base and sordid; so that there is something necessary, beside consideration and resolution, to the full cure of man.

No privation can be removed but by the introduction of another form; as when a man is blind, that blindness, which is a privation of sight, cannot be removed without bringing in a power of seeing again. Original sin is a privation of original righteousness, and an introduction of corrupt principles, which cannot be removed but by some powerful principle contrary to it. Since the inability upon the earth, by reason of the curse, to bring forth its fruits in such a manner as it did when man was in a state of innocence, the nature of it must be changed to reduce it to its original fruitfulness; so must

man, since a general defilement from Adam has seized upon him, be altered before he can 'bring forth fruit to God,' Rom. vii. 4. We must be united to Christ, engrafted upon another stock, and partake of the power of his resurrection; without this we may bring forth fruit, but not fruit to God. There is as utter an impossibility in a man to answer the end of his creation, without righteousness, as for a man to act without life, or act strongly without health and strength. It is a contradiction to think a man can act righteously without righteousness, for without it he has not the being of a man; that is, man in such a capacity, for those ends for which his creation intended him.

Well, then, since there is an unfitness, unwillingness, inability in a man to answer his end, there is a necessity of a new life, a new nature, a new righteousness. There is a necessity for his happiness that he should be brought back to God, live to God, be a son of God, and this cannot be without regeneration; for how can he be brought back to God without a principle of spiritual motion? How can he live to God that has no spiritual life? How can he be fit to be a son of God who is of a brutish and diabolical nature?

Prop. 3. Hence it follows, that it is universally necessary. Necessary for all men. Our Saviour knows none without this mark. There must be a change in the soul: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' There must be the habitation of the Spirit: Rom. viii. 9, 'If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' There must be a crucifixion, not only of the corrupt affections of the flesh, but of the flesh itself: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.'

The old nature must be killed, with all its attendants. There is no sonship to God without likeness, no relation of a child of God without a childlike nature. Let a man be of whatsoever quality in the world, never so high, never so low, of whatsoever age, of whatsoever moral endowments, 'except a man,' every man, &c.

And simply necessary. Our Saviour does not say he is in danger not to see the kingdom of God, or he may come short of it; but he shall not, he cannot. There is no possible way but this for any man, no other door to creep in at but by that of a new birth; salvation cannot be attained without it, and damnation will certainly be the issue of the want of it. As there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved but by the name of Jesus Christ, so there is no other way under heaven wherein we can be saved but by the birth of the Spirit.

It is necessary, therefore, in all places, in all professions. It is not necessary only in Europe, and not in Africa. Let a man be what he will, in any place under heaven, he must have a Jesus to save him, and an Holy Ghost to change him; it is one and the same Spirit acts in all, and produces the same qualities in all. Let men's religion and professions be what they will (men are apt to please themselves with this and that profession and opinion, but), there is no salvation in any profession, or any kind of opinion, but by regeneration. It is not necessary our understandings should be all of one size, that our opinions should all meet in uniformity, but it is necessary we should all have one spiritual nature. It is as necessary to the being of a good man that he should be spiritual as to the being of a man that he should be rational, though there is a great latitude and variety in the degrees of men in grace, as well as their reasons. Some are of little faith, some of great faith; some babes in Christ, some strong men. It is not necessary all should be as strong as Abraham, but it is simply necessary all should be new born, as Abraham; no age, no time excludes it.

(1.) Righteousness was necessary before the fall. The new birth is but the beginning of our restoration to that state we had before the fall. Adam could not have been happy without being innocent. The holiness of God could not create an impure creature. Without it God could take no pleasure in his work.

(2.) After the fall it was necessary, continually necessary from the first moment of the fall. This work of regeneration is included in the first promise: Gen. iii. 15, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed.' Naturally we have a mighty friendship to Satan, a friendship to his works, though not to his person. But if any man had interest in that promise, he must exchange that friendship for an enmity.

If Jesus Christ, who is principally meant by the seed of the woman, had an enmity to Satan, then all Christ's seed must be possessed with the same spirit. For when the seed of the woman was to break the serpent's head it was necessary that those that would enjoy the fruit of that conquest should be enemies to the nature of the devil, and the works of the devil, otherwise they could not join with that interest which overthrows him. It is unreasonable to think the head should have an enmity, and the members an amity; and we cannot have an enmity to that which is the same with our nature, without a change of disposition. It is not a verbal enmity that is here meant. While we pretend to hate him we may do his pleasure, and Satan is never troubled to be pretendedly hated and really obeyed. As wicked men do the will of God's purpose, while they oppose the will of his precept, so they do the devil's will many times while they think they cross it; there must be a contrary nature to Satan before there can be an enmity. That foolish appetite, affected sensuality, indulgence to the flesh, the cause of our first friendship with Satan, must be changed into divine desires, affection to heavenly things, a mortification of the flesh, before a man can part with this friendship. There must be a change in the conformity of the soul to the nature of the devil before an enmity against him can be raised. We are never enemies to those that encourage us in what we affect. His nature can never be altered, by reason of the curse of God upon him; therefore ours must, if ever the league be broken. In Isa. lxv. 25 it is said, 'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like an ox: and dust shall be the serpent's meat.' The nature of men may be changed by the gospel, but dust shall always be the serpent's meat. The saving some by water in the deluge was a figure of this

inward baptism, which is the 'answer of a good conscience towards God,' 1 Peter iii. 20, 21. As the old world was so corrupt that all must be washed away before it could be restored, so is the little world of man. The cloud and sea through which the Israelites passed signified this, as the apostle informs us: 1 Cor. x. 2, 'And were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and the sea.' Whereupon some think there were some sprinklings of the water upon them, as they stood like two walls, to favour their passage.

(3.) Necessary in the time of the law. By the moral law this renewing was implied in the first command, of not having any other gods before him, Exod. xx. 3. We cannot suppose that command only limited to a not serving an outward image. Is not the setting up self, our own reasons, our own wills, and bowing down to them, and serving them, as much a wrong to God as the bowing down to a senseless image? nay, worse than the adoring of an image, since that is senseless; but our wills corrupt, and are no more fit to be our God than an image is fit to be a representation of him. So that in the spiritual part of the command this must be included, to acknowledge nothing as the rule of perfection, but God; to set ourselves no other patterns of conformity but God, which the apostle phrases a being new created after God, Eph. iv. 24.

If all idolatry were forbidden, then that which is inward as well as that which is outward. If we were to have no other gods before him, then we were to prefer nothing inwardly before him; we were to make him our pattern, and be conformed to him; which we cannot, without another nature than that we had by corruption.

Upon this are those scriptures founded which speak of covetousness to be idolatry, Col. iii. 5, that 'if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,' 1 John ii. 15; he does not love God.

Now the preferring self before God is the essential part of the corrupt nature. Therefore all men, by the law of nature (which is the same with the moral law), and the Jews, to whom this law was given, were

bound to have another nature than that which was derived from Adam, which essentially consisted in the making ourselves our god. Self-esteem, self-dependence, self-willedness, is denying affection and subjection to God.

By the ceremonial law more plainly. Their duty was not terminated in an external observance of the types and shadows under the law, but a heart-work God intended to signify to them in all those legal ceremonies. As sacrifices signified a necessity of expiation of sin, so their legal washings represented to them a necessity of regeneration.

Therefore God is said not to require the sacrifices of beasts: Ps. xl. 6, 'Sacrifice and offering thou did not desire' (that is, sacrifices of beasts), 'burnt-offerings and sin-offerings hast thou not required;' viz. as the ultimate object of his pleasure, but as representations of Christ, the great sacrifice. So neither did he command circumcision, and other legal purifications, for anything in themselves, or anything they could work, further than upon the body, but to signify unto them an inward work upon the heart. Hence they are said not to be commanded by God: Jer. vii. 22, 23, 'For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice.' That is, God did not principally require these as the things which did terminate his will and pleasure, but an obedience to him, and walking with him, which cannot be without an agreement of nature: 'For how can two walk together, unless they be agreed?' Amos iii. 3. Hence God speaks so often to them of the circumcision of the heart, Deut. x. 16, and promises this circumcision of the heart: Deut. xxxvi. 6, 'And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed,' &c. And Paul expressly says, Rom. ii. 28, 29, that 'he was not a Jew;' that is, a spiritual Jew, one of the spiritual seed of Abraham, who had the 'circumcision that was outward in the flesh,' but he that had 'that of the heart.'

So among us many confide in baptism, which signifies nothing to men grown up, without an inward renewal and baptism of the heart, no more than outward circumcision did to them.

(4.) The obligation upon us is still the same. The covenant made with Adam was made perpetually with him for all his posterity, therefore all his posterity, by that covenant, were perpetually obliged to a perfect righteousness. If God had made this covenant with Adam, that he should transfuse this original righteousness to his posterity only for such a time, then indeed, after the expiration of the term, the obligation had ceased, and none had been bound to have it as a debt required by God. The fault of wanting it had been removed without any infusion of grace, because the time being expired, and so the obligation ceasing, it had not been a fault to want it; neither could Adam's posterity have been charged with sin, because the want of righteousness, after the expiration of the time fixed, had not been a sin. But because there was no time fixed, but that it was perpetually of force as to righteousness, which was the main intent of it, we still remain under the obligation of having a righteous nature.

Now God, seeing the impossibility of answering this obligation in our own persons, by our own strength, appoints a way whereby we may answer it in a second head, not pulling the former covenant as to the essential part of it, which was a righteous nature, but mitigating it, as the Chancery nulls not the common law, but sweetens the severity of it.

This latter covenant is called 'an everlasting covenant.' Not that the obligation of the other to righteousness is ceased, but transmitted to another head; which head cannot possibly fail, as our former did, who has both a perfect righteousness in himself, and has undertook for a perfect righteousness in his people, which he is able to accomplish, and to that purpose begins it here, and perfects it hereafter. To this purpose the Scripture speaks of the everlastingness of the covenant: Ps. lxxxix. 28, 'My covenant shall stand fast with him;' that is, with Christ. And if his people sin, as he expresses it

afterwards, yet 'my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him.' In this respect Christ is called the covenant of the people: Isa. xiii. 6, 'I will give thee for a covenant of the people.' And the end of placing David his servant over his people, is not to give way to licentiousness and unrighteousness, and maintain men in an hostile nature against God, but that they might 'walk in his judgments, and observe his statutes,' Jer. xxvii. 24; and that everlasting covenant of peace he would make with them is in order to sanctify them, Jer. xxxvii. 26, 28, compared together. When God would make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant, it was to set his sanctuary among them, and to let the heathen know that the Lord did sanctify Israel. And the end of the covenant is to 'put his law into the inward parts,' Jer. xxxi. 33.

Christ undertook to keep up the honour of God, which was violated by the breach of that covenant, to 'make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,' Dan. ix. 24. This obligation our second head entered into for us, and in him we are complete, even as our head, and as the 'head of all principality and power,' Col. ii. 10, who has undertaken for our perfect righteousness; of our persons, by his own righteousness; of our nature, by inherent righteousness, as it follows, ver 11, &c., 'in whom you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,' &c. This obligation still remains upon our head, and upon us in him, and to him we are to have recourse for a full answering of it. And this cannot be answered without a new birth here, which ends in a perfection hereafter. And Christ, by a plain precept, has made it absolutely necessary now to all under the gospel administration.

So that no age, no time, no administration excludes it. It was as necessary to Adam, the first man, as to the last that shall be born. For being by nature spiritually dead, there must be a restoration to a spiritual life, if ever any be happy. 'God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.' What was always necessary is absolutely necessary, and admits of no exception; and therefore the removal of

the diabolical nature is indispensable to him and to us, since we are all the posterity of Adam, and the inheritors of his corruption. How can any, in any age, enjoy an infinite holy God, without being changed from their impurity?

Prop. 4. Hence it follows, that it is so necessary, that it is not conceivable by any man in his right wits how God can make any man happy without it. It is not for us, poor shallow creatures, to dispute what God can, and what God cannot do; what God may do by his absolute power. But yet it seems a contradiction, and it is not intelligible by us how God can make a man happy without regeneration.

What semblance of reason can be given that any one who is a slave of Satan, a child of wrath by nature, can be made the son and friend of God, without an expulsion of that nature which rendered him criminal, and restoring that in some degree which renders him innocent?

Without habitual grace, sin is not taken away; and as long as a man remains under sin, how he can be capable of and communion with God I understand not; for he cannot be at one and the same time under God's greatest wrath and his highest love. How is it possible that one can have an enjoyment of eternal life, who has nothing in him but a relation to eternal death?

God made man's nature fit for his communion; man made himself unfit by guilt and filth. This unfitness must be removed by regeneration before this privilege man had by creation can be restored. Not that this restored righteousness is the cause of our communion with God in happiness, but a necessary requisite to it. No doubt but God might have restored this righteousness without admitting man to a converse with him, if there had been no covenant made to that purpose. That God may give grace without glory, is intelligible; but to admit a man to communion with him in glory, without grace, is not intelligible.

(1.) It is not agreeable to God's holiness to make any an inhabitant of heaven, and converse freely with him in a way of intimate love, without such a qualification of grace: Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loves righteousness; his countenance does behold the upright.' He must, therefore, hate iniquity, and cannot love an unrighteous nature because of his love to righteousness; 'his countenance beholds the upright,' he looks upon him with a smiling eye, and therefore he cannot favourably look upon an unrighteous person, so that this necessity is not founded only in the command of God that we should be renewed, but in the very nature of the thing, because God, in regard of his holiness, cannot converse with an impure creature. God must change his nature, or the sinner's nature must be changed. There can be no friendly communion between two of different natures without the change of one of them into the likeness of the other. Wolves and sheep, darkness and light, can never agree. God cannot love a sinner as a sinner, because he hates impurity by a necessity of nature as well as a choice of will. It is as impossible for him to love it as to cease to be holy.

This change cannot be then on God's part; it must therefore be on man's part. It must therefore be by grace, whereby the sinner may be made fit for converse with God, since God cannot embrace a sinner in his dearest affections without a quality in the sinner suitable to himself. All converse is founded upon a likeness in nature and disposition; it is by grace only that the sinner is made capable of converse with God.

(2.) It is not agreeable to God's wisdom. Is it congruous to the wisdom of God to let a man be his child and the child of the devil at the same time? Is it fit to admit him to the relation of a son of God, who retains the enmity of his nature against God, to make any man happy with the dishonour of his laws, since he is not subject to the law of God, neither will be: one that cannot bear him, but abhors his honour and the apprehensions of his holiness?

Man naturally has risings of heart against God, looks upon him under some dreadful notion, has an utter aversion from him; alienation and enmity are inseparable: Col. i. 21, 'You who were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds.' It does not consist with the wisdom of God to make any man happy against his will; God therefore first changes the temper of the will by his powerful grace, thereby making him willing, and by degrees fitting him for happiness with him.

It is not fit corruption should inherit incorruption, or impurity be admitted to an undefiled inheritance, and therefore God brings none thither which are not first begotten by him to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: 1 Peter i. 3, 4, 'Which according to his mercy has begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.' It cannot be honourable for the wisdom of God to give a right to eternal life to one that continues a child of the devil, and bestow his love upon one that resolves to give his own heart to sin and Satan.

This which I have now discoursed is founded upon men's natural notions in their right reason. But if we look into the Scripture it is certain there is no other way but this: a man without a new birth can have no right to happiness by any covenant of God, by any truth of God, by any purchase of Christ. God never promised happiness without it. Christ never purchased it for any one without a new nature. No example is there extant of any person God has made happy without this alteration, nor in the strictest inquiries can we conceive any other way possible; therefore if there be any one present that has hopes to enjoy everlasting happiness without regeneration, he expects that which God never yet bestowed upon any, and which, according to our understanding, God cannot, without wrong to his holiness and wisdom, confer upon any person. I beseech you, therefore, let none of you build your hopes upon such

vain foundations; you must be holy, or you shall never see God to your comfort.

Prop. 5. It is so necessary, that the coming and sufferings of our Lord and Saviour would seem insignificant without it. That this regeneration was a main end of his coming, is evident by his making this one of the main doctrines he was, as a prophet and teacher, sent from God to make known to the world, it being the first he taught Nicodemus. Jesus Christ came to glorify God, and to glorify himself in redeeming a people. And what glory can we conceive God has, what glory can Christ have, if there be no characteristical difference between his people and the world? And what difference can there be but in a change of nature and temper, as the foundation whence all other differences do result? Sheep and goats differ in nature.

The righteousness which is given through our Mediator is the same, in the essentials and respects it bears to God, as we had at first. And his threefold office of king, priest, and prophet, is in order to it: his priestly, to reconcile and bring us to God; his prophetic, to teach us the way; and his kingly, to work in us those qualifications, and bestow that comely garb upon us that was necessary to fit us for our former converse. Our second Adam would not be like the first, if he failed in this great work of conveying his righteous nature to us, as Adam was to convey his original righteousness to his posterity. As that was to be conveyed by carnal generation, so the righteous nature of the second Adam in to be transmitted to us by spiritual regeneration. In this respect renewed men are called his seed, and counted to him for a generation, as Ps. xxii. 30, 'A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord ("la'adonai") for a generation,' to Christ, it shall be accounted as much the generation of Christ as the rest are the generation of Adam, as if they had proceeded out of his loins, as mankind did out of Adam's. As God looks upon believers as righteous through the righteousness of Christ as if it were their own, so he accounts them as if they were the generation of Jesus Christ himself.

(1.) Christ came to save from sin. Salvation from sin was more his work than barely salvation from hell: Mat. i. 21, 'He shall save his people from their sins.' From sin as the cause, from hell as the consequent. If from sin, was it only from the guilt of sin, and to leave the sinful nature unchanged? Was it only to take off punishment, and not to prepare for glory? It would have been then but the moiety of redemption, and not honourable for so great a Saviour. Can you imagine that the death of Jesus Christ, being necessary for the recovery of a sinner, was appointed for an incomplete work, to remit man's sin and continue the insolence of his nature against God? It was not his end only to save us from wrath to come, but to save us from the procuring cause of that wrath; not forcibly and violently to save us, but in methods congruous to the honour of God's wisdom and holiness, and therefore to purify us: Tit. ii. 14, 'To redeem us from all iniquity,' all parts of it, 'by purifying unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' that we might have a holy nature, whereby we might perform holy actions, and be as zealous of good works and the honour of God, as we had been of bad works and to bring dishonour to him.

It was also the end of his resurrection to 'quicken us to a newness of life,' Col. ii. 12, 18, Eph. ii. 5, 6. If any man without a new nature could set foot into heaven, a great intendment of the death and resurrection of Christ would be insignificant.

Christ came to take away sin, the guilt by his death, the filth by his Spirit, given us as the purchase of that death. In taking away sin he takes away also the sinful nature.

(2.) Christ came to destroy the works of the devil: 1 John iii. 8, 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' These works are two, sin, and the misery consequent upon it. Upon the destruction of sin necessarily follows the dissolution of the other which was knit with it. If the sinful nature were not taken away, the devil's works would not wholly be destroyed; or if the sinful nature were taken away, and a righteous

nature not planted in the stead of it, he would still have his ends against God in depriving God of the glory he ought to have from the creature. And the creature could not give God the glory he was designed by his creation to return, unless some nature were implanted in him whereby he might be enabled to do it.

Would it, then, be for the honour of this great Redeemer to come short of his end against Satan, to let all the trophies of Satan remain, in the errors of the understanding, perversity of the will, disorder of the affections, and confusion of the whole soul? Or if our Saviour had only removed these, how had the works of the devil been destroyed if we had lain open to his assaults, and been liable the next moment to be brought into the same condition, which surely would have been, were not a righteous and divine nature bestowed upon the creature.

(3.) Christ came to bring us to God: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' Was it to bring us to God with all our pollutions, which were the cause God cast us off? No; but to bring us in such a garb as that we might be fit to converse with him. Can we be so without a new nature and a spiritual likeness to God? Would that man who would bring another to a prince to introduce him into favour, bring him into his presence in a slovenly and sordid habit, such a garb which he knew was hateful to the prince? Neither will our Saviour, nor can he bring sinners in such a plight to God, because it is more contrary to the nature of God's holiness to have communion with such, than it is contrary to the nature of light to have communion with darkness, 1 John i. 5-7. Can it be thought that Christ should come to set human nature right with God, without a change of that principle which caused the first revolt from God? Besides, since the coming of Christ was to please God, and to glorify him in all his attributes, as well as to save us, how can God be pleased with the effects of Christ's death, if he brought the creature to him without any change of nature, but with its former enmity and pollution? Will you say his mercy would be glorified? How can that be without a wrong to his purity, and a provocation to his justice? Suppose such a dispute were in God,

would not holiness, wisdom, justice, joined together, over-vote mercy?

But since there can be no such dispute, how can we conceive that mercy, an infinite perfection in God, can desire anything to the prejudice of the honour of his holiness, justice, and wisdom?

Well, then, if we expect happiness without a renewed nature, we would make Christ a minister of sin as well as of righteousness, Gal. ii. 17, &c. As there is a justification by him, so his intent was to plant a living principle in us, whereby we might be enabled to live to him. It is in vain, then, to think to find any benefit by the death of Christ without a new nature, any more than from God without it.

Prop. 6. The end of the Spirit's coming manifests it to be necessary. We are said therefore to be 'saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,' Titus iii. 5, 2 Thess. ii. 13. As God by his Spirit, moving upon the face of the waters, created the world, so God by his Spirit, moving upon the face of the soul, new creates all the faculties of it. Can the coming of Christ, and the coming of the Spirit, the most signal favours of God to mankind, be intended for no other end than to convey to us the mercy of God, with the dishonour of his holiness, to change our misery without changing our nature, and putting us in a capacity both to glorify God and enjoy him? To what purpose does the Spirit come, if not to renew? Whatsoever was the office of the Spirit, cannot be supposed to be exercised without this foundation. Can there be any seal of the Spirit without some impression made upon the soul like to the Spirit, which is the seal whereby we are sealed? Can he witness to us that we are the children of God, if there be no principle in us suitable to God as a father, no childlike frame? Is the Spirit only to bring things to remembrance for a bare speculation, without any operative effect? Is he to help us in prayer? How can that be, without giving us first a sense of what we need, and a praying heart? And how can we have a praying heart till our natures, so averse from God and his worship, be changed? He is a 'quickening Spirit,' 2 Cor. iii. 6, 'the Spirit gives life.' How can that

be while we lie rotting in our former death? It is a 'Spirit of holiness.' Can he dwell in a soul that has an unholy nature? Though he find men so at his first coming, would he not quickly be weary of his house if it continued so? He comes to change our old nature, not to encourage it. What fruits of the Spirit could appear without the change of the nature of the soil?

Prop. 7. From all this it follows that this new birth is necessary in every part of the soul. There is not a faculty but is corrupted, and therefore not a faculty but must be restored. Not a wheel, not a pin in all this clock of the heart but is out of frame, not one part wherein sin and Satan have not left the marks of their feet: Titus i. 15, 'Their mind and conscience is defiled.' It is clearer to a regenerate soul that it is so, since by the light of grace he discerns a filth in every faculty. The more knowledge of God he has, the more he discovers his ignorance; the more love to God, the more he finds and is ashamed of his enmity. And though in our imperfect regeneration here, grace and sin are in every part of the soul, as wine and water mingled together are in every part of the vessel, yet every faculty is in part renewed; and grace and sin lie not so huddled together but that the soul can distinguish them, and be able to say, this is grace, this is part of the new Adam, and this is sin, and part of the old Adam in me.

Because there was an universal depravation by the fall, regeneration must answer it in its extensiveness in every faculty. Otherwise it is not the birth of the man, but of one part only. It is but a new piece, not a new creature. This or that faculty may be said to be new, not the soul, not the man. We are all over bemired by the puddle of sin, and we must be all over washed by the water of grace. A whole sanctification is the proper fruit of reconciliation: 2 Thess. v. 23, 'The God of peace sanctify you wholly.' Reconciliation was of the whole man, so must regeneration. Sin has rooted itself in every part; ignorance and error in our understandings; pride, and self-love, and enmity in our wills; all must be uprooted by a new grace, and the triumphs of sin spoiled by a new birth.

Prop. 8. It is so necessary, that even the dim eye of natural reason has been apprehensive of some need of it. And, therefore, it is a wonder that there should be a need of pressing it upon men under the light of the gospel. Those doctrines that are purely intellectual and supernatural, are not so easily apprehended by men, as having no footing in reason, whereby reason is rendered unpliant to consent to them. But those doctrines that tend to the reformation of man carry a greater conviction, as having some notion of a depravation, which gives them some countenance in the minds of men, though not in their affection. Men cannot conceive any notion of God's greatness, majesty, and holiness, but they must also conceive something necessary to an enjoyment of him (wherein their felicity consists), besides those natural principles which they find in themselves. Natural reason must needs assent to this, that there must be some other complexion of the soul to fit us for a converse with so pure a majesty. The wiser sort of heathens did see themselves out of frame; the tumult and disorder in their faculties could not but be sensible to them. They found the flights of their souls too weak for their vast desires. They acknowledged the wings of it to be clipped, and that they never came so out of the hands of God. That therefore there was a necessity of some restorative above the art of man to complete the work. And I think I have read of one of them that should say, That there could not be a reformation unless God would take flesh. They had 'the work of the law written in their hearts,' Rom. ii. 15. They knew such works were to be done; they found themselves unable to do them. Whence would follow that there must be some other principle to enable them than what they had by nature. To this purpose they invented their purgative virtues; and by those and other means hoped to arrive to an "homoiosis toi theoi", which they much talked of as necessary to a converse with God. As they were sensible of their guilt, and therefore had sacrifices for the expiation of that, so they were sensible of their filth, and had their purifications and washings for the cleansing of that. Hence it was that they admired those men that acted in a higher sphere of moral virtue and moderation than others. Some of them have acknowledged the malady, but despaired of a remedy, judging it

above the power of nature to cure. Certainly that which the wisest heathens, in the darkness of nature, without knowledge either of law or gospel, have counted necessary; and since it is seconded by so plain a declaration of our Saviour, must be indisputably necessary. Plato in several places says, That there was a certain divine principle in our minds at first, but that it was abolished, and God would again renew and form the soul with a kind of divinity.

How vain then are men, how inexcusably foolish, to neglect both the light of the gospel and that of reason too; that spend not one hour, one minute, in a serious consideration of it and enquiry after it; in slighting their own reason as well as the express declaration of Jesus Christ. Oh that men were sensible of this, which is of so great concernment to them.

II. I come to show that regeneration is necessary.

1. It is necessary to a gospel state.

(1.) Nothing can exist in any state of being without a proper form. That which has not the form of a thing is not a thing of the same species. He cannot be a man that wants a rational form of a man, a soul. And how can any man be a Christian without that which does essentially constitute a Christian? We can no more be Christians without a Christian nature, than a man can be a man without human nature. Grace only gives being to a Christian, and constitutes him so: 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all.' Grace there is meant of habitual grace, because he speaks of his labour as the fruit of it. In bodily life brutes go beyond us, in the vigour of senses, greatness of strength, temperance, natural affection. In reason and moral virtues many heathens have excelled us. There is something else, then, necessary for the constitution of a Christian, and that is, Christ's living in him by a new forming of his soul by his Spirit. As the body lives by the soul, which distributes natural, vital, and animal spirits to every part

of the body, for the performance of its several functions; so the soul lives by grace, which diffuses its vigour to every part, the understanding, will, and affections.

(2.) There is no suitableness to a gospel state and government without it. In all changes of government in the world there is a change in the whole state of affairs, in those that are the instruments of government, in the principles of those that submit to the government. After the fall of man God set up a new mode of government. All judgment was committed to the Son: John v. 22, 'For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son.' Ver. 27, 'And has given him authority to execute judgment.' The whole administration of affairs is put into his hand; not excluding the Father, who still gave out his orders in the government, wherefore he says, ver. 30, 'I can of myself do nothing; as I hear, I judge.' There must be, therefore, some agreement between the frame of this government and the subjects of it. As there is a new Adam, a new covenant, a new priesthood, a new spirit; so there must be a new heart, new compacts, new offerings, new resolutions. New administrations and old services can no more be pieced together than new does and old garments. The gospel state of the church is called a new heaven and a new earth. Man is by the inclinations of his corrupt nature obedient to the law of sin. There must be a cure and change of those inclinations, to make them tend to an observance of the orders of this new government, and an hearty observation of it, 2 Cor. v. 17, 'Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new, and all things are of God' (so they were before), but now in a new manner and frame; and this is the reason rendered why every man in Christ must be a new creature.

(3.) All the subjects of this government have been brought in this way, not one excepted. Though God has chosen some that he would bless for ever under this evangelical government, yet notwithstanding the purpose of God they are in as great unfitness for this state as the worst of men, till God exerting his power fashions them to be vessels of honour to himself. It is not God's choice of any

man which puts any man into a gospel state, without the operation of the Spirit, renewing the mind and fitting him for it. All that were designed by God's eternal purpose were to be brought in by this way of the new birth, as 2 Thess. ii. 13, 'God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' And by this they were fortified against all those workings of the mystery of iniquity, against the government of Christ and the state of the gospel, which would be damnable and destructive to many; for he had spoken of that before, upon which occasion he brings this in. 'A chosen generation, a holy nation, a peculiar people,' are joined together, 1 Peter ii. 9. Peculiar they could not be, unless they had something of an intrinsic value in them above others, and a peculiar fitness for special service, and to offer spiritual sacrifices, therefore called also a royal priesthood.

(4.) The end of the particular institutions, of initiation or admission, under the two different administrations of this government, was to signify this—of circumcision under the law, and baptism under the gospel. Both signified the corruption and filthiness of nature, and the necessity of the circumcision of the heart and the purification of nature. Hence baptism is called 'the laver of regeneration,' Titus iii. 5, many understanding it of baptism. Not that these did confer this new nature in a physical way, or that it was always conferred in the administration of them, but the necessity of having this was always signified by them. Therefore one of the Jews, against the opinion of his countrymen, says absolutely, it is a madness to think that those ceremonies, under their administration, were appointed only for the purification of the body without that of the soul. And Rom. ii. 29, says the apostle, 'He is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit.' So that partaking of baptism, and being entrusted with the oracles of God, make a man no more a Christian than circumcision, &c., did make a man a Jew. He is only a Christian that has a Christian nature. The necessity of this nature was evidenced and signified both by the one and by the other.

In every state there are duties to be performed and privileges to be enjoyed. So likewise in the gospel state. Without a new birth we cannot perform the one or be capable of the other.

2. It is necessary to the performance of gospel duties.

(1.) There can be no preparation to any service without it. Man's soul at first could make a spiritual music to God, till the flesh disordered the strings, and no music can be made till the Spirit puts the instrument in tune again. In Jesus Christ we are 'created to good works,' Eph. ii. 10. Therefore no preparation can be before the new creation, no more than there was a preparation in the matter without form and void to become a world. What evangelical duties can be performed without an evangelical impression, without the forming of Christ and the doctrine of Christ in the heart, not only in the notion, but the operative and penetrating power of it? The heart must be first moulded, and cast into the frame of the doctrine of the gospel, before it can obey it, as Rom. vi. 17, 'But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you,' or, 'unto which you were delivered.' The mould wherein a thing is cast makes it fit for the operation for which it is intended. The ship that wants any material thing in its make cannot sail well, will not obey the directions of the pilot; and he that wants grace will be carried away with the breath of every sin and temptation. All the motions and railings naturally in ways of duty by other principles, cannot make an aptitude to divine services, no more than a thousand times flinging up a stone into the air can produce any natural fitness in it for such an elevation any more than it had at first, which was none at all. Where should we have any preparation? It cannot be from Adam; he died a spiritual death by his sin, and had no natural fitness for any spiritual service, and therefore cannot convey by nature more to his posterity than what he had by nature; what grace he had afterwards was bestowed upon his person, not upon the nature which was to be transmitted to his posterity.

(2.) Therefore we cannot act any evangelical service without a new nature. If we have no natural preparation, we can have no natural action. The law must be written in our hearts before it be formed into the life, Jer. xxxi. 33, 34, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' It is then, and then only, that we have a practical and affectionate knowledge of God, 'And they shall know me from the least unto the greatest.' Restoration to a supernatural life must be before there can be supernatural actions, a just nature before a just walk, as Hosea xiv. 9, 'The just shall walk in them,' that is, in the ways of God. The motion of the creature is not the cause but the effect of life. The evangelical service is not the cause of righteousness but the effect. We cannot walk in one commandment of God till the law be written in our inward parts, Ezek. xxxvi. 14. Those that have not a new heart cannot walk in God's statutes. We can never answer the terms of the covenant without a new nature. For,

[1.] No act can transcend the principle of it. There is a certainty in this rule; that the elevation of an inferior nature to the acts of a superior nature cannot be without some inward participation of that superior nature. The operation of everything follows the nature of the thing. A beast cannot act like a man without partaking of the nature of a man, nor a man act like an angel without partaking of the angelical nature. How then can a man act divinely without a participation of the divine nature? Duties of a supernatural strain, as evangelic duties are, require a supernatural frame of spirit. Nothing can exceed the bounds of its nature, for then it should exceed itself in acting. Whatsoever service, therefore, does proceed from mere nature, cannot amount to a gospel-service, because it comes not from a gospel-principle. We cannot believe without a habit of faith, nor love without a habit of love; for this only renders us able to perform such acts. Justification is necessary to our state as well as regeneration; but regeneration seems to be more necessary to our duties than the former; this principally to the performance of them, the other to the acceptance of them.

[2.] The nature does always tincture the fruit of it. Our Saviour, by his interrogation, implies an impossibility that those that are evil should speak good things: Mat. xii. 84, 'O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.' The very hissings of a viper proceed from the malice of its nature. As the root is, so is all the fruit. From one seed many grains arise, yet all partake of the nature of that seed. Streams partake of the quality of the fountain. If the seed, root, and fountain be good, so is what-soever springs from them. There is not one righteous man by nature, neither Jew nor Gentile, all are concluded under sin: Rom. iii. 10, 'There is none righteous, no, not one;' none that 'understands and seeks God,' &c. He adds *not one* twice; he exempts none, not one righteous by nature, not one righteous action by nature: 'none that does good, no, not one.' He applies it to all mankind. A poisonous nature can produce nothing but poisonous fruit. Our actions smell as rank as nature itself. Whatsoever rises from thence, though never so spacious and well-coloured, is evil and unprofitable. If, therefore, we would produce good fruit, we must have a new root, seed, and spring. Our sour nature must be changed into a sweetness and purity. If the vine be empty, the fruit will be so too: Hosea x. 1, 'Ephraim is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit to himself,' or, 'equal to himself,' "yeshaweh". Unless the tree be good, the fruit can never be generous: Mat. vii. 17, 18, 'Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.' We must have the Spirit before we can bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. All good services are related to this, as effects to their cause; so that what a man does by an act of reason, and natural conscience, and good education, if his understanding and conscience remain wholly under their natural pollution, the service is not good, because the soul is corrupt; much less are those services good which are the fruit only of humour. How the soul can be habitually sinful, and yet the acts flowing from it be good, is not easily conceivable; it is against the stream of natural observation. It is true, indeed, that a man that is habituated to one kind of sin may do an action that receives no tincture from that particular habit, because it does not proceed from it; as a drunkard gives an alms, his giving alms has no infection

inherent from that particular habit of drunkenness, but from the nature, which is wholly corrupt, it has. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one,' Job xiv. 4. Who can bring a clean service out of a miry heart? Not one man in the world. We cannot, therefore, perform any evangelical service if those foundations be considered.

Not spiritually, because we are flesh. God must be 'worshipped in spirit,' John iv. 44; in a spiritual manner, with spiritual frames. The apostle speaks of 'walking in the spirit,' Phil. iii. 3, and 'praying in the Holy Ghost,' Jude 20. None can act spiritually but those that are 'born of the Spirit;' and no action is spiritual but what proceeds from a renewed principle. The most glittering and refined flesh is but flesh in a higher sphere of flesh, therefore whatsoever springs up from that principle is fleshly, upon the former foundation, that nothing can rise higher than its nature. You may as well expect to gather grapes of thorns as spiritual duties from carnal hearts: Mat. vii. 16, 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' If a natural man 'cannot receive,' and 'cannot know the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned,' 1 Cor. ii. 14, how should he perform the duties belonging to God, since they are spiritually to be performed? We are naturally more averse to motions upon our wills than to the illuminations of our minds. An appetite for knowledge, and a flight from God being both the fruits of Adam's fall, who was both curious to know, as God, and fearing to approach to God after his fall. There may be some services in natural men which may look like spiritual, but in the principle they are not so. Many acts are done by irrational creatures which look like rational acts. As the order among bees, like the acts of statesmen regulating a commonwealth; their carrying gravel in their fangs to poise them in a storm, and hinder them from being carried away by the violence of the wind; yet these are not rational acts, because they proceed not from reason, but from a natural instinct put into them by Gods the supreme governor. So that as no action of an ape, though like the action of a man, can be said to be a human act, so no action of an unregenerate man, though like a spiritual action, can be called spiritual, because it proceeds not from a spiritual principle, but from a contrary one paramount in him. And

all actions have their true denomination from the principle whence they flow. They may be fruits of morality, and fruits of conscience, but not spiritual fruits, which God requires.

Well, then, we must be first built up 'a spiritual house,' we must be a 'priesthood' before we can 'offer spiritual sacrifice,' 1 Peter ii. 5. We must have the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost in us before we can have a tincture of the Holy Ghost upon our services. In all human acts, we should act as rational creatures; in all religious acts, as spiritual creatures. Now, as a man cannot act rationally without reason, so neither can we act spiritually without a divine spirit in us. We are indeed to serve God, and worship him as men: therefore rational acts are due to God in worship, and we are constituted in the rank of rational beings to that purpose. But since our minds are defiled, they must be purified; since our understandings are darkened, they must be enlightened. There must be a grace infused, a lamp set up, a spiritual awakening, and invigorating our reasons and wills, before we can worship God as God in a spiritual manner.

We cannot perform any evangelical service, vitally, because we are dead. Our services must be living services, if in any wise they be suitable to a living God. The apostle wishes us, Rom. xii. 1, to 'present our bodies a living sacrifice.' He does not mean only our bodies, consisting of flesh and bones, or a natural life; but he names the body as being the instrument of motion and service, or it may be *synecdoche partis pro toto*, a part for the whole. Present yourselves as a sacrifice consecrated to God, and living to him, and as living by him.

Upon the loss of original righteousness, another form or principle was introduced, called in Scripture flesh, and a body of death. Hence by nature we are said to be dead, Eph. ii. 1, and all our works before repentance are dead works, Heb. vi. 1. And these works have no true beauty in them, with whatsoever gloss they may appear to a natural eye. A dead body may have something of the features and beauty of a living, but it is but the beauty of a carcass, not of a man. A statue, by

the stonecutter's art, and the painter's skill, may be made very comely, yet it is but a statue still; where is the life? Such services are but the works of art, as flowers painted on the wall with curious colours, but where is the vegetative principle? Since man, therefore, is spiritually dead, he cannot perform a living service. As a natural death does incapacitate for natural actions, so a spiritual death must incapacitate for spiritual actions. Otherwise, in what sense can it be called a death, if a man in a state of nature were as capable of performing spiritual actions as one in a state of grace? No vital act can be exercised without a vital principle. As Adam could not stir to perform any action, though his body was framed and perfected, till God breathed into him a living soul, so neither can we stir spiritually till God breathe into us a living grace. Spiritual motions can no more be without a spiritual life than bodily motions can be without an enlivening soul. 'The living, the living, they shall praise thee,' and Ps. lxxx. 18, 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.' There can be no living praise, nor no living prayer, without a renewed heart. If it be one effect of the blood of Christ to 'purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God,' as Heb. ix. 14, then it is clear that till our consciences are purged from dead works we cannot serve the living God, for what suitableness can there be between a living God and dead services? Is a putrefied rank carcass a fit present for a king? or a man full of running sores and boils over his whole body fit to serve in a prince's chamber? Our best services, without a new nature, though they may appear varnished and glittering to man, yet in the sight of God they have no life, no substance, but stinking rotten dust, because coming from a dead and rotten heart.

Well, then, we must be born again; it is not a dead nature, nor a dead faith, can produce living fruit for God. We may as well read without eyes, walk without legs, act without life, as perform any service to God without a new nature; no, we cannot perform the least: a dead man can no more move his finger than his whole body.

Not graciously, because we are corrupt. By the same reason that we are to speak with grace, Col. iv. 6, and to sing with grace in our hearts

to the Lord, Col. iii. 16, we are to do every other duty with an exercise of grace to God: and without grace, our praises are but hollowings, our prayers but howlings, as the Scripture terms them: Hosea vii. 14, 'They have not cried to me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds.' How can there be an exercise of that which is not? The skill of the musician cannot discover itself till the instrument be made tuneable. The heart must be strung with grace by the Spirit, before that Spirit can touch the strings to make harmony to God in a gospel service. Our tempers must be changed, our hearts fitted, before he can make melody to God. The principal beauty and glory of a duty lies in the internal workings of the heart; and how can that heart work graciously, that has nothing of God and his grace in it? It is said, 'Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,' Prov. xxii. 15. So is corruption in the heart of a man, like poison in a bundle of stuff; it is entered into the very composition of us. A law of sin is predominant in a natural man, Rom. vii. 9, 3, which does influence all his actions. Strong habits will interest themselves in all we go about, and all a man's services are regulated by it, for he has no other law in his mind to check the motions of it, and to scent his duties, whereby they may carry a pleasing savour to God. The gift of prophecy, the understanding of mysteries, the depth of knowledge, the removing mountains, bestowing alms, dying for religion, are brave and noble acts, but without charity, love to God, without which, no other grace can work, all these profit nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3. There is a moral goodness in feeding the poor, but no gracious goodness without charity. A little of this would make those, as a diamond does gold wherein it is set, more valuable. If all those profit nothing without this grace of charity, they would profit much with it. How does grace alter the very nature of services? Those acts which are sensitive in a brute, were he transformed into a man, and endued with reason, would become rational. Those actions which are but moral in a mere man, when changed into Christian, become evangelical; they would be of another nature and another value.

Well, then, look after the new birth, since it is so necessary. There cannot be gracious practices without gracious principles. Can

anything fly to heaven without wings? We are to walk as Christ walked; how can we do it without a principle of kin to that which Christ had? We are bound to act from a principle of righteousness; Adam was, and his posterity are; and should we not look after that which is so necessary a perfection, requisite for our services? No doubt but the devil could find matter enough for prayer, and from the excellency of his knowledge, frame some rare strains, as some word it; but would it be a service which came from such a nature? As long as we are allied to him in our nature, our services will be of as little value. He transforms himself into an angel of light, but is still a devil; and many men do so in their religious acts, yet still remain unregenerate.

Not freely and voluntarily, because we are at enmity. A natural man's services are forced, not free. The aversion of our natures from God is as strong as their inclination to evil. We have no fervent desires to love God, and therefore no desires to do anything out of affection to him. When sensual habits are planted in the soul, there is an enmity to God in the mind: it will not be 'subject to the law of God,' Rom. viii., and whilst that habit sways, it cannot. This inclination to sin, and consequently aversion to good, is incorporated in nature, like blackness in a black person, or spots in a leopard; they are accustomed to sin, and cannot do good, Jer. xiii. 23. There is no agreeableness between God and man's soul, whilst there is a friendship between the heart and sin; he affects the one, and is disgusted with the other: one is his pleasure, the other his trouble; he has no will, no heart to come to God in any service, and when he does, he is rather dragged, than sweetly drawn. The things of God are against the bent of a natural heart; there is nothing so irksome as the most spiritual service; when men engage in them, they row against the stream of nature itself. There must, therefore, be something of a contrary efficacy to overpower this violent tide, a law of grace to renew the mind and turn the motions of the will, to another channel. Restraining grace may for a while stop the current, but not turn and change the natural course. A carnal mind conceits the things of God and his spiritual service to be foolishness, and therefore contemns

them, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. The eye of the mind must be opened to discern the wisdom of God in them, before he can affect them. The heart should be lifted up in the evangelical ways of God. Can mere flesh be thus? Force can never change nature. You may hurl lead up into the air, but it will never ascend of itself while it is lead, unless it be ratified into air or fire. Keep up iron many years in the air by the force of a loadstone, it will retain its tendency to fall to the earth if the obstacle be removed; the natural gravity is suspended, not altered. Till the nature of the will be altered, it can never move freely to any duty; there must be a power to will, before there is a will to do, as Philip. ii. 13, 'It is God which works in you both to will and to do.' A supernatural renewing grace must expel corrupt habits from the will, and reduce it to its true object. When faith is planted, it brings love to work by; when the soul is renewed, there is an harmony between God and the heart, between the mind and the word, between the will and the duty; when the appetite and true taste of the soul is restored in regeneration, then spring up strong desires to apply itself to every holy service: 1 Peter ii. 2, 3, 'The sincere milk of the word' is fervently desired, after it is spiritually tasted.

Well, then, there must be a change in us, or in the law. The law is spiritual, man is carnal, Rom. vii. 14. The law can have no friendship for man, nor man no friendship for the law in this state, since their natures are so contrary. What the law commands is disgusting to the flesh, what the flesh desires is displeasing to the law. There must then be a change; the law must become carnal, or man become spiritual, before any agreement can be between them. Where do you think this change must light? It can never be in the law, therefore it must be in man. The wound, in our wills must be cured; the tide of nature, that never carries us to God, must be turned, and altered by a stream of grace, to move us to him and his service. Man has been a slave to his lust by the loss of grace, and is never like to be restored to his liberty in the service of God, till he be repossessed of that grace, the loss of which brought him into slavery. The gospel is a 'law of liberty,' James i. 25; a servile spirit does not suit a free law, neither is it a fit frame for an evangelical service.

Nor delightfully. We can never perform spiritual services with delight, because we are alienated. This we are to do. Paul 'delighted in the law of God,' Rom. vii. 22; and the law was the 'delights' of David, Ps. cxix. 92; his whole pleasure run in this channel. Now, because of that aversion to God, there is no will and freedom in his service, much less can there be a delight. A corrupt nature can have no divine strains; a diseased man has no delight in his own acts, his distemper makes his very motion unpleasant to him. Things that are not natural can never be delightful. There is a mighty distance between spiritual duties and a carnal heart. Things out of their place can never be at rest. Sin is as much a natural man's element as water to a fish or air to a bird; if he be stopped in the ways of the flesh, he is restless till he return. He may indeed have some delight sometimes in a service—not as it respects God as the object, or God as the end, there is no such friendship in a natural man's heart to him—but there is an agreement between a service and some carnal end he performs it for. His delight is not terminated in the service, but in self-love, self-interest, or some external reward, anchored in it by some hopes of carnal advantage, not springing from a living love or a gracious affection to God. He has no knowledge of God, and therefore can have no delight in God or in his service. It is impossible we can come before him without pleasure and delight, if we know how amiable he is in his person, and how gracious in his nature; but we naturally think God a hard master, and man having no delight in God, he can have none in those means which lead him to God, and as they are appointed to bring God and his soul together. He has wrong notions of duties, looks upon them as drudgeries, not as advantages: Mal. i. 13, 'Ye said, Behold, what a weariness it is,' &c. Without a change of nature, we cannot desire communion with God, and therefore cannot delight in the means of it. We can no more do any service cheerfully than the saints without it could 'receive joyfully the spoiling of their goods,' Heb. x. 34. We can never be in a holy ecstasy without this inward principle, to make the gospel services connatural to us. This only makes high impressions upon the soul. It is the law within our hearts, which only makes us delight to do his will: Ps. xl. 8, 'Thy law is within my heart,' in my bowels. He had a natural affection to it,

and then a high delight in it. It made our Saviour delight to do his work; and it was the inward man of the heart, wherein the apostle's delight in the law was placed. Unless we have a divine impression of God upon us, we cannot hear his word with any joy in it; as our Saviour says, John viii. 47, 'Ye therefore hear them not,' that is, the words of God, 'because you are not of God.' Unless we have God's light and his truth sent forth into us, we can never make God our exceeding joy, or go to his altar with such a frame, Ps. xliii. 3, 4.

Well, then, there is a necessity of the new nature, to have a warm frame of heart in evangelical duties. What is connatural to us is only delightful. So much of weariness and bondage we have in any holy service, so much of a legal frame; so much of love and delight, so much we have of a new covenant grace. A spirit of adoption and regeneration only can make us delight to come to our father, and to cry Abba to him.

Without regeneration we cannot perform evangelical duties sincerely, because we are a lie, and in our best estate vanity. We must worship God 'in truth' as well as 'spirit,' John iv. 24. God is a Spirit, and therefore must be worshipped in spirit. God is truth, and therefore must be worshipped in truth. Without a new nature we cannot worship God in truth. The old nature is in itself a lie, a mere falsity, something contrary to that nature God created. It was first introduced by a lie of the devil 'ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,' Gen. iii. 5), and thereupon a fancy that God lied in his command. How can we serve God with this nature, which had nothing but a lie for its foundation,—a lie of the devil, a lie in our fancy? Therefore our old nature is no better than a lie. How can we serve God with that nature which is quite another thing to that of his framing? Man in his fall is a liar: Rom. iii. 4, 'Let God be true, and every man a liar,' a covenant-breaker, that kept not his faith with God. God, in respect of truth, and man, in respect of lying, are set in opposition by the apostle there. No man but would slight and scorn that service from another, which he knew to be a lying service in the very frame of it. There is no truth can be in any service which is

founded only upon an old nature, and performed by one that is acted by the father of lies; and so is every unregenerate man, every 'child of disobedience,' Eph. ii. 2.

Now, sincerity cannot be without a new nature,

(1.) Because there are no divine motives which should sway the soul. Most services of natural men have such dirty springs, so unsuitable to that raised temper men should have in dealing with God, that they produce sacrifices not fit to be offered to an earthly governor: Mal. i. 8, 'If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil?' &c., 'offer it now unto thy governor will he be pleased with thee?' Had they had divine motives, they had never brought such sickly services. What was not fit for themselves, they thought fit for God. Did but princes know what motives many had in their services they would with as much scorn reject them as they do ignorantly receive them with affection. But it is otherwise with God, who knows all the springs and wards in that lock of the heart of his own framing. Do not most services take their rise from custom, or from an outward religious education barely, or at best from natural conscience, which though it be all in a man, which takes God's part, yet it is flesh, and defiled? And what pure vapours can be expected from a lake of Sodom? Titus i. 15, 'To them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.' The mind, which is the repository of natural light, and the conscience, which is the advocate of natural light, and applies it upon particular occasion, are defiled, and that in every unbelieving person. Can the motives which conscience takes from a dark and defiled principle, as the mind is, be divine? It is fear of death, wrath, and judgment which it mostly applies. These are the motives of defilement. Fear is the natural consequence of pollution; without sin and corruption we never had had any fear of hell. That cannot be gracious which springs naturally from the commission of sin, and can this be divine? Were there no punishment feared, there should be no duty performed. Conscience has naturally no basis to stand upon but this. What is the principle of his fear? Self. It is not therefore obedience to God, but self-preservation, says a man. Fear is

but a servile disposition, and therefore cannot make a service good. All such extrinsic motives which arise not from a new life, are no more divine than the weights of a clock may be said to have life because they set the wheels on running. The same action may be done by several persons upon different principles and motives, for which one may be rewarded, the other not, as Mat. x. 41, 42, 'He that receives a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' One may receive a member of Christ out of respect to Christ and the relation the person has to him, another man receive the same person out of a common principle of humanity, the action is the same, the good redounding to the object is the same; nay, it may be greater in him that acts from a commiseration of him, as a man, than a cup of cold water from the other, because his ability is greater; but the inward respect to the object is different. One respects him as a man of the same nature with himself in misery, the other respects him as a member of Christ in misery; one respects him as a man, the other as a righteous man. The principle is different: one relieves him out of a natural compassion, common to a heathen with him, the other out of a Christian affection to his Head. The actions are therefore different, because of their motives: one is rewardable, and promised to be rewarded, the other not; one may be from grace— I do not say it always is, unless there be a constant tenor of such motives in our actions, for a natural man, under the preaching of the gospel, may do such a thing out of a present and transient respect to Christ, whom he hears so often of, and has some presumption to be saved by, but it is not his constant frame—I say, one may be from grace, the other from nature.

Therefore from hence results a necessity of the alteration of the frame of our souls, to furnish us with divine and heavenly motives for our actions. A man may do a thing by nature from a good principle, a principle of common honesty, good in its kind (brass is good in its kind, but not so good as silver), but not evangelically

good, without a renewed affection to God: John xiv. 15, 'If you love me, keep my commandments;' keep what I command you, out of affection to me. Where 'the imagination of the heart is evil, and only evil, and that continually,' Gen. vi. 5, all the service a man in that state performs rises from this spring, and has some infectious imagination in it, highly abominable to God; either wrong notions of God in it, or wrong notions of the duty, or corrupt motives, something or other of the evil imagination of the heart, mixes itself with it.

(2.) Without a renewed nature, as there are no divine motives, so there can be no divine ends. We are bound to refer our natural actions, much more our religious services, to the glory of God. The end is the moral principle of every action. It is that which confers a goodness or badness upon the service: Luke xi. 34, 'If the eye be evil, the whole body is full of darkness' (this is commonly understood of a man's aim). If the intention be evil, there is nothing but darkness in the whole service. The perfection of everything consists in answering the end for which it was framed. That which Jonas the first end of our framing, ought to be the end of our acting, viz. the glory of God. But man has taken himself off from this end, and has been fond of making himself his chief good and ultimate end. Men naturally have corrupt ends in good duties. Pride is the cause of some men's virtue. And they are spiritually vicious in avoiding crimes, because they intrench too much upon their reputation. The pharisees made their devotion contribute to their ambition: Mat. vi. 5, 'They pray to be seen of men,' and Mat. xxiii. 5, 'But all their works they do to be seen of men.' Not one work wherein they had not respect to this. Their works might well be called the works of the devil, whose main business it was to set up pride and self. All their pretences of devotion to God, were but the adoration of some golden image. Have not many in their more splendid actions, the same end with brutes: the satisfaction of the sensitive part, covetousness, pride, emulation, sense of honour, qualities perceivable in the very brutes, as the end of some of their actions? The acting for a sensitive end is not suitable to a rational, much less can it be the end of a gracious creature. Have

not men sinful ends in their religious services? in their prayers to God, , in their acknowledgements of God? The devil could entreat our Saviour's leave to go into the herd of swine. Was this a prayer, though directed to Christ, when his end was to destroy and satisfy his malice in it? At best, a man without grace is like a picture in a room which eyes all, and has no more respect to a prince than his attendants. A natural man's respect to God is but equal to a respect to all his other worldly concerns. Indeed it were well if it were so. He parcels out one part for God, one part for himself, and one part for the world, but God has the least share, or at best, no more than the rest. And truly, as a picture cannot give a greater respect, to fix its eyes more upon a prince than a peasant, because it has no life; so neither can a natural man pay a supreme respect to God in his service, without a spiritual life. There is a necessity then of removing those depraved ends, that man may answer the true end of his creation. The principles then upon which such ends do grow, contrary to the will of God, must be rooted out, that the soul may move purely to God in every service. We are come short of the glory of God: Rom. iii. 23, 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God;' short of aiming at it, short of his approbation of our acts. Being thus come short, our ends cannot rise higher than the frame of our soul. Grace, grace only can advance our wills to those supernatural ends for which they were first framed. We can never aim at the glory of God till we have an affection to him. We can never honour him supremely, whom we do not supremely love. An affection to God can never be had, till the nature, wherein the aversion is placed, be changed into another frame. We are to glorify God, as God. How can we do this without the knowledge of him? How can we know him but by the gospel, wherein he discovers himself? How can we have right conceptions of the gospel, till gospel impressions be made upon us? How can we act for the glory of God, to whom naturally we are enemies? There is none of us born with a spiritual love to God. There must be an alteration of the end and aim in us; our actions cannot else be good, though ordered by God himself. God employs Satan in some things, as in afflicting Job; but is his performance good? No, because his end is not the same with God's. He acts out of malice

what God commands out of sovereignty, and for gracious designs. Our end without it, is not the same with the end of the action; for moral acts tend to God's glory, though the agent has no such intention. So the action may be good in itself, but not good in the actor, because he wants a due end.

Well then, those actions only can be said to be evangelical, when the great end of God's glory, which was his end both in creation and redemption, has a moral influence upon every service; when we have the same end in our redeemed services, as God had in his redeeming love.

Not humbly. We cannot without regeneration perform gospel duties humbly, because of natural stoutness and hardness. Evangelical duties must be performed with humility. Self-denial is the chief gospel lesson, and is to run through the veins of every service. Therefore God speaks of giving 'a heart of flesh,' in gospel times: Ezek. xi. 19, 'I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them.' Gospel duties require a pliability and tenderness of heart. Adam's overvaluing himself, and swelling with designs of being like God, brought an incapacity upon himself of serving his creator. And man ever since, is too much aspiring and too well opinioned of himself, to perform duties in an evangelical strain, with that meltingness, that nothingness in himself, which the gospel requires. Our swelling and admiring thoughts of our own natural righteousness, hinders Christ from saving us, and ourselves from serving him. There must then be an humble, and melting, and self denying frame. The angels are said to cover their faces before God, Isa. vi. 2, as having nothing to glory in of their own. And the chief design of the gospel is to beat down all glorying in ourselves: 1 Cor. i. 29, 31, 'That no flesh should glory in his presence; let him that glories, glory in the Lord.' And indeed it humbles us no more than what, upon due consideration, will appear very necessary. Nature then must be changed before this pride be rooted out. Old things must pass away, that God may be all in all in the creature. We cannot

without a new nature make a true estimate of ourselves, and lie as vile and base in the presence of God. A stone, with all the hammering, cannot be made soft. Beat it into several pieces, you may sever the continuity of its parts, but not master its hardness; every little piece of it will retain the hardness of its nature. So it is with a heart of stone. The nature must be changed before it be fit for those services which require melting, humble, and admiring frames. There is a necessity of a residing grace, like fire, to keep the soul in a melting temper.

Not constantly. Without a new nature, we cannot perform gospel services constantly, because of our natural levity. Where the nature is flesh, the heart 'minds the things of the flesh,' Rom. viii. 5. The mind thus habituated, will not be long employed about the things of the Spirit. There is a natural levity in man's nature. Do not many seem to begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh? seem to arise to heaven, and quickly fall down to earth? Do not our very promises vanish with the next wind of temptation, and like sparks, expire as soon as they be born, unless grace be in the heart to keep them alive. The Israelites are accused of not having a heart steadfast with God: Ps. lxxviii. 37, 'Their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.' Are our natures better than theirs? Do we not all lie under the same charge; so uncertain naturally, about divine things, as if there were nothing but wind in our composition? Nothing can be kept up in motion against its nature, but by force. A top has no inward principle of motion, but is moved by some outward force. When that is removed, the motion languishes. Any motion that depends only upon outward wires, expires upon the breaking of them. When external motives, which spurred men on to this or that service, cease, the service dies of course, because the spring of the motion falls. If fear of hell, terrors of death, some pressing calamity, be the spring of any duty; when these are removed, there will be no more regard to the duty they engendered. But what is natural, is constant, because the spring always remains. Interest changes, conscience is various; and therefore the operations arising from thence, will partake of the uncertainty of thorn. Stony ground may

bring forth blades; but for want of root, they will quickly wither: Mat. xiii. 5, 20. A man may mount high in religion, by the mixture of some religious passion, as meteors in the air; but by reason of the gross and earthy parts in them, will not continue their station. There is no being without, stable, but God; and no principle stable within, but grace: Heb. xiii. 9, 'It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.' Whatsoever service is undertaken upon changeable motives, is as changeable as the bottom upon which it stands. If credit, slavish fear of God, worldly interest, inspire us with some seeming holy resolutions, they will all fly away upon the first removal of those props. There is therefore a necessity of a change of nature and disposition. Where there is no approbation of things that are excellent, there can be no constant operation about them. All action about an object, continues according to the affection to it, and delight in it. We shall then be filled with the fruits of righteousness, to the glory of God, when we have a sincere approbation of the excellency of them: Philip i. 10, 11, first, 'approve things that are excellent;' and then follows, 'without offence, till the day of Christ.' A stately profession can no more hold out against the floods of temptation, than a beautiful building can stand against the winds without a good foundation under ground. It is the Spirit of the Lord within, as well as without, can only maintain the standard against temptation, Isa. lix. 19.

Well then, upon the whole, there is a necessity of regeneration for the performance of gospel duties. We cannot else perform them spiritually, because we are flesh; nor vitally, because we are dead; nor graciously, because we are corrupt; nor voluntarily, because we are enmity; nor delightfully, because we are alienated; nor sincerely, because we are falsity; nor humbly, because of our stoutness; nor constantly, because of our levity. Our natures must be changed in all these respects, before we can be fit for any gospel service.

(2) Regeneration is necessary for the enjoyment of gospel privileges.

[1.] For the favour of God, and his complacency with us. We are not fit for God's delight, without it. That person who has his love, must have his image. If ever God could love an old nature, which he once hated, and delight in that which he once loathed, he must divest himself of his immutability. He never hated the person of any of his creatures, but for unrighteousness. And upon the removal of this cloud of separation between him and them, the beams of his love break out in their former vigour. God's love is not straitened, nor his kindness exhausted, no more than his hand is shortened, or his ear grown heavy, that he cannot hear: Isa. lix. 1, 2, 'But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.'

For, first, what did make the first separation, was it not sin? God told Adam before, what the issue would be, upon his eating the forbidden fruit: Gen. ii. 17, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' It is not a temporal death there only meant; for he should then have died that day wherein he fell, the word surely importing so much. And the punishment of a temporal death was pronounced afterwards: Gen. iii. 19, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' Thou shalt surely die; thy integrity and righteousness will expire that very moment, and thou shalt die in my just displeasure. It is a spiritual death that is most properly meant. The punishment of sin is death; the chief part of this death is an 'alienation from the life of God,' Eph. iv. 18; that is, not to have God, and the righteousness of God's image living in him; but to be impure, corrupt, a hater of God, and servant of sin. Now from this punishment no man can be freed, but by a contrary regeneration, the proper effect whereof is to love God, to know his name, to partake of his holiness, to imitate his

virtues. Man forfeited all God's favour upon his fall, and can challenge nothing of it.

Secondly, What then can restore man to God's favour? Can that which first deprived us of it? The cause of our destruction can never be the means of our restoration. Did the loss of Adam's integrity

make him unfit for paradise, the garden of God, from whence he was expelled, as a token of God's disfavour? And can the continuance of that loss be a means to regain that love which cashiered us? It was a spiritual death; and is the carcass of a soul fit for God's complacency? There must be not only a satisfaction to his justice for the reinstating man into his favour (this is done by Jesus Christ); but a restoring of his image, this is done by the Holy Ghost. It is as impossible the soul can be beautiful without life, and without holiness, as for a body to be beautiful without a good colour and proportion of parts. Take away this, beauty must cease, and deformity succeed in the place. It is impossible, therefore, that where sin remains in its full vigour, where there is nothing of an original integrity residing, but that the soul must be monstrous, vile, and deformed in the eyes of God. To make it therefore a fit object for God's favour, it is necessary it be beautified with a holy nature, and adorned with its due proportions and vigour. The righteousness of Israel must go forth as brightness; he must be called by a new name, that is, a new nature, for what is a name without a nature? And then it should be Hephzibah, 'the Lord delights in thee.' Isa. lxii. 14, 'The righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness, and the glory thereof as a lamp that burns.' Righteousness is the glory of a soul, as well as of a church: 'Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: thou shalt be called by a new name,' a new nature wrought by the word of God; 'which the mouth of the Lord shall name.' Then she should be in favour with God, 'a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a total diadem in the hand of her God.' Righteousness is the glory of a soul, and God's delight and complacency is the consequent of a righteous nature.

Thirdly, The elect themselves have no interest in God's favour of delight without it. This follows upon the former, God cannot love the very top of mankind, his own choice, with a love of complacency, without regeneration, without a righteous nature. There is a favour of intention and purpose before it; there is also an executive love in the very infusing the habits of grace, which is a supernatural favour, because there is both a purpose and then an actual conferring a

supernatural good. God is free, and may will to give his gifts how, and to whom he pleases. But an elect person, whilst he continues in a state of nature, is not simply beloved, though there be a purpose of love, because there is no gracious quality in him, which is the object of God's special favour. It is regeneration only which is the object of God's delight in us.

Fourthly, Hence will follow, that no privilege under heaven, without it, can bring us into God's favour; no, not if any man were related to Christ according to the flesh. The apostle Paul would not think the better of himself for a fleshly relation to Christ, for being of the same country, descended of the Jewish nation: 2 Cor. v. 16, 'Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' Though it be an honour to be of the same descent with Christ, according to the flesh, to be of the same nation and country, yet this does not make a man any more beloved of God. Nothing avails in Christ, but a new creature; and our Saviour himself pronounces it so. It was the highest privilege to be the mother of our Saviour, according to the flesh; yet this had been nothing, without her being born again of the Spirit: 'Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? Behold my mother and my brethren,' pointing to his disciples, Mat. xii. 48, 49. 'My mother and my brethren are those which hear the word of God, and do it,' Luke viii. 21. Those that hear the word, that have the gracious effect of the word wrought in them by the Spirit, are equal to my mother, and my brethren, and superior to any of my fleshly relations, if they be without it. There is a necessity of regeneration upon this account.

[2.] As there is no favour, so there is no union with God and Christ without it. Man has some kind of natural union with all things in the world; he has being with all creatures, rational faculties with angels, sense with animals, vegetation with plants; he wants only that with God which could beautify all the rest. And this can only be by partaking of the image of God's holiness by a new birth. There must be a capability for this union on man's part. A superior and inferior

nature man be united together, but never contrary natures. There must be some proportion between the subjects to be united, which proportion consists in a commensuration of one thing to another. What proportion is there between God and our souls? There can be none without a supernatural grace infusing a pure nature. As we come out of the quarry of nature, rough and unpolished, we are not fit to be cemented with the cornerstone in the heavenly building; we must be first smoothed and altered by grace.

First, How can things be united to one another which are already united to their contraries? Separation from one body must make way for union to another. Naturally we are united to the devil as the head of the wicked world. We are by nature his members. Our understandings and wills were united with his in Adam, when Adam gave up his understanding and will to him; and ever since he 'works in the children of disobedience', Eph. ii. 2, 'Who now works in the children of disobedience,' "enegountos en huiois". Working and working in, as a united nature to him, and principle in him. It is necessary this union should be broken before we can partake of the influence of another head. The diabolical nature and principle, therefore, which we have got by sin must be removed, and another nature, which is divine, put in the place first (in order of nature), before we can be united to Christ, and enjoy the benefits of union with him.

Secondly, How can things of a contrary nature be united together? Can fire and water be united, a good angel, and an impure devil? can heaven and hell ever meet friendly and compose one body? We are united to the first Adam by a likeness of nature; how can we be united to the second, without a likeness to him from a new principle? We were united to the first by a living soul; we must be united to the other by a quickening Spirit. We have nothing to do with the heavenly Adam, without bearing an heavenly image, 1 Cor. xv. 48, 49. We are earthly as in the first Adam; we must be heavenly to be in the second, because his nature is so. If we are his members, we must have the same nature which was communicated to him by the Spirit

of God, which is holiness. This nature must flow from the same principle, otherwise it is not the same nature; an old nature cannot be joined to a new Adam. There must be one spirit in both; as 1 Cor. vi. 17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;' and if it were an union barely of affections, as some would only make it, it is not conceivable how it can be without a change of disposition. But since it is an union by indwelling of the same Spirit in both (Rom. viii. 9, 'If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his'), it is less intelligible, how it can be without an assimilation of our nature to the nature of Christ. It can never be supposed the Spirit should unite a pure head, and impure members. Such an union would make our blessed Saviour like Nebuchadnezzar's image; an head of gold, arms of silver, and feet of clay. Shall we loathe to have nasty things about us, and will the holy Jesus endure a loathsome putrefying soul to be joined to him?

Thirdly, How can anything be vitally united to another without life? It is a vital union, by virtue of which believers are called Christ (1 Cor. xi. 12, 'As all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ'); and it is compared to the union of the members of a natural body, Rom. xii. 4, 5. Members have not only life in their head, but in themselves, because the soul, which is the life of the body, is not only in the head, but in all the parts of the body, and exercises in every part its vital operations. The Spirit therefore, which is the band of this union, communicates life to every member wherein he resides, as well as in the head. What man would endure a dead body to be joined to him, though it were the carcass of one he never so dearly loved? If a man were united to Christ, without regeneration, Christ's body would be partly alive, partly dead, if any one member of it had not a spiritual life. A dead body and a living head, a member of Christ with a nature contrary to him, is an inconceivable paradox. Did God ever design such a monstrous union for his Son?

Upon these accounts does result the necessity of regeneration; without it, no union with Christ.

(3.) There can be no justification without it. We are not justified by an inherent righteousness; yet we are not justified without it. We cannot be justified by it, because it is not commensurate to the law by reason of its imperfection; we cannot be justified without it, for it is not congruous to the wisdom and holiness of God, to count a person righteous, who has nothing of righteousness in him, and whose nature is as corrupt as the worst of men. With what respect to God's honour, can it be expected that God should pardon that man's sins, whose will is not changed who still has the same habitualness in his will to commit sin, though he does not at present act it. It is very congruous in a moral way, that the person offending should retract his sin, and return to his former affection. There is a distinction between justification and regeneration, though they never are asunder. Justification is relative; regeneration internally real. Union with Christ is the ground of both; Christ is the meritorious cause of both. The Father pronounces the one, the Spirit works the other; it is the Father's sentence, and the Spirit's work. The relative and the real change are both at the same time: 1 Cor. vi. 7, 'But you are sanctified, but you are justified;' both go together. We are not justified before faith, because we are justified by it, Rom. v. 1; and faith is the vital principle whereby we live: Gal. ii. 20, 'The life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.' It is the root-grace, and contains the seeds of all other graces in it; it is habitually and seminally all other grace; so that unless we be new born, no justification can be expected; no justification can be evidenced. God never pardons sin, but he subdues iniquity: Micah vii. 18, 19, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardons iniquity?' He will subdue our iniquities. The conquest cannot be made, while the nature, the root of the rebellion, remains. When he turns his compassion to us, he will turn away our hearts from iniquity. If a man were justified before he were regenerate, then he was righteous before he was alive; being 'in Christ,' as free from condemnation, is always attended with a 'walking after the Spirit;' and walking is not before living, Rom. viii. 1. Pardon would be unprofitable, unless he that were pardoned were made righteous inchoately here, and had a right to, and hope of, a perfect righteousness hereafter. If righteousness hereafter were not

imparted in this manner, it would be an argument a man were still under the law, which says, 'he that does them shall live in them' (which is impossible in a man that has once sinned, (though his sins are remitted). But it is clear that righteousness is imparted, since there is no man in the world whose sins are pardoned, but finds some principle in him whereby he is enabled to contest with sin more than before he was. Therefore do not deceive yourselves; there is no pardon without a righteous nature, though pardon be not given for it.

(4.) There is no adoption without regeneration. We can no more be God's sons, without spiritual regeneration, than we can be the sons and daughters of men, without natural generation. Adoption is not a mere relation without an inward form. The privilege, and the image of the sons of God, go both together. A state of adoption is never without a separation from defilement: 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18, 'Come you out from among them, be you separate, and I will be a father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters.' The new name in adoption is never given till the new creature be framed. 'As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God,' Rom. viii. 14, "houtoi", those very persons; that is the signal mark, that they are led by the Spirit; therefore first enlivened by the Spirit. A childlike relation is never without a childlike nature. The same method God observes in declaring the members his sons, as he did in declaring the head his Son, which was 'according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,' Rom. i. 4. So he declares believers to be his sons, by giving them a spirit of holiness, and by a resurrection from sin, and spiritual death. The devils may as well be adopted sons of God, as we, without a change of nature. To be the sons of the living God, was the great promise of the gospel prophesied of: Hos. i. to, 'Ye are the sons of the living God.' How well will it suit, a living God and a dead son? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Our Saviour's argument from the immortality of the soul will evidence not only a resurrection, but a necessity of spiritual life. What advantage is there in being sons of the living God, if we had no more life in us than his greatest enemies? Regeneration, as a physical act, gives us a likeness to God in our nature. Adoption, as a legal act,

gives us a right to an inheritance; both the great intendments of the gospel, both accompanying one another. No sonship without a new nature.

(5). There is no acceptation of our services without it. We are not fit to perform any duty without it, and God will never accept any duty from us without it. In the first of Ephesians, 1. election, 2. regeneration, expressed by being holy, 3. adoption, 4. acceptation, are linked together: ver. 4-6, 'He has chosen us that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us to the adoption of children;' after follows grace 'wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved.' Our acceptation is only upon the account of Christ; but the acceptability is upon the account of grace. Faith makes our persons and our duties acceptable, and Christ makes them both accepted. Acceptability arises from grace, as damnability arises from sin. God damns none, unless they be damnable; neither does God accept any in Christ, unless they be acceptable. The papists that plead for merit, acknowledge nothing of it before grace, but after grace, because then the services have a greater proportion to God, from the dignity of the person, they being acts of God's children, and wrought by his Spirit. God can love nothing but himself, and what he finds of himself in the creature. All services, without something of God's image and Spirit in them, are nothing. As the product of a million of ciphers, though you still add to them, signifies nothing; but add one figure, an unit, the Spirit, grace, it will make the product to be many millions, of high account with God. All the significance depends upon the figure, which, if absent, the rest would be nothing. All moral perfections, without a new nature, are but ciphers in God's account: Heb. xi. 6, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' Grace is only a good work: Philip. i. 6, 'He which has begun a good work in you, will perform it till the day of Christ;' intimating that their morality and their natural wisdom, before their regeneration, were not good works in the sight of God. They were good in their kind; as a crab may be said to be a good crab, but not a good pippin. It is not good, unless it be fruit brought forth in Christ; neither is it ordained as good to the day of Christ, to appear glorious at the time

of his triumph. God looks into our services, whether he Spirit frames them, and Christ presents them; all that we do must go through their hands before they can reach God's heart. Acceptation can never be without a renewed nature. The services of the flesh cannot please God: Rom. viii. 8. 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God.' Their persons cannot, therefore their actions cannot, because they are the products of a nature at variance with him, a nature that is not, nor cannot be subject to his law; so that God must be displeased with his own spiritual law; yea with his own holy nature, and change his judgment, and change his nature, before he can be pleased with fleshly services, for at the best, they are but refined brutishness. The image of the devil can never be grateful to God. Services flowing from nature, may seem in the outward form of them, to be as acceptable as the duties of a good man; but considering what a dunghill of filthiness the heart is, from whence they proceed, they cannot be so. Good water is sweetest, and bad water most corrupt, nearest the spring or fountain, the streams may lose some of their corruption in their passage. A gracious man's duties are most pleasant to God nearest the heart, a natural man's services are most distasteful nearest the spring. When the heart is a good treasure, what comes from it is regarded as a rich gift, because it comes from a valuable treasure, Luke vi. 40; hence it is that a less work, coming from a pure and holy principle in a renewed man, is more acceptable to God, than a greater work (in respect of the external glorification of him in the good of mankind), coming from an impure principle in a natural man, as a cup of cold water given to a disciple is more valuable than the gift of a prince from another principle. In the one, God sees a conformity of affection with his holiness; in the other, only a conformity with his providence. One intends God's glory, and the other only acts it, proposing some other end to himself; and we use to value gifts, rather by the affection of the friend, than the quantity of the gift. Well then, consider it; without a new nature, all our services, though they should amount to many millions in number, have no intrinsic value in them with God. For where the nature is displeasing, the actions flowing from that nature can never please him: 'He that turns away his ear from hearing the law,' that is, from a

spiritual obedience to the law, 'even his prayer is an abomination,' Prov. xxviii. 9; it is formed by a noisome soul.

(6.) There is no communion with God without a renewed soul. God is incapable on his part, with the honour of his law and holiness, to have communion with such a creature. Man is incapable on his part, because of the aversion rooted in his nature. What way can there be to bring God and man together without this change of nature? what communion can there be between a rising God and a dead heart? God loathes sin, man loves it; God loves holiness, man loathes it. How can these contrary affections meet together in an amicable friendship? what communion with so much disagreement in affections? In all friendship there must be similitude of disposition. Justification cannot bring us into communion with God without regeneration; it may free us from punishment, discharge our sins, but not prepare us for a converse, wherein our chief happiness lies. There must be some agreement before there can be a communion. Beasts and men agree not in a life of reason, and therefore cannot converse together. God and man agree not in a life of holiness, and therefore can have no communion together. We are by sin alienated from the life of God, and therefore from his fellowship, Eph. iv. 18; we must have his life restored to us before we can be instated in communion with him.

[1.] God can have no pleasure in it. God took a delight in the creation, and did rejoice in his work. Sin despoiled God of his rest. It can give God no content, no satisfaction; for to be in the flesh, is to be in that nature which was derived from Adam, which brought the displeasure of God upon all mankind. Regeneration by the Spirit restores the creature to such a state wherein God may take pleasure in him, and strips him by decrees of that sin which spoiled his delight in the work of his hands; as it grows, communion is enlarged. God made man at first after his own image, that he might have communion with him. Since the loss of that, what fitness can there be for communion, till the restoration of that which God thought fit for his delight? Suppose that some one work of a natural man may be good and pleasing to

God, it will not argue a communion of God with the person: he may be pleased with the work, but not with the man, for all the goodness he has being in the act, and the act being transient, when that is past his goodness is as the morning dew, vanished. He cannot be the object of God's delight, because he has no habitual goodness in him. If a man be abominable and filthy naturally, he cannot have a converse with God without a nature suitable to God, and a nature so animated, as that God may put some trust in it, and not be at uncertainty: Job xv. 14-16, 'What is man, that he should be clean, he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he puts no trust in his saints,' &c. No man is clean, but those that delight in sin are much more abominable, that 'drink up iniquity like water.' Now God being infinitely holy, can have no communion with that which he does abominate, and he cannot have a fixed and a delightful communion with that which he cannot confide in. It must be therefore such a nature as is produced and preserved by his own Spirit. If the heavens are not clean in his sight, we must have a nature purer and cleaner than the heavens, before God can delightfully behold us, and pleasingly converse with us.

[2.] As God can have no pleasure in it, so man is contrary to it. Man, as he is by corruption, is at variance with God, and cannot but be at variance with him. An uncircumcised heart will not love God, or at least, will not pay him such a proportion of love, and love of such a quality, as is due to him; for if the end of the circumcision of the heart be to love the Lord with all our hearts, as Deut. xxx. 6, 'And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' then it will necessarily infer, that he whose heart is not circumcised, does not love God with all his heart. Holiness and iniquity are so contrary, that no agreement can be made between them. God must deny his nature before he can deny his hatred of sin, and man must be stripped of his nature before he can leave his affection to sin. It is equally impossible for wickedness to love holiness, and for purity to love pollution. There can be no fellowship with God, whilst we walk in darkness, and he is light, 1 John i. 6, 7.

[3.] Nay, thirdly, man naturally resists all means for it. It is the Spirit only which is the bond of union, and consequently the cause of communion. The Spirit can only bring God and us together. Walking in the Spirit hinders us from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, which make us incapable of communion: Gal. v. 16, 'Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' But every man by nature (as well as the Jews) 'resists the Holy Ghost,' Acts vii. 61. And while this resistance of the great medium of it remains, this communion can never be. This resistance, therefore, must be removed, and there must be a divine stamp and impression upon our very nature, to make it pliable. You see more and more the necessity of regeneration.

(7.) As there is no communion with God without it, so no communications of Christ to our souls can be relished and improved without it. All the communications of Christ relish of that fullness of grace which was in his person, and therefore cannot be relished by any principle but that of the same nature. Whenever Jesus Christ comes to bless us with the great blessings of his purchase, he turns away our hearts from iniquity, Acts iii. 26.

[1.] Ordinances cannot be improved. The word has no place in them, John viii. 37. There is no footing naturally for any divine and spiritual truth. The nature of the soil must be changed before this heavenly plant will thrive. Plants grow not upon stones, nor this heavenly plant in a stony heart. The vine and the weed draw the same moisture of the earth, which in the vine is transmuted, by the nature of the plant, into a nobler substance than that in the weed. The new nature of a good man turns the juice of the word into a nobler spirit in him; and according as the nature of a good man is enriched with grace, the more does he concoct the word, and improve it, to the bringing forth fruit, and fruit of a diviner nature than another. The juice it affords to all is the same, but the nature of the creature turns it in the concoction. Nature must be changed then, to make any profitable improvement of the word and other institutions. A stone receives the water upon it, not into it; it falls off,

or dries up as soon as ever it falls: but a new heart, a heart of flesh, sucks in the dew of the word, and grows thereby. The new birth and nature makes us suck in the milk, and grow thereby, 1 Peter ii. 2.

[2.] There can be no communication of comfort. The Spirit comforts by exciting grace, and by discovering grace, not by dashes and enthusiasms. What comfort can there be when grace, the foundation, is wanting? Can the Holy Ghost ever speak a lie, and give any man comfort, and tell him he is a child of God, when he has the nature of the devil, so contrary to him? This were to witness not with our spirits, but against the frame and habit of them, which is not the Spirit's work, Rom. viii. 16. Jesus Christ will not trifle away his comforts upon such as have no conformity to him. This were to put a jewel in a swine's snout, a crown upon a beast's head. Those that are not heirs by a new nature to heaven, cannot claim any title to the first fruits and clusters of it, the comforts of the gospel. As there is a necessity of a likeness to Christ, to make us capable of communications from him in a state of glory, so it is as certainly necessary to the lower degrees of it in this world. Vessels of wrath must be changed into vessels of honour before they are capable of being filled with spiritual comforts. Our blessed Saviour keeps his choicest flowers and richest beams for his dressed garden, not for the wild desert.

(8.) We cannot be in covenant without it. This should have been first, as the foundation of all. Had not Adam had an habitual righteousness in his nature, he had not been a fit person for God to have entered into covenant with. There must therefore be a restored righteousness, that we may come into the bond of the new covenant for eternal life. The very terms of it are, a new heart, a heart of flesh, a new spirit, the law written in the heart. Without this new nature, we cannot depend on him by faith, which is the condition of the covenant. For we cannot confide in him to whom we have an enmity, and of whom we have a jealousy. We cannot have God to be our God unless we be his people, have the nature and disposition of his people, turn to him, act towards him as our God; whereas in our first

defection we made the devil our God. God requires righteousness still to our being in covenant, but dispenses with the strictness of the first covenant, and gives our Saviour a power to that end, in committing all judgment to the Son. As the covenant is spiritual, so there must be a spiritual life to answer the terms of it. Without it, we cannot walk in the way wherein we engage by covenant to walk, neither can we have any right to the promises and benefits of the covenant. Does God promise to be our God? It is upon the condition we be his people. Does he promise never to leave us nor forsake us? It is upon condition we continue not in our original apostasy. Does he promise to be present with us? It is more than his holiness will endure, while we continue in our filthy nature.

2. The second general. As regeneration is necessary to a gospel state, so it is necessary to a state of glory. It seems to be typified by the strength and freshness of the Israelites when they entered into Canaan. Not a decrepit and infirm person set foot in the promised land: none of those that came out of Egypt with an Egyptian nature, and desires for the garlic and onions thereof, with a suffering their old bondage, but dropped their carcasses in the wilderness; only the two spies, who had encouraged them against the seeming difficulties. None that retain only the old man, born in the house of bondage, but only a new regenerate creature, shall enter into the heavenly Canaan. Heaven is the inheritance of the sanctified, not of the filthy: Acts xxvi. 18, 'That they may receive an inheritance among them which are sanctified, through faith that is in me.' So our Saviour himself phrases it in his discourse to Paul upon his conversion by faith, the great renewing principle. Upon Adam's expulsion from paradise, a flaming sword was set to stop his re-entry into that place of happiness. As Adam, in his forlorn state, could not possess it, we also, by what we have received from Adam, cannot expect a greater privilege than our root. Had Adam retained the righteousness of his nature, he had been fit for that place, and that place for him; but poor decrepit Adam could have no leave to enter. The priest under the law could not enter into the sanctuary till he were purified, nor the people into the congregation; neither can any man have access

into the holy of holies till that be consecrated for him by the blood of Jesus, and he sprinkled by the same blood for it, Heb. x. 19, 22. It is by the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon our hearts that we enter into the holiest by a way which he has consecrated; 'for there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination or a lie,' Rev. xxi. 17, as every unclean thing was prohibited entrance into the temple. Whosoever shall enter into the rest of God, must cease from his own works of darkness and corruption, as God did from his works of creation, Heb. iv. 10. If man fell the sixth day, the day of his creation, the rest of God in his lower works was disturbed by the entrance of sin upon them, as well as it had been disturbed by the sin of the angels in heaven. God rested from his works of creation, but not in them, but in Christ, the covenant of redemption, and restoration by him. We must therefore cease from our own works, to enter into his rest. This entrance we cannot have in an unbelieving, unregenerate state, because by unbelief we approve not of that for our rest, wherein God settled his own repose; and by unregeneracy we oppose the great intendment of it, the restoration of the creature to be a fit object for God's rest and complacency. It is necessary to a state of glory.

(1.) Not that there is a natural connection between a regenerate state and glory, that in its own nature gives a right to heaven, but a gracious connection by the will of God. Though it be morally impossible in nature that a man can have communion with God without a renewed state, yet when he has a new nature, it is not absolutely necessary that God should love him so intensely as to give him an eternal reward, but conditionally necessary, upon the account of the covenant wherein God has so promised. Though it be absolutely unavoidable to God to love goodness (for, because he is perfectly good, he cannot hate it), yet it is not absolutely necessary he should instate it in so inconceivable a glory. A new nature, indeed, makes a man capable of eternal glory, without which it is not possible for him to have it; but it gives him not a right to it, nor instates him in it in its own nature, but by the gracious indulgence of God. For, as I have said before, in the general foundation of this

doctrine, that God may give grace without glory, is intelligible; but how he can admit a man to glory without grace is inconceivable. The very having of grace is a reward in itself. It is an ennobling of our nature, a setting us in our right station (the purity of the body is a pleasure, though a man has no hopes upon it to be preferred to a better condition), which may appear to us upon the banishment of Adam from paradise. Had there been any natural connection, he had not been dispossessed, supposing him to have faith infused into him at the time of the promulgation of the promise; or if afterwards, he would have had a re-entry, had there been a natural connection between a new nature and a state of glory.

(2.) Nor is there any meritorious connection between a regenerate state and glory, because there is no exact proportion between a new nature and eternal glory. The papists say, that before habitual grace a man cannot merit, but after it is infused by the Spirit of God into the soul, a merit does result from the dignity of the person brought into a state of grace. No such thing. Glory indeed is merited, but the merit results, not from the new nature, but from the new head, our Lord Jesus Christ. That righteousness whereby God is engaged to give us a crown of glory for a garland of grace, is not a commutative justice; as if grace were of equal value to glory, and heaven no more than a due compensation: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.' But it is the veracity and faithfulness of God which is meant by righteousness there, and other-where in Scripture. It is a justice due to the promise, not to the nature of the grace, and due to the covenant made with Christ, which was, that he should have a seed to serve him

upon which compact our Saviour so peremptorily demands his people's being with him in glory: John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.' As much as to say, Father, I will not remit a tittle of that article, which is part of the covenant between thee and me; I will have that performed to the full. And it is observable, though he mentions their faith, and

their keeping his word, in other parts of the chapter, as arguments for God to take notice of them, and preserve them, yet his desire of the state of glory he founds upon his will, which must be grounded upon some antecedent agreement, whereby he had a right to plead for it. So that it is from the faithfulness of God to his promise, and the full merit of Christ, and thereupon his fixed resolution to have it performed, not from any meritorious dignity in the new nature itself. Grace only fits for glory, but does not merit it.

(3.) It is necessary by a fixed determination of God. Supposing that God could in his own nature, congruously admit of an unregenerate dead creature to a fruition of him in heaven, yet since he has decreed otherwise, and appointed other methods, God is now by his own free resolution under an immutable necessity not to admit him. As God having by a determinate counsel ordained the death of Christ as the medium to redemption, could not in our apprehensions afterwards appoint another way, because his counsel had pitched, not only upon the redemption of man, as the end, but the death of Christ as the means; and had there been a change, it must either be in the end or in the means. If in the end, and he would not have man redeemed, there had been an alteration in his love and kindness; if in the means, it must be either a worse or a better means; if a worse, and not so fit to effect redemption, it had still implied a change in his kindness; if a better means, it would argue a defect of wisdom in his first choice, that he did not foresee the best. By the like counsel and wisdom he has settled this of regeneration as the way to glory: 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' Heb. xii. 14. Without a fixed and permanent holiness, which must be an holiness of nature, not only of action. Supposing any holiness in an action, without a new nature, it is yet but a transient holiness, and though it may make the action acceptable to God, yet it can never make the person that did it acceptable to him.

(4.) Regeneration is necessary in a way of aptitude and fitness for this state. A fitness in both subjects is necessary to the enjoyment of one another. Since therefore our happiness consists in an eternal

fruition of God, and that naturally we are a mass and dunghill of putrefied corruption, there must be such a change as to make an agreement with that God whom to enjoy is our happiness; for all aptitude is a certain connection of the two terms whereby they may touch and receive each other. We cannot enjoy God in his ordinances without an holy nature, much less in heaven. As we are under the condemnation of the law by reason of our guilt, so we are under an unfitness for heaven by reason of our filth. We have a remote natural capacity for it, as we are creatures endued with rational faculties. But we have a moral unfitness, while we want a divine impression to make us suitable to it. Justification and adoption give us a right to the inheritance, but regeneration gives us a 'meetness to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' Col. i. 12. We are not meet for it while we are unholy, and while we are darkness, because it is an inheritance of saints, and an inheritance in light. As the body cannot be made glorious without a resurrection from a natural death, so neither can the soul, which is immortal, be made glorious without a resurrection from a spiritual death. Our corruptible bodies? 1 Cor. xv. 50, cannot possess an incorruptible kingdom unless made like to the glorious body of Christ, much less our souls, which are the chief subjects of communion with him in heaven. A depraved soul is as much unfit for a purified heaven as a corruptible body is for an incorruptible glory. Our Saviour ascended not into heaven to take possession of his glory till after his resurrection from death, neither can we enter into heaven till a resurrection from sin. As Jesus Christ became like unto us, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest for us, Heb. ii. 17, 'It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren;' so it behoves us to be made like unto him, that we may be fit offerings in the hand of our high priest, to present to God, for him to take pleasure in. The father of the prodigal forgave him at the first meeting after his return, but before he admitted him into the pleasure of his house he took away his garments that smelt of draff, and put other robes upon him. God is said therefore 'to work us to this thing,' "katechradzesthai", polish, that we may be fit to be clothed upon with our heavenly house, 2 Cor. v. 5. If God be happy in his nature, man cannot be happy in a nature contrary to him; for we

can never expect to enjoy a felicity in such a nature, which if God himself had, he could never be happy in himself. It is holiness in God which fits him to fill heaven and earth with the beams of his glory, and it is an holy nature in us, which makes us fit to receive him. As without holiness God could not be glorious in himself: Isa. vi. 8, 'Holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory;' so without holiness in our natures we could not be glorious with God. We are no more fit for heaven in a state of nature than a piece of putrefied flesh is fit to become a star. In heaven there are duties to be done, and privileges to be enjoyed. The work cannot be done, the reward cannot be received, without a new nature. The glorifying God, and enjoying him, is the glory of heaven. How can we do the one or receive the other without the change of our affections? Can God have a voluntary glory from his enemy, or can his enemy delight in the enjoyment of him?

[1.] Regeneration and the new nature is necessary to the duty of heaven. Eternity cannot free us from duty. Some duties are essential to the relation of a creature, some result only from this or that state of the creature. The alteration in the state changes the duty proper to that state; but no place, no state, can exempt a creature from those duties which are essential to him as a creature. It is impossible to conceive any relation, without some new debt or service. From every change in relations in the world there does arise some new duty which was not incumbent upon a man before. The relation which a regenerate man has to God here is the same which it is in heaven, but it is manifest there in an higher degree, and a choicer fruition. Thence therefore will arise, though not any new duty that we can conceive, yet fresher obligations to those services which are proper for that place. Without a change of nature it is not possible for any man (were he admitted thither) to perform the duties of heaven. Holy work is troublesome to a natural man here, and the more heavenly it was in itself, the more disgustful to corrupt nature. What was in a little measure holy was a drudgery upon earth; and what is in a greater measure holy cannot be a satisfaction in heaven to an old frame. There are some natural motives to some duties here, and our

indigence takes part with them (as in that of prayer); but those of a more elevated strain, as love, and praise, and admirations of God, our natures are more averse to. What duty can be performed without a will? It is concluded by most, that the happiness of heaven consists as much, if not more, in the frame of the will, than in that of the understanding. If the will be not new framed, what capacity is there to perform the service requisite to that happy state? We must first be made just here before we can be made perfect above: Heb. xii. 23, 'Spirits of just men made perfect.' Just by an imputed righteousness, holy by an inherent righteousness, before they were transplanted to a state of perfection. Without a perfect frame none can perform the choice duties of heaven, and without righteousness here, we cannot be made perfect there.

Quest. What are the duties of heaven, that cannot be performed without a new nature?

Ans. First. Attendance on God. Some kind of service which we cannot understand in the state here below. The angels stand before God, and wait his commands; there is a pleasure of God which they do: Ps. ciii. 21, 'Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure.' There is a will of God done in heaven, as well as upon earth. There are acts of adoration performed by them; they cover their faces, Isa. vi.; they are commanded to worship the Lord Christ, Heb. i. 6. Their holiness fits them for their attendance, therefore called 'the holy angels.' It is against the nature of devils to perform such acts as those which the holiness of angels fits them for. Glorified souls shall be as the angels of God in heaven: Mat. xxii. 30, 'But are as the angels of God in heaven.' Equal to angels in their state, as they are angels in heaven; equal to angels in their work, as they are angels of God, attending on God, and ministering unto him, Dan. vii. 10; though what that ministry shall be is not easily known in the extent of it. Is it usual in this world to take up a person from under an hedge, and bring him to an immediate attendance on a prince, without cleansing him, and begetting other dispositions and behaviour in him by some choice education? God picks some out for an immediate attendance on him

in heaven; but he sends his Spirit to be their tutor, to breed them up, and grace their deformed souls with beautiful features, and their ulcerous and cancerous spirits, with a sound complexion, that they may be meet to stand before him. When God calls any to do him service in a particular station in the word, he gives them another heart; so he did to Saul for the kingdom, 1 Sam. x. 9. Is there not much more necessity of it for an immediate service of God in heaven? A malefactor, by pardon, is in a capacity to come into the presence of a prince, and serve him at his table; but he is not in a fitness till his noisome garments, full of his prison vermin, be taken off. Can one that is neither pardoned nor purified, one with the guilt of rebellion upon him, and a nature of rebellion in him, be fit to stand before God?

Secondly, Contemplation of God is a work in heaven. There shall be a perfect knowledge; therefore a delightful speculation. The angels behold his face, Mat. xviii. 10, and that always. The saints shall see him as he is, 1 John iii. 2. It is not a stupid sight, but a gazing upon the face of this sun, with a refined and ravishing delight. For this work there must be,

First, A change of judgment. The eye must be restored. It is as possible for a blind eye to behold the sun, or a blear eye to stare in the face of it, without watering, as for a blind understanding to behold God; for it is not a being in the place of heaven, but having a faculty disposed, which does elevate us to the knowledge of him. Things that are corporal cannot know things that are spiritual. We cannot in this sensitive body view the face of an angel, and understand his nature; much less with a body of a total death, see the face of God, which is above all created beings, more than any spiritual creature is above sense. 'In heaven the saints shall know him, as they are known of him,' 1 Cor. xiii. 12, perfectly, as far as the capacity of a creature can extend. Has God any scales upon his eyes? Does he not know perfectly what he knows? So shall the glorified saints. But if a natural man were admitted into heaven, what prospect could he have with a blind understanding? As men under

the gospel administrations cannot see the kingdom of God, even in the midst of it, without a new birth, so neither could they see the kingdom of God in the midst of heaven itself without a new frame, if not see it, much less enjoy it.

Secondly, There must be a change of will. Men like not to retain God in their knowledge, when he is represented to them in the dark, yet pleasant glass of nature, Rom. i. 28. The apostle there speaks it of the heathens, and the wisest of them, their philosophers, who, though pleased with the contemplation of nature, yet were not pleased with the contemplation of God in nature; much less will they like him, when he discovers himself clothed with the light of holiness as a garment. That vicious eye, which is too weak to behold with any delight the image of the sun in a glass, or a pail of water, will be much more too weak to gaze upon it in its brightness in the firmament. If there be no delight to know God here, what pleasure, what fitness can there be in the same frame to contemplate him above? Let me ask you, Have you any pleasure in the study of God? What is the reason, then, that in your retirements, when you have nothing to do, your thoughts are no more upon him? What is the reason that if any motion does offer to advise you to fix your thoughts upon him, you so soon shift it off as a troublesome companion, and some slight jolly thought is admitted with gladness into those embraces which the other courted? Can such a temper be fit for heaven, where nothing but thoughts of God run through the veins of glorified souls? If the discovery of God's glory in the gospel is accounted no better than folly by natural men, and therefore not received, 1 Cor. ii. 14, the manifestation of it above would meet with no better valuation of it, unless the temper both of judgment and will were changed. They are spiritually to be discerned here, and no less spiritually to be discerned above. The weak and waterish eye must be cured by some powerful medicine before it can stare upon the light of the sun, or delight itself in its glory.

Thirdly, Love is a duty in heaven. Love is a grace that shoots the gulf with us, and attends us not only to the suburbs, but into the very

heart of heaven, when other graces conduct us only to the gates, and then take their leave of us, as having no business there. 'Charity never fails,' 1 Cor. xiii. 8. And, indeed, it is so essentially our duty in every place, that it is concluded that God cannot free us from the obligation of it, whilst we remain his creatures; because God being infinitely good, and therefore infinitely amiable and infinitely gracious to them, it would seem unrighteous, and inconsistent with supreme goodness, to forbid the creature an affection to that which is infinitely excellent, and a gratitude to its benefactor which can be paid only in love. Now, though we are bound to love God in the highest degree, yet every new mercy adds a fresh obligation to return our affection to him. So when we shall have the clearest beams of God's love darting upon us from heaven, we shall also have higher obligations to love him, both for his excellency, which shall be more visible, and his love, which shall be more sensible. Now, can the heart of a natural man cling about God? Can it forget its father's house, and be wholly taken up with the Creator's excellency? Can he that loved pleasures more than God in the world, 2 Tim. iii. 4, love God more than pleasures in heaven, without an alteration of his soul? No. The heart must be first circumcised by God, before we can love God with all our heart, Dent. xxx. 6. If we will not be subject to the law of God here, how can we be subject to the love of God, which is the law of heaven? How can we cleave to God without love, or relish him without delight? No man in a natural estate could stay in heaven, because he does not love the person whose presence only makes it heaven. How can there be a conformity to God in affection, without a conformity to his holiness? A choiceness of love, with a perverseness of will; a supremacy of delight, without a rectitude of heart; a love of God, without a loathing of sin; a fervency of love, with a violence of lust: all these are contradictions. He that has a hatred of God, cannot perform the main duty of heaven; and therefore what should he do there?

Fourthly, Praise is a service in heaven. If a pure angel be not sufficient for so elevated a duty, how unfit then is a drossy soul? What is the angels' note, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God,' Isa. vi. 3, can

never be a natural man's; for how can he possibly praise that which he hates? What is the note of glorified saints? It is Hallelujah, Rev. xix. 1, 'Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God.' And again they said, Hallelujah, ver. 3. 'Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns,' ver. 6. Nothing but *hallelujah* four times, ver. 1, 3, 4, 6. How can that heart frame an *hallelujah*, that is stuffed with jealousies of him? How can he exalt the honour of God, who was always pleased with the violations of it? How can he rejoice at the Lord's reigning, that would not have one lust subdued by his power? How can a natural man, as natural, ever be wound up to a height fit for such strains, since 'out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks'? The tongue can never be framed to praise while the heart is evil. Our blessed Saviour must be glorified in us, before he can be glorified by us, 2 Thes. i. 10, 12. If a man in a mere natural state be unfit for this heavenly work, how unfit are then their tongues to sound his praise, which are always filled with reproaches of God? And how can their ears endure to hear it from others, which were never offended with the blasphemies of him? They could never rejoice in this heavenly concert were they admitted. Nay, their enmity to the work would not permit their stay. The smoke of pure incense is fitter rather to drive a swine out of the room than to invite his continuance.

[2.] The new birth is necessary, as to the duty, so to the reward of heaven. As the reward is exceeding glorious, the preparation thereto must be exceeding gracious. The rewards of heaven are something incorporated with us, inlaid in the very frame of our souls, and cannot be conceived enjoyable without a change in the nature of the subject. Man was first formed before he was brought into the garden of Eden, or pleasure: Gen. ii. 8, There he 'put the man whom he had formed.' Man must be new-formed before he be brought into that place, which is the anti-type of Eden, the place of eternal and spiritual pleasure. A natural man can no more relish the rewards of heaven, than a dead carcass can esteem a crown and a purple robe, or be delighted with the true pleasure of heaven, than a swine, that loves to wallow in the mire, can be delighted with a bed of roses. A

disorder in nature is a prohibition to all happiness belonging to that nature; a distempered body, under the fury of a disease, can find no delight in the pleasures of the healthful; a wicked man, with a troubled and foaming sea of sin and lust in his mind, Isa. lvii. 20, would find no more rest in heaven than a man with his disjointed members upon a rack can in the beauty of a picture. We must be spiritually minded before we can have either life or peace, Rom. viii. 6. Righteousness in the soul is the necessary qualification for the peace and joy in the kingdom of God: Rom. xiv. 17, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' While malice remains in the devil's nature, were he admitted into heaven he would receive a torment instead of a content. A wicked man would meet with hell in the midst of heaven as long as he carries his own rack within him, boiling and raging lusts in his heart, which can receive no contentment without objects suitable to them, let the place be what it will. Heaven, indeed, is not only a place, but a nature; and it is a contradiction to think that any can be happy with a nature contrary to the very essence of happiness.

The pleasure and reward of heaven is,

First, A perfect likeness to God and Christ. This is the great privilege of heaven, which the apostle, in the midst of his ignorance of other particulars, resolves upon as certain as that which results from regeneration, and being the sons of God, and is the full preparation for the beatific vision: 1 John iii. 2, 'Now we are the sons of God; and it does not yet appear, what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.' He seems to intimate this, that we can never be like him when he does appear, unless we be now, while we are here, the sons of God, nor ever be admitted to a sight of him. As Christ presented himself without spot to God, when he laid the foundation of our redemption, so he presents his people 'without blemish to God' when he lays the top-stone of it in our glorification, Eph. v. 27. Now as we cannot be like to Christ in our walk here without a new birth, neither can we without it be like to Christ in glory hereafter. It is not the place

makes us like to God, but there must be a likeness to God to make the place pleasant to us. When once the angels had corrupted their nature, the short stay they made in heaven did neither please them nor reform them. And when Satan appeared before God, among the angels, Job i. 6, neither God's presence nor his speaking to him did anywise better him; he came a devil, and he went away so, without any pleasure in the place or presence, but by the permission of God, to wreak his malice on holy Job. An unlikeness to God is the misery of the creature. It is therefore impossible, whilst the soul remains in that state, that it can arrive at blessedness, because it is a contradiction to think a felicity can be enjoyed in a contrariety to and separation from the fountain of it: Ps. lxxiii. 27, 'Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish.' It is by faith, beholding the glory of the Lord in the glass of the gospel here, that we must be 'transformed into his image,' before we can be 'changed into his glory,' 2 Cor. iv. 18. And we cannot be like God by holy actions only, though we had performed as many of them as all the holy men in the world ever did as to the matter of them, abstracted from the principle and end; and the reason is, because God is not only holy in his actions, but holy in his nature; and, therefore, we must not only have actions materially good, but a holy nature suitable to the holiness of God, otherwise we neither are, nor never can, be like him.

Secondly, The fruition of God is a privilege of heaven, which necessarily follows this likeness. God is the eternal portion of glorified souls, upon which they live. He is the strength of their hearts, Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. There is none but God in heaven is the chief object of their love and delight. The presence of God makes 'the fullness of joy,' Ps. xvi. 11. His favour and the light of his glorious countenance constitutes heaven and happiness; not the place, but the countenance. God's frown kindles hell, and his smile renders any place an heaven. Now an old nature cannot have a good look from God; for since he is infinitely holy, he must hate unholiness; infinitely true, he must hate falsity. As it is impossible a man can love truth and falsity, righteousness and unrighteousness, as such, at one and the same time, in an intense degree, therefore an impure nature

cannot be happy unless God be mutable. God cannot smile on the old Adam unless he hate himself. What satisfaction can such an one possibly have in God's presence? How can he savour the society of God that never loved it? Do we naturally love any warm mention of God? Have we not a stony deadness to any heavenly motion that falls upon us? A mighty quickness to receive sinful motions in that which we love? Do not our countenances fall, and our delight take wings to itself and fly away at any lively appearance of God? If we have such an enmity to his law, which is but a transcript of his holiness, much greater must our enmity be to the original copy. Hence in Scripture men are said to 'refuse his law,' Ps. lxxviii. 10; to 'forsake his law,' Ps. cxix. 53; to be 'far from his law,' Ps. cxix. 150. Darkness does not more naturally vanish at the appearance of the sun, than an old nature will fly away from the glory and brightness of God. A mass of black darkness and an immense sphere of light may as soon be espoused together, as a friendly amity be struck up between God and an unrenewed man. God is light without darkness, 1 John i. 5; man is darkness itself, as if nothing else entered into the composition of his corrupt nature, Eph. v. 8. If there be therefore a disagreement, contrariety, and unwillingness on both sides, how can any pleasing correspondence be effected? If God should bring a man with his corrupt nature into local heaven, God could not please himself in it, nor such an one delight himself in God, no more than a swine can be pleased with the presence of an angel, or a mole sport itself with the beauty of flowers, or a vitiated eye rejoice at the brightness of light. We must really make God such an one as we shape him in our natural fancy, and like to us, before we can take any pleasure in converse with him. Our nature, therefore, must be changed before we can please him, or be satisfied in him. His presence else will cause fear, while our sinful state remains, an affection inconsistent with happiness.

Thirdly, The company of the saints is an adjunct of that happiness in heaven. A sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, Mat. viii. 11, in a festival converse, is a part of that felicity. The coming to be with an 'innumerable company of

angels, with the general assembly, and church of the firstborn,' is not the least thing in the composition of this happiness, Heb. xii. 22, 23. What joy is that man capable of which should be surrounded with company he has the greatest disaffection to, where he could not meet with any one person without the holy quality he has an antipathy against? A natural man never loved holiness, as holiness, here. The more beautiful the image of God was in any, the more burdensome was their company; the more degrees any good man wanted of perfection in righteousness, the more tolerable was a familiarity with him. If holiness in others, in a lower degree, were disaffected by you, how can you bear the perfection of it? If the mixed and dark goodness in renewed men, which was but a weak flash of the glory of heaven, were unwelcome, how will you be able to endure the lustre of it? Again, glorified saints could not have the least converse with such an one? If carnal nature were a trouble to them here, when they had many relics of corruption, much more must it be above, if they were admitted into that place of glory, because the more holy any creature is, the more it hates that which is contrary to that holiness; the more settled we are in anything, the more we loathe that which is opposite to it; all the folly in their hearts here done away, and the disagreeing principle perfected in the blessed. There must, therefore, be a change in them, to take pleasure in you, or a change in you, to take pleasure in them. They must return to the frame of old Adam, and put off the renewed image of God, before they can delight in you; or you must come up to the frame of the new Adam, and be new created after the same image, before you can delight in them. The truth is, supposing a man admitted into the heavenly place with an old nature, he could not continue there; for the saints must either leave heaven, or he must. Light and darkness cannot agree; what makes the one happy, cannot beatify the other. Saints shall not leave it, because it is their inheritance, it was prepared for them, and they for it; a natural man must, because it was never prepared for him, nor he fitted for it.

Fourthly, Spiritual delights inconceivable are in that state, which, without a new and heavenly nature, it is impossible to relish. 'In the light of God they see light,' and they 'drink of the rivers of God's

pleasures,' and are 'satisfied with the fatness of his house,' Ps. xxxvi. 8, 9. Now, is it a fleshly fatness? Are the pleasures of God carnal or spiritual? What is God's pleasure shall be the pleasure of glorified souls. How can the sordid old temper be fit for spiritual delights? Flesh can never savour but the things of the flesh; another palate is necessary to relish the things of the spirit: Rom. viii. 5, 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit;' "fronousin" signifies to savour or relish. There must be a transformation by the renewing of the mind, Rom. xii. 2, which is the palate of the soul, before we can know what the will of God is, or taste what the pleasures of God are; without it we can no more relish the pleasures of God than we can know his will. All satisfaction does not result from the intrinsic excellency of the object, or the beauty of a place, or a power in anything to affect us, but from a faculty rightly disposed to the object, and a congruity and agreement between that and the understanding, and between that and the will. Brutes cannot be delighted with intellectual pleasures, because they want a faculty, nor fools, because they want a right disposition of that faculty. Purity of heart only gives us a relish of the purity of pleasure: Tit. i. 15, 'To the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure.' An ill humour on the palate tinctures the meat, and embitters that which was sweet in itself. It must be freed from that vicious juice before it can relish the sweetness of food. Natural men, because of the impurity of their natures, savour not those spiritual delights which the word, and prayer, and other holy duties afford in themselves. What fitness, then, is there in this state for the delights of heaven, which are as much superior to those delights in duties as the sun does surmount a star in brightness? The best unregenerate man is sunk in sense, swallowed up in sense; and what suitableness can there be between a spiritual delight and a sensual frame? True pleasures and contrary desires can never abide together. A carnal man has no apprehensions of spiritual delights but by the measures of animal pleasures. And if there be no conception of them in the understanding, what motion to them can there be in the will, or what fitness for them in the affection? Without a new nature, a new frame,

we are no more able to understand or enjoy the pleasures of heaven, than a bat is to take pleasure in a mathematician's lines or a philosopher's books. It is not conceivable how God can make any man happy against his will, because all pleasure consists in the agreeableness of the will to the object. The whole scheme of heaven must be changed to make such men happy that have not tempers suited to its present state. The bright hangings of heaven must be taken down and others put in their place to please a vicious nature.

Use. If regeneration be absolutely necessary to a gospel state, and the enjoyment of eternal glory in heaven, then it informs us,

1. How much the nature of man is depraved; for otherwise there were no need of his being born again, and no reason could be imagined why our blessed Saviour should so pressingly urge the necessity of it, If man's nature were according to his original frame, it would please God, because it was of his own creation. But we are flesh by our natural birth, and therefore to be happy we must be spiritual by a second birth. It is not a new mending, a new repairing and patching, but a new birth. We are by sin as distant from God and grace, as death from life, as nothing from being. It is not a death in appearance, but a certain death. God foretold it to Adam: Gen. ii. 17, 'But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,' "mot tamut". I suppose there is nothing here of a corporal death meant (as I have said before), but a death of his integrity and righteous nature, upon this act of disobedience; and the reason is because a temporal death did not ensue presently. And God uses to be punctual when he fixed a time to any threatening, as here he did, in the day, at that very time thou shalt die. Had it been meant of a temporal death, he had died at that instant. When God threatened Pharaoh, *tomorrow* such and such a plague shall come, it was certainly so. The destruction of Nineveh in forty days had been too, had they not repented. When he promised and mercy or deliverance at such a time, it was certainly performed: the *very* day, at the end of the time appointed, the Israelites came out of Egypt, Exod. xii. 41. And though God

threatened Hezekiah with death, and bids him set his house in order, yet he fixed no time, Isa. xxxviii. 1. Besides, a temporal death was not necessary to his punishment; God might have flung both body and soul away together into hell. Besides, a temporal death, or death of the body, was fixed after the promise of the seed, Gen. iii. 12, as a punishment superadded upon his sin, as well as the rest, of his eating his bread in the sweat of his brows, and the pain of women's conception and travail, which were to put him in mind of his sin in his redeemed state; therefore I question whether a temporal death, or an obnoxiousness to it, were at all meant there, but a spiritual death, the death of his righteous nature. It is a certain death, a mighty deprivation, a loss of a noble frame, a beautiful rectitude. How may we cry, as the prophet in another case: Isa. xiv. 12, 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground!' How is our beauty not only defaced, but changed into deformity? How dreadfully are we fallen, not only to lame ourselves, but dead ourselves, that we cannot rise again, as a man fallen may! We are so inconceivably changed from what we were, that we cannot be recovered without a new make, without a new birth. Oh that we had a true and sensible prospect of this! Give me leave to say that though the fell be the cause of all our misery, yet the true consideration and sense of it is the first step to all our happiness. And we cannot take so full a view of it in the extent of the nature of it, as in the consideration of this doctrine, viz. The necessity of regeneration.

2. If regeneration be so necessary, then how much to be lamented is the ignorance of this doctrine in the world? And strange and sad it is that it should be so little considered. The common talk is observing God and reforming the life, but who of a thousand speaks of the necessity of a new nature? It is a sad case that, when a doctrine is so clear, men should be so stupid and deludingly damn themselves; that they should be so sottishly ignorant of this who have Bibles in their hands and houses, yet not understand this, which is the great purpose for which God even sent the Scripture among the sons of men. It is a shame not to have the knowledge of this great and

necessary truth. As the apostle in another case: 1 Cor. xv. 24, 'Some have not the knowledge of God, I speak it to your shame.' How strange and uncouth does this doctrine sound in the ears of the carnal world, which wonder at it, as Nicodemus did at our Saviour's proposal, and think all our discourses of it an heap of enthusiastic nonsense! It is as if we should speak parables, as if you should talk of astronomy to the natural fool, or read divinity in Arabic to a man who understands only his native language. How little sensible is the world of the necessity of this work! They expect Christ should change their misery into glory, without changing their hearts and fitting their spirits for it, which will never be. They think it enough for them that Christ was conceived in the womb of the virgin, without being formed again in their souls, as the poor Jews at this day expect a Messiah, not to alter the frame of their souls, but the frame of the world; not to subdue their spirits, but to conquer the nations to be their vassals. How should this stupidity of men be a matter of lamentation to us!

3. If regeneration be so absolutely necessary, how should Christian parents endeavour all they can to have their children regenerate? There is no necessity they should have great estates, and live bravely in the world; but there is a necessity, a great necessity, they should be new creatures, and live spiritually. In leaving the one to your children, you leave them but earth; in leaving the other, you convey heaven to them. There is an obligation upon you, their old polluted nature was derived from you by carnal generation; make them amends by endeavouring to derive grace to them by spiritual instruction; you made them children of wrath, why will you not endeavour to make them children of God and heirs of heaven? Education of itself will not produce this noble work, nor the bare hearing of the word, or any outward means whatsoever, by their own strength; yet the Spirit does often bless them, and very much, and I doubt not but a great number that are regenerate had the first seeds sown in them by a religious education. And I have made this observation in many. Timothy had a religious education both by his mother and grandmother, though this did not renew him, for Paul,

by the preaching of the gospel, was the instrument of that he calls him 'his own son in the faith,' 1 Tim. i. 2, yet no question his religious instructions from his parents did much facilitate this work. Use all endeavour therefore, to convince them of the necessity of a new birth, be earnest with them till you see it produced, that they may not curse you for being the instruments of their beings, but bless you for being the instruments of their spiritual life.

4. This doctrine acquaints us with the insufficiency of everything else without this to enable us to enter into the kingdom of God.

(1.) Great knowledge is not sufficient. Natural knowledge is not. All the wisdom of Solomon in a man, though it may enable him to take an exact measure of nature from the highest star to the meanest insect, does no more fit him for heaven than the stone in the head of a toad expels his venomous nature. We have more relics of Adam's nature in knowledge than we have in righteousness. To be a philosopher, physician, or statesman, is not essential to happiness in this world, much less can it prepare a man for the happiness of another. But grace is as essential to it as natural heat and radical moisture are to the life of a man. Jesus Christ came not to make us scholars in naturals, but to endue us with such a knowledge as is in order to eternal happiness, and with such a renewing principle as might make us capable of heaven. Knowledge and wisdom are some of the choicest flowers in nature's garden; but it will be a small advantage to descend to hell with our brains full of wit and sophistry. One saving cry, from a new born infant soul is of more value than the knowledge of all philosophers. Spiritual knowledge is not, that is, the knowledge of spiritual doctrines, the knowledge of Scripture itself. Nicodemus had a good stock of this; he understood the letter of the Scripture, was well read in all the parts of the law; he was thought fit to be one of the great Sanhedrin. Something else was requisite besides this; a new birth was still wanting. What if we understood the mind of the Spirit of God in every verse in the Bible; were able to discourse profoundly of the great mysteries of the gospel; had the gift of prophecy, and knowledge of things to come, had the interpretation

of the whole book of the Revelation writ in our minds; what will all this avail us? An evangelical head will be but drier fuel for eternal burning, without an evangelical impression upon the heart and the badge of a new nature. Men may prophesy in Christ's name, in his name cast devils out of bodies, and devils of errors out of men's brains, yet not be regarded by Christ; but he says to them, 'I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity,' Mat. vii. 22, 23. If they had had this mark and gospel impression, our Lord would have known them. Christ in heaven would have owned himself formed in the heart; he could not have been ignorant of his own nature and offspring.

Well then, a man may have all the learning of Christians and heathens stored up in his head, and not the least stamp of it in his heart; he may be wise in knowledge, and a fool in improvement. A heap and pack of knowledge is not wisdom among men, without an application of that knowledge to particular exigencies and usefulness.

(2.) Outward reformation is not sufficient. Regeneration is never without reformation of life; but this may be without that. We may be outward Christians without an inward principle, though we can never be inward Christians without an outward holiness. The new birth is properly an internal work, and shows itself externally; as the heat of the heart and vital parts will evidence itself in outward motions. 'The king's daughter is all glorious within' as well as without, Ps. xlv. 13. What a vanity would it be to boast of freedom from other diseases, if you have the plague upon thee? What a poor comfort is it to brag of thy being without gross immoralities, whilst the plague of thy nature remains uncured? Outward reformation only (though of excellent use) is but a new appearance, not a new creature, a change of life, not of the heart; whereas this work we discourse of is a new birth in the understanding and will; it begins at the spirit and descends from thence to the body, 1 Thess. v. 23; it is a sanctification in spirit, soul, and then body. Can that which can be no evidence to us in self-examination, be of itself sufficient to waft us to

heaven? If you retire to take a view of yourselves whether you belong to God, will you judge by your outward actions or inward frame? There is no characteristical difference in any external action between a true Christian and an hypocrite. That, therefore, which is not a sufficient evidence to us of a right to happiness, cannot be a sufficient preparation of ourselves for it.

This reformation may proceed either,

[1.] From force and fear. Such a reformation is from impediments, not from inclination. The cutting a bird's wings takes not away its propensity to fly, but its ability; the cutting the claws of a lion, or pulling out his teeth, changes not his lionish nature. Fear restrained Herod from putting John to death, when his will was inclined to the act, Matt. xiv. 5. Fear may pare the nails of sin, grace only can hinder the growth and take away its life. This does but only stop the streams, not choke the fountain.

Or, [2.] from sense of outward interest. It may be a rational abstinence from those sordid pleasures which debase a man's esteem and prey upon his reputation; and in the mean time his inward lusts may triumph, while outward appearances are stopped. Such a splendid life may consist with those inward vermin, more contrary to the pure nature of God, and as inconsistent with a man's happiness. The river which ran in open view, may sink and run as fiercely through subterranean caverns. Men may cast out one gross devil to make way for seven more spiritual ones. The interest which restrains outward acts will not restrain inward lusts.

Well then, an outward reformation without an inward grace, can no more rectify nature, than an abstinence from luxury can cure a disease a man has contracted through intemperance, without some other physic to pluck up the root of the distemper. Outward applications of salves and ointments will do little good in a fever, unless the spring of the disease be altered, and a new *crasis* wrought in the blood. All outward acts are but 'bodily exercise, which profit

little,' 1 Tim. ii. 3. Outward reformation does but sweeten the conversation, but does not purge the man. He only is a vessel unto honour who has purged himself from these things: 2 Tim. ii. 21, 'If a man therefore purge himself from those, he shall be a vessel unto honour.' Outward reformation only, it is a cleansing of our life, but not ourselves. Self-nature must be purged.

(3.) Morality is not sufficient. By morality, I mean not only an outward reformation, but some love to moral virtue, as the heathens had, raised upon the thoughts of the excellency of it. Nicodemus was a moral man; he had some affection to Christ upon the consideration of his miracles; he had never else ventured to come to him so much as by night. He had no blot upon his conversation, he had desires to be instructed. This was more than a bare abstinence from sin, yet notwithstanding, besides those moral qualifications, he must have a new birth before he can see the kingdom of God. Men may do much good, be very useful to others in their generation, yet be in the very bottom of unregeneracy. A healing witch, as well as a hurting one, is the devil's client, and in covenant with him. There is not so great a difference between the highest degree of glory in heaven and the lowest degree of grace on earth, as there is between the lowest degree of saving grace and the highest degree of natural excellency, because the difference between these is specific, as between a rational and irrational creature; the difference between the other is only in degree, as between an infant and a man. It is one thing to have a love to moral virtue, another thing to have a love to God in it, one thing to move for self, and another thing to move for the glory of the Creator; one thing to be animated by reason, and another thing to be inspired by the Holy Ghost. What can a moral honesty profit that man who values the world's dung above the Creator's glory? What though he be honest and useful to his neighbours, must his affection to God be measured by his honesty among men? The great business is from what principle it flows. What if he does good to others whilst he does his Creator wrong by fostering any one thing in his heart above him? Can his goodness to others make a compensation for his disesteem of God? The bravest man in the whole world, who has no other descent

than from Adam, must have a new quality put into his heart before he can be happy; for if a new birth be necessary, all endowments below it are to no purpose for the attainment of that state for which it is intended. Whatsoever is of the old Adam in us, though it be a beautiful flower, must wither and die: 1 Peter i. 28, 24, 'For all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass, the grass withers, and the flower thereof fades away.' The apostle sets in opposition the incorruptible seed whereby they were born, and the fairer flowers in nature's garden. The best thing which a man glories in is a flower, but withering; it is a glory, but the glory of the flesh; it has no lustre in the sight of God; it is not a flower to be set in heaven. It is only the word of God, and the impressions made on us by that word, which endure for ever. As herbs can not grow without partaking of the natural influence and beams of the sun, so nothing stands and flourishes but what partakes of the nature and spirit of Christ. Nay, it is so far from being sufficient, that it is a great hindrance of regeneration, without the overpowering grace of God, because it is the glory of a man; that is, that wherein a man glories. Men are apt to rest upon their morals without reflecting upon their naturals. They see no spots in their lives, and therefore will not believe there are any in their hearts. They are so taken up, with the pharisee, their proud thoughts of their being above others, that they never think how much they have inwardly of the publican in coming short of the glory of God. Unregenerate morality, therefore, is not sufficient. The heart must be changed before moral virtues can commence graces. When this is once done, what were moral before become divine, as having a new principle to quicken them, and a new end to direct them.

(4.) Religious professions are not sufficient. Can you, upon a serious consideration, conclude that this only is the import of all those scriptures which speak of being born of God, raised from a death in sin, quickened and led by the Spirit, created in righteousness and true holiness? Are not these things, in the very manner of speaking them, elevated above any mere profession, which may be declared to the world without any such work, which is the evident intendment of

those scriptures? It is not the naming the name of Christ, but the departing from iniquity; a departing from it in our nature as well as in our actions, that is the badge whereby the Lord knows who are his: 2 Tim. ii. 19, 'The Lord knows who are his: and let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' Religious profession only is but a form, a figure, a shape of godliness: a picture made by art, without life and power, and an enlivened faculty, and a divine principle whence it should proceed; it is but a name of life at best under a state of death: Rev. iii. 1, 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.' Professions without a new nature, are no more the things God requires of us, than sacrifices under the law without a broken heart. It is not a following our Saviour in profession, but in regeneration, which gives the apostles a title to that promise of sitting upon his throne in glory: Mat. xix. 28, 'Ye that have followed me in regeneration, ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' Judas had followed Christ till that time, and after, in a profession, but not in the regeneration, not from a regenerated principle.

(5.) Multitudes of external religious duties and privileges are not sufficient. Men are very apt to place their security here. It was the great labour of the prophet Isaiah to bring the Jews, in his time, off from them. God does not require attendance on ordinances as the ultimate end, but as means to the beginning and promoting a new birth: Isa. xi. 16, 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? Wash ye, make ye clean.' The resting in these is the manifest destruction of men's souls, when thousands of sacrifices to God cannot be acceptable without a new nature. We naturally affect an easy religion; and outward acts of worship, especially under the gospel, have no great difficulty in them. Men would rather be at great expense of sacrificing, than crucify one beloved sin, and cringe a thousand times before the cross of Christ, than nail one corruption to it. How easy a work were it to get to heaven, if nothing else were required but to be a member of the Christian visible church? Circumcision was a privilege, but it availed nothing without a new creature, Gal. v. 6. There was another circumcision made without

hands, the work of God, that was required, Col. ii. 11; a new creature, without which outward circumcision signified nothing. The practice of some duties may stand with an inward hatred of them, as the abstinence from some sins may stand with an inward love to them. Outward worship is but a carcass, when the soul is not conformed to God, the object of worship, and does not attain an union to, and communion with God, which is the end of worship. What are all acts of worship without a nature suitable to the God we approach unto in them? Judge not, therefore, of your state by any external actions; no outward act, but unregenerated persons may do, yea, they may express much zeal in them. They may have their bodies as martyrs consumed by flames, without having their corruption consumed by grace; a stinking breath may make as good music to the ear in a pipe as a sound one. There is something more necessary than a bare performance of duties.

(6.) Nay, more, convictions are not sufficient. Nicodemus was startled by our Saviour's miracles, believes him to be a prophet sent by God, acknowledges that God was with him, John iii. 2, yet still the necessary qualification of a new birth was wanting. Your spirits may be torn in pieces by terror, the heart of stone may be rent asunder, and yet no heart of flesh appear; the ground may be ploughed, yet not sown. Sensuality and lust may be kept under by a spirit of bondage, when it is not cast out by a spirit of adoption; the sun may scorch you, and not enliven you; the knowledge of the foulness of sin, and the fierceness of wrath, is the work of the Spirit in the law; the new birth is the work of the Spirit in the gospel, the stone may be cut and hewed by the law, and yet never polished by the gospel, never brought into covenant: Hosea vi. 5, 7, 'I have hewed them by my prophets, but they like men have transgressed the covenant.' It is not then great knowledge, fair-coloured fruit, oil in the lamp of life, loud professions, glittering services, or tearing convictions, which are this badge whereby Christ knows his own from all the world besides: all these will be answered, 'I know you not.' Is it not, then, a worthy stork, and high time to get that new nature, whereby God will know thee to belong to him? Professions may be false, outward

reformation may be but as a painted sepulchre: knowledge only elevates the understanding, but as our communion lies in the acts of the will, there must be some work upon that to fit us for our great happiness. If these things are not sufficient, then profane men cannot expect heaven by the way of hell.

Use 2. If regeneration be so absolutely necessary to salvation, how miserable is the condition of every unregenerate man! What a miserable case is it, that sinners should dream on in their delusions till everlasting burnings confute their fancies, and turn their hopes into dreadful despair. Oh, how do most men live as if this doctrine were a mere falsity, and act as if they would take heaven by the violence of their lusts, not by the industry of grace? Know you not that an unrighteous nature shall not inherit the kingdom of God? 1 Cor. vi. 9, 'Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived,' &c. Is it possible you should be ignorant of that which stares you in the face in every page in the Bible? If you know not this you know nothing. Be not deceived. Nothing is so natural as heart-deceit and presumptuous confidence. The apostle else would not have spoken of it with such an emphasis, but that he knew how apt men are to delude themselves with hopes of mercy in a state of sin. Self-flattery is one of the strongest branches which grows upon the pride of nature. How vain is it to fancy to yourselves a fitness for heaven, while there are only preparations for hell? Whence should such imaginations arise? Not from God; it is contrary to all his professed declarations. Is it from yourselves? What reason have you to believe your fancies in spiritual things, who are so often mistaken in temporal? Is it from the devil? What reason have you to believe your greatest enemy? If this work be brought, he has for ever lost you. It is he that cherishes such notions, for he has no pleasure to undo his kingdom, and lose his subjects. Never did any man use so much diligence to get a new nature as the devil does to hinder him.

Will you seriously consider,

1. It is highly irrational to expect security and glory in an unregenerate state. Is it for us to separate those things which God has joined, flesh and destruction, a new birth and a kingdom? That which does naturally tend to hell can never conduct us to heaven. Can the old nature, which frames a fit subject for eternal vengeance, ever fashion it to be a vessel of eternal glory? There is as great a tendency in the old nature to hell as there is of a stone or lead to the earth. If men may be saved in their ungeneracy,

(1.) God must be false to himself. False he must be to his truth, false to holiness, false to his Son, false to the whole tenor of the gospel. God must change the covenant of grace, blot out all his threatenings in Scripture, give the lie to all his declarations in the word, proclaim himself unwise in all his administrations, if ever such a man be happy; and is it not a damnable conceit, and a provoking wish, to desire that God should belie himself to befriend us? There must be a new gospel before any can be saved without a new nature. This cannot be. Must God change his law, or we our lusts? God has settled and declared a decree, that none that are not born again shall enter into the kingdom of God. His decree stands irreversible, the change must necessarily therefore be on our side.

(2.) As far as I can understand, God must put himself out of heaven before that such a man can come thither. There can be no pleasure on either side with unsuitableness. If God be absent from heaven, as to his glorious presence, how can there be happiness? He loves his own righteousness better than to endure such men's presence, and they love their unrighteousness so much as not to bear his. No man cares for coming into a place which is possessed by one that he hates; they can have no pleasure to be in a heaven with God, who were delighted to be in a world without him, Eph. ii. 12.

(3.) Jesus Christ must be a liar, and the gospel false, if ever there be a heaven enjoyed by an old nature. He has asserted it, that is truth itself; and is it not a madness to imagine a possibility of coming thither in spite of him? You may upon better grounds hope to be

crowned monarch of the whole world tomorrow, than to enter into heaven without being born again. Christ values his truth, though he did not his life, above our souls, and his word will stand firm against all presumptuous confidence whatsoever.

(4.) Suppose God should reverse his gospel (which cannot be), and declare another, I cannot see how the ease would be mended, for what gospel can God frame, with a salvo to his own honour, without the creatures being righteous to enjoy the benefit of it? Must God conform himself to the will of our lusts? Must he cast his holiness into the depths of the sea? Must he paint himself black to agree with our hue? as the Negroes picture him of their own colour. In a word, must God cease to be God that you may cease to be miserable? To desire happiness without a new nature shows a contempt of God, since it is to desire it on terms on which it is dishonourable for God to give it.

Well then, this doctrine is so certainly true, that if an angel from heaven should declare the contrary he ought not to be believed: Gal. i. 8, 'Let him be accursed;' that is, he would be more a devil than an angel, and it could be an accursed doctrine. He must found his doctrine upon another gospel, and a gospel printed in hell, but impossible to have an *imprimatur* from heaven. Is it possible, then, for any man, after such an assertion of our Saviour, to live under the hearing of the Christian doctrine, and fancy a heavenly glory belonging to him without a heavenly nature?

2. As it is highly irrational, so it is highly sinful to lie in an unrenewed state. To continue in it after the declaration of God's holiness, in so eminent a manner, in the death of his Son, is a high approbation of unrighteousness, and a contempt of his infinite purity; for since he has shown himself a hater of sin, and the old nature of Adam in the death of the Redeemer, more than he could any other; the fostering the old nature in us is a valuing that which God has manifested his hatred of, and a slighting all the expressions of his love. It draws a greater guilt upon our persons than Adam did

by his fall upon our natures: John xv. 22, 'If I had not come and spoken to them, then had not had sin.' If I had not told them those things, and preach heavenly doctrine to them, their sin had been as it were a petty larceny, in comparison of what it is now, a treason against my Father's crown and dignity; 'but now they have hated me and my Father'.

3. Hence it follows that such a man's condition must be exceeding miserable. Those that 'have a part in the first resurrection,' on them it is said 'the second death shall have no power,' Rev. xx. 6; whether he means the resurrection of Christ, or the spiritual resurrection of the soul. The second death then shall have power over them that have no part in the first resurrection.

(1.) Such are peculiarly miserable. Such a man had better have been any other creature,—a toad, a serpent, a beetle, liable to be trod to death by the next comer,—than have been a man, and live and die with a serpentine nature, and without renewing grace, would be glad one day to chance states with them; and it had been better to have been born in the darkest part of America than in England, and better to have lived in the blindest corner in England than in London, where he has heard so much and so often of the necessity of the new birth, and yet cherished an old nature. It is an astonishing madness this. Better never to have been born a man than not be a real Christian, which he cannot be without this new birth, this necessary regeneration; better never to have entered by the door of baptism into the Christian society, than not have a nature answerable to the baptismal intendment. There is not the meanest beggar that creeps in the street, the most ulcerous Lazarus that lies at the door, but if renewed is infinitely happier than any one unrenewed can be with all worldly felicity.

(2.) Such are unavoidably miserable. The mercy of God can never make you happy against his truth, the righteousness of God can never do it without the necessary qualification. Is it just with God to give his worst enemies the same reward of glory with his choicest

friends; to those that never endeavoured to reform their lives according to the methods of the gospel, as to those who have had the holy image of his Son drawn and wrought in their hearts? In 2 Tim. iv. 8 he is said to be a 'righteous judge,' which could not be if he gave the same rewards to both the contrary qualifications. The devil may as soon be eased, as any man without a new birth. Though there be enough written against the salvation of devils, yet there is more written in the book of God against the salvation of men living and dying in an unregenerate state than against the salvation of devils. Do any expect to see the kingdom of God without it? Why, that form on which you sit, that dust under your feet, far cleaner than ourselves by nature, are fitter to be brought into that place of glory. The holiness of God can better endure them than an unrenewed man. He pronounced their kind good at the creation, but never was an unrenewed nature pronounced good by God. You can no more shun an eternal misery without it, than you can a temporal death with it, you can no more fly from hell than from yourselves. Our blessed Saviour, the redeemer of the world, will know none for admission into happiness without his badge upon them: Mat. vii. 23, 'I never knew you:' you had nothing in you worthy my knowledge and affection. Where is the evangelical impression upon your soul? will be the only question then asked.

Well, then, I wish every unregenerate man would put the question to his soul, Can I dwell with everlasting burnings? Can I, with a cheerful security, meet the wrath of God in its march against me? Is eternal darkness a delightful state? Is an eternal separation from the blessed God to be desired? Is a present sensual life to be preferred before a joyful eternity? Is there any one Scripture in the whole book of God can give me comfort in this state? What, then, dost thou, O my soul, spend thy thoughts about, since there is nothing to procure thy felicity, but this new birth?

Use 8. Is of comfort. Is it so, that without regeneration there is no salvation? Then how great is the comfort of that person, who has attained this necessary thing! What a foundation is here for the

composition of never songs for spiritual exultings! What a diffusion may there be of pleasure through the whole soul! That little regenerating principle within you is more necessary than the wisdom of Solomon, the power of Nebuchadnezzar, the glory of Ahasuerus, the reaching heads of the most knowing men in the world, and shall make you happy, when others in their unrenewed wisdom and unsanctified wealth shall descend to destruction.

1. The least true grace has comfort from hence. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;' therefore if he be born again, he shall see it. Our Saviour does not say, except a man has been born so long, arrived to such a stature, but simply born again; it lies upon the essence, not upon the degree. A child that cries the first minute it is born, is in a state of life, as well as the man in the prime of his strength. A child has the nature of a man, though attended with some strong disease and great infirmities; though every true Christian has not the same growth yet he has the same birth, the same renewing Spirit. 'If a man be in Christ he is a new creature;' the apostle does not say, he is a strong creature, or a tall creature. St John reckons three different states of Christians, 1 John ii. 13, 14, children, young men, and fathers, and all in a state of the knowledge of God.

2. Here is comfort in the ignorance of the time of the new birth. 'Except a man be born again,' not except he know the time of his being born again; the want of the knowledge of the time has troubled some, but it is no matter for the time, if we find the essential properties; our happiness is secured by the essence, not by the circumstance. It is the glory of those that were born in Sion, that they 'were born there,' Ps. lxxxvii. 5, though the time of their birth were not exactly known by them. Many may tell the first preparations to it, the first strong conviction, the first time they found their hearts affected; this is more easy than to tell the very time when spiritual life was infused, any more than to tell the punctual time when the child was quickened in the womb; this is no more known, than that

particular minute when this or that addition was made to our stature and growth, though the growth itself be discernible.

3. Such are new born to the enjoyment of God in glory. If none shall see God without it, then those shall certainly see God who have it; it is for the undefiled inheritance that God did first beget you: 1 Peter i. 3, 'He has begotten us to a lively hope, to an inheritance undefiled, incorruptible that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.' Had not God intended you for an everlasting converse with himself, he would not have taken such pains, but have let you lie in your blood, and run down the stream of nature into the ocean of a miserable eternity with the common mass of the world. What comfort will this be, when you see the old house of your bodies full of gaps, ready to fall, that your reborn souls are ready to take possession of their eternal inheritance! Paul was one of the highest rank in Christianity, both in grace and office, yet the 'crown of righteousness' was not only laid up for him, and to be given to him, but to 'all that love the appearing of Christ, 2 Tim. iv. 8, that is, to all those that, from the principles of the new nature, aspire to that perfection, which shall be at the appearance of Christ. There is as certain a tendency, by the ordination of God, of a renewed soul to heaven, as of flame into the air. Grace and glory are in nature the same thing as a seed and a plant.

4. It is comfort upon this account, If new-born to heaven, then to all things which may further your passage thither and assist you in it. To God, as your God and king to protect you, as your Father to cherish you; to the promises as your promises, as assurances and deeds for heaven; to a sanctification of all states for a furtherance of you in your travel to and fitness for this kingdom; to a sight of God in his ordinances, and in his providences; he will not deny a beam here in his institutions to those for whom he reserves his full face hereafter; to a fellowship with God in duties of worship, as a foretaste of a perpetual communion with him; to an improvement of all graces, to the most perfect dress at last of all beautiful grace, which may completely fit you for an everlasting sight of God in heaven.

Use. 4. If without the new birth there is no entering into heaven, then it stands upon you to clear up your evidences for the new birth. If the existence of it be necessary for our felicity, the knowledge of it is necessary for our comfort. This is the great distinguishing evangelical sign; without an inward principle of life, we have not reached the intendment of the gospel: John vi. 63, 'The words of Christ are spirit and life.' John x. 10, 'I am come that you might have life.' He has no interest in the gospel that has not this in his heart. Every man in Christ must be a new creature.

To encourage you in this work, consider,

1. It is by this you must know your justification. Justification is our blessedness: Rom. iv. 8, 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.' And this is the way to know our blessedness: forgiveness of sin precedes the inheritance, and both this and that are received only by the sanctified through faith in Christ: Acts xxvi. 18, 'That they may receive forgiveness of sin, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in me.' The alteration of our frame is motifs, more discernible to us, than that of our relative states; the new dispositions discover what relation we stand in to God. This is a certain truth, he that does not find the draught of God's image in him, has no reason to conclude he has any saving interest in the propitiatory sacrifice of the Redeemer. As the blood and water were not separated in the effusion upon the cross, neither are they in their application to the soul; water to renew us, and blood to justify us. The 'washing of regeneration' evidences our being justified by grace, Titus iii. 57; the apostle infers the one from the other.

2. Therefore, by the knowledge of this only you can gain comfort. The great desire is, Oh that I were assured! Let it be your great business to clear up the new birth. It is the office of the Spirit not only to comfort but renew, and to comfort by renewing. The hope of eternal life is founded upon the renewing of the Holy Ghost, as well as on justification by grace, Titus i. 5-7; the Spirit as a comforter is to guide

into all truth, John xvi. 13, into that truth which is sanctifying, John xvii. 17. The property of the Spirit is to guide us into sanctifying truth, and sanctify us by that truth; the Spirit does witness with our spirits that we are the children of God; its witness is by something within us, not without us. There must be something in our hearts as a foundation of this testimony; what witness can there be in an old nature? Look after, therefore, those essential properties of the new nature. Christ preached duty and comfort together; his first sermon, Mat. v., is made up of both. The clear evidence of a new life seated in the centre of the soul, will be a surer testimony of our right to, and fitness for glory, than if an angel from heaven should assure us in the name of God, that we are some of his heirs, the testimony of an angel is but that of a creature, lower then the verbal testimony of the Son of God. The evidences of the beginnings of glory, by the operations of grace and a Godlike nature, are more uncontrollable than the highest assurances all the angels in heaven can give us. Clear up this, therefore. There are many counterfeits; men may take morality, outward reformation, heaps of religious duties, to be this work, but these are all insufficient, and men without good examination may cheat themselves, and take copper for gold, and tin for silver. There is a natural or moral integrity, and an evangelical integrity; the natural integrity God owns in Abimelech: Gen. xx. 6, 'Yea, I know that thou did this in the integrity of thy heart.' He was king of the place where Abraham thought there was no fear of God, ver. 12. And it is likely there was not. God puts none of them upon prayer for themselves, but Abraham upon praying for them.

Then ask yourselves these two or three questions.

1. How stand your hearts to God and sin? Is there a bias in the will, which does naturally carry it to God? What light is there in your minds? what flexibleness and tenderness in the will and conscience? what sprightliness in your affections to the things of God? what readiness to meet him in his motions to you? what closing with Christ? Are there strong cries, struggling, wrestling, Jacob-like prayers? A new-born babe not to cry; a child not to call to his father,

and follow him, and press to him: it is inconsistent with such a nature, since it is the first fruit of the 'spirit of adoption' received by us, to cause us to cry, Abba, Father, Rom. viii. 15. How stand your hearts to sin? Are there deep humiliations for it, utter detestation of it? Are your affections dead to the flesh and the world, and alive and quick to the things of God? Rom. viii. 10, 'The body is dead because of sin, and the spirit is life because of righteousness.' What humbling of inward pride, what striving against inward sins, what loathing of inward corruptions?

2. What delight have you in spiritual duties? Do your souls spring up in a service? Are your hearts in heaven before the words are out of your mouth? What is agreeable to nature is not burdensome. Spiritual services are as pleasant to a new nature, as sin is to an old, as sweet wines and delicious food is to a gluttonous disposition: Ps. cxix. 103, 'How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!' Honey, one of the staple excellencies of Canaan, which is described to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Does your delight in the law of God spring up from the inner man? There is a delight in doing some things of the law (the Gentiles did by nature the things contained in the law, Rom. ii. 14), by a moral nature, not a new nature; if by nature, they had then a delight in them, and it was as all delight is, inward in the soul and heart, no doubt but many of them had pleasure in their morality. That is not the meaning of the apostle; but he does distinguish his delights from theirs by the object of it, and by the subject or spring of it. It was the law of God, as it was the law of God, that he did delight in; and it was not only an inward delight, but a delight arising from an inner nature, a man distinct from that man composed of soul and body; it did arise from a spirit possessed with nobler principles and higher ends.

Well, then, is it your meat and drink to do his will? Has the glory of God been dearer to you than the dearest worldly concerns you have? Are your converses with him very delightful to you? Do the thoughts of God, and delights in him, frequently return upon you? What bears

the most grateful relish in your souls? holy thoughts and duties, or sinful and foolish vanities?

3. How do you live? Have you another life 'by the faith of the Son of God?' Gal. ii. 20; another faith beside the common faith, not resting in assent, but 'working by love,' Gal. v. 6. Do you live to yourselves? That is proper to a state of nature. Or do you live to God? 2 Cor. v. 18. That is proper to a state of grace: Gal. ii. 19, 'I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.' Is there a closing with Christ, not only as your Saviour, but as the principle and end of your lives? Is there a living the life of God, the life of Christ? Can Christ be formed in the heart, and there be nothing of the qualities of Christ, nothing of the spirit of Christ? Is Christ formed in the heart, a hard, low, dead, cold, dark, lifeless Christ? This frame is a quite contrary thing to Christ. If we are born of the will of God, we are born to answer the will of God. Is it the will of God that we should be loose in our hearts, and vain in our lives? That is the will of the flesh, not the will of God. According as our hearts are, so is our birth; sin or grace must have dominion in the soul; they cannot live amicably together; a man cannot be a sinner and a saint with the same will, cannot equally love holiness and iniquity. We may as well say that a man may be in heaven and hell at the same time; not but that a renewed man may in a sudden fit do a thing against his nature, as Moses, one of a mild disposition, was transported with a strain of passion against his nature. If sin reigns in the heart, though it does not in outward acts; if we yield ourselves servants, to obey it in the lusts thereof, though not in the outward fruit of those lusts, this new-creature principle was never settled in the heart: Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin reign therefore in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.' He makes a manifest difference between the inward lust obeyed, and the outward commission of it in the members, and places the reign of sin in one as well as the other; and, ver. 16, concludes them in a state of nature or a state of grace, according as they yield themselves servants to this or that. A regenerate practical atheist is just as true as to say a regenerate devil.

(1.) Be diligent observers, therefore, of what solid alterations you find in your spirits; what motions, starts, principles, ends you can perceive there; and if you find you have this excellent and necessary new birth, admire God's grace in you, that he should pass by so many thousands in the world and renew you; that he should leave many soaking in their sins, and swimming to destruction in their old nature, and bestow this heavenly plant upon your souls. And prize it too. Aquinas has an excellent saying, The good of one grace is greater than the good of all nature; which words Cajetan commends as fit to be writ upon our minds, and constantly reviewed by us, to raise our admirations of God and his grace.

I speak now but little of these things, because the next discourse will lead me to speak more of them.

(2.) Seek it. If it be necessary to be had, it is necessary to be sought. We are all at this present before God in an old or new nature; and if we die in the nature we have received from old Adam, without another from the new, it is as certain that every one of us shall be excluded out of the kingdom of God, as it is certain we live and breathe in the places where we stand or sit. We are born of the earth, we must be born from heaven; we must have a spiritual as well as an animal life. Oh that every man and woman had the same thoughts of the necessity of it as they have who are past hope in hell of ever attaining it! Riches are not necessary, honours are not necessary; this is of absolute necessity. Were you like Solomon in all his glory, you could not have the privilege of entering into God's kingdom without a new nature; but a new nature without the glory of Solomon, nay, without a rag to your backs, will admit you. If those that are already renewed must be every day putting off the old and putting on the new man, Eph. iv. 22, 24, how much more need have you who have not dropped one scale, or sweat out one spirit of the old man, nor have a grain of the new man in you? As original corruption stood up in the place of original righteousness, so a gracious regenerate frame must rise up in the place of original corruption, for God will never befriend corrupt nature so much as to give a happiness to that which

he hates. Men do not choose weeds but flowers to plant in their delightful gardens. God indeed does choose weeds, but they are turned into the nature of flowers before he transplants them to glory. We must have a wedding garment to fit us for his feast, and oil in our vessels to prepare us for his nuptials.

Seek it, for,

(1.) It is an indispensable duty. God has resolved that only 'the pure in heart shall see God,' Mat. v. 8. It is a duty incumbent on us to love God. Since we are bound to love God, we are bound to love whatsoever has any relation to him. Therefore we must love ourselves, not with a sordid, carnal love, but as we are the image of God. Hence we are bound to do what we can to brighten and clear this image, and restore it to its primitive perfection in our souls. We are answerable to God for the presenting this image of God in the same state wherein it was when he conferred it upon Adam, and upon us in his loins. Since the Redeemer has undertaken to restore it, it is our duty to seek to this Redeemer for the restoration of it, for he came 'that we might have life,' John x. 16; a vital principle in us to fit us for eternal life, and to 'have it more abundantly,' in a more glorious and fixed manner than Adam had.

(2.) Seek it, for something of this nature, or equivalent to it, seems necessary to all rational and intellectual creatures. The first nature of man was sown in mutability, and there was a necessity of something equivalent to this regeneration to fix and establish his nature; as the confirmation of angels under the head Christ is in some sort a regeneration of them, for it is an alteration of their state, from mutable to immutable, not by nature, for so God only is immutable, but by grace: Eph. i. 10, 'He has gathered together in one all things in Christ.' There is need now of it to change our nature, and afterwards to fix us in it. Most think that Adam, had he stood some time, had been confirmed in the state of innocence, and advanced to a more excellent state than that of paradise, which would have been an alteration of his state. If, then, an alteration of state was necessary

for the fixing his happiness, an alteration of state is much more necessary for us for regaining the happiness we fell from.

(3.) Seek it, because in not seeking it you act against your own reason and natural experience. You have by the fight of nature, improved by the light of the gospel, so much knowledge as to perceive that you are not as God first made you. You cannot but acknowledge it impossible that so filthy and disorderly a piece can come out of his hands; that there is something wanting to you. And are those relics of nature left only to show us our indigence, and not also to spur us on to seek a remedy? Melanchthon says, I have seen many epicures who, being in some grief for their sins, have argued, How can I expect to be received by God, when I find not a new light and new virtues infused into me? When you are stilled after the rage of carnal affections or glut of pleasures, and you do in silence turn in upon yourselves, and make inquiry after your future state, if your conscience do not lie and flatter, will they not tell you to your faces that you are men of death, prepared against the day of slaughter? Besides, will not every man confess in his most raised retirements that he cannot find any real satisfaction in things below? And are there not sometimes some natural aspirings to something above these? Do not all men one time or other inquire, Ps. iv. 6, 'Who will show us any good?' Have you ever a more delightful pleasure than when you find yourselves inflamed with some desires for it? But, alas! do you not feel yourselves in a depraved state, and that these motions are but weak flutterings, and that the soul is quickly wearied in them? Is not this an evidence that there must be a more vigorous nature infused both to attain and enjoy them? Is it not then an acting against your own sentiments not to seek it? Do you not offer violence to that little reason in you to cut the wings of such motions? Let me add this too, you act in a way contrary to the nature of every thing, not to seek that state which was designed for the perfection of human nature. Is it not natural for everything to endeavour its recovery to its primitive purity, and struggle under that which is preternatural to it? A fountain will not rest till it has wrought out the filth which has been cast into it; so neither should man be quiet till he recover himself

from the dominion of sin in his nature, and his pollution by it. Are you contented with a nasty, impure, and diseased body? are you not restless till it be cleansed and cured? and is it no trouble to you to have your souls in a dirty and foul condition? Do you not hereby act against your own nature in other things?

(4.) Not to seek it is to despise the general mercy of God, and the general kindness of the Mediator to human nature. There are in man desires for and inclinations to happiness, and some knowledge that this happiness lies in God. These desires were left in man by the mercy of God upon the interposition of the Mediator; therefore some call them not relics of nature, but restored principles, as a foundation to work upon; for upon the fall man did forfeit all, and sin despoiled himself of all *de jure*, but by the mediation of Christ, those were left (Col. i. 17, 'By him all things consist'), otherwise there had been no stock to work upon. These are left as foundations upon which God grafts this grace of regeneration, as they that spin do not spin out the whole thread, but leave some end) that they may add to it another thread; so God, having a purpose to do good on man in renewing him, did not suffer the stock of nature to be wholly rooted out, but left that as a root to graft upon, to make him the better capable of happiness. Had not man had a natural desire to happiness, there were no ground to work upon him to induce him to such a thing; therefore in not seeking it you reproach God for leaving this stump in you, and seem to be so well pleased with corrupt nature as if you would not have any remainder of the former. It is a striving against the relic of original nature left in us.

(5.) Seek it, for it is as necessary as justification. You should therefore seek it with as high an esteem of it as you have of pardon, none but would desire pardon of sin. You must be as desirous of the regeneration of your nature; they are equally necessary. Those who will not have an inherent righteousness can never expect an imputed righteousness from Christ; he never came to that end. Two things happened to us by the fall: another state and another nature; the regaining of the former must be equally sought with the latter, a

being in another covenant by justification (for naturally we are in the covenant with Adam), and a being beautified with another image, because naturally we are deformed by the image of Adam. As long as we are only in a state of descent from, and union with, the first Adam, we are under the strictness of his covenant and the deformity of his image; when we are united to the second Adam, and spiritually descend from him, we are in his covenant of grace, and are adorned with his image. Both, therefore, must be looked after as equally necessary: Rom. v. 21, 'That as sin has reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.' Let us, then, look after this reign of grace; let not that be the last which should be first in our thoughts. Since our natural descent from Adam, we are born God's enemies: we must be spiritually new-born before our enmity can expire.

(6.) The advantages that accrue by regeneration are high. When we are received, we part with impurity for purity, with dross for gold, with corruption for holiness, with flesh for spirit, with nature for grace, with sin for God, and the enjoyment of him for ever. Our present nature is a nature of death and bondage; a new nature is like the new law, a law of life and liberty, James i. 25. It will put our souls in order, and set the Israelite free from the Egyptian taskmaster; it will quell the rage of sin, and diffuse a serenity in our souls. Grace and peace are not unfitly joined together by the apostle, in respect of peace in ourselves, which cannot be without habitual grace, as well as peace with God, which cannot be without his favour. It will enable us to perform spiritual services. As all natural actions flow from a natural form in the creature, so all spiritual actions flow from a spiritual nature in the soul, and without it a carnal heart can no more do any spiritual work than a rock can perform the work of a balsam-tree. It is but highly reasonable and just we should endeavour to regain that state wherein we were created, as the best for us, since the estate wherein God created us was certainly the best. It is inconceivably better to be a righteous man than to be a man.

(7.) Seek it; you will never repent your labour, because it is necessary. Necessity makes us contend with the greatest difficulties; men will do more at a pinch than they can do at other times, when no necessity is upon them. Never did any repent of it, never any will; it has been a comfort upon a deathbed to all that had it: it never was any man's sorrow. The universal consent of all who have found it wrought should quicken our desires and endeavours for it. Ask a renewed man whether ever it troubled him that he was regenerate? whether he would be without that state rather than undergo the same pains again? Would not his answer be, No, not for all the world? When the blessed apostle Paul considered his late regeneration, he expresses it with some regret, 1 Cor. xv. 8, 'as one born out of due time.' It implies a sorrow that he was not born sooner; and Austin cries out, *Sero te amavi, Domine*, I have loved thee too late, Lord. So does every renewed man repent that he was not regenerate sooner. A regenerate man come under the yoke of Christ finds such a pleasure in it, such a suitableness, such an advantage to his interest, that he would not be free from those delightful engagements, and the sweetness of that yoke, for all the delights and commodities of the world.

Exhortation. 3. Seek it presently; let not a minute pass without some ejaculation to God for the new birth; and when you come home, fall upon your knees, and rise not till you find a change of resolutions and dispositions. If you did well understand the necessity of it, you would not be one hour without begging it. You have heard the necessity of it now, are you sure you shall ever hear the doctrine preached on again? Are you sure you may not be past the hope as well as the happiness of the new birth before man's days be run, if the present opportunity be neglected? When God commanded Abraham to circumcise himself and his family, it is said he did it that very day wherein God commanded him, Gen. xvii. 23. Why should you not imitate Abraham in the ready and speedy circumcision of the heart? Though God does wait long, it cannot be thought he should always be courting dead souls. It must be now; there is no hope of such a change after death: 'The redemption of their soul ceases for ever,' Ps.

xlix. 8; no more under the offers of a redeeming Saviour, no more under the motions of a renewing Spirit. Christ breaks the nations like a potter's vessel, Ps. ii. 9. A vessel before it be burned may be macerated in water, and formed anew; but when it has been burned in the furnace, it cannot be changed. Well, if thou wilt be new born this day, God will bless the memory of this day, for he will gain a son; Jesus Christ will by his blood put this day in red letters in his calendar, for he will gain a brother; the Spirit will rejoice, for he will gain a temple; angels will rejoice, for they will gain a fellow-servant; you will gain a fitness for an everlasting inheritance. Let me, therefore, press young men and women to this necessary and important concern; I know not when I may have so fit an opportunity or subject for it. It is not said, except an old man be born again, but except a *man*; therefore be not careless, as if you were not concerned in it, nor put it off to a longer day from the probability of the length of your life in a course of nature. Consider,

1. An early regeneration makes for God's honour.

(1.) In preventing much sin. How ripe are young ones, yea, even children when they are scarce green in age, as though iniquity had been their tutor in the womb! Youthful blood is the devil's tinder. Job knew it; therefore when his sons feasted he sacrificed, chap. i. 5. He was jealous of their inbred corruption, from the sense of the sins of his own youth, which we find him complaining of, Job xiii. 26; therefore he feared his children, having the same temptations, might fall into the same transgressions. Sow, by an early regeneration, many diseases of the soul are prevented, as well as the great crack of nature cured, as the distempers of the body are prevented by altering the habit of it in the spring. Though by a late regeneration, that of an old man, the soul is fitted for heaven, yet it will be grievous to him to think that his former dishonouring of God in his natural state was not prevented. It is otherwise with the early regenerate; they cannot complain, as Paul did, Oh, how have I persecuted the church of God! how have I breathed out threatenings against Christ and his people! how have I wallowed in all kind of sin! They have indeed as much

reason to complain of the stock of the old nature within them, but not of so many bitter fruits of the flesh as others. How does the devil hang the wing when he is deprived of an active servant! As nothing makes heaven so glad, so nothing makes hell so sad, as to be frustrated of the full crop of sin it expected from such an instrument.

(2.) In doing much service for God. Young men are usually of active spirits and vigorous affections, whereas age does freeze all youthful warmth. Such, like Peter, can 'gird themselves, and go whither they please,' John xxi. 18, and travel about for God; but age damps the spirits. We are not so fit for service when the vigour of our youth is spent. And would you be saved, and God have no more glory from you? Now what parts, or strength, or mettle, a young man have, grace will bias, put into a right channel, and direct to an useful end. The early regenerate will be eminent in piety; for in a course of nature, they have a longer time to grow in. Their faith and love, by a larger exercise, will be the stronger; and the stronger the grace the more glory will be brought to God, Rom. iv. 20. Abraham, it is said, was 'strong in faith, giving glory to God.' He that rises betimes in the morning, will do more work than he that lies in bed till noon, or loiters till the sun declines.

(3.) In manifesting the power of the grace of God. An early regeneration is the great ornament of the gospel. It evidences the dignity and strength of habitual grace, in quenching youthful heats and powerful temptations, in making such to deny themselves, and prefer God's precepts before their own pleasures. It magnifies grace, when the devil is beat upon his own dunghill, where he had so great an interest, by reason of the corruptions such are subject to. What an eulogy is it to the beauty and power of grace, to see a young flourishing plant in God's garden! It shows the power of his grace upon such to salvation, that they are strong in the power of the might of God, to wrestle against principalities and powers, as well as against flesh and blood. It manifests the power of God's grace in the work of faith, and that there is a spirit of power residing in them.

2. As an early regeneration makes for God's honour, so it makes for your own interest.

(1.) Your new birth will be the gentler. The work of conscience will be more kindly, without the horrors they have, who have lain many years soaking in the old nature. More of hell must be flashed in an old sinner's face, to awaken him from his dead sleep. Paul, who had sinned some years with an high hand, was struck to the earth. Christ, as it were, took him by the throat, and shook him: Acts ix. 6, 'He trembling, and astonished, said,' &c. There will be more amazing aggravations of sin to rack the conscience, and consequently more anguish. Putrefied wounds require more lancing; and therefore are more painful in the cure than those which are but newly made. The more we are alienated from the life of God, the harder it will be to return to live that life again. The further a man is gone out of his road, the longer he must travel to come in again, and the more pains he must take in running or riding, than he that wandered but a little from it.

(2.) Your new birth will be the more grateful to God. God loves the first fruits. He would not have the gleanings, but the first crop of everything under the law, which was laid upon the altar as God's portion. The kindness of the youth is most respected by God. He cherished Israel because they were 'the first fruits of his increase,' Jer. ii. 2, 3. 'I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when thou went after me in the wilderness,' under many discouragements. God writes down the time of the new birth, and it runs in his mind a long time after. 'Epenetus, the first fruits of Achaia,' is saluted by Paul, just after the salutation of the whole church, with the title of *well-beloved*: Rom. xvi. 5, 'Greet the church that is in their house, salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the [first] fruits of Achaia unto Christ.' And surely more beloved by the Lord than by the servant. God has most affection for such as come in at the first sound of the gospel. Daniel was a young man, yet the holiest man of his age; and God has so great an affection to him that he joins him with Noah, that famous preacher of righteousness, and

Job, that mirror of patience,—Ezek. xiv. 14, 'Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should but deliver their own souls by their righteousness,'—as those that had the greatest power with him, to keep off judgments from the place where they were.

(3.) Comfort will be the greater by an early new birth. What a long time will such an one have to enjoy the comforts of the Spirit! whereas those that are renewed later, have fewer comforts, because their grieving the Spirit has been the longer. You will be always ready, and fit for the kingdom of God, let God call when he will. Your foretastes of heaven greater, and much acquaintance with the life of it, before you arrive at the place of full enjoyment. John, the youngest disciple, lay in Christ's bosom; he had afterwards the most spiritual illuminations, and the discoveries of the state of the church in after days revealed to him. When our sluggishness makes God wait for our return, his justice will make us wait long for his comforts. The earlier your new birth, the sweeter will be your death, as being more stored with experiences of God's grace, and goodness, and truth, wherewith to answer all the devil's affrighting charges in your departing hence. No doubt can arise, but there will be a treasure of experience whence to draw an answer. The longer acquaintance you have with God, and the longer likeness to him in your natures, the more joyful will be your passage to him, and the more confidence against the fear of death.

(4.) The earlier your new birth, the sincerer and stronger will be your grace. To row against the strong stream and tide of nature, temptations of a youthful age, the inconstancy and lightness of your humour, and the inconsiderateness of your temper, are arguments of sincerity. To seek God, when a man has fair and frequent invitations to sin, is not so liable to suspicion, as when a man can live no longer. The latter proceeds rather from a fear of wrath than love to their Creator, or affection to his glory. Grace will be the stronger, the more full of juice. He that is new-born betimes, when he is young, will grow to a greater stature and a mighty strength in his age; for it is not with grace as it is with our bodies, the older the weaker; but as the

outward man decays, the inward man grows, and is renewed day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16. A young plant in the house of God will be fat and flourishing, and full of fruit in old age, Ps. xcii. 18, 14. The weakness of the body in such is the youthfulness of grace.

(5.) The earlier the new birth, the weightier will be your glory in the kingdom of God. God rewards according to our works: Rev. ii. 23, 'I will give to every one of you according to your works.' Not only to the wicked, the children of the woman Jezebel, according to their works, but to them whose charity, service, faith, patience, he knew, ver. 19. The longer you are without a new life, a vital principle, the fewer will your works be, and the shorter your wages. Though God in regeneration works as a sovereign, and has mercy on whom he will have mercy, yet, in rewarding, he acts as a righteous judge, according to the rules of justice: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'The crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me;' and so does proportion the glory to every man's service. Young ones regenerate, that bear head against the temptations of their violent nature, shall have crowns get with more jewels. They shall not only have an entrance, but 'an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' 2 Peter i. 11. They shall enter into the port with a full gale. The more violent storms they bear up against, the brighter will be their glory. For if he that endures temptation, but one temptation, shall have a crown, by proportion, he that endures many shall have a greater: James i. 12, 'Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for when he is tried, he shall have a crown of life.' How comfortable will it be to feel the weight of your crown and the richness of your robes, according to your years of service. If there be any sorrow in heaven, it is because they were not sooner new-born, that they might more have glorified God on earth, who bestows so much honour upon them in heaven. If any of you were sure to be regenerate after you had spent so many years after the course of the world and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, yet how great would your loss be, both of the comforts of the Spirit in this life, and of degrees of glory in the other!

3. Deferring the seeking after this new birth till more years grow upon you is a mighty folly. It is a matter of the highest concern, the greatest necessity, in comparison of which all other things are but toys and superfluities. Is it not folly to prefer superfluous things before necessary? Is it not a madness for a man to be mending the mud-wall about his garden, and neglect to quench the fire which has got hold of his house? You are poisoned in your nature, you have plague-spots upon your hearts. Would it not be ridiculous for a man that has drunk poison, and spilt some upon his clothes, to be more careful to have the stains fetched out of his garments than the poison out of his stomach? You are careful about the concerns of the body and flesh, oh be not such fools as to let the poison within get the greater head, and the plague continue in the heart.

Folly it is,

(1.) Because of the uncertainty of life. You are not lords and keepers of your own times, they are in God's hands: Ps. xxxi. 15 'My times are in thy hands.' What if he should fling that time out of his hand tomorrow, what would your condition be? Those that are in a dead state now, as they are here, if judgment find them so, are irrecoverable. Because thou art a child of wrath, if he take thee thus away with his stroke, as Job speaks, chap. xxxvi. 18, then a 'great ransom cannot deliver thee.' Hell followed death close at the back, Rev. vi. 8. Shall sin reign in a *body*? That is base. But in a *mortal* body, a body that may drop into the grave every hour? That is folly in the highest degree. It is the apostle's exhortation: Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies.' Many a candle has been put out before half burnt, how often has a clear sun in the morning been overcast before noon! Were none of you the last week at the funeral of some strong and vigorous person? Perhaps there is no more time left you than just what will serve for to seek this new birth. God seizes upon some suddenly, that they have not time so much as to cry out what ails them: Job xxxvi. 13,14, 'They cry not when he binds them. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.' It is better to be new-born many years too soon (if it can be

supposed to be too soon), than to defer it one minute too late. He that defers the new birth today, may not have a morrow to be new born in. And to be surprised by death before you are new born, better for you, you had never been born at all.

(2.) It is folly, because if you neglect the present time, though you may live, yet your return to God by a new birth may be very uncertain. There is such a thing as a day of grace, shorter than the days of a man's life: Luke xix. 42, 'The things of their peace' were then 'hid from their eyes,' though their destruction was deferred forty years. There is such a resolve in heaven sometimes, that 'the Spirit shall strive no longer' with this or that man: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man,' or 'in man,' with this or that man; 'for that he also is flesh.' It is a threatening to those in the church, in opposition to the profane world, ver. 2. The church began then to be corrupted. My Spirit shall not strive with them; though they make a profession of me, and attend upon me in worship, yet they are flesh, degenerated into mere flesh, and flesh they shall be. And sometimes it is confirmed by a solemn oath. Rev. x. 5, 6, The angel swears in a most solemn manner, 'by him that lives for ever, who created heaven and earth' &c., 'that there should be time no longer;' that is, no time of repentance, as appears if you refer it to Rev. ix. 20, 21. It is not therefore without great reason that the apostle does double both the notes of attention, *behold*, and the time too, *now, now*, when he exhorts them not to receive the grace of God in vain; that is, sit under the gospel administration to no purpose, without having a gospel impression and signature upon their hearts: '*Behold, now* is the accepted time; *behold, now* is the day of salvation,' 2 Cor. vi. 2.

4. As it is a folly to neglect it; so if it be not presently sought, and endeavoured for, the more difficult it will be every day to attain it.

(1.) In regard of the increase of moral indisposition and unfitness. It is true indeed there is in every man a moral indisposition to a spiritual renovation, but the indisposition is greater when the habits

of sin are more than ordinarily strengthened. The more the soul is frozen, the harder it will be to melt. A body dead some few hours is a subject more capable of having life breathed into it than when it is putrefied and partly mouldered to dust. A young tree may more easily be taken up and transplanted than a strong old oak, which has spread its roots deep into the earth. The more rooted the habit of sin, the harder the alteration of the soul. Every sin in an unregenerate man is an adding a new stone to the former heap upon the grave to hinder his resurrection. It is a fetter and bond—Acts viii. 23, 'bond of iniquity'—and the more new chains are put upon thee, the more unable wilt thou be to stir. The habits of sin will become more connatural to the soul, and fortify themselves with new recruits.

(2.) In regard of the industry of the devil. If you remain in a state of nature till you are old, that devil which blinds you now will have increased your blindness by that time; he will bestir himself in your age, that he may not lose that which he has possessed so long. It is a shame for Satan, as well as for a man, *deficere in ultimo actu*. He that struck the first fatal blow to us, and occasioned this degenerate nature, will not want watchfulness and care to strengthen it in you. He will be diligent to keep up his own work; the longer his possession, the more difficult his departure. Judas was a devil in our Saviour's judgment all his time—John vi. 70, 'One of you is a devil,'—but when he had withstood the force of our Saviour's discourses, and nourished his covetousness against his Master's frequent conviction, the devil 'entered into his heart,' John xiii. 27. Perhaps there had been before some strugglings of natural conscience in Judas, as there may be in some of you; but when he had, against the sight of our Saviour's miracles, the hearing of his sermons, the checks of his own conscience, continued in a natural state, Satan enters into him in a more peculiar manner, in a way of more special efficacy; and, by an uncontrollable power, breaks the bridle of conscience, which had held him in so long, and runs furiously with him to what wickedness he pleased. Satan reigned in him before; but as the regenerate, being by degrees filled with spiritual gifts, and having additions of grace, are said to be 'filled with the Spirit,' so

natural men, as they increase in sin by degrees, are said to have a new entrance of Satan into them, because there is an increase of his efficacy in them, and power over them, binding them in stronger chains and fetters of iron.

(3.) In regard of spiritual judgments, which will make it impossible. Such judgments upon men that sit under the gospel, and admit not the influence of it, are more frequent than is usually imagined, though they are not so visible. Open sins God punishes many times by visible judgments, but wilful unregeneracy by spiritual. Though a man may sit under the same means of grace which God does bless to regenerate others, they may be an accidental means to harden him: 'The miry places shall not be healed, but be given to salt,' as it is Ezek. xlvi. 47, when others shall grow like trees on both sides the river, and bear a never-fading leaf. If once your neglects and provocations put God to his oath, and make him swear, as he once did, that you shall not enter into his rest, Heb. iii. 11, his oath will be irreversible, he will blow up heaven and earth before he will break it. And that it may not be evaded that this was an oath against the Israelites, it is intimated by the apostle that even in the times of the gospel this oath is of force, ver. 12. He from thence exhorts them at that time to take heed of 'an evil heart of unbelief.' What need of this exhortation to them, if this oath did only concern the Israelites murmuring in the wilderness, and were not valid against unbelievers and unregenerate men in the time of the gospel? It is a terrible place that in Isa. vi. 9, 'Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed;' which dreadful place is no less than six times quoted in the New Testament, as though it belonged only to them that sit under evangelical light with a wilful unregeneracy. Certainly as the mercies of the gospel are most spiritual, so the judgments inflicted upon the neglecters of it are the most spiritual judgments. Then a man is made the centre of divine fury, and his heart sealed up from any seizure by sanctifying grace: Ezek. xxiv. 13, 'Because I have purged thee,' that is, offered thee purging grace, 'and thou was not purged, thou shalt not be

purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.' When God passes such a secret sentence, if all the men in the world, and all the angels in heaven, should, with their most affectionate strains of reason, attempt the persuading of you, they were not able to open an heart which God has judicially locked up and sealed. It is observed by some, that the work of the gospel, for conversion, is usually done in those places where it comes, in the space of seven years, as to those who have sat under it so long; and they ground it upon Dan. ix. 27, 'And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week,' that is, one week of years. And that our Saviour preached three years and an half among the Jews, and the apostles three years and an half or thereabouts before the Jews were discovenanted. I will not affirm it positively, but offer it as worthy consideration to those that have sat under the gospel more than seven years without any renewing work on their souls.

Well then, let me beseech you, resolve upon this work presently. We are not to bid a poor man 'go away, and come again tomorrow,' Prov. iii. 27, 28; and shall we bid the Spirit, knocking at our hearts in the gospel, go away, and come again another time? Our blessed Saviour did not defer his death for us till he was old, and shall not we live to him till we are old? As his death is an argument used by the apostle, to move us to live to him, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, so the time of his death should be an argument to us to live to him betimes. How many has this foolish *tomorrow* deceived! and many have perished *today* before the dawning of tomorrow. Defer it not therefore a night longer; reflect upon yourselves, and say, Have I lived so long, pleased with my old nature? O Lord, what had become of me without thy wonderful patience? Let your motion be as the lightning, as the prophet Ezekiel speaks of the motion of four beasts, chap. i. 14. God may make up the match between himself and you before midnight: there was less time in God's working upon the jailer.

Quest. What shall we do to get this new birth?

Answer 1. Begin with prayer; seek it from that Saviour that first made so plain a declaration of it. 'A man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from heaven,' John iii. 27. Then from heaven beg it; let God hear of you as soon as ever you come home. God usually lets in renewing grace at the same gate at which honest prayer goes out. Prayer is a compliance with God's grace; he never refuses it to them that heartily desire it. Go therefore to God, give him no rest; if you do so, it may not be long before you will hear that joyful word drop from his gracious lips: 'My grace will be sufficient for you,' sufficient to renew you, sufficient to cure you. Let the fervency of your prayers be proportioned according to the necessity of the thing, and the greatness of your misery without it. Plead, therefore, with God for it; Lord, is it not better to make me thy friend than to let me continue thy enemy? Is it not more thy glory to raise a soul from sin than a Lazarus from the grave? Thy power and mercy are more illustrious in turning a dry stock into a fruitful and flourishing tree. Overcome, therefore, my base nature by thy merciful power; change me from a venomous to a dove-like nature. Oh how fain would I glorify thee, by answering the end of my creation! Glorify thyself by new creating my heart, that I may glorify thee in a newness of life. I cannot get a new heart by my own strength; but it is a work not too hard for thy power, and suitable to thy promise. Plead the promise: Ezek. xi. 19, 'I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh;' and Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you;' but he 'will be inquired of, to do it for them,' ver. 37. Breathe and aspire after it; beg for it as earnestly as you would in extreme hunger for food for the satisfaction of your natural appetite; God will not deny it for such as breathe after it, Mat. v. 6, Hunger and thirst after righteousness, and you shall be filled; beg the operation of the Spirit. Our Saviour provided the plaster, but left the Spirit to apply it; he provided the colours, his blood, to draw his image, but none but the Spirit can lay them on. Ask therefore the Spirit of the Father in the name of Christ; the Father sends him into the world, and sends him into the heart, but in the name of Christ. It is called a holy Spirit, because without it there can be no holy nature.

2. Be deeply sensible of the corruption of nature. The more we are sensible of our inherent depravation, the more we shall breathe after a real change. Can he ever imagine the necessity of a cure, who understands not the greatness of his disease? Be fully convinced, as Paul was, that in you, that is, 'in your flesh, dwells no good thing,' Rom. vii. 18. I *know*; I am experimentally sensible of it. Did we but truly see the defilement of our nature, and the monstrous alteration of it from that of our creation, as we can the deformity of some monster in the world, we should loathe ourselves, we should fly, if we could, from our own nature, and send forth nothing but groans for a deliverance from the body of death, and have no rest till we were stripped of so abominable a frame. Let us, therefore, turn in upon ourselves, take a view of our condition, see if there be any suitableness between our depraved natures, and the glory of another world. There is not, unless we conceit heaven a place filled only with carnal pleasures. But reason will tell us the contrary, and a carnal soul can never, in that state, be fit for a spiritual glory.

3. View often the perfection of the law of God. This will make us sensible of the contrariety of our nature to God's holiness, and consequently make us look about for a remedy. See whether your nature answers the exactness of the law; for although you were alive without the law, yet, when the commandment and your hearts come to look upon one another, you will see sin in its life and power, and all the conceits of your own excellency will die: Rom. vii. 9, 'For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' Paul thought himself a righteous person, till he came to measure himself by the exact and spiritual image of the law. He had been instructed in the literal knowledge of the law, for he was brought up a Pharisee; his head and the law were acquainted, and then he thought himself a living person; but when his heart and the law came to be acquainted, then he found himself dead, and his high opinion of himself fell to the ground. Consider, then, how the law requires a perfect righteousness, an inward principle. All duties it commands are not only to be done materially, but formally; for they are so commanded in such a manner, from such a principle, to such

an end. Then reflect, have I such a righteousness? can I answer the law? do I come up to the measures of it in any one action? Surely I do not. Then consider further, Does not this law stand? will God lay it in the dust? has he thrown it out of doors? Surely it is holy, just, and good, and therefore a standing rule. I must have a principle suitable to that which Jesus Christ came not to destroy, but establish. How shall I do it with this corrupt nature, wherein I do not one action that does sincerely respect it, as the law of God, that is, accompanied with a delight in it? Certainly this temper, so contrary to the law, must be changed. I must have an inner man to delight in this law, a principle that must in some measure, though imperfectly, suit it. This orderly consideration would put you upon the seeking out for such a righteousness as may in part answer it.

4. Observe the motions of the Spirit. There is an assisting work of the Spirit, and an informing work. There is not a man but has, or once had, the strivings of this Spirit with him. There are the knockings of Christ by his Spirit at the door; there are calls, 'Zacchaeus, come down; this day is salvation come to thy house.' Did you never hear a voice from heaven, saying, 'Come to me that you may have life'? Did you never hear a groan from heaven, 'When shall it once be?' Did you never see a tear trickling down the cheek of Christ, as when he wept over Jerusalem? Did you never hear a sigh of a grieved Spirit waiting upon you? Can you see, and hear, and hear again, yet no compliance, when that is of absolute necessity you are exhorted to? Smother not these motions; answer them with suitable affections. If Christ looks upon you, as he did upon Peter, think of what you are, and weep, Mark xiv. 72. If the Spirit calls, answer presently, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' The neglect of the time of the Spirit's breathing is the cause of a continuance in unregeneracy Repel not those sweet motions that strike upon your hearts.

5. Attend diligently upon all means of grace. They are the pipes through which the Spirit breathes, the lungs of the Spirit, the instruments whereby our natures are altered: 'Faith comes by hearing.' It is by the hearing of faith that the Spirit is ministered: Gal.

iii. 5, 'He therefore that ministers to you the Spirit, does he it by the works of the law, or the hearing of faith?' None can expect it who will not use the means to have it, no more than men can expect to live without eating and drinking. Would we be warm? we must approach to the fire. Would we be clean? we must wash in the water. Would we be renewed? we must attend upon the breathings of the Spirit in the institutions of God. This we may do, though we cannot renew ourselves; we may read the word as well as a piece of news; we may hear the word, and attend to it, as well as to any worldly concern; we may meditate upon it, and consider it, as well as a story. This we have power to do, and it is by the word that this great work is done. By a powerful word Christ called Lazarus out of the grave, and by his word spoken by his Spirit, his great deputy he sent after him, he calls us out of our state of death. Beg of the Spirit to breathe upon you before you come to attend upon his institutions. We profit little by the Word, and our old nature attends us, because we take no notice of the Spirit of God, who is appointed the principal officer in this business. It is he that is to guide us into truth, John xvi. 13. Though men may speak truth to us, yet the Spirit can only guide the truth into our hearts, and guide us into the heart, and bowels, and inwards of truth, to taste the marrow of it.

6. I might add, Study the gospel. Look upon Jesus Christ in that glass; this transforms us into his image; as the beholding the light of the sun in a glass, paints an image of that light in our faces; so does the beholding Christ in the gospel: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'But ye all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.' The gospel is the cause of our first change, and of our growth in it, 'from glory to glory,' but by the Spirit of God in the gospel, 'as by the Spirit of the Lord.' Study the promises of the gospel, and the end of the blood of Christ, which was to purge our conscience from dead works. It is by believing the promises of pardon in the blood of Christ that 'the conscience is purged from dead works,' Heb. ix. 14.

Human Inability

A Sermon by Charles Spurgeon, 1858

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."--John 6:44.

Coming to Christ" is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering, and his blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God's gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening; where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be

offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavour this morning, first of all, to notice man's inability, wherein it consists. Secondly, the Father's drawings--what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing a sweet consolation which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then,

MAN'S INABILITY.

The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any physical defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God.

Nor, again, does this inability lie in any mental lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and

power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep in his nature. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly; there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it cannot do so. Can it not be tamed? Cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame; but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit.

But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases;

there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

1. First, it lies in the obstinacy of the human will. "Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the if they will that is the difficulty. We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ himself declares it--"Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;' and as long as that 'ye will not come' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer--Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay,

thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this--"I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from him, at a distance from him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the understanding is darkened. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man--that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;" and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. "Well," says one, "I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology; I think I understand almost every point." True, that you may do in the letter of it; but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual

understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be for ever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, the affections, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere--there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even his professed followers so cold in their affections to him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more--conscience, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within

the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered; it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved; conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me feel that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall; but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Saviour, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, "No man will come," but it says, "No man can come." Now, many interpreters believe that

the can here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word will. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ; and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe. but you have had to pray, Lord, help mine unbelief?" Because, although willing enough to receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God ?" I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless--if such be his experience,--does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between will and power: might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or

foot? Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question: if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory; for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at his feet; it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that he must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner--there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church; the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or

twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God; from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and if this be any hurt may God of his infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much. But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace, and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues for ever.

Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he cannot leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform, lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both

from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other, What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is

THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the gospel. Very true; the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be some thing more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the gospel. In that city he had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had he given to them, that he declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now, if the preaching of Christ himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, he does not say no man can come except the minister draw him, but except the Father draw him.

Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly, it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God--the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, "Then do you think that Christ drags men to himself, seeing that they are unwilling!" I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to himself" I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that,

he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true he does not use "moral suasion;" he knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved "with full consent against his will;" that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God's power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Saviour's blood while he is striving to run away from the Saviour. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put his influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled--"draw me and I will run after thee." We follow on while he draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth; it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess.

The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a man's heart is this: he finds him with a very good opinion of himself: and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, "I don't want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights." The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. "I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have

swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain; it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh," saith the man within himself, "I will try and reform; I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out." Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony, and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

*"Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and thou alone,*

"Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, "I never can be saved. Nothing can save me." Then, comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross. that Man died to save sinners; you feel that you are a sinner; he died to save you." And he enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds "a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one. "Well," says one, "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while

trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers: it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbours and reputable in your conversation; if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid; grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God.

"Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has

begun to save you. As soon as you say "Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,' I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished."

But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou hast sinned against him, and if he wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist his will nor thwart his purpose. Thou hast deserved his wrath, and if he chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head, thou canst do nothing to avert it. If, on the other hand, he chooses to save thee, he is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in his hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little."

Now, the comfortable reflection is this:--Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning, has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot?" And could you not now stand up in your seat, and sing.

*"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive of my Lord,
To sing the triumph of his Word."*

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart--"Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust is in thee: I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only thou, O Christ--sink or swim, I cast myself on thee?" Oh, my brother, thou art drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless he had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if he has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort thee: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee; and inasmuch as he has drawn thee, it is a proof that he has loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of his. Thy name was written on the Saviour's hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest to-day; ay, and it was there before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

The Necessity of the Spirit's Work

A Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 8th, 1859,

by the

REV. C. H. Spurgeon

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"And I will put my Spirit within you."—Ezekiel, 36:27.

The miracles of Christ are remarkable for one fact, namely that they are none of them unnecessary. The pretended miracles of Mahomet, and of the church of Rome, even if they had been miracles, would have been pieces of folly. Suppose that Saint Denis had walked with his head in his hand after it had been cut off, what practical purpose would have been subserved thereby? He would certainly have been quite as well in his grave, for any practical good he would have conferred on men. The miracles of Christ were never unnecessary. They are not freaks of power; they are displays of power it is true, but they all of them have a practical end. The same thing may be said of the promises of God. We have not one promise in the Scripture which may be regarded as a mere freak of grace. As every miracle was necessary, absolutely necessary, so is every promise that is given in the Word of God. And hence from the text that is before us, may I draw, and I think very conclusively, the argument, that if God in his covenant made with his people has promised to put his Spirit within them, it must be absolutely necessary that this promise should have been made, and it must be absolutely necessary also to our salvation that every one of us should receive the Spirit of God. This shall be the subject of this morning's discourse. I shall not hope to make it very interesting, except to those who are anxiously longing to know the way of salvation.

We start, then, by laying down this proposition—that the work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to us, if we would be saved.

I. In endeavoring to prove this, I would first of all make the remark that this is very manifest if we remember what man is by nature. Some say that man may of himself attain unto salvation—that if he hear the Word, it is in his power to receive it, to believe it, and to have a saving change worked in him by it. To this we reply, you do not know what man is by nature, otherwise you would never have ventured upon such an assertion. Holy Scripture tells us that man by nature is dead in trespasses and sins. It does not say that he is sick,

that he is faint, that he has grown callous, and hardened, and seared, but it says he is absolutely dead. Whatever that term "death" means in connection with the body, that it means in connection with man's soul, viewing it in its relation to spiritual things. When the body is dead it is powerless; it is unable to do any thing for itself; and when the soul of man is dead, in a spiritual sense, it must be, if there is any meaning in the figure, utterly and entirely powerless, and unable to do any thing of itself or for itself. When ye shall see dead men raising themselves from their graves, when ye shall see them unwinding their own sheets, opening their own coffin-lids, and walking down our streets alive and animate, as the result of their own power, then perhaps ye may believe that souls that are dead in sin may turn to God, may recreate their own natures, and may make themselves heirs of heaven, though before they were heirs of wrath. But mark, not till then. The drift of the gospel is, that man is dead in sin, and that divine life is God's gift; and you must go contrary to the whole of that drift, before you can suppose a man brought to know and love Christ, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit finds men as destitute of spiritual life as Ezekiel's dry bones; he brings bone to bone, and fits the skeleton together, and then he comes from the four winds and breathes into the slain, and they live, and stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army, and worship God. But apart from that, apart from the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God, men's souls must lie in the valley of dry bones, dead, and dead for ever.

But Scripture does not only tell us that man is dead in sin; it tells us something worse than this, namely, that he is utterly and entirely averse to every thing that is good and right. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."—Romans 8:7.—Turn you all Scripture through, and you find continually the will of man described as being contrary to the things of God. What said Christ in that text so often quoted by the Arminian to disprove the very doctrine which it clearly states? What did Christ say to those who imagined that men would come without divine influence? He said, first, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" but he said

something more strong—"Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." No man will come. Here lies the deadly mischief; not only that he is powerless to do good, but that he is powerful enough to do that which is wrong, and that his will is desperately set against every thing that is right. Go, Armenian, and tell your hearers that they will come if they please, but know that your Redeemer looks you in the face, and tells you that you are uttering a lie. Men will not come. They never will come of themselves. You cannot induce them to come; you cannot force them to come by all your thunders, nor can you entice them to come by all your invitations. They will not come unto Christ, that they may have life. Until the Spirit draw them, come they neither will, nor can.

Hence, then, from the fact that man's nature is hostile to the divine Spirit, that he hates grace, that he despises the way in which grace is brought to him, that it is contrary to his own proud nature to stoop to receive salvation by the deeds of another—hence it is necessary that the Spirit of God should operate to change the will, to correct the bias of the heart, to set man in a right track, and then give him strength to run in it. Oh! if ye read man and understand him, ye cannot help being sound on the point of the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work. It has been well remarked by a great writer, that he never knew a man who held any great theological error, who did not also hold a doctrine which diminished the depravity of man. The Armenian says man is fallen, it is true, but then he has power of will left, and that will is free; he can raise himself. He diminishes the desperate character of the fall of man. On the other hand, the Antinomian says, man cannot do any thing, but that he is not at all responsible, and is not bound to do it, it is not his duty to believe, it is not his duty to repent. Thus, you see, he also diminishes the sinfulness of man; and has not right views of the fall. But once get the correct view, that man is utterly fallen, powerless, guilty, defiled, lost, condemned, and you must be sound on all points of the great gospel of Jesus Christ. Once believe man to be what Scripture says he is—once believe his heart to be depraved, his affections perverted, his understanding darkened, his will perverse, and you must hold that if such a wretch as that be

saved, it must e t e work of the Spirit of God, and of the Spirit of God alone.

2. I have another proof ready to hand. Salvation must be the work of the Spirit in us, because the means used in salvation are of themselves inadequate for the accomplishment of the work. And what are the means of salvation? Why, first and foremost stands the preaching of the Word of God. More men are brought to Christ by preaching than by any thing else; for it is God's chief and first instrument. This is the sword of the Spirit, quick and powerful, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. "It pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." But what is there in preaching, by which souls are saved, that looks as if it would be the means of saving souls? I could point you to divers churches and chapels into which you might step, and say, "Here is a learned minister, indeed, a man who would instruct and enlighten the intellect;" you sit down, and you say, "Well, if God means to work a great work, he will use a learned man like this." But do you know any learned men that are made the means of bringing souls to Christ, to any great degree? Go round your churches, if you please, and look at them, and then answer the question. Do you know any great men—men great in learning and wisdom—who have become spiritual fathers in our Israel? Is it not a fact that stares us in the face, that our fashionable preachers, our eloquent preachers, our learned preachers, are just the most useless men in creation for the winning of souls to Christ. And where are souls born to God? Why, in the house around which the jeer and the scoff and the sneer of the world have long gathered. Sinners are converted under the man whose eloquence is rough and homely, and who has nothing to commend him to his fellows, who has daily to fall on his knees and confess his own folly, and when the world speaks worst of him, feels that he deserves it all, since he is nothing but an earthen vessel, in which God is pleased to put his heavenly treasure. I will dare to say it, that in every age of the world the most despised ministry has been the most useful; and I could find you at this day poor Primitive Methodist preachers who can scarce speak correct English, who have

been the fathers of more souls, and have brought to Christ more than any one bishop on the bench. Why, the Lord hath been pleased always to make it so, that he will clothe with power the weak and the foolish, but he will not clothe with power those who, if good were done, might be led to ascribe the excellence of the power to their learning, their eloquence, or their position. Like the apostle Paul, it is every minister's business to glory in his infirmities. The world says, "Pshaw! upon your oratory; it is rough, and rude, and eccentric." Yet, 'tis even so, but we are content, for God blesses it. Then so much the better that it has infirmities in it; for now shall it be plainly seen that it is not of man or by man, but the work of God, and of God alone. It is said that once upon a time a man exceedingly curious desired to see the sword with which a mighty hero had fought some desperate battles; casting his eye along the blade, he said, "Well, I don't see much in this sword." "Nay," said the hero, "but you have not examined the arm that wields it." And so when men come to hear a successful minister, they are apt to say, "I do not see any thing in him." No, but you have not examined the eternal arm that reaps its harvest with this sword of the Spirit. If ye had looked at the jaw-bone of the ass in Samson's hand, you would have said, "What! heaps on heaps with this!" No; bring out some polished blade; bring forth the Damascus steel! NO; but God would have all the glory, and, therefore, not with the polished steel, but with the jaw-bone must Samson get the victory. So with ministers; God has usually blessed the weakest to do the most good. Well, now, does it not follow from this, that it must be the work of the Spirit? Because, if there be nothing in the instrument that can lead thereunto, is it not the work of the Spirit when the thing is accomplished? Let me just put it to you. Under the ministry dead souls are quickened, sinners are made to repent, the vilest of sinners are made holy, men who came determined not to believe are compelled to believe. Now, who does this? If you say the ministry does it, then I say farewell to your reason, because there is nothing in the successful ministry which would tend thereunto. It must be that the Spirit worketh in man through the ministry or else such deeds would never be accomplished. You might as well expect to raise the dead by

whispering in their ears, as hope to save souls by preaching to them, if it were not for the agency of the Spirit. Melancthon went out to preach, you know, without the Spirit of the Lord, and he thought he should convert all the people, but he found out at last that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon, and he had to go back and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit or ever he saw a soul saved. I say, that the fact that the ministry is blessed proves, since there is nothing in the ministry, that salvation must be the work of a higher power.

Other means, however, are made use of to bless men's souls. For instance, the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are both made a rich means of grace. But let me ask you, is there any thing in baptism that can possibly bless any body? Can immersion in water have the slightest tendency to be blessed to the soul? And then with regard to the eating of bread and the drinking of wine at the Lord's Supper, can it by any means be conceived by any rational man that there is any thing in the mere piece of bread that we eat, or in the wine that we drink? And yet, doubtless, the grace of God does go with both ordinances for the confirming of the faith of those who receive them, and even for the conversion of those who look upon the ceremony. There must be something, then, beyond the outward ceremony; there must, in fact, be the Spirit of God, witnessing through the water, witnessing through the wine, witnessing through the bread, or otherwise none of these things could be means of grace to our souls. They could not edify; they could not help us to commune with Christ; they could not tend to the conviction of sinners, or to the establishment of saints. There must, then, from these facts, be a higher, unseen, mysterious influence—the influence of the divine Spirit of God.

3. Let me again remind you, in the third place, that the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart may be clearly seen from this fact, that all which has been done by God the Father, and all that has been done God the Son must be ineffectual to us, unless the Spirit shall reveal these things to our souls. We believe, in the first place, that God the Father elects his people; from before all

worlds he chooses them to himself, but let me ask you—what effect does the doctrine of election have upon any man until the Spirit of God enters into him? How do I know whether God has chosen me from before the foundation of the world? How can I possibly know. Can I climb to heaven and read the roll? Is it possible for me to force my way through the thick mists which hide eternity, and open the seven seals of the book, and read my name recorded there? Ah! no; election is a dead letter both in my consciousness and in any effect which it can produce upon me, until the Spirit of God calls me out of darkness into marvelous light. And then, through my calling, I see my election, and, knowing myself to be called of God, I know myself to have been chosen of God from before the foundation of the world. It is a precious thing—that doctrine of election—to a child of God. But what makes it precious? Nothing but the influence of the Spirit. Until the Spirit opens the eye to read, until the Spirit imparts the mystic secret, no heart can know its election. No angel ever revealed to any man that he was chosen of God; but the Spirit doth it. He, by his divine workings bears an infallible witness with our spirits that we are born of God; and then we are enabled to "read our title clear to mansions in the skies."

Look, again, at the covenant of grace. We know that there was a covenant made with the Lord Jesus Christ by his Father from before all worlds, and that in this covenant the persons of all his people were given to him, and were secured; but of what use, or of what avail is the covenant to us, until the Holy Spirit brings the blessings of the covenant to us? The covenant is, as it were, a holy tree laden with fruit; if the Spirit doth not shake that tree, and make the fruit fall therefrom, until it comes to the level of our standing, how can we receive it? Bring hither any sinner and tell him there is a covenant of grace, what is he advantaged thereby? "Ah," says he, "I may not be included in it; my name may not be recorded there; I may not be chosen in Christ;" but let the Spirit of God dwell in his heart, richly by faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, and that man sees the covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and he cries with David, "It is all my salvation and all my desire."

Take, again, the redemption of Christ. We know that Christ did stand in the room, place, and stead of all his people, and that all those who shall appear in heaven will appear there as an act of justice as well as of grace, seeing that Christ was punished in their room and stead, and that it would have been unjust if God punished them, seeing that he had punished Christ for them. We believe that Christ, having paid all their debts, they have a right to their freedom in Christ—that Christ having covered them with his righteousness, they are entitled to eternal life as much as if they had themselves been perfectly holy. But of what avail is this to me, until the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to me? What is Christ's blood to any of you until you have received the Spirit of grace? You have heard the minister preach about the blood of Christ a thousand times, but you passed by; it was nothing to you that Jesus should die. You know that he did atone for sins that were not his own; but you only regarded it as a tale, perhaps, even an idle tale. But when the Spirit of God led you to the cross, and opened your eyes, and enabled you to see Christ crucified, ah, then there was something in the blood indeed. When his hand dipped the hyssop in the blood, and when it applied that blood to, your spirit, then there was a joy and peace in believing, such as you had never known before. But ah, my hearer, Christ's dying is nothing to thee unless thou hast a living Spirit within thee. Christ brings thee no advantage, saving, personal, and lasting, unless the Spirit of God hath baptized thee in the fountain filled with his blood, and washed thee from head to foot therein.

I only mention these few out of the many blessings of the covenant just to prove that they are, none of them, of any use to us, unless the Holy Spirit gives them to us. There hang the blessings on the nail—on the nail, Christ Jesus; but we are short of stature; we cannot reach them; the Spirit of God takes them down and gives them to us, and there they are; they are ours. It is like the manna in the skies, far out of mortal reach; but the Spirit of God opens the windows of heaven, brings down the bread, and puts it to our lips, and enables us to eat. Christ's blood and righteousness are like wine stored in the wine-vat; but we cannot get thereat. The Holy Spirit dips our vessel into this

precious wine, and then we drink; but without the Spirit we must die and perish just as much, though the Father elect and the Son redeem, as though the Father never had elected, and though the Son had never bought us with his blood. The Spirit is absolutely necessary. Without him neither the works of the Father, nor of the Son, are of any avail to us.

4. This brings us to another point. The experience of the true Christian is a reality; but it never can be known and felt without the Spirit of God. For what is the experience of the Christian? Let me just give a brief picture of some of its scenes. There is a person come into this hall this morning—one of the most reputable men in London. He has never committed himself in any outward vice; he has never been dishonest; but he is known as a staunch, upright tradesman. Now, to his astonishment, he is informed that he is a condemned, lost sinner, and just as surely lost as the thief who died for his crimes upon the cross. Do you think that man will believe it? Suppose, however, that he does believe it, simply because he reads it in the Bible, do you think that man will ever be made to feel it? I know you say, "Impossible!" Some of you, even now, perhaps, are saying, "Well, I never should!" Can you imagine that honorable, upright tradesman, saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner?"— standing side by side with the harlot and the swearer, and feeling in his own heart as if he had been as guilty as they were, and using just the same prayer and saying, "Lord, save, or I perish." You cannot conceive it, can you? It is contrary to nature that a man who has been so good as he should pat himself down among the chief of sinners. Ah! but that will be done before he will be saved; he must feel that before he can enter heaven. Now, I ask, who can bring him to such a leveling experience as that, but the Spirit of God? Ye know very well proud nature will not stoop to it. We are all aristocrats in our own righteousness; we do not like to bend down and come among common sinners. If we are brought there, it must be the Spirit of God who casts us to the ground. Why, I know if any one had told me that I should ever cry to God for mercy, and confess that I had been the vilest of the vile, I should have laughed in their face; I should have said, "Why I have

not done anything particularly wrong; I have not hurt anybody." And yet I know this very day I can take my place upon the lowest form, and if I can get inside heaven I shall feel happy to sit among the chief of sinners, and praise that Almighty love which has saved even me from my sins.. Now, what works this humiliation of heart? Grace. It is contrary to nature for an honest and an upright man in the eye of the world to feel himself a lost sinner. It must be the Holy Spirit's work, or else it never will be done. Well, after a man has been brought here, can you conceive that man at last conscience-stricken, and led to believe that his past life deserves the wrath of God? His first thought would be, "Well, now, I will live better than I ever have lived." He would say, "Now, I will try and play the hermit, and pinch myself here and there, and deny myself, and do penance; and in that way, by paying attention to the outward ceremonies of religion, together with a high moral character, I doubt not I shall blot out whatever slurs and stains there have been." Can you suppose that man brought at last to feel that, if ever he gets to heaven, he will have to get there through the righteousness of another? "Through the righteousness of another?" says he, "I don't want to be rewarded for what another man does,—not I. If I go there, I will go there and take my chance; I will go there through what I do myself. Tell me something to do, and I will do it; I will be proud to do it, however humiliating it may be, so that I may at last win the love and esteem of God." Now, can you conceive such a man as that brought to feel that he can do nothing?—that, good man as he thinks himself, he cannot do any thing whatever to merit God's love and favor; and that, if he goes to heaven, he must go through what Christ did? Just the same as the drunkard must go there through the merits of Christ, so this moral man must enter into life, having nothing about him but Christ's perfect righteousness, and being washed in the blood of Jesus. We say that this is so contrary to human nature, so diametrically opposed to all the instincts of our poor fallen humanity, that nothing but the Spirit of God can ever bring a man to strip himself of all self-righteousness, and of all creature strength, and compel him to rest and lean simply and wholly upon Jesus Christ the Saviour.

These two experiences would be sufficient to prove the necessity of the Holy Spirit to make a man a Christian. But let me now describe a Christian as he is after his conversion. Trouble comes, storms of trouble, and he looks the tempest in the face and says, "I know that all things work together for my good." His children die, the partner of his bosom is carried to the grave; he says, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." His farm fails, his crop is blighted; his business prospects are clouded, all seem to go, and he is left in poverty: he says, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." You see him next laid upon a sick bed himself, and when he is there, he says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word." You see him approaching at last the dark valley of the shadow of death, and you hear him cry, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me, and thou thyself art with me." Now, I ask you, what makes this man calm in the midst of all these varied trials, and personal troubles, if it be not the Spirit of God? O, ye that doubt the influence of the Spirit, produce the like without him, go ye and die as Christians die, and live as they live, and if you can show the same calm resignation, the same quiet joy, and the same firm belief that adverse things shall, nevertheless, work together for good, then we may be, perhaps, at liberty to resign the point, and not till then. The high and noble experience of a Christian in times of trial and suffering, proves that there must be the operation of the Spirit of God.

But look at the Christian, too, in his joyous moments. He is rich. God has given him all his heart's desire on earth. Look at him: he says, "I do not value these things at all, except as they are the gift of God; I sit loose by them all and, notwithstanding this house and home, and all these comforts, 'I am willing to depart and be with Christ, which is

far better.' It is true, I want nothing here on earth; but still I feel that to die would be gain to me, even though I left all these." He holds earth loosely; he does not grasp it with a tight hand, but looks upon it all as dust,—a thing which is to pass away. He takes but little pleasure therein, saying,—

"I've no abiding city here,
I seek a city out of sight."

Mark that man; he has plenty of room for pleasures in this world, but he drinks out of a higher cistern. His pleasure springs from things unseen; his happiest moments are when he can shut all these good things out, and when he can come to God as a poor guilty sinner, and come to Christ and enter into fellowship with him, and rise into nearness of access and confidence, and boldly approach to the throne of the heavenly grace. Now, what is it that keeps a man who has all these mercies from setting his heart upon the earth? This is a wonder, indeed, that a man who has gold and silver, and flocks and herds, should not make these his god, but that he should still say,—

"There's nothing round this spacious earth
That suits my large desire;
To boundless joy and solid mirth
My nobler thoughts aspire."

These are not my treasure; my treasure is in heaven, and in heaven only. What can do this? No mere moral virtue. No doctrine of the Stoic ever brought a man to such a pass as that. No, it must be the work of the Spirit, and the work of the Spirit alone, that can lead a man to live in heaven, while there is a temptation to him to live on earth. I do not wonder that a poor man looks forward to heaven; he has nothing to look upon on earth. When there is a thorn in the nest, I do not wonder that the lark flies up, for there is no rest for him below. When you are beaten and chafed by trouble, no wonder you say,—

"Jerusalem! my happy home!
Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"

But the greatest wonder is, if you line the Christian's nest never so softly, if you give him all the mercies of this life, you still cannot keep him from saying,—

"To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone;
Oh bear me, ye cherubim, up,
And waft me away to his throne."

5. And now, last of all, the acts, the acceptable acts, of the Christian's life, cannot be performed without the Spirit; and hence, again, the necessity for the Spirit of God. The first act of the Christian's life is repentance. Have you ever tried to repent? If so, if you tried without the Spirit of God you know that to urge a man to repent without the promise of the Spirit to help him, is to urge him to do an impossibility. A rock might as soon weep, and a desert might as soon blossom, as a sinner repent of his own accord. If God should offer heaven to man, simply upon the terms of repentance of sin, heaven would be as impossible as it is by good works; for a man can no more repent of himself, than he can perfectly keep God's law; for repentance involves the very principle of perfect obedience to the law of God. It seems to me that in repentance there is the whole law solidified and condensed; and if a man can repent of himself then there is no need of a Saviour, he may as well go to heaven up the steep sides of Sinai at once.

Faith is the next act in the divine life. Perhaps you think faith very easy; but if you are ever brought to feel the burden of sin you would not find it quite so light a labor. If you are ever brought into deep mire, where there is no standing, it is not so easy to put your feet on a rock, when the rock does not seem to be there. I find faith just the

easiest thing in the world when there is nothing to believe; but when I have room and exercise for my faith, then I do not find I have so much strength to accomplish it. Talking one day with a countryman, he used this figure: "In the middle of winter I sometimes think how well I could mow; and in early spring I think, oh! how I would like to reap; I feel just ready for it; but when mowing time comes, and when reaping time comes, I find I have not strength to spare." So when you have no troubles, couldn't you mow them down at once? When you have no work to do, couldn't you do it? But when work and trouble come you find how difficult it is. Many Christians are like the stag, who talked to itself, and said, "Why should I run away from the dogs? Look what a fine pair of horns I've got, and look what heels I've got too; I might do these hounds some mischief. Why not let me stand and show them what I can do with my antlers? I can keep off any quantity of dogs." No sooner did the dogs bark, than off the stag went. So with us. "Let sin arise," we say, "we will soon rip it up, and destroy it; let trouble come, we will soon get over it; but when sin and trouble come, we then find what our weakness is. Then we have to cry for the help of the Spirit; and through him we can do all things, though without him we can do nothing at all.

In all the acts of the Christian's life, whether it be the act of consecrating one's self to Christ, or the act of daily prayer, or the act of constant submission, or preaching the gospel, or ministering to the necessities of the poor, or comforting the desponding, in all these the Christian finds his weakness and his powerlessness, unless he is clothed about with the Spirit of God. Why, I have been to see the sick at times, and I have thought how I would like to comfort them; and I could not get a word out that was worth their hearing, or worth my saying; and my soul has been in agony to be the means of comforting the poor, sick, desponding brother; but I could do nothing, and I came out of the chamber, and half wished I had never been to see a sick person in my life: I had so learned my own folly. So has it been full often in preaching. You get a sermon up, study it, and come and make the greatest mess of it that can possibly be. Then you say, "I wish I had never preached at all." But all this is to show us, that

neither in comforting nor in preaching can one do any thing right, unless the Spirit work in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Every thing, moreover, that we do with out the Spirit is unacceptable to God; and whatever we do under his influence, however we may despise it, is not despised of God, for he never despises his own work, and the Spirit never can look upon what he works. in us with any other view than that of complacency and delight. If the Spirit helps me to groan, then God must accept the groaner. If thou couldst pray the best prayer in the world, without the Spirit, God would have nothing to do with it; but if thy prayer be broken, and lame, and limping, if the Spirit made it, God will look upon it, and say, as he did upon the works of creation, "It is very good;" and he will accept it.

And now let me conclude by asking this question. My hearer, then have you the Spirit of God in you? You have some religion, most of you, I dare say. Well, of what kind is it? Is it a homemade article? Did you make yourself what you are? Then, if so, you are a lost man up to this moment. If, my hearer, you have gone no further than you have walked yourself, you are not on the road to heaven yet; you have got your face turned the wrong way; but if you have received something which neither flesh nor blood could reveal to you, if you have been led to do the very thing which you once hated, and to love that thing which you once despised, and to despise that on which your heart and your pride were once set, then, soul, if this be the Spirit's work, rejoice; for where he hath begun the good work he will carry it on. And you may know whether it is the Spirit's work by this. Have you been led to Christ, and away from self: Have you been led away from all feelings, from all doings, from all willings, from all prayings, as the ground of your trust and your hope, and have you been brought nakedly to rely upon the finished work of Christ? If so, this is more than human nature ever taught any man; this is a height to which human nature never climbed. The Spirit of God has done that, and he will never leave what he has once begun, but thou shalt go from strength to strength, and thou shalt stand among the bloodwashed throng, at last complete in Christ, and accepted in the beloved. But if

you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his. May the Spirit lead you to your chamber now to weep, now to repent, and now to look to Christ, and may you now have a divine life implanted, which neither time nor eternity shall be able to destroy. God, hear this prayer, and send us away with a blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The Necessity of Divine Influences

by W.G.T Shedd

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” — LUKE xi. 13

THE reality, and necessity, of the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart, is a doctrine very frequently taught in the Scriptures. Our Lord, in the passage from which the text is taken, speaks of the third Person in the Trinity in such a manner as to convey the impression that His agency is as indispensable, in order to spiritual life, as food is in order to physical; that sinful man as much needs the influences of the Holy Ghost as he does his daily bread. “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?” If this is not at all supposable, in the case of an affectionate earthly parent, much less is it supposable that God the heavenly Father will refuse renewing and sanctifying influences to them that ask for them. By employing such a significant comparison as this, our Lord implies that there is as pressing need of the gift in the one instance as in the other. For, he does not compare spiritual influences with the mere luxuries of life, — with wealth, fame, or power — but with the very staff of life itself. He selects the very bread by which the human body lives, to illustrate the helpless sinner’s need of the Holy Ghost. When God, by his prophet, would teach His people that he would at some future time bestow a rich and remarkable blessing upon them, He says: “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” When our Saviour was about to leave his disciples, and was sending them forth as the ministers of his religion, he promised them a direct and supernatural agency that should “reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.”

And the history of Christianity evinces both the necessity and reality of Divine influences. God the Spirit has actually been present by a special and peculiar agency, in this sinful and hardened world, and hence the heart of flesh and the spread of vital religion. God the Spirit has actually been absent, so far as concerns his special and peculiar agency, and hence the continuance of the heart of stone, and the decline, and sometimes the extinction of vital religion. Where the Holy Spirit has been, specially and peculiarly, there the true Church of Christ has been, and where the Holy Spirit has not been, specially and peculiarly, there the Church of Christ has not been; however carefully, or imposingly, the externals of a church organization may have been maintained.

But there is no stronger, or more effective proof of the need of the presence and agency of the Holy Spirit, than that which is derived from the *nature of the case*, as it appears in the individual. Just in proportion as we come to know our own moral condition, and our own moral necessities, shall we see and feel that the origin and growth of holiness within our earthly and alienated souls, without the agency of God the Holy Spirit, is an utter impossibility. Let us then look into the argument from the nature of the case, and consider this doctrine of a direct Divine operation, in its relations to ourselves personally. Why, then, does every man need these influences of the Holy Spirit which are so cordially offered in the text?

1. He needs them, in the first place, in order that *he may be convinced of the reality of the eternal world*.

There is such a world. It has as actual an existence as Europe or Asia. Though not an object for any one of the five senses, the invisible world is as substantial as the great globe itself, and will be standing when the elements shall have been melted with fervent heat, and the heavens are no more. This eternal world, furthermore, is not only real, but it is filled with realities that are yet more solemn. God inhabits it. The judgment-seat of Christ is set up in it. Heaven is in it.

Hell is in it. Myriads of myriads of holy and happy spirits are there. Myriads of sinful and wretched spirits are there. Nay, this unseen world is the *only* real world, and the objects in it the *only* real objects, if we remember that only that which is immutable deserves the name of real. If we employ the eternal as the measure of real being, then all that is outside of eternity is unreal and a vanity. This material world acquires impressiveness for man, by virtue of the objects that fill it. His farm is in it, his houses are upon it, solid mountains rise up from it, great rivers run through it, and the old rolling heavens are bent over it. But what is the transient reality of these objects, these morning vapors, compared with the everlasting reality of such beings as God and the soul, of such facts as holiness and sin, of such states as heaven and hell? Here, then, we have in the unseen and eternal world a most solemn and real object of knowledge; but where, among mankind, is the solemn and vivid knowledge itself? Knowledge is the union of a fact with a feeling. There may be a stone in the street, but unless I smite it with my foot, or smite it with my eye, I have no knowledge of the stone. So, too, there is an invisible world, outstanding and awfully impressive; but unless I feel its influences, and stand with awe beneath its shadows, it is as though it were not. Here is an orb that has risen up into the horizon, but all eyes are shut.

For, no thoughtful observer fails to perceive that an earthly, and unspiritual mode of thought and feeling is the prevalent one among men. No one who has ever endeavored to arrest the attention of a fellow-man, and give his thoughts an upward tendency towards eternity, will say that the effort is easily and generally successful. On the contrary, if an ethereal and holy inhabitant of heaven were to go up and down our earth, and witness man's immersion in sense and time, the earthliness of his views and aims, his neglect of spiritual objects and interests, his absorption in this existence, and his forgetfulness of the other, it would be difficult to convince him that he was among beings made in the image of God, and was mingling with a race having an immortal destination beyond the grave.

In this first feature of the case, then, as we find it in ourselves, and see it in all our fellow-men, we have the first evidence of the need of *awakening* influences from on high. Since man, naturally, is destitute of a solemn sense of eternal things, it is plain that there can be no moral change produced in him, unless he is first wakened from this drowse. He cannot become the subject of that new birth without which he cannot see the kingdom of God, unless his torpor respecting the Unseen is removed. Entirely satisfied as he now is with this mode of existence, and thinking little or nothing about another, the first necessity in his case is a startle, and an alarm. Difficult as he now finds it to be, to bring the invisible world before his mind in a way to affect his feelings, he needs to have it loom upon his inward vision with such power and impressiveness that he cannot take his eye off, if he would, Lethargic as he now is, respecting his own immortality, it is impossible for him to live and act with constant reference to it, unless he is wakened to its significance. Is it not self-evident, that if the sinner's present indifference towards the invisible world, and his failure to feel its solemn reality, continues through life, he will certainly enter that state of existence with his present character? Looking into the human spirit, and seeing how dead it is towards God and the future, must we not say, that if this deadness to eternity lasts until the death of the body, it will certainly be the death of the soul?

But, in what way can man be made to realize that there is an eternal world, to which he is rapidly tending, and realities there, with which, by the very constitution of his spirit, he is forever and indissolubly connected either for bliss or woe? How shall thoughtless and earthly man, as he treads these streets, and transacts all this business, and enjoys life, be made to feel with misgiving, foreboding, and alarm, that there is an eternity, and that he must soon enter it, as other men do, either as a heaven or a hell for his soul? The answer to this question, so often asked in sadness and sorrow by the preacher of the word, drives us back to the throne of God and to a mightier agency than that of man.

For one thing is certain, that this apathy and deadness will never of itself generate sensibility and life. Satan never casts out Satan. If this slumberer be left to himself, he is lost. Should any man be given over to the natural inclination of his heart, he would never be awakened. Should his earthly mind receive no check, and his corrupt heart take its own way, he would never realize that there is another world than this, until he entered it. For, the worldly mind and the corrupt heart busy themselves solely and happily with this existence. They find pleasure in the things of this life, and therefore never look beyond them. Worldly men do not interfere with their own present actual enjoyment. Who of this class voluntarily makes himself unhappy, by thinking of subjects that are gloomy to his mind? What man of the world starts up from his sweet sleep and his pleasant dreams, and of his own accord looks the stern realities of death and the judgment in the eye? No natural man begins to wound himself, that he may be healed. No earthly man begins to slay himself, that he may be made alive. Even when the natural heart is roused and wakened by some foreign agency, some startling providence of God or some Divine operation in the conscience, how soon, if left to its own motion and tendency, does it relapse into its old slumber and sleep. The needle has received a shock, but after a slight trembling and vibration it soon settles again upon its axis, ever and steady to the north. It is plain, that the sinner's worldly mind and apathetic nature will never conduct him to a proper sense of Divine things.

The awakening, then, of the human soul, to an effectual apprehension of eternal realities, must take its first issue from some other Being than the drowsy and slumbering creature himself. We are not speaking of a few serious thoughts that now and then fleet across the human mind, like meteors at midnight, and are seen no more. We are speaking of that permanent, that everlasting dawning of eternity, with its terrors and its splendors, upon the human soul, which allows it no more repose, until it is prepared for eternity upon good grounds and foundations; and with reference to such a profound consciousness of the future state as this, we say with confidence, that the awakening must proceed from some Being who

is far more alive to the solemnity and significance of eternal duration than earthly man is. Without impulses from on high, the sinner never rouses up to attend to the subject of religion. He lives on indifferent to his religious interests, until *God*, who is more merciful to his deathless soul than he himself is, by His providence startles him, or by His Spirit in his conscience alarms him. Never, until God interferes to disturb his dreams, and break up his slumber, does he profoundly and permanently feel that he was made for another world, and is fast going into it. How often does God say to the careless man: "Arise, O sleeper, and Christ shall give thee light;" and how often does he disregard the warning voice! How often does God stimulate his conscience, and flare light into his mind; and how often does he stifle down these inward convictions, and suffer the light to shine in the darkness that comprehends it not! These facts in the personal history of every sin-loving man show, that the human soul does not of its own isolated action wake up to the realities of eternity. They also show that God is very merciful to the human soul, in positively and powerfully interfering for its welfare; but that man, in infinite folly and wickedness, loves the sleep, and inclines to remain in it. The Holy Spirit strives, but the human spirit resists.

II. In the second place, man needs the influences of the Holy Spirit *that he may be convinced of sin.*

Man universally is a sinner, and yet he needs in every single instance to be made aware of it. "There is none good, no, not one;" and yet out of the millions of the race how very *few feel* this truth! Not only does man sin, but he adds to his guilt by remaining ignorant of it. The criminal in this instance also, as in our courts of law, feels and confesses his crime no faster than it is proved to him. Through what blindness of mind, and hardness of heart, and insensibility of conscience, is the Holy Spirit obliged to force His way, before there is a sincere acknowledgment of sin before God! The careful investigations, the persevering questionings and cross-questionings, by which, before a human tribunal, the willful and unrepenting criminal is forced to see and acknowledge his wickedness, are but

faint emblems of that thorough work that must be wrought by the Holy Ghost, before the human soul, at a higher tribunal, forsaking its refuges of lies, and desisting from its subterfuges and palliations, smites upon the breast, and cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Think how much of our sin has occurred in total apathy, and indifference, and how unwilling we are to have any distinct consciousness upon this subject. It is only now and then that we feel ourselves to be sinners; but it is by no means only now and then that we are sinners. We sin habitually; we are conscious of sin rarely. Our affections and inclinations and motives are evil, and only evil, continually; but our experimental *knowledge* that they are so comes not often into our mind, and what is worse stays not long, because we dislike it.

The conviction of sin, with what it includes and leads to, is of more worth to man than all other convictions. Conviction of any sort, — a living practical consciousness of any kind, — is of great value, because it is only this species of knowledge that moves mankind. Convince a man, that is, give him a consciousness, of the truth of a principle in politics, in trade, or in religion, and you actuate him politically, commercially, or religiously. Convince a criminal of his crime, that is, endue him with a conscious feeling of his criminality, and you make him burn with electric fire. A convicted man is a man thoroughly conscious; and a thoroughly conscious man is a deeply moved one. And this is true, with emphasis, of the conviction of sin. This consciousness produces a deeper and more lasting effect than all others. Convince a community of the justice or injustice of a certain class of political principles, and you stir it very deeply, and broadly, as the history of all democracies clearly shows; but let society be once convinced of sin before the holy and righteous God, and deep calleth unto deep, all the waters are moved. Never is a mass of human beings so centrally stirred, as when the Spirit of God is poured out upon it, and from no movement in human society do such lasting and blessed consequences flow, as from a genuine revival of religion.

But here again, as in reference to the eternal state, there is no realizing sense. Conviction of sin is not a characteristic of mankind at large. Men generally will acknowledge in words that they are sinners, but they wait for some far-distant day to come, when they shall be pricked in the heart, and feel the truth of what they say. Men generally are not conscious of the dreadful reality of sin, any more than they are of the solemn reality of eternity. A deep insensibility, in this respect also, precludes a practical knowledge of that guilt in the soul, which, if unpardoned and unremoved, will just as surely ruin it as God lives and the soul is immortal. Since, then, if man be left to his own inclination, he never will be convinced of sin, it is plain that some Agent who has the power must overcome his aversion to self-knowledge, and bring him to consciousness upon this unwelcome subject. If any one of us, for the remainder of our days, should be given over to that ordinary indifference towards sin with which we walk these streets, and transact business, and enjoy life; if God's truth should never again in this world stab the conscience, and God's Spirit should never again make us anxious; is it not infallibly certain that the future would be as the past, and that we should go through this "accepted time and day of salvation" unconvicted and therefore unconverted?

But besides this destitution of the experimental sense of sin, another ground of the need of Divine agency is found in the *blindness* of the natural mind. Man's vision of spiritual things, even when they are set before his eyes, is dim and inadequate. The Christian ministry is greatly hindered, because it cannot illuminate the human understanding, and impart the power of a keen spiritual insight. It is compelled to present the objects of sight, but it cannot give the eye to see them. Vision depends altogether upon the condition of the organ. The eye sees only what it brings the means of seeing. The scaled eye of a worldling, or a debauchee, or a self-righteous man, cannot see that sin of the heart, that "spiritual wickedness," at which men like Paul and Isaiah stood aghast. These were men whose character compared with that of the worldling was saintly; men whose shoes' latches the worldling is not worthy to stoop down and unloose, And

yet they saw a depravity within their own hearts which he does not see in his; a depravity which he cannot see, and which he steadily denies to exist, until he is enlightened by the Holy Ghost.

But the preacher has no power to impart this clear spiritual discernment. He cannot arm the eye of the natural man with that magnifying and microscopic power, by which hatred shall be seen to be murder, and lust, adultery, and the least swelling of pride, the sin of Lucifer. He is compelled, by the testimony of the Bible, of the wise and the holy of all time, and of his own consciousness, to tell every unregenerate man that he is no better than his race; that he certainly is no better than the Christian Church which continually confesses and mourns over indwelling sin. The faithful preacher of the word is obliged to insist that there is no radical difference among men, and that the depravity of the man of irreproachable morals but unrenowned heart is as total as was that of the great preacher to the Gentiles, — a man of perfectly irreproachable morals, but who confessed that he was the chief of sinners, and feared lest he should be a cast-away. But the preacher of this unwelcome message has no power to open the blind eye. He cannot endow the self-ignorant and incredulous man before him, with that consciousness of the “plague of the heart” which says “yea” to the most vivid description of human sinfulness, and “amen” to God’s heaviest malediction upon it. The preacher’s position would be far easier, if there might be a transfer of experience; if some of that bitter painful sense of sin with which the struggling Christian is burdened might flow over into the easy, untroubled, and thoughtless souls of the men of this world. Would that the consciousness upon this subject of sin, of a Paul or a Luther, might deluge that large multitude of men who doubt or deny the doctrine of human depravity. The materials for that consciousness, the items that go to make up that experience, exist as really and as plentifully in your moral state and character, as they do in that of the mourning and self-reproaching Christian who sits by your side, — your devout father, your saintly mother, or sister, — whom you know, and who you know is a better being than you are. Why should they be weary and heavy-laden with a sense of their unworthiness

before God, and you go through life indifferent and light-hearted? Are they deluded in respect to the doctrine of human depravity, and are you in the right? Think you that the deathbed and the day of judgment will prove this to be the fact? No! if you shall ever know anything of the Christian struggle with innate corruption; if you shall ever, in the expressive phrase of Scripture, have your senses exercised as in a gymnasium (*Tà aísthataria gegumnasuéva* Heb. v. 14) to discern good and evil, and see yourself with self-aborrence; your views will harmonize most profoundly and exactly with theirs. And, furthermore, you will not in the process create any *new* sinfulness. You will merely see the *existing* depravity of the human heart. You will simply see what is, — is now, in your heart, and in all human hearts, and has been from the beginning.

But all this is the work of a more powerful and spiritual agency than that of man. The truth may be exhibited with perfect transparency and plainness, the hearer himself may do his utmost to have it penetrate and tell; and yet, there be no vivid and vital consciousness of sin. How often does the serious and alarmed man say to us: “I know it, but I do not *feel* it.” How long and wearily, sometimes, does the anxious man struggle after an inward sense of these spiritual things, without success, until he learns that an inward sense, an experimental consciousness, respecting religious truth, is as purely a gift and product of God the Spirit as the breath of life in his nostrils. Considering, then, the natural apathy of man respecting the sin that is in his own heart, and the exceeding blindness of his mental vision, even when his attention has been directed to it, is it not perfectly plain that there must be the exertion of a Divine agency, in order that he may pass through even the first and lowest stages of the religious experience?

In view of the subject, as thus far unfolded, we remark:

1. First, that it is the duty of every one, *to take the facts in respect to man's character as he finds them*. Nothing is gained, in any province of human thought or action, by disputing actual verities. They are

stubborn things, and will not yield to the wishes and prejudices of the natural heart. This is especially true in regard to the facts in man's moral and religious condition. The testimony of Revelation is explicit, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" and also, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." According to this Biblical statement, there is corruption and blindness together. The human heart is at once sinful, and ignorant that it is so. It is, therefore, the very worst form of evil; a fatal disease unknown to the patient, and accompanied with the belief that there is perfect health; sin and guilt with-out any just anti proper sense of it. This is the testimony, and the assertion, of that Being who needs not that any should testify to Him of man, for he knows what is in man. And this is the testimony, also, of every mind that has attained a profound self-knowledge. For it is indisputable, that in proportion as a man is introspective, and accustoms himself to the scrutiny of his motives and feelings, he discovers that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint."

It is, therefore, the duty and wisdom of every one to set to his seal that God is true, — to have this as his motto. Though, as yet, he is destitute of a clear conviction of sin, and a godly sorrow for it, still he should *presume* the fact of human depravity. Good men in every age have found it to be a fact, and the infallible Word of God declares that it is a fact. What, then, is gained, by proposing another than the Biblical theory of human nature? Is the evil removed by denying its existence? Will the mere calling men good at heart, and by nature make them such?

“Who can hold a fire in his
hand,
By thinking on the frosty
Oaucasus?
Or cloy the hungry edge of

appetite,
By bare imagination of a
feast?
Or wallow naked in
December snow,
By thinking on fantastic
summer heat?”
- SHAKSPEARE: Richard
II. Act i. Sc. 3.

2. In the second place, we remark that it is the duty of every one, *not to be discouraged by these facts and truths relative to the moral condition of man*. For, one fact conducts to the next one. One truth prepares for a second. If it is a solemn and sad fact that men are sinners, and blind and dead in their trespasses and sin, it is also a cheering fact that the Holy Spirit can enlighten the darkest understanding, and enliven the most torpid and indifferent soul; and it is a still further, and most encouraging truth and fact, that the Holy Spirit is given to those who ask for it, with more readiness than a father gives bread to his hungry child. Here, then, we have the fact of sin, and of blindness and apathy in sin; the fact of a mighty power in God to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and the blessed fact that this power is accessible to prayer. Let us put these three facts together, all of them, and act accordingly. Then we shall be taught by the Spirit, and shall come to a salutary consciousness of sin; and then shall he verified in our own experience the words of God: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

IN expounding the doctrine of these words, in the preceding discourse, the argument for the necessity of Divine influences had reference to the more general aspects of man’s character and condition. We were concerned with the origin of seriousness in view of a future life, and the production of a sense of moral corruption and unfitness to enter eternity. We have now to consider the work of the

Spirit, in its relations, first, to that more distinct sense of sin which is denominated the consciousness of *guilt*, and secondly, to that saving act of *faith* by which the atonement of Christ is appropriated by the soul.

I. Sin is not man's misfortune, but his fault; and any view that falls short of this fact is radically defective. Sin not only brings a corruption and bondage, but also a condemnation and penalty, upon the self-will that originates it. Sin not only renders man unfit for rewards, but also deserving of punishment. As one who has disobeyed law of his own determination, he is liable not merely to the negative loss of blessings, but also to the positive infliction of retribution. It is not enough that a transgressor be merely let alone; he must be taken in hand and punished. He is not simply a diseased man; he is a criminal. His sin, therefore, requires not a removal merely, but also an *expiation*.

This relation and reference of transgression to law and justice is a fundamental one; and yet it is very liable to be overlooked, or at least to be inadequately apprehended. The sense of *ill-desert* is too apt to be confused and shallow, in the human soul. Man is comparatively ready to acknowledge the misery of sin, while he is slow to confess the guilt of it. When the word of God asserts he is poor, and blind, and wretched, he is comparatively forward to assent; but when, in addition, it asserts that he deserves to be punished everlastingly, he reluctates. Mankind are willing to acknowledge their wretchedness, and be pitied; but they are not willing to acknowledge their guiltiness, and stand condemned before law.

And yet, guilt is the very essence of sin. Extinguish the criminality, and you extinguish the inmost core and heart of moral evil. We may have felt that sin is bondage, that it is inward dissension and disharmony, that it takes away the true dignity of our nature, but if we have not also felt that it is *iniquity* and merits penalty, we have not become conscious of its most essential quality. It is not enough that we come before God, saying: "I am wretched in my soul; I am

weariness of my bondage; I long for deliverance.” We must also say, as we look up into that holy Eye: “I am guilty; O my God I deserve thy judgments.” In brief, the human mind must recognize all the Divine attributes. The entire Divine character, in both its justice and its love, must rise full-orbed before the soul, when thus seeking salvation. It is not enough, that we ask God to free us from disquietude, and give us repose. Before we do this, and that we may do it successfully, we must employ the language of David, while under the stings of guilt: “O Lord rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Be merciful unto me, O God be merciful unto me.”

What is needed is, more consideration of sin in its objective, and less in its subjective relations; more sense of it in its reference to the being and attributes of God, and less sense of it in its reference to our own happiness or misery, or even to the harmony of our own powers and faculties. The adorable being and attributes of God are of more importance than any human soul, immortal though it be; and what is required in the religious experience is, more anxiety lest the Divine glory should be tarnished, and less fear that a worm of the dust be made miserable by his transgressions. And whatever may be our theory of the matter, “to this complexion must we come at last,” even in order to our own peace of mind. We must lose our life, in order to find it. Even in order to our own inward repose of conscience and of heart, there must come a point and period in our mental history, when we do actually sink self out of sight, and think of sin in its relation to the character and government of the great and holy God, — when we do see it to be *guilt*, as well as corruption.

For guilt is a distinct, and a distinguishable quality. It is a thing by itself, like the Platonic idea of Beauty.¹ It is sin stripped of its accompaniments, — the restlessness, the dissatisfaction, and the unhappiness which it produces, — and perceived in its pure odiousness and ill-desert. And when thus seen, it does not permit the mind to think of any thing but the righteous law, and the Divine character. In the hour of thorough conviction, the sinful spirit is lost in the feeling of guiltiness: wholly engrossed in the reflection that it

has incurred the condemnation of the Best Being in the universe. It is in distress, not because an Almighty Being can make it miserable but, because a Holy and Good Being has *reason* to be displeased with it. When it gives utterance to its emotion, it says to its Sovereign and its Judge: "I am in anguish, more because Thou the Holy and the Good art unreconciled with me, than because Thou the Omnipotent canst punish me forever. I refuse not to be punished; I deserve the inflictions of Thy justice; only *forgive*, and Thou mayest do what Thou wilt unto me." A soul that is truly penitent has no desire to escape penalty, at the expense of principle and law. It says with David: "Thou desirest not sacrifice;" such atonement as I can make is inadequate; "else would I give it." It expresses its approbation of the pure justice of God in the language of the gentlest and sweetest of Mystics:

"Thou hast no lightnings, O
Thou Just!
Or I their force should
know;
And if Thou strike toe into
dust,
My soul approves the blow.

The heart that values less
its ease,
Than it adores Thy ways,
In Thine avenging anger,
sees
A subject of its praise.

Pleased I could lie,
concealed and lost,
In shades of central night;
Not to avoid Thy wrath,
Thou *know'st*,
But lest I grieve Thy sight.

Smite me, O Thou whom I
provoke!
And I will love Thee still
The well deserved and
righteous stroke
Shall please me, though it
kill.”²

Now, it is only when the human spirit is under the illuminating, and discriminating influences of the Holy Ghost, that it possesses this pure and genuine sense of guilt. Worldly losses, trials, warnings by God’s providence, may rouse the sinner, and make him solemn; but unless the Spirit of Grace enters his heart he does not feel that he is ill-deserving. He is sad and fearful, respecting the future life, and perhaps supposes that this state of mind is one of true conviction, and wonders that it does not end in conversion, and the joy of pardon. But if he would examine it, he would discover that it is full of the lust of self. He would find that he is merely unhappy, and restless, and afraid to die. If he should examine the workings of his heart, he would discover that they are only another form of self-love; that instead of being anxious about self in the present world, he has become anxious about self in the future world; that instead of looking out for his happiness here, he has begun to look out for it hereafter; that in fact he has merely transferred sin, from time and its relations, to eternity and its relations. Such sorrow as this needs to be sorrowed for, and such repentance as this needs to be repented of. Such conviction as this needs to be laid open, and have its defect shown. After a course of wrong-doing, it is not sufficient for man to come before the Holy One, making mention of his wretchedness, and desire for happiness, but making no mention of his culpability, and desert of righteous and holy judgments. It is not enough for the criminal to plead for life, however earnestly, while he avoids the acknowledgment that death is his just due. For silence in such a connection as this, is *denial*. The impenitent thief upon the cross was clamorous for life and happiness, saying, “If thou be the Christ, save

thyself and us.” He said nothing concerning the crime that had brought him to a malefactor’s death, and thereby showed that it did not weigh heavy upon his conscience. But the real penitent rebuked him, saying: “Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds.” And then followed that meek and broken-hearted supplication: “Lord remember me,” which drew forth the world-renowned answer: “This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

In the fact, then, that man’s experience of sin is so liable to be defective upon the side of guilt, we find another necessity for the teaching of the Holy Spirit; for a spiritual agency that cannot be deceived, which pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the real intent and feeling of the heart.

II. In the second place, man needs the influences of the Holy Spirit, in order that *he may actually appropriate Christ’s atonement for sin.*

The feeling of ill-desert, of which we have spoken, requires an expiation, in order to its extinction, precisely as the burning sensation of thirst needs the cup of cold water, in order that it may be allayed. When the sense of guilt is awakened in its pure and genuine form, by the Holy Spirit’s operation, the soul *craves* the atonement, — it *wants* the dying Lamb of God. We often speak of a believer’s longings after purity, after peace, after joy. There is an appetency for them. In like manner, there is in the illuminated and guilt-smitten conscience an appetency for the piacular work of Christ, as that which alone can give it pacification. Contemplated from this point of view, there is not a more rational doctrine within the whole Christian system, than that of the Atonement. Anything that ministers to a distinct and legitimate craving in man is reasonable, and necessary. That theorist, therefore, who would evince the unreasonableness of the atoning work of the Redeemer, must first evince the unreasonableness of the consciousness of guilt, and of the judicial craving of the conscience. He must show the groundlessness of that

fundamental and organic feeling which imparts such a blood-red color to all the religions of the globe; be they Pagan, Jewish, or Christian. Whenever, therefore, this sensation of ill-desert is elicited, and the soul feels consciously criminal before the Everlasting Judge, the difficulties that beset the doctrine of the Cross all vanish in the *craving*, in the *appetency*, of the conscience, for acquittal through the substituted sufferings of the Son of God. He who has been taught by the Spirit respecting the iniquity of sin, and views it in its relations to the Divine holiness, has no wish to be pardoned at the expense of justice. His conscience is now jealous for the majesty of God, and the dignity of His government. He now experimentally understands that great truth which has its foundation in the nature of guilt, and consequently in the method of Redemption, — the great ethical truth, that after an accountable agent has stained himself with crime, there is from the necessity of the case no remission without the satisfaction of law.

But it is one thing to acknowledge this in theory, and even to feel the need of Christ's atonement, and still another thing to *really appropriate* it. Unbelief and despair have great power over a guilt-stricken mind; and were it not for that Spirit who "takes of the things of Christ and shows them to the soul," sinful man would in every instance succumb under their awful paralysis. For, if the truth and Spirit of God should merely convince the sinner of his guilt, but never apply the atoning blood of the Redeemer, hell would be in him and he would be in hell. If God, coming forth as He justly might only in His judicial character, should confine Himself to a convicting operation in the conscience, — should make the transgressor feel his guilt, and then leave him to the feeling and with the feeling, forevermore, — this would be eternal death. And if, as any man shall lie down upon his death-bed, he shall find that owing to his past quenching of the Spirit the illuminating energy of God is searching him, and revealing him to himself, but does not assist him to look up to the Saviour of sinners; and if; in the day of judgment, as he draws near the bar of an eternal doom, he shall discover that the sense of guilt grows deeper and deeper, while the atoning blood is not

applied, — if this shall be the experience of any one upon his death-bed, and in the day of judgment, will he need to be told what he is and whither he is going?

Now it is with reference to these disclosures that come in like a deluge upon him, that man needs the aids and operation of the Holy Spirit. Ordinarily, nearly the whole of his guilt is latent within him. He is, commonly, undisturbed by conscience; but it would be a fatal error to infer that therefore he has a clear and innocent conscience. There is a vast amount of undeveloped guilt within every impenitent soul. It is slumbering there, as surely as magnetism is in the magnet, and the electric fluid is in the piled-up thunder-cloud. For there are moments when the sinful soul feels this hidden criminality, as there are moments when the magnet shows its power, and the thunder-cloud darts its nimble and forked lightnings. Else, why do these pangs and fears shoot and flash through it, every now and then? Why does the drowning man instinctively ask for God's mercy? Were his conscience pure and clear from guilt, like that of the angel or the seraph, — were there no latent crime within him, — he would sink into the unfathomed depths of the sea, without the thought of such a cry. When the traveller in South America sees the smoke and flame of the volcano, here and there, as he passes along, he is justified in inferring that a vast central fire is burning beneath the whole region. In like manner, when man discovers, as he watches the phenomena of his conscience, that guilt every now and then emerges like a flash of flame into consciousness, filling him with fear and distress, — when he finds that he has no security against this invasion, but that in an hour when he thinks not, and commonly when he is weakest and faintest, in his moments of danger or death, it stings him and wounds him, he is justified in inferring, and he must infer, that the deep places of his spirit, the whole *potentiality* of his soul is full of crime.

Now, in no condition of the soul is there greater need of the agency of the Comforter (O well named the Comforter), than when all this latency is suddenly manifested to a man. When this deluge of

discovery comes in, all the billows of doubt, fear, terror, and despair roll over the soul, and it sinks in the deep waters. The sense of guilt, — that awful guilt, which the man has carried about with him for many long years, and which he has trifled with, — now proves too great for him to control. It seizes him like a strong-armed man. If he could only believe that the blood of the Lamb of God expiates all this crime which is so appalling to his mind, he would be at peace instantaneously. But he is unable to believe this. His sin, which heretofore looked too small to be noticed, now appears too great to be forgiven. Other men may be pardoned, but not he. He *despairs* of mercy; and if he should be left to the natural workings of his own mind; if he should not be taught and assisted by the Holy Ghost, in this critical moment, to behold the Lamb of God; he would despair forever. For this sense of ill-desert, this fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, with which he is wrestling, is organic to the conscience, and the human will has no more power over it than it has over the sympathetic nerve. Only as he is taught by the Divine Spirit, is he able with perfect calmness to look up from this brink of despair, and say: “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

In view of the truths which we have now considered, it is worthy of observation:

1. First, that *the Holy Spirit constitutes the tie, and bond of connection, between man and God.* The third Person in the Godhead is very often regarded as more distant from the human soul, than either the Father or the Son. In the history of the doctrine of the Trinity, the definition of the Holy Spirit, and the discrimination of His relations in the economy of the Godhead, was not settled until after the doctrine of the first and second Persons had been established. Something analogous to this appeals in the individual

experience. God the Father and God the Son are more in the thoughts of many believers, than God the Holy Ghost. And yet, we have seen that in the economy of Redemption, and from the very nature of the case, the soul is brought as close to the Spirit, as to the Father and Son. Nay, it is only through the inward operations of the former, that the latter are made real to the heart and mind of man. Not until the third Person enlightens, are the second and first Persons beheld. "No man," says St. Paul, "can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

The sinful soul is entirely dependent upon the Divine Spirit, and from first to last it is in most intimate communication with Him during the process of salvation. It is enlightened by His influence; it is enlivened by Him; it is empowered by Him to the act of faith in Christ's Person and Work; it is supported and assisted by Him, in every step of the Christian race; it is comforted by Him in all trials and tribulations; and, lastly, it is perfected in holiness, and fitted for the immediate presence of God, by Him. Certainly, then, the believer should have as full faith in the distinct personality, and immediate efficiency, of the third Person, as he has in that of the first and second. His most affectionate feeling should centre upon that Blessed Agent, through whom he appropriates the blessings that have been provided for sinners by the Father and Son, and without whose influence the Father would have planned the Redemptive scheme, and the Son have executed it, in vain.

2. In the second place, it is deserving of very careful notice that *the influences of the Holy Spirit may be obtained by asking for them*. This is the only condition to be complied with. And this gift, furthermore, is peculiar, in that it is *invariably* bestowed whenever it is sincerely implored. There are other gifts of God which may be asked for with deep and agonizing desire, and it is not certain that they will be granted. This is the case with temporal blessings. A sick man may turn his face to the wall, with Hezekiah, and pray in the bitterness of his soul, for the prolongation of his life, and yet not obtain the answer which Hezekiah received. But no man ever

supplcated in the earnestness of his soul for the influences of the Holy Spirit, and was ultimately refused. For this is a gift which it is always safe to grant. It involves a spiritual and everlasting good. It is the gift of righteousness, of the fear and love of God in the heart. There is no danger in such a bestowment. It inevitably promotes the glory of God. Hence our Lord, after bidding his hearers to “ask,” to “seek,” and to “knock,” adds, as the encouraging reason why they should do so: “For, *every one* that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh, [always] findeth and to him that knocketh, it shall [certainly] be opened.” This is a reason that cannot be assigned in the instance of other prayers. Our Lord commands his disciples to pray for their daily bread; and we know that the children of God do generally find their wants supplied. Still, it would not be true that *every one* who in the sincerity of his soul has asked for daily bread has received it. The children of God have sometimes died of hunger. But no soul that has ever hungered for the bread of heaven, and supplcated for it, has been sent empty away. Nay more: Whoever finds it in his heart to ask for the Holy Spirit may know, from this very fact, that the Holy Spirit has anticipated him, and has prompted the very prayer itself. And think you that God will not grant a request which He himself has inspired? And therefore, again, it is, that *every one* who asks invariably receives.

The third remark suggested by the subject we have been considering is, that *it is exceedingly hazardous to resist Divine influences*. “Quench not the Spirit” is one of the most imperative of the Apostolic injunctions. Our Lord, after saying that a word spoken against Himself is pardonable, adds that he that blasphemes against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come. The New Testament surrounds the subject of Divine influences with very great solemnity. It represents the resisting of the Holy Ghost to be as heinous, and dangerous, as the trampling upon Christ’s blood.

There is a reason for this. We have seen that in this operation upon the mind and heart, God comes as near, and as close to man, as it is

possible for Him to come. Now to grieve or oppose such a merciful, and such an *inward* agency as this, is to offer the highest possible affront to the majesty and the mercy of God. It is a great sin to slight the gifts of Divine providence, — to misuse health, strength, wealth, talents. It is a deep sin to contemn the truths of Divine Revelation, by which the soul is made wise unto eternal life. It is a fearful sin to despise the claims of God the Father, and God the Son. But it is a transcendent sin to resist and beat back, *after it has been given*, that mysterious, that holy, that immediately Divine influence, by which alone the heart of stone can be made the heart of flesh. For, it indicates something more than the ordinary carelessness of a sinner. It evinces a determined *obstinacy* in sin, — nay, a Satanic opposition to God and goodness. It is of such a guilt as this, that the apostle John remarks: “There is a sin unto death; I do not say that one should pray for it.”³

Again, it is exceedingly hazardous to resist Divine influences, because they depend wholly upon the good pleasure of God, and not at all upon any established and uniform law. We must not, for a moment, suppose that the operations of the Holy Spirit upon the human soul are like those of the forces of nature upon the molecules of matter. They are not uniform and unintermittent, like gravitation and chemical affinity. We may avail ourselves of the powers of nature at any moment, because they are steadily operative by an established law. They are laboring incessantly, and we may enter into their labors at any instant we please. But it is not so with supernatural and gracious influences. God’s awakening and renewing power does not operate with the uniformity of those blind natural laws which He has impressed upon the dull clod beneath our feet. God is not one of the forces of nature. He is a Person and a Sovereign. His special and highest action upon the human soul is not uniform. His Spirit, He expressly teaches us, does not always strive with man. It is a wind that bloweth when and where it listeth. For this reason, it is dangerous to the religious interests of the soul, in the highest degree, to go counter to any impulses of the Spirit, however slight, or to neglect any of His admonitions, however gentle. If God in mercy has

once come in upon a thoughtless mind, and wakened it to eternal realities; if He has enlightened it to perceive the things that make for its peace; and that mind slights this merciful interference, and stifles down these inward teachings, then God withdraws, and whether He will ever return again to that soul depends upon His mere sovereign volition. He has bound himself by no promise to do so. He has established no uniform law of operation, in the ease. It is true that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy, anti waits and bears long with the sinner; and it is also true, that He is terribly severe and just, when He thinks it proper to be so, and says to those who have despised His Spirit: "Because I have called and ye refused, and have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."

Let no one say: "God has promised to bestow the Holy Ghost to every one who asks: I will ask at some future time." To "ask" for the Holy Spirit implies some already existing desire that He would enter the mind and convince of sin, and convert to God. It implies some *craving*, some *yearning*, for Divine influence; and this implies some measure of such influence already bestowed. Man asks for the Holy Spirit, only as he is moved by the Holy Spirit. The Divine is ever prevenient to the human. Suppose now, that a man resists these influences when they are *already* at work within him, and says: "I will seek them at a more convenient season." Think you, that when that convenient season comes round, — when life is waning, and the world is receding, and the eternal gulf is yawning, — think you that that man who has already resisted grace can make his own heart to yearn for it, and his soul to crave it? Do men at such times find that sincere desires, and longings, and aspirations, come at their beck? Can a man say, with any prospect of success: "I will now quench out this seriousness which the Spirit of God has produced in my mind, and will bring it up again ten years hence. I will stifle this drawing of the Eternal Father of my soul which I now feel at the roots of my being, and it shall re-appear at a future day."

No! While it is true that any one who “asks,” who really *wants* a spiritual blessing, will obtain it, it is equally true that a man may have no heart to ask, — may have no desire, no yearning, no aspiration at all, and he unable to produce one. In this case there is no promise. Whosoever *thirsts*, and *only* he who thirsts, can obtain the water of life. Cherish, therefore, the faintest influences and operations of the Comforter. If He enlightens your conscience so that it reproaches you for sin, seek to have the work go on. Never resist any such convictions, and never attempt to stifle them. If the Holy Spirit urges you to confession of sin before God, yield *instantaneously* to His urging, and pour out your soul before the All-Merciful. And when He says, “Behold the Lamb of God,” look where He points, and be at peace and at rest. The secret of all spiritual success is an immediate and uniform submission to the influences of the Holy Ghost.

Notes

1. *Auto, kath auto, meth autou, ounoeides*. Convivium, p. 247, Ed. Bipont.
2. Guyon: translated by COWPER, is expressed by VAUGHAN in Works III. 85. — A similar thought “The Eclipse.”

“Thy anger I could kiss, and will;
But O Thy grief, Thy grief doth kill.

3. The sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable, not because there is a grade of guilt in it too scarlet to be washed white by Christ’s blood of atonement but, because it implies a total quenching of that operation of the third Person of the Trinity which is the only power adequate to the extirpation of sin from the human soul. The sin against the Holy Ghost is tantamount, therefore, to *everlasting* sin. And it is noteworthy, that in Mark iii 29 the reading *hamartamatos*, instead of *krisews*, is supported by a majority of the oldest manuscripts and versions, and is adopted by Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles. “He that

shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost . . . is in danger of eternal *sin*.”

Total Depravity

by Robert L. Dabney

I. What Presbyterians really mean by “Original Sin,” “Total Depravity,” and “Inability of Will.”

WCF 9.3, “Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”

By original sin we mean the evil quality which characterizes man's natural disposition and will. We call this sin of nature original, because each fallen man is born with it, and because it is the source or origin in each man of his actual transgressions.

By calling it total, we do not mean that men are from their youth as bad as they can be. Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, “deceiving and being deceived.” (2 Tim 3:13.) Nor do we mean that they have no social virtues towards their fellowmen in which they are sincere. We do not assert with extremists that because they are natural men, therefore all their friendship, honesty, truth, sympathy, patriotism, domestic love, are pretences or hypocrisies. What our Confession says is, “That they have wholly lost ability of will to any *spiritual good accompanying salvation*.” [WCF 9.3] The worst retain some, and the better much, ability of will for sundry moral goods accompanying social life. Christ teaches this (Mark 10:21) when, beholding the social virtues of the rich young man who came

kneeling unto him, "*He loved him,*" for Christ could never love mere hypocrisies. What we teach is, that by the fall man's moral nature has undergone an utter change to sin, irreparable by himself. In this sense it is complete, decisive, or total. The state is as truly sinful as their actual transgressions, because it is as truly free and spontaneous. This original sin shows itself in all natural men in a fixed and utter opposition of heart to some forms of duty, and especially and always to spiritual duties, owing to God, and in a fixed and absolutely decisive purpose of heart to continue in some sins (even while practicing some social duties), and especially to continue in their sins of unbelief, impenitence, self-will, and practical godlessness. In this the most moral are as inflexibly determined by nature as the most immoral. The better part may sincerely respect sundry rights and duties regarding their fellowmen, but in the resolve that self-will shall be their rule, whenever they please, as against God's sovereign holy will, these are as inexorable as the most wicked. I suppose that a refined and genteelly reared young lady presents the least sinful specimen of unregenerate human nature. Examine such a one. Before she would be guilty of theft, profane swearing, drunkenness, or impurity, she would die. In her opposition to these sins she is truly sincere. But there are some forms of self-will, especially in sins of omission as against God, in which she is just as determined as the most brutal drunkard is in his sensuality. She has, we will suppose, a Christian mother. She is determined to pursue certain fashionable conformities and dissipations. She has a light novel under her pillow which she intends to read on the Sabbath. Though she may still sometimes repeat like a parrot her nursery prayers, hers is spiritually a prayerless life. Especially is her heart fully set in her not to forsake at this time her life of self-will and worldliness for Christ's service and her salvation. Tenderly and solemnly her Christian mother may ask her, "My daughter, do you not know that in these things you are wrong toward your heavenly Father?" She is silent. She knows she is wrong. "My daughter, will you not therefore now relent, and choose for your Saviour's sake, this very day, the life of faith and repentance, and especially begin tonight the life of regular, real, secret prayer. Will you?" Probably her

answer is in a tone of cold and bitter pain. “Mother, don't press me, I would rather not promise.” No; *she will not!* Her refusal may be civil in form, because she is well bred; but her heart is as inflexibly set in her as the hardened steel not at this time to turn truly from her self-will to her God. In that particular her stubbornness is just the same as that of the most hardened sinners. Such is the best type of unregenerate humanity.

Now, the soul's duties towards God are the highest, clearest, and most urgent of all duties; so that wilful disobedience herein is the most express, most guilty, and most hardening of all the sins that the soul commits. God's perfections and will are the most supreme and perfect standard of moral right and truth. Therefore, he who sets himself obstinately against God's right is putting himself in the most fatal and deadly opposition to moral goodness. God's grace is the one fountain of holiness for rational creatures; hence, he who separates himself from this God by this hostile self-will, shuts himself in to ultimate spiritual death. This rooted, godless, self-will is the eating cancer of the soul. That soul may remain for a time like the body of a young person tainted with undeveloped cancer, apparently attractive and pretty. But the cancer is spreading the secret seeds of corruption through all the veins; it will break out at last in putrid ulcers, the blooming body will become a ghastly corpse. There is no human remedy. To drop the figure; when the sinful soul passes beyond the social restraints and natural affections of this life, and beyond hope, into the world of the lost, this fatal root, sin of wilful godlessness will soon develop into all forms of malignity and wickedness; the soul will become finally and utterly dead to God and to good. This is what we mean by total depravity.

Once more, Presbyterians do not believe that men lose their *free-agency* because of original sin. See our Confession, WCF 9.1: “God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil.” We fully admit that where an agent is not free he is not morally responsible. A just God will never punish him for actions

in which he is merely an instrument, impelled by the compulsion of external force or fate. But what is free-agency? There is no need to call in any abstruse metaphysics to the sufficient answer. Let every man's consciousness and common sense tell him: I know that I am free *whenever what I choose to do is the result of my own preference.*

I choose and act so as to please myself, then I am free. That is to say, our responsible volitions are the expression and the result of our own rational preference. When I am free and responsible it is because I choose and do the thing which I do, *not compelled by* some other agents, but in accordance with my own inward preference. We all know self-evidently that this is so. But is rational preference in us a mere haphazard state? Do our reasonable souls contain no original principles regulative of their preferences and choices? Were this so, then would man's soul be indeed a miserable weathercock, wheeled about by every outward wind; not fit to be either free, rational or responsible. We all know that we have such first principles regulative of our preferences: and these *are our own natural dispositions.* They are inward, not external. They are spontaneous, not compelled, and so as free as our choices. They are our own, not somebody else's. They are ourselves. They are essential attributes in any being possessed of personality. Every rational person must have some kind of natural disposition. We can conceive of one person as naturally disposed this way, and of another that way. It is impossible for us to think a rational free agent not disposed any way at all. Try it. We have capital illustrations of what native disposition is in the corporeal propensities of animals. It is the nature of a colt to like grass and hay. It is the nature of a bouncing schoolboy to like hot sausage. You may tole the colt with a bunch of nice hay, but not the boy; it is the hot sausage will fetch him when he is hungry; offer the hot sausage to the colt and he will reject it and shudder at it. Now both the colt and the boy *are free* in choosing what they like; free because their choices follow their own natural likings, *i.e.,* their own animal dispositions.

But rational man has mental dispositions which are better than illustrations, actual cases of native principles regulating natural choices. Thus, when happiness or misery may be chosen simply for their own sakes, every man's natural disposition is towards happiness and against misery. Again, man naturally loves property; all are naturally disposed to gain and to keep their own rather than to lose it for nothing. Once more, every man is naturally disposed to enjoy the approbation and praise of his fellowmen; and their contempt and abuse are naturally painful to him. In all these cases men choose according as they prefer, and they prefer according to their natural dispositions, happiness rather than misery, gain rather than loss, applause rather than abuse. They are as free in these choices as they are sure to choose in the given way. And they are as certain to choose agreeably to these original dispositions as rivers are to run downwards; equally certain and equally free, because the dispositions which certainly regulate their preferences are their own, not someone else's, and are spontaneous in them, not compelled.

Let us apply one of these cases. I make this appeal to a company of aspiring young ladies and gentlemen: "Come and engage with me of your free choice in this given course of labor; it will be long and arduous; but I can assure you of a certain result. I promise you that, by this laborious effort, you shall make yourselves the most despised and abused set of young people in the State." Will this succeed in inducing them? Can it succeed? No; it will not, and we justly say, it cannot. But are not these young persons free when they answer me, as they certainly will, "No, Teacher, we will not, and we cannot commit the folly of working hard solely to earn contempt, because contempt is in itself contrary and painful to our nature." This is precisely parallel to what Presbyterians mean by inability of will to all spiritual good. It is just as real and certain as inability of faculty. These young people have the fingers wherewith to perform the proposed labor, let us say of writing, by which I invite them to toil for the earning of contempt. They have eyes and fingers wherewith to do penmanship, but they *cannot* freely choose my offer, because it contradicts that principle of their nature, love of applause, which

infallibly regulates free, human preference and choice. Here is an exact case of “inability of will.” If, now, man's fall has brought into his nature a similar native principle or disposition against godliness for its own sake, and in favor of self-will as against God, then a parallel case of inability of will presents itself. The former case explains the latter. The natural man's choice in preferring his self-will to God's authority is equally free, and equally certain. But this total lack of ability of will toward God does not suspend man's responsibility, because it is the result of his own free disposition, not from any compulsion from without. If a master would require his servant to do a bodily act for which he naturally had not the bodily faculty, as, for instance, the pulling up of a healthy oak tree with his hands, it would be unjust to punish the servant's failure. But this is wholly another case than the sinner's. For, if his natural disposition towards God were what it ought to be, he would not find himself deprived of the natural faculties by which God is known, loved, and served. The sinner's case is not one of extinction of faculties, but of their thorough wilful perversion. It is just like the case of Joseph's wicked brethren, of whom Moses says (Gen 37:4): “That they hated their brother Joseph, so that they could not speak peaceably unto him.” They had tongues in their heads? Yes. They could speak in words whatever they chose, but hatred, the wicked voluntary principle, ensured that they would not, and could not, speak kindly to their innocent brother.

Now, then, all the argument turns upon the question of fact: is it so that since Adam's fall the natural disposition of all men is in this state of fixed, decisive enmity against God's will, and fixed, inexorable preference for their own self-will, as against God? Is it true that man is in this lamentable state; that while still capable of being rightly disposed toward sundry virtues and duties, terminating on his fellow-creatures, his heart is inexorably indisposed and wilfully opposed to those duties which he owes to his heavenly Father directly? That is the question! Its best and shortest proof would be the direct appeal to every man's conscience. I know that it was just so with me for seventeen years, until God's almighty hand

took away the heart of stone and gave me a heart of flesh. Every converted man confesses the same of himself. Every unconverted man well knows that it is now true of himself, if he would allow his judgment and conscience to look honestly within. Unbeliever, you may at times desire even earnestly the impunity, the safety from hell, and the other selfish advantages of the Christian life; but did you ever prefer and desire that life for its own sake? Did you ever see the moment when you really wished God to subjugate all your self-will to his holy will? No! That is the very thing which the secret disposition of your soul utterly resents and rejects. The retention of that self-will is the very thing which you so obstinately prefer, that as long as you dare you mean to retain it and cherish it, even at the known risk of an unprepared death and a horrible perdition. But I will add other proofs of this awful fact, and especially the express testimony of the Holy Spirit:

There is the universal fact that all men sin more or less, and do it wilfully. In the lives of most unrenewed men, sin reigns prevalently. The large majority are dishonest, unjust, selfish, cruel, as far as they dare to be, even to their fellow-creatures, not to say utterly godless to their heavenly Father. The cases like that of the well-bred young lady, described above, are relatively few, fatally defective as they are. This dreadful reign of sin in this world continues in spite of great obstacles, such as God's judgments and threatenings, and laborious efforts to curb it in the way of governments, restrictive laws and penalties, schools, family discipline, and churches. This sinning of human beings begins more or less as soon as the child's faculties are so developed as to qualify him for sinning intentionally. "The wicked go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." Now, a uniform result must proceed from a regular prior cause—there must be original sin in man's nature.

Even the great rationalistic philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, believed and taught this doctrine. His argument is, that when men act in the aggregate and in national masses, they show out their real native dispositions, because in these concurrent actions they are not

restrained by public opinion and by human laws restricting individual actions, and they do not feel immediate personal responsibility for what they do. The actions of men in the aggregate, therefore, shows what man's heart really is. Now, then, what are the morals of the nations towards each other and towards God? Simply those of foxes, wolves, tigers, and atheists. What national senate really and humbly tries to please and obey God in its treatment of neighbor nations? What nation trusts its safety simply to the justice of its neighbors? Look at the great standing armies and fleets! Though the nation may include many God-fearing and righteous persons, when is that nation ever seen to forego a profitable aggression upon the weak, simply because it is unjust before God? These questions are unanswerable.

In the third place, all natural men, the decent and genteel just as much as the vile, show this absolute opposition of heart to God's will, and preference for self-will in some sinful acts and by rejecting the gospel. This they do invariably, knowingly, wilfully, and with utter obstinacy, until they are made willing in the day of God's power. They know with perfect clearness that the gospel requirements of faith, trust, repentance, endeavors after sincere obedience, God's righteous law, prayer, praise, and love to him, are reasonable and right. Outward objects or inducements are constantly presented to their souls, which are of infinite moment, and ought to be absolutely omnipotent over right hearts. These objects include the unspeakable love of God in Christ in giving his son to die for his enemies, which ought to melt the heart to gratitude in an instant; the inexpressible advantages and blessings of an immortal heaven, secured by immediate faith, and the unutterable, infinite horrors of an everlasting hell, incurred by final unbelief, and risked to an awful degree, even by temporary hesitation. And these latter considerations appeal not only to moral conscience, but to that natural selfishness which remains in full force in unbelievers. Nor could doubts concerning these gospel truths, even if sincere and reasonably grounded to some extent, explain or excuse this neglect. For faith, and obedience, and the worship and the love of God, are

self-evidently right and good for men, whether these awful gospel facts be true or not. He who believes is acting on the safe side in that he loses nothing, but gains something whichever way the event may go; whereas neglect of the gospel will have incurred an infinite mischief with no possible gain should Christianity turn out to be true.

In such cases reasonable men always act, as they are morally bound to do, upon the safe side, under the guidance of even a slight probability. Why do not doubting men act thus on the safe side, even if it were a doubtful case (which it is not)? Because their dispositions are absolutely fixed and determined against godliness. Now, what result do we see from the constant application of these immense persuasives to the hearts of natural men? *They invariably put them off*; sometimes at the cost of temporary uneasiness or agitation, but they infallibly put them off, preferring, as long as they dare, to gratify self-will at the known risk of plain duty and infinite blessedness. Usually they make this ghastly suicidal and wicked choice with complete coolness, quickness, and ease! They attempt to cover from their own consciences the folly and wickedness of their decision by the fact they can do it so coolly and unfeelingly. My common sense tells me that this very circumstance is the most awful and ghastly proof of the reality and power of original sin in them. If this had not blinded them, they would be horrified at the very coolness with which they can outrage themselves and their Saviour. I see two men wilfully murder each his enemy. One has given the fatal stab in great agitation, after agonizing hesitations, followed by pungent remorse. He is not yet an adept in murder. I see the other man drive his knife into the breast of his helpless victim promptly, coolly, calmly, jesting while he does it, and then cheerfully eat his food with his bloody knife. This is no longer a man, but a fiend.

But the great proof is the Scripture. The whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, asserts this original sin and decisive ungodliness of will of all fallen men. Gen 6:3: “My spirit shall not always strive with man, *for that he also is flesh* (carnally minded).” Again, Gen 6:5:

“God saw that every imagination of the man's heart was only evil continually.” After the terrors of the flood, God's verdict on the survivors was still the same. Gen 8:21: “I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.”

Job, probably the earliest sacred writer, asks, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.” (Job 14:4.) David says: “Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Ps 51:5.) The prophet asks (Jer 13:23), “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.” Jeremiah says, Jer 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things, *and desperately* wicked.” What does desperately mean? In the New Testament Christ says (John 3:4-5), “That which is born of the flesh is flesh;” and “Except ye be born again ye cannot see the kingdom of God.” The Pharisees` hearts (decent moral men) are like unto whited sepulchres, which appear beautifully outwardly, but within are *full* of dead men's bones *and all uncleanness*. Does Christ exaggerate, and slander decent people?

Peter tells us (Acts 8:23) that the spurious believer is “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.” Paul (Rom 8:7): “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,” (inability of will). (Eph 2): “All men are by nature children of wrath ... and dead in trespasses and sins.” Are not these enough?

Regeneration

by William G. T. Shedd

In Westminster Shorter Catechism QQ. 30–31 the application of redemption is attributed to a particular work of God denominated effectual calling: "The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling." This effectual calling is defined to be "the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing [Westminster Larger Catechism 67 adds: powerfully determining] our wills, he does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel." According to this definition the effectual call produces (a) conviction of conscience, (b) illumination of the understanding, (c) renovation of the will, and (d) faith in Christ's atonement. Everything in redemption runs back, ultimately, to God: "His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

But such effects in the soul as conviction, illumination, renovation, and faith imply a great change within it. These are fruits and evidences of that spiritual transformation which in Scripture is denominated "new birth," "new creation," "resurrection from the dead," "death to sin and life to righteousness," "passage from darkness to light." Consequently, effectual calling includes and implies regeneration. Hence it is said in Westminster Confession 13.1 that "they who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are farther sanctified." In Westminster Confession 10.2 effectual calling is made to include regeneration, because man is said to be "altogether passive, until he is enabled to answer the call."¹

Various Uses of the Term Regeneration

The term regeneration has been used in a wide and in a restricted sense. It may signify the whole process of salvation, including the preparatory work of conviction and the concluding work of sanctification. Or it may denote only the imparting of spiritual life in

the new birth, excluding the preparatory and concluding processes. The Romish church regards regeneration as comprehending everything in the transition from a state of condemnation on earth to a state of salvation in heaven and confounds justification with sanctification. The Lutheran doctrine, stated in the apology for the Augsburg Confession and in the Formula of Concord, employs regeneration in the wide meaning, but distinguishes carefully between justification and sanctification. In the Reformed church, the term regeneration was also employed in the wide signification. Like the Lutheran, while carefully distinguishing between justification and sanctification, the Reformed theologian brought under the term regeneration everything that pertains to the development as well as to the origination of the new spiritual life. Regeneration thus included not only the new birth, but all that issues from it. It comprised the converting acts of faith and repentance and also the whole struggle with indwelling sin in progressive sanctification. Thus Calvin (3.3.9) remarks: "I apprehend repentance (poenitentiam) to be regeneration (regenerationem), the end of which is the restoration of the divine image within us. In this regeneration, we are restored by the grace of Christ to the righteousness of God from which we fell in Adam. And this restoration is not accomplished in a single moment or day or year; but by continual, even tardy, advances the Lord destroys the carnal corruptions of his elect." Here, regeneration is employed to denote not merely the instantaneous act of imparting life to the spiritually dead, but also the processes of conversion and sanctification that result from it. (See supplement 6.3.1.)

This wide use of the term passed into English theology. The divines of the seventeenth century very generally do not distinguish between regeneration and conversion, but employ the two as synonyms. Owen does this continually (On the Spirit 3.5), and Charnock likewise (Attributes, Practical Atheism). The Westminster Creed does not use the term regeneration. Instead of it, it employs the term vocation or effectual calling. This comprises the entire work of the Holy Spirit in the application of redemption. Under it belongs everything pertaining to the process of salvation, from the first step

of conviction of sin to the act of saving faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Fisher, *On the Catechism*, 31–32).

The wide and somewhat vague use of the term regeneration was suggested by a few scriptural texts. The apostle gives the injunction: "Put off the old man," "put on the new man," and "be renewed (ananeousthai)² in the spirit of your minds" (Eph. 4:22–25). He exhorts Christians to "be transformed by the renewing (anakainōsei)³ of their mind" (Rom. 12:2). In 2 Cor. 4:16 he says that the "inward man is renewed (anakainountai)⁴ day by day." In these instances, as the use of ananeoō⁵ and anakainoō⁶ instead of gennaō⁷ shows, the notion of molding or forming, rather than that of regenerating, is in St. Paul's mind. He is addressing those in whom the principle of the new life has been implanted—who have been born again—and now urges them to the exercise and nurture of the new life. Similarly, the prophet Ezekiel (18:31), addressing the house of Israel, the church of God, says: "Make you a new heart and a new spirit." Here, the return from backsliding and the reformation and culture of the spiritual life, not the actual regeneration of the soul, are what is demanded. Neither of these two texts refers to regeneration in the restricted signification of the term. God does not, in either of them, command man to quicken himself, to create life from the dead, to command the light to shine out of darkness, to call things that be not as though they were (2 Cor. 4:6; Rom. 4:17). In them both he exhorts regenerate but backsliding man, as he does the church at Ephesus, to "repent and do the first works" (Rev. 2:5). In the New Testament the renewing of regeneration is denoted by ktizein,⁸ gennaō,⁹ zōopoiein;¹⁰ and that of sanctification by ananeousthai¹¹ (Eph. 4:23), anakainountai¹² (2 Cor. 4:16), and anakainōsis¹³ (Rom. 12:2). (See supplement 6.3.2.)

But this wide use of the term regeneration led to confusion of ideas and views. As there are two distinct words in the language, regeneration and conversion, there are also two distinct notions denoted by them. Consequently, there arose gradually a stricter use of the term regeneration and its discrimination from conversion.

Turretin (15.4.13) defines two kinds of conversion, as the term was employed in his day. The first is "habitual" or "passive" conversion. It is the production of a habit or disposition in the soul: "Habitual or passive conversion occurs through the infusion of supernatural habits by the Holy Spirit."¹⁴ The second kind is "actual" or "active" conversion. It is the acting out in faith and repentance of this implanted habit or disposition: "Actual or active conversion occurs through the exercise of those good habits in which the acts of faith and repentance are both granted by God and called forth from man."¹⁵ After thus defining, Turretin remarks that the first kind of conversion is better denominated "regeneration" because it has reference to that new birth by which man is renewed in the image of his maker; and the second kind of conversion is better denominated "conversion" because it includes the operation and agency of man himself. De Moor on Marck (23.2), after distinguishing between *conversio activa* and *passiva*, says that the latter is synonymous with vocation.

We shall adopt this distinction between regeneration and conversion. Regeneration, accordingly, is an act; conversion is an activity or a process. Regeneration is the origination of life; conversion is the evolution and manifestation of life. Regeneration is wholly an act of God; conversion is wholly an activity of man. Regeneration is a cause; conversion is an effect. Regeneration is instantaneous; conversion is continuous.

The doctrine of regeneration was taught by Christ to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:3, 6); "the sons of God are born not of the will of man, but of God" (1:13). It had previously been taught in the Old Testament: "I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 11:19); "a new heart will I give you" (36:26); "I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts" (Jer. 31:33). The vision of dry bones (Ezek. 37) taught the doctrine symbolically. Moses taught the doctrine in Deut. 30:6: "The

Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (cf. Ps. 51:10).

Characteristics of Regeneration

Respecting regeneration, the following characteristics are to be noted. First, regeneration is solely the work of God. The terms employed in Scripture prove this: "creating anew" (Eph. 4:24), "fathering" (James 1:18), "quickenings" (John 5:21; Eph. 2:5), "calling out of darkness into light" (1 Pet. 2:9), "commanding the light to shine out of darkness" (2 Cor. 4:6), "alive from the dead" (Rom. 6:13), "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17), "born again" (John 3:3–7), "God's workmanship" (Eph. 2:10). These terms denote a work of omnipotent power. The origination of life is impossible to the creature. He can receive life; he can nurture life; and he can use and exert life. But he cannot create life.

Second, regeneration as the creative and life-giving act of God produces an effect on the human understanding. It is illumination: "enlightening the mind" (Westminster Larger Catechism 67); "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Cor. 2:12–13); "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. 1:18; Phil. 1:9; Col. 3:10; 1 John 4:7; 5:20; 17:3; Ps. 19:7–8; 43:3–4). The distinguishing peculiarity of the knowledge produced by regeneration is that it is experimental. By this is meant that the cognition is that of immediate consciousness. This is the highest and clearest form of cognition. When, for example, the truth that God is merciful is stated in language, the natural man understands the language grammatically and logically, but nothing more. He has no accompanying consciousness of God's mercy. In common phrase, he does not feel that God is merciful. But a knowledge that is destitute of inward consciousness is an inferior species. It is a blind man's knowledge of color. The blind man understands the phraseology by which the color

is described. It conveys logical and self-consistent notions to his understanding, but it is unattended with sensation. Such a knowledge of color is inadequate, in reality is ignorance, compared with that of a man possessed of vision. It is the knowledge of a sensuous object without any sensation. It is quasi knowledge, such as Christ refers to when he says of the natural man: "Seeing he sees not; and hearing he hears not."

Illumination or instruction by the Holy Spirit implies then the production of an experimental consciousness of religious truth. In this respect, it differs from human teaching. This is alluded to in John 6:63: "The words I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," that is, they are spiritual life. Vital and conscious knowledge of religious truth is the effect of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the human understanding. One man can teach religious truth by grammatical propositions to another, but he cannot illumine his mind in respect to it. He can tell a man that God is holy, is love, that sin is hateful and virtue is lovely; but he cannot impart the consciousness that God is holy, that God is love, that sin is hateful, that virtue is lovely. The production of an experience upon such subjects is the prerogative of God.

Hence all the unexperimental knowledge of the natural man upon religious subjects is denominated "ignorance" in Scripture. Said Christ to the Jews, "You neither know me nor my Father" (John 8:19); to his disciples he said, "It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13:11); "this is life eternal to know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3); "no man knows the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are filled with the praise of a kind of knowledge which they represent sinful man to be destitute of and which is the gift of God. Christ the great high priest "has compassion upon the ignorant" (Heb. 5:2). Scoffers are "willingly ignorant" (2 Pet. 3:5). Unbelieving Jews were "ignorant of God's righteousness" (Rom. 10:3). Before regeneration, men fashion themselves

"according to their lusts in ignorance" (1 Pet. 1:14). The sinful condition of the pagan world is called a "time of ignorance" which God in his forbearance temporarily overlooked" (Acts 17:30). Sin is often denominated folly. The psalmist mourning over the remainders of sin exclaims: "So foolish was I, and ignorant" (Ps. 73:32).

St. Paul explains the difference between the knowledge of the natural man and that of the regenerate in 1 Cor. 2:14: "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." "There is a wide difference," says Owen (Holy Spirit 3.3), "between the mind's receiving doctrines notionally and its receiving the things taught in them really. The first, a natural man can do. It is done by all who, by the use of outward means, do know the doctrine of Scripture in distinction from human ignorance and error. Hence men unregenerate are said 'to know the way of righteousness' (2 Pet. 2:21)." This true and real reception of divine truth, according to Owen, denotes (a) an apprehension that these "spiritual things" agree with the divine attributes and express them; the doctrine of gratuitous justification, for example, when received by the regenerate mind is perceived to accord with all the attributes of God and thus to be a manifestation of the glory of God; and (b) an apprehension that the particular "spiritual thing" is suited to the end proposed; the death of Christ, for example, is adapted in every way to meet the demands of God's holy nature and of man's sinful nature. It is not "foolishness," but wisdom, or an adaptation of means to ends and is so perceived and understood by the spiritual man, but not by the natural. That there is this power of illuminating the understanding is proved by the fact that good men pray that it may be exercised: "Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law" (Ps. 119:34); "teach me your statutes" (119:68).

Third, regeneration with respect to the human will is "renewal." Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 67 describes one part of effectual calling as the "renewing and powerfully determining" of the will. Biblical texts that prove this are the following: "I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh and

will give them a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26–27); "renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10); "may the God of peace make you perfect to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight" (Heb. 13:21); "it is not of him that wills, but of God that show mercy" (Rom. 9:16); "God works in you to will" (Phil. 2:13); "your people shall be willing in the day of your power" (Ps. 110:3); "the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" (2 Thess. 3:5). Those texts, also, which describe regeneration as a "quickenings" prove that the will is renewed.

Recurring to the distinction which we have made between "inclination" and "volition" or "choice," regeneration is to be defined as the origination of a new inclination by the Holy Spirit, not as the exertion of a new volition or making a new choice by the sinner.¹⁶ Keeping this distinction in mind, we say that in regeneration God inclines man to holiness and disinclines him to sin. This change of the disposition of the will is attributable solely to the Holy Spirit. The sinner discovers, on making the attempt, that he is unable to reverse his determination to self and the creature. He cannot start a contrary disposition of his will. He is unable to incline himself to God as the chief end of his existence. He can choose the antecedents or preparatives to inclining, but cannot incline. By a volition he can read his Bible. This is a preparative or antecedent to supreme love of God, but it is not supreme love and cannot produce it. By volitions he can listen to preaching and can refrain from vicious actions. These also are preparatives or antecedents to a holy inclination of the will, but are not this inclination itself and cannot produce it. It is a fact of consciousness that while the sinner can put forth single volitions or particular choices that are favorable to a new voluntary disposition because they evince the need of it, he cannot begin the new disposition itself. He cannot incline himself by any volition whatsoever. "The will," says Edwards (Will 3.4), "in the time of a leading act or inclination that is opposite to the command of God, is not able to exert itself to the contrary. The sinful inclination is unable to change itself; and for this plain reason that it is unable to incline to change itself." To employ a phrase of Edwards, the unregenerate is

"unable to be willing" in the direction of holiness. The reason and ground of this inability has been explained in anthropology. The inability is voluntary in the sense that it is the consequence of an act of self-determination, and this act was the sin in Adam by which the human will became sinfully inclined.

By the operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, the man is enabled to incline to holiness instead of sin. In the scriptural phraseology, he is "made willing" (Ps. 110:3). God "works in him to will" (Phil. 2:13). In the phraseology of Westminster Larger Catechism 67, he is "powerfully determined." By renewing the sinful and self-enslaved will, the Holy Spirit empowers it to self-determine or incline to God as the chief good and the supreme end. This new self-determination expels and takes the place of the old sinful self-determination. From this new self-determination or inclination or disposition or principle, holy volitions or choices proceed, and from the holy choices, holy actions.

That God the Spirit possesses the power to originate an inclination to holiness in the human will is proved by the biblical representations. David frequently asks God to exert this power: "Incline my heart unto your testimonies" (Ps. 119:36); "make me to go in the path of your commandments" (119:35); "turn away my eyes from beholding vanity" (119:37); "create in me a clean heart" (51:10); "open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth your praise" (51:15); "we are the clay, and you our potter" (Isa. 64:8); "the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14). The assurance of Christ that the Holy Spirit shall be given to everyone that asks implies the power of the Spirit to incline the human will.

While the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human will is inexplicable (John 3:8), yet certain particulars are clear. (a) The influence of the Spirit is distinguishable from that of the truth, from that of man upon man, and from that of any instrument or means whatever. His energy acts directly upon the human soul itself. It is the influence of spirit upon a spirit, of one of the trinitarian persons

upon a human person. Neither the truth nor a fellowman can thus operate directly upon the essence of the soul itself. It is in this respect that theologians have defined the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the human will to be "physical."¹⁷ The physis¹⁸ or essence of the Holy Spirit operates upon the physis¹⁹ of the human spirit. In regeneration, there is immediate contact between God and man. Spiritual essence touches spiritual essence. Yet there is no mingling or confusion of substance. God and man are two distinct and different beings, yet in regeneration they approach closer to each other than they do either in creation or providence. This fact is supported by the metaphors which describe the intimacy of the union between the believer and Christ. The one is the head, and the other is a member of the same body. Christ is the very life of the regenerate soul. In two instances the church is called "Christ": "To your seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16; 1 Cor. 12:12). Christ is "formed in the believer" (Gal. 4:19). It is also supported by the biblical statements respecting the working of the Holy Spirit in the soul: "The Spirit makes intercession" (Rom. 8:26–27). The operation of the Spirit is so intimate that his working cannot in consciousness be distinguished from that of the soul itself. The believer is a "temple" of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). That the influence of the Holy Spirit is directly upon the human spirit and is independent even of the word itself is further proved by the fact that it is exerted in the case of infants without any employment of the truth. John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15).²⁰ (b) By reason of this peculiarity in the operation of the Holy Spirit, it does not force the human will. It is purely spiritual agency exerted upon a spiritual being. If matter could operate by contact and directly upon mind, the consequence would be compulsion. The two things are heterogeneous. But when God operates directly upon man, the two beings are homogeneous. It is a Scholastic maxim that "whatever is received, is received after the manner of the recipient."²¹ Sensuous organs alone are adapted to receive sensuous impressions from objects of sense; the immaterial spirit alone is adapted to receive an impression from the eternal Spirit. Man's body cannot experience spiritual influences, and his soul cannot be

affected by matter. (c) The operation of the Holy Spirit is in the will; that of the truth, and of man upon man, is on the will. The more interior an influence is the farther is it from being compulsory. It is better able to work in accordance with the nature and constitution of that within which it works. If it were operating ab extra,²² it would be more apt to work across or against the constitutional structure: "It is a characteristic of God to move the will, especially by inclining it from within"²³ (Aquinas, Summa 1.105.4). (See supplement 6.3.3.)

Fourth, man is passive in regeneration. He cannot actively originate spiritual life. His relation to regeneration is that of a recipient. This is a part of the meaning of "passivity" in this connection. In that particular instant when the divine and holy life is implanted, the soul of man contributes no energy of efficiency of any kind. Being dead in sin, it cannot produce life to righteousness. A corpse cannot originate animal life. Lazarus was passive at that punctum temporis²⁴ when his body was reanimated. The same is true of the soul of man in respect to regeneration. But since regeneration is instantaneous, the sinner's passivity is instantaneous also. Man is passive only for a moment, during the twinkling of an eye. God's regenerating act is like the sounding of the last trumpet. The resurrection of dead bodies is instantaneous, and the regeneration of dead souls is so likewise. The doctrine that the sinner is passive in regeneration does not imply that the passivity extends over a great length or even any length of time in his existence. On the contrary, it is only a punctum temporis²⁵ in his history. Up to that point of time, he is active: active in enmity to God. After that point of time he is active: active in submission to God. The carnal mind is enmity; the spiritual mind is love. Enmity and love are activities of the soul. Between the carnal mind and the spiritual mind, there is nothing but the instant of regeneration. In this instant when the new life is imparted, the activity is solely that of God the Holy Spirit.

Fifth, man cannot cooperate in regeneration. This follows logically from the fact that he is passive in regeneration. A dead man cannot assist in his own resurrection. It also follows from the fact that cooperation implies some agreement between the parties. God and

the sinner must harmonize before they can work together. Two forces cannot cooperate unless they are coordinate and coincident forces. But up to the instant of regeneration, man is hostile to God: "The carnal mind is enmity toward God" (Rom. 8:7). Enmity cannot cooperate with love. (See supplement 6.3.4.)

Upon the Semipelagian, the Tridentine, and the Arminian theory of depravity, there may be cooperation, but not upon the Augustinian and Calvinistic. According to the former theories, there are slight remainders of holiness in the natural man which, though feeble, yet afford a point of contact and an element of force in his regeneration. Calvin (3.24.13) attributes synergism to Chrysostom and also to Bernard and Lombard (2.2.6):

Lombard, in order to establish the position that the human will performs its part in regeneration, informs us that two sorts of grace are necessary. One he calls operative, by which we efficaciously will what is good; the other cooperative, which attends as auxiliary to a goodwill. This division I dislike, because, while he attributes an efficacious desire of what is good to the grace of God, he insinuates that man has of his own nature antecedent though ineffectual desires after what is good; as Bernard asserts that a goodwill is the work of God, but yet allows that man is self-impelled to desire such a goodwill. But this is very remote from the meaning of Augustine, from whom, however, Lombard claims to have borrowed this distinction.

Synergism is enunciated in the canons of the Council of Trent (6.4). Regeneration is explained as taking place by some cooperation of the human will with the divine. The will is said to be "excited and assisted" by divine grace. Similarly, Limborch (Theology 4.14.21) says that "grace is not the solitary, yet it is the primary cause of salvation; for the cooperation of free will is due to grace as a primary cause; for unless the free will had been excited (excitatum) by prevenient grace, it would not be able to cooperate with grace." These are not the terms which the Scriptures employ. To excite and

assist sinful man is not the same as to quicken and renew him. To excite the human will is to stimulate it, not to impart life. Excitement supposes some vitality which is in low tone and requires a tonic. Assistance implies that the will already has some force in the right direction which only needs to be added to. This is very different from the view presented in Ezek. 37:14: "I will put my spirit in you, and you shall live." If there be some spiritual life in the natural man, he can cooperate in regeneration. But if he is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:11) he cannot. The truth upon this subject is well stated in Westminster Confession 10.2: "This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer the call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it." According to this statement, man is passive until he is quickened, after which divine act he is actively holy.

It is said by some that the sinful will has the power to cease self-determination to evil, though it has not the power to self-determine or incline to good. It can stop resistance to God, though it can do nothing more. But this would involve a cessation of all action in the will, both sinful and holy action, at the instant of regeneration, and this would make the will characterless at this instant. But in anthropology (pp. 496, 502, and 584–85) we have shown that the will cannot be inactive or destitute of an inclination, either good or evil. The will must be incessantly inclined in order to be a will, as the understanding must be incessantly intelligent in order to be an understanding. Consequently, the cessation of sinful inclination must be caused by the origination of holy inclination. Sin does not first stop, and then holiness come into the place of sin; but holiness positively expels sin. Darkness does not first cease, and then light enter; but light drives out darkness. Sin goes out, as Chalmers phrases it, by "the expulsion power of a new affection." Consequently, the regeneration of the will is the only way to stop the evil inclination of the will. Again, it is said that there is receptivity for holiness in the fallen will, though there is no energy to produce it.

But receptivity is more than capacity. It is a faint desire or inclination. Hence St. Paul says that "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him" (1 Cor. 2:14). There is repulsion, not reciprocity, in the natural man. "The carnal mind (phronēma)²⁶ is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). When Christ (Luke 18:42) said to the blind man "receive your sight," there was no receptivity in the eye, no favoring condition of the organ, that facilitated the restoration of sight. The causing of vision was wholly miraculous. Simultaneously with the words receive your sight, there was the exertion of creative power upon the sightless eye, enabling it to the act of vision. (See supplement 6.3.5.)

Sixth, regeneration is a work of God in the human soul that is below consciousness. There is no internal sensation caused by it. No man was ever conscious of that instantaneous act of the Holy Spirit by which he was made a new creature in Christ Jesus. And since the work is that of God alone, there is no necessity that man should be conscious of it. This fact places the infant and the adult upon the same footing and makes infant regeneration as possible as that of adults. Infant regeneration is taught in Scripture: "He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15); "suffer little children to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of God" (18:15–16); "the promise is unto your children" (Acts 2:39); "now are your children holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). Infant regeneration is also taught symbolically (a) by infant circumcision in the Old Testament and (b) by infant baptism in the New Testament.

Seventh, regeneration is not effected by the use of means, in the strict signification of the term means. The Holy Spirit employs means in conviction, in conversion, and in sanctification, but not in regeneration. The appointed means of grace are the word, the sacraments, and prayer. None of these means are used in the instant of regeneration; first, because regeneration is instantaneous and there is not time to use them; second, because regeneration is a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human spirit. It is the action of Spirit upon spirit, of a divine person upon a human person,

whereby spiritual life is imparted. Nothing, therefore, of the nature of means or instruments can come between the Holy Spirit and the soul that is to be made alive. God did not employ an instrument or means when he infused physical life into the body of Adam. There were only two factors: the dust of the ground and the creative power of God which vivified that dust. Divine omnipotence and dead matter were brought into direct contact, with nothing intervening. The dust was not a means or instrument by which God originated life. So in regeneration there are only two factors: the human soul destitute of spiritual life and the Holy Spirit who quickens it. The dead soul is not an instrument by which spiritual life is originated, but the subject in which it is originated.

When Christ restored sight to the blind man, he did it by creative energy alone, without the use of means or instruments. The light of day was not a means. It contributed nothing to the result. Nor was the blind eye a means of originating vision. When Christ anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay mixed with spittle, the act was symbolical, probably; but certainly the spittle was not a means employed by him to work the miracle. In like manner, the word and truth of God, the most important of all the means of grace, is not a means of regeneration, as distinct from conviction, conversion, and sanctification. This is evident when it is remembered that it is the office of a means or instrument to excite or stimulate an already existing principle of life. Physical food is a means of physical growth; but it supposes physical vitality. If the body is dead, bread cannot be a means or instrument. Intellectual truth is a means of intellectual growth; but it supposes intellectual vitality. If the mind be idiotic, secular knowledge cannot be a means or instrument. Spiritual truth is a means of spiritual growth, in case there be spiritual vitality. But if the mind be dead to righteousness, spiritual truth cannot be a means or instrument. Truth certainly cannot be a means unless it is apprehended. But "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

That regeneration is not effected by the use of means will appear from considering those cases in which means are employed. First, the word and truth of God are means of conviction, because there is in the human conscience a kind of vitality that responds to the truth as convicting and condemning. The apostasy did not kill the conscience stone-dead. If it had, no fallen man could feel remorse. Adam's fall has benumbed and stupefied the conscience, but there is still sufficient vitality left in it for it to be a distressing witness to man. Consequently, the Holy Spirit employs truth as a means of exciting and stimulating the human conscience, not of regenerating it in the strict sense of the term. The conscience is not "made alive from the dead" in the sense that the will is. It has not lost all sensibility to moral truth. It possesses some vitality that only needs to be stimulated and toned up. This is done in conviction and by the use of truth as an instrument. Second, the word and truth of God are means of conversion, because regeneration has preceded and has imparted spiritual life to the soul.²⁷ There is now a spiritual vitality that can respond to the truth. The understanding having been enlightened by regeneration, when the particular truth that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin is presented, it is apprehended. This truth is now spiritually understood and is no longer "foolishness" to the mind. And the will having been renewed and "powerfully determined" or inclined, this same cardinal truth is believed savingly. The doctrine of vicarious atonement thus becomes a means of faith in Christ, and faith in Christ works by sorrow for sin and love of holiness. Faith and repentance are converting acts. They are the substance of conversion and are brought about by the use of the appropriate means: by the presentation of evangelical truth to a soul in which the Holy Spirit has operated with regenerating grace. Third, the word and truth of God are means of sanctification, upon the same principle. Regeneration and conversion precede sanctification. By regeneration, spiritual life is originated; by conversion, spiritual life is put in action and manifested. Of course, then, the means of sanctification find a spiritual vitality in the soul, to which they are correlated. The Holy Spirit employs the word, sacraments, prayer, afflictions, and all the discipline of life as instruments by which he

excites and induces the renewed man to struggle with indwelling sin and to endure unto the end.

But when we consider regeneration itself and look into the soul for a principle of life and power to be correlated to means or instruments of regeneration, we do not find any. The unenlightened understanding is unable to apprehend, and the unregenerate will is unable to believe. Vital force is lacking in these two principal faculties. What is needed at this point is life and force itself. Consequently, the author of spiritual life himself must operate directly, without the use of means or instruments, and outright give spiritual life and power from the dead, that is, *ex nihilo*. The new life is not implanted because man perceives the truth, but he perceives the truth because the new life is implanted. A man is not regenerated because he has first believed in Christ, but he believes in Christ because he has been regenerated. He is not regenerated because he first repents, but he repents because he has been regenerated.²⁸

Eighth, regeneration is the cause of conversion. The Holy Spirit acts in regeneration, and as a consequence the human spirit acts in conversion. And as the act of regeneration is not divisible between God and man, neither is the act of conversion. The converting activity of the regenerate soul moves in two principal directions: (a) faith, which is the converting or turning of the soul to Christ as the Redeemer from sin, and (b) repentance, which is the converting or turning of the soul to God as the supreme good. Regeneration is instantaneous, conversion is continuous. Faith is gradual and unceasing, and so is repentance; but regeneration is effected completely and once for all. (See supplement 6.3.6.)

In connection with the doctrine that God is the sole author of regeneration, several particulars are to be noticed. The reason for expecting the regeneration of men is found in God's promise to bestow regeneration, not in man's power to produce it. In his discourse on the day of Pentecost, Peter assigns as a reason for "repenting and being baptized for the remission of sins" the fact that

God "has promised remission to as many as he had called" (Acts 2:38–39). He expected to see men repent under his preaching because "God had exalted Jesus to be a prince and a Savior to give repentance" (5:31) and because "God also to the Gentiles had granted repentance unto life" (11:18). Similarly, Paul exhorts Timothy to "be gentle unto all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:24). The preacher should confidently expect faith and repentance to follow from his preaching, because of God's purpose and promise to bestow regenerating grace in connection with preaching. In order to this expectation, it is not necessary that he should know who are the particular persons whom God has elected. It is enough to know that God has made an immense election, that he has formed a purpose to regenerate "a multitude which no man can number, out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues" (Rev. 7:9). A second ground of hope and expectation that sinners will be regenerated is the fact that under the gospel dispensation God's regenerating grace is being continually exerted. The Holy Spirit actually accompanies the faithful preacher of the word. The prophets "preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven" (1 Pet. 1:12). The Holy Spirit as a regenerating spirit is actually poured out among mankind. There is not a moment in which he does not regenerate many souls. Men are being born spiritually all the time, as men are being born physically all the time. A third reason for the expectation that sinners will be regenerated is the fact that God has promised to pour out the regenerating Spirit in answer to the prayers of the church. The church can obtain the Holy Spirit for the sinful world: "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse and prove me, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing" (Mal. 3:10); "if you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:13). The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was an answer to the prayer of the church.

Man's Agency in Regeneration

The question here arises: What is man's relation to regeneration? The answer is that his agency is not in regeneration itself, but in the work of conviction which is preparatory or antecedent to regeneration.

The term preparative as used by the Augustinian and Calvinist is very different from its use by the Semipelagian and Arminian. The former means by it conviction of sin, guilt, and helplessness. The latter employs it in the sense of a preparative disposition or a favoring state of heart. This is referred to in Westminster Confession 9.3: "A natural man is not able to convert himself or prepare himself thereto." The tenth of the Thirty-nine Articles also excludes the Semipelagian "preparatives" to regeneration: "We have no power to do good works acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us that we may have a goodwill and working with us when we have that goodwill." In Semipelagian use, a "preparative" denotes some faint desires and beginnings of holiness in the natural man upon which the Holy Spirit, according to the synergistic theory of regeneration, joins. Having this sense of the term in view, Witsius (Covenants 3.6.27) says: "Let none think it absurd that we now speak of means of regeneration, when but a little before (3.6.10, 12) we rejected all preparatives for it." Owen, on the other hand, denies "means" and asserts "preparatives" of regeneration. Yet Owen and Witsius agree in doctrine. In the Calvinistic system, a "preparative" to regeneration or a "means" of it is anything that demonstrates man's total lack of holy desire and his need of regeneration. It is consequently not a part of regeneration, but something prior and antecedent to it. There is a work performed in the soul previous to the instantaneous act of regeneration, as there is a work performed in the body previous to the instantaneous act of death. A man loses physical life in an instant, but he has been some time in coming to this instant. So man gains spiritual life in an instant, though he may have had days and months of a foregoing experience of conviction

and sense of spiritual death. This is the ordinary divine method, except in the case of infants.

John the Baptist was sent to preach the law in order "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). Conviction of sin, in this instance, was an antecedent or preparative to the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, but no part of regeneration itself. There is a grace of God that goes before regenerating grace and makes the soul ready for it. It is common or prevenient grace. Man's work in respect to regeneration is connected with this. Moved and assisted by common or prevenient grace, the natural man is to perform the following duties in order to be convicted of sin and know his need of the new birth:

1. Reading and hearing the divine word: "Faith comes by hearing" (Rom. 10:17); "who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 13:9); "the Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners, of driving them out of themselves and drawing them unto Christ" (Westminster Larger Catechism 155).

2. Serious application of the mind and examination of the truth in order to understand and feel its force: "Take heed how you hear: for whosoever has to him shall be given" (Luke 8:18). Says Owen (Holy Spirit, 2), "Should men be as intent in their endeavors after knowledge in spiritual things as they are to skill in crafts, sciences, and other mysteries of secular life, it would be much otherwise with them." The use of these means of conviction under common grace produces (a) illumination in regard to the requirements of the law and failure to meet them (this is not the spiritual illumination of the regenerate mind in 1 Cor. 2:14, but the legal illumination referred to in 2 Cor. 7:10; (b) conviction and distress of conscience; and (c) reformation of the outward life.

3. Prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit both as a convicting and a regenerating spirit, which is commanded by Christ in Luke 11:9, 13:

"I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you. If you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." That prayer for regenerating grace is a duty and a privilege for the unregenerate man is proved (a) by the fact that the Holy Spirit is promised generally under the gospel, as a regenerating spirit: "I will take you from among the heathen and gather you out of all countries, and I will put my Spirit within you. A new heart will I give you" (Ezek. 36:24, 27); "it shall come to pass that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. And whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered" (Joel 2:28–32). This is quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost. In accordance with these Scriptures, Westminster Confession 7.3 teaches that "God promises to give unto all those who are ordained to life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe." All men are to "call upon the name of the Lord" for the gift of the Holy Spirit thus promised, because no man has the right to assert that he is of the nonelect or to affirm this of another man. As Christ's atonement is offered indiscriminately, so the Holy Spirit is offered indiscriminately; and this warrants every man in asking for what is offered. Prayer for regenerating grace is also proved (b) By the fact that a man must obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit as a regenerating spirit before he can obtain it as a converting and sanctifying spirit. The Holy Spirit is not given as a converting and a sanctifying spirit until he has been given as a regenerating spirit. Regeneration is the very first saving work in the order, and this therefore is the very first blessing to be asked for: "Make the tree good, and his fruit good" (Matt. 12:33); "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). No man has any warrant or encouragement to pray either for conversion or for sanctification before he has prayed for regeneration. Whoever, therefore, forbids an unregenerate man to pray for regenerating grace forbids him to pray for any and all grace. In prohibiting him from asking God to create within him a clean heart, he prohibits him altogether from asking for the Holy Spirit. Prayer for regenerating grace is also proved (c) by the fact that the church is commanded to pray for the

outpouring of the Spirit upon unregenerate sinners in order to their regeneration. It is not supposable that God would command the church to pray for a blessing upon sinners which sinners are forbidden to ask for themselves.

To recapitulate, then, we say that the sinner's agency in respect to regeneration is in the antecedent work of conviction, not in the act of regeneration itself. The Holy Spirit does not ordinarily regenerate a man until he is a convicted man, until, in the use of the means of conviction under common grace, he has become conscious of his need of regenerating grace. To the person who inquires: "How am I to obtain the new birth, and what particular thing am I to do respecting it?" the answer is: "Find out that you need it and that your self-enslaved will cannot originate it. And when you have found this out, cry unto God the Holy Spirit, 'Create in me a clean heart, and renew within me a right spirit.' " And this prayer must not cease until the answer comes, as Christ teaches in the parable of the widow and the unjust judge (Luke 18:1–8). When men are convicted of sin and utter helplessness, they are "a people prepared for the Lord" (1:17). A sense of guilt and danger is a "preparative" to deliverance from it. A convicted man is a fit subject for the new birth, but an unconvicted man is not. A person who denies that he is a guilty sinner before God or that sin deserves endless retribution or who has no fears of retribution is not "prepared" for the regenerating work of the Spirit. It is true that the Holy Spirit, "who is free to work with means, without means, above means, and against means" (Westminster Confession 5.2), can convict a sinner without his cooperation if he pleases. An utterly careless and thoughtless person is sometimes by the power of God the Spirit suddenly filled with remorse and terror on account of his sins. And sometimes a convicted person does his utmost to repress conviction and get rid of moral anxiety, and the divine Spirit will not permit him to succeed. But this is not to be counted upon. The sinner is commanded to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the work of conviction. "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19) is enjoined upon him as well as upon the believer. He must endeavor to deepen, not to dissipate the sense of sin which has been

produced in his conscience, or he is liable to be entirely deserted by the Spirit and left to his own will and be filled with his own devices. The sinner cannot cooperate in the work of regeneration, but he can in the work of conviction. This "preparative" of conviction does not make the sinner deserving of regeneration. God is not obliged to overcome the sinner's self-determination to sin because the sinner knows that he cannot overcome it himself. The sinner's helplessness does not make him meritorious of salvation, because it is self-produced; but it does make him a suitable subject for the exercise of God's unmerited compassion in regenerating grace.

One thing is important, therefore, in giving advice to an unregenerate person, namely, to remind him of the danger of legality and self-righteousness. He must not suppose that by the use of the means of conviction—reading and hearing the word of God, avoiding all associations and practices that dissipate seriousness and quench conviction, and prayer that God would apply the truth to his conscience—he is doing a meritorious work that obliges God to the regenerating act. He must not imagine that "by doing his own part," as it is sometimes said, he can necessitate God to do his. This would make regeneration a debt, not grace. It would make it depend upon the sinner's action and not, as St. Paul says, upon God's "purpose according to election" (Rom. 9:11). The sinner must not require beforehand an infallible certainty that he will be regenerated as the condition of his using the means of common grace in conviction. He must not say to the Most High: "I will do my part, provided you will do yours." He must proceed upon a probability, remembering all the while that he merits not and has no claim to the new birth. After his best endeavors, he must look up as the leper did, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." He must do as the preacher does in regard to the regeneration of his hearers. The preacher does not say to the Lord, "I will preach your word, on condition that you will regenerate everyone to whom I preach." But he does as Paul bade Timothy: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25). And as the preacher has ample

encouragement to preach, because of the general promise that God's "word shall not return to him void," so every convicted sinner has ample encouragement to look up for God's grace in Christ for the new heart and right spirit which come only from this source and which are promised generally under the gospel dispensation. (See supplement 6.3.7.)

The language of Edwards (*Pressing into the Kingdom in Works* 4.392) accords with the scriptural representations:

Though God has not bound himself to anything that a person does while destitute of faith and out of Christ, there is great probability that in a way of hearkening to this counsel you will live; and that by pressing onward and persevering, you will at last, as it were by violence, take the kingdom of heaven. Those of you who have not only heard the directions given, but shall, through God's merciful assistance, practice according to them, are those that probably will overcome.

Of the same tenor is the following from Davies (*Sermons* 1.50 [ed. Barnes]; cf. Owen, *Works* 2.272–73 [ed. Russell]):

Men say to us, "You teach us that faith is the gift of God and that we cannot believe of ourselves, why then do you exhort us to it? How can we be concerned to endeavor that which it is impossible for us to do?" I answer to this, I grant that the premises are true; and God forbid that I should so much as intimate that faith is the spontaneous growth of corrupt nature or that you can come to Christ without the Father's drawing you; but the conclusions you draw from these premises are very erroneous. I exhort and persuade you to believe in Jesus Christ because it is while such means [as preaching the gospel] are used with sinners, and by the use of them, that it pleases God to enable them to comply or to work faith in them. I would therefore use those means which God is pleased to bless to this end. I exhort you to believe, in order to set you upon the trial [to believe]; for it is putting it to trial, and that only, which can fully convince you of your own inability to believe; and till you are convinced of this, you can

never expect strength from God. I exhort you to believe, because sinful and enfeebled as you are, you are capable of using various preparatives to faith. You may attend upon prayer, preaching, and all the outward means of grace with natural seriousness; you may endeavor to get acquainted with your own helpless condition and as it were place yourself in the way of divine mercy; and though all these means cannot of themselves produce faith in you, yet it is only in the use of these means that you are to expect divine grace to work it in you; never was it yet produced in one soul while lying supine, lazy, and inactive.

The speculative difficulties connected with the doctrine of regeneration arise from the fact that men put their questions and make objections from the viewpoint and position of the unconvicted sinner. They deny that they are helpless sinners; or they deny that sin deserves endless punishment; or they deny that sin requires vicarious atonement in order to its remission. A mind that is speculatively in this state is not "prepared" for regenerating grace. These are not the antecedents of regeneration. Such opinions as these must be given up, and scriptural views must be adopted, before the Holy Spirit will create the new heart. Or even if there be no heterodoxy, yet if the orthodox truth be held in unrighteousness; if the person does not reflect upon the truth and makes no effort to know his guilt and danger, but lives on in thoughtlessness and pleasure; this state of things must be changed. By a serious application to his own case of the law of God, the person must become an anxious inquirer, as a "preparative" to regeneration. The questions about man's relation to regeneration will give no serious trouble to any convicted man, to anyone who honestly acknowledges that he is a guilty and helpless sinner and seeks deliverance from the guilt and bondage of sin. The questions will then answer themselves.

It is objected that the prayer of the unregenerate is sinful. This proves too much, because it would preclude any action whatever by the unregenerate man. The hearing of the word by the unregenerate is sinful. But the unregenerate is not forbidden to hear, upon this

ground. The thinking of the wicked, like his plowing, is sin. All the acts of the unregenerate are sinful, because none of them spring from supreme love to God, yet some of them are better preparatives for or antecedents to God's work of regeneration than others. Attendance upon public worship is better adapted to advance a man in the knowledge of his spiritual needs than attendance upon the theater. Prayer is better adapted than prayerlessness to bring a blessing to the soul. "Behold he prays" was mentioned as a hopeful indication in the case of Saul of Tarsus. "An act," says Owen, "may be good as to the matter of it, though sinful as to the form: for example, hearing the word by the unregenerate. And an act may be bad both as to the matter and the form: for example, pleasure seeking on the Sabbath by the unregenerate. The former act is to be preferred, rather than the latter. The former act is positively commanded of God; the latter is positively forbidden." Westminster Confession 16.7 teaches that "works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, yet because they do not proceed from faith are sinful and cannot please God. And yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God [than their performance of them]." If the presence of sin in the soul is a reason why an unregenerate man may not pray for regenerating grace, then it is a reason why the regenerate man may not pray for sanctifying grace. A regenerate man's prayer is mixed with sin. If, then, a person may not pray until he is regenerated, neither may he pray until he is perfectly sanctified. If the existence of sin is a reason for not praying in one case, it is in the other.

It is objected, second, that only the prayer of faith is infallibly granted. But this is no reason why a prayer that will probably be granted should not be offered. Prayer for sanctification supposes previous regeneration. This is the prayer of faith and is heard in every instance. But it does not follow that the prayer for regeneration, which God is able to answer and which he encourages convicted sinners to hope that he will answer, should not be put up, because infallible certainty is not connected with the answer. Probability of an answer is good reason for asking for regenerating

grace. The fact that the prayer of the unregenerate does not deserve an answer does not prove that God will not answer it. The prayer of the regenerate does not deserve an answer on the ground of merit.

The first reason why prayer for sanctification is infallibly certain to be granted, while that for regeneration is not, is that God has bound himself by a promise in the former case, but not in the latter. The former is connected with a covenant; the latter is not. God has promised to sanctify every believer without exception who asks for sanctification; but he has not promised to regenerate every convicted sinner without exception who asks for regeneration. Regeneration is according to the purpose of God in election; and election does not depend upon any act of the creature, be it prayer or any other act. Consequently, the convicted sinner's prayer cannot infallibly secure regeneration, as the believer's prayer can sanctification. Whenever regenerating grace is implored, the sovereignty of God in its bestowment must be recognized. The words of St. Paul apply here: "If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25). The words of the prophets also: "Let every man cry mightily unto God; who can tell if God will turn and repent, that we perish not?" (Jon. 3:9); "rend your heart, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. Who knows if he will return and repent and leave a blessing behind him?" (Joel 2:13–14). The words of the leper must always be a part of the prayer for regenerating grace: "If you will, you can make me clean" (Mark 1:40). When it is said that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved" (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13), the prayer of the convicted may be meant, and the general fact is that it will be answered.³⁰ Or the prayer of the regenerate for sanctification may be meant. Whosoever shall believingly and penitently call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

A second reason why the answer to prayer for regeneration is optional and sovereign, while that for sanctification is not, is that in the latter instance it is a means to the end, while in the former it is not. The prayer for sanctification is a part of the process of

sanctification, but the prayer for regeneration is not a part of regeneration. Prayer as a divinely appointed means infallibly secures its end; but prayer as an appointed antecedent and not a means is accompanied with probability, not absolute certainty.

Because God has not bound himself by a covenant to hear the prayer of every convicted sinner without exception, it by no means follows that he does not hear such a prayer and that it is useless for such a person to pray. He has heard the cry of multitudes of this class. It is his general rule under the gospel economy to hear this cry. The highest probability of success, therefore, attends the prayer of an anxious and convicted person for regenerating grace. And this is ample encouragement for him to call upon the merciful and mighty God for what he needs, namely, a heart of flesh in place of the stony heart. It is not true that God never granted the prayer of an unregenerate man. Such men in peril have called upon God to spare their lives and have been heard. This is taught in Ps. 107:10–14. Convicted men, from a sense of danger and the fear of the wrath to come, have prayed for the salvation of their souls from perdition, and God has saved them. In such cases, God has granted the petition, not because it was a holy one or because it merited to be granted, but because the blessing was needed and because of his mercy to sinners in Christ. Calvin (3.20.15) mentions the prayers of Jotham (Judg. 9:20) and of Samson (16:28) as instances in which "the Lord complied with some prayers, which, nevertheless, did not arise from a calm or well-regulated heart. Whence it appears that prayers not conformable to the rules of the divine word are nevertheless efficacious."

But in addition to the fact that the prayer of a convicted sinner may have an effect upon God and be answered favorably, it also has an effect on the person himself and prepares for the regenerating act of God. No man can study the divine word and receive legal illumination from it without having some sense of danger awakened and giving utterance to it in prayer. Even if the prayer be only the cry of fear and is not accompanied with filial trust and humble

submission, it is of use. The prayer, by its very defects, prepares for the new birth by showing the person his need of it. The person in distress asks for a new heart. The answer does not come immediately. The heart is displeased, is perhaps made more bitter and rebellious. By this experience, the Holy Spirit discloses to the unregenerate man more and more of the enmity of the carnal mind and the impotence of the self-enslaved will. This goes toward preparing him for the instantaneous act of regeneration.

"It is," says Owen (Holy Spirit 4.3), "in no way inconsistent that faith should be required previously unto the receiving of the Spirit as a spirit of sanctification; though it be not so as he is the author of regeneration." And the reason he assigns is that in the instance of sanctification prayer is a means; while in the instance of regeneration prayer is not a means but a preparative. He discusses the point in the following manner:

May a person who is yet unregenerate pray for the Spirit of regeneration to effect that work in him? For whereas as such he is promised only to the elect, such a person not knowing his election seems to have no foundation to make such a request upon. Answer: (1) Election is no qualification on our part which we may consider and plead in our supplications, but is only the secret purpose on the part of God of what himself will do and is known to us only by its effects. (2) Persons convinced of sin and a state of sin may and ought to pray that God, by the effectual communications of his Spirit unto them, would deliver them from that condition. This is one way whereby we "flee from the wrath to come." (3) The especial object of their supplications herein is sovereign grace, goodness, and mercy as disclosed in and by Jesus Christ. Such persons cannot indeed plead any especial promise as made unto them. But they may plead for the grace and mercy declared in the promises as indefinitely proposed unto sinners. It may be that they can proceed no further in their expectations but unto that of the prophet, "Who knows if God will come and give a blessing?" (Joel 2:14). Yet is this a sufficient ground and encouragement to keep them waiting at the throne of grace. So

Paul, after he had received his vision from heaven, continued in great distress of mind praying until he received the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:9, 17). (4) Persons under such convictions have really sometimes the seeds of regeneration communicated unto them, and then as they ought to so they will continue in their supplications for the increase and manifestation of it.³¹

When our Lord (John 14:17) asserts that "the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit because it sees him not neither knows him," the reference is to the Holy Spirit as the spirit of sanctification. Christ is speaking of him as the "Comforter" who augments and strengthens already existing spiritual life. But if the "world," that is, the unregenerate, are incapable of receiving the Holy Spirit in his regenerating office, they cannot be regenerated.

There is the highest encouragement in the word of God to pray for the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit. It is a duty enjoined upon all men without exception, like that of hearing the word: "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:14); "you, Lord, are plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon you" (Ps. 86:5); "the Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him" (145:18); "the Lord is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. 10:12); "seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near" (Isa. 55:6); "I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8); "behold he prays" (Acts 9:11); "you that hear prayer, unto you shall all flesh come" (Ps. 65:2). These and other similar texts relate to spiritual gifts. They invite and command men universally and indiscriminately to ask God for the Holy Spirit in any of his operations, as the first and best of his gifts: "Prayer, being one special part of religious worship, is required by God of all men" (Westminster Confession 21.3).³²

While regeneration is a sovereign act of God according to election, it is an encouraging fact both for the sinner and the preacher of the

word that God's regenerating grace is commonly bestowed where the preparatory work is performed. This is the rule under the gospel dispensation. He who reads and meditates upon the word of God is ordinarily enlightened by the Holy Spirit, perhaps in the very act of reading or hearing or meditating: "While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts 10:44). He who asks for regenerating grace may be regenerated perhaps in the act of praying. God has appointed certain human acts whereby to make ready the heart of man for the divine act. Without attentive reading and hearing of the word and prayer, the soul is not a fit subject for regenerating grace. By "fitness" is not meant holiness or even the faintest desire for holiness, but a conviction of guilt and danger, a sense of sin and utter impotence to everything spiritually good. Such an experience as this "breaks up the fallow ground," to employ the scriptural metaphor (Jer. 4:3; Hos. 10:12). When the Holy Spirit finds this preparation, then he usually intervenes with his quickening agency. The effect of prevenient grace in conviction is commonly followed by special grace in regeneration; the fact of the outward call is a reason both for the sinner and the minister of the word for expecting the inward call. Yet regeneration, after all the preparation that has been made by conviction and legal illumination, depends upon the sovereign will of God: "The wind blows where it lists, so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Regeneration rests upon God's election and not upon man's preparative acts, upon special grace and not upon common grace.

It follows, consequently, that the unregenerate man should be extremely careful how he deals with common grace. If he suppresses conviction of sin and thus nullifies common grace, then God may withdraw all grace. This was the case with some of the Jews: "For they, being [willingly] ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. And because of unbelief were broken off" (Rom. 10:3; 11:20). The same is true of some nominal Christians. God has sovereignty and liberty in respect to regenerating grace. When a person has stifled conviction, God

sometimes leaves him to his self-will forever. Yet observation shows that the Holy Spirit suffers long and is very patient and forbearing with convicted men, that he does not hastily leave them, even when they disobey his admonitions, but continues to strive with them and finally brings them to faith and repentance. (See supplement 6.3.8.)

Upon this general fact in the economy of redemption—that the right use of common grace is followed by regenerating grace—both the sinner and the preacher should act. In this respect, both are like other men. The farmer has no stronger motive than that of probable success for sowing grain; the merchant, for sending out ships; the manufacturer, for erecting factories. Salvation is in the highest degree probable for any person who earnestly and diligently uses common grace and the means of common grace. It is to be confidently expected that a convicted man will be made a new man in Christ Jesus. Every lost man ought to be thankful for such an encouraging probability. But to insist beforehand upon infallible certainty—and especially a certainty that is to depend upon his own action—is both folly and sin. It is folly to suppose that so weak and fickle a faculty as the human will can make anything an infallible certainty. And it is sin to attempt to divide the glory of regenerating the human soul between the Holy Spirit and the soul itself. (See supplement 6.3.9.)

Third, it is objected that to pray for regeneration is to delay faith and repentance. The sinner is commanded immediately to believe on Christ and turn from his sin with godly sorrow; but praying for regeneration is dallying with the use of means. It is an excuse for procrastination. To this it is to be replied: That prayer for regeneration is a prayer that God the Holy Spirit would work instantaneously upon the heart and would immediately renew and incline the will. There would be force in this objection if the sinner were taught that there are means of regeneration and were exhorted to supplicate God to regenerate him at some future time through his own use of these means. But he who truly prays for regenerating grace despairs of all agency in the use of means and precludes all

procrastination by entreating an immediate and instantaneous act on the part of God by which he shall, this very instant, be delivered from the death and bondage of sin and be brought into the life and liberty of the gospel. He implores "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, to shine in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). He asks the Son of God, "who quickens whom he will" (John 5:21), to enliven his spirit now "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). Consequently, prayer for regenerating grace is an evidence that the convicted person has come to know that the word, sacraments, and prayer—all the means of grace—are inadequate to reanimate the soul and make it alive to righteousness. It is not until he has discovered that legal conviction, legal illumination, resolutions to reform, external reformation, reading and hearing the word, and prayer itself cannot change the heart that he leaves all these behind him and begs God immediately and instantaneously to do this needed work in his soul. The prayer for regenerating grace is, in truth, the most energetic and pressing act that the sinner can perform. It is the farthest removed of any from procrastination. It is an immediate act on the part of the sinner, and it entreats God to do an instantaneous work within him.

In this manner, prayer for the instantaneous gift of regenerating grace harmonizes with the gospel call to immediate faith and repentance. Faith and repentance naturally and necessarily result from regeneration. Whoever is regenerated will believe and repent.³³ To pray therefore for instantaneous regeneration is, virtually, to pray for instantaneous faith and repentance, and vice versa. He who prays "help my unbelief; take away the stony heart, and give the heart of flesh" prays that God would "renew and powerfully determine the will," which is the definition of regeneration. At the same time, prayer for regenerating grace must not be substituted for the act of faith and repentance. The direction is "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." This is the biblical answer to the question: What must I do to be saved? But when the convicted person discovers that the act of faith is hindered and prevented by

the blindness of his understanding and the bondage of his will to sin and asks if he may implore the "enlightening and quickening energy of the Holy Spirit to persuade and enable him to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered in the gospel" (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 31), he is to be answered in the affirmative. In imploring the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, he is "striving to enter in at the strait gate"; he is endeavoring to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The act of faith in the blood of Christ, in its own nature, is simple and easy: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:30). But considered in reference to the pride and self-righteousness of the natural heart, faith is impossible without regeneration. Hence the frequent statement in Calvinistic creeds that man needs to be persuaded and enabled to this act.³⁴ (See supplement 6.3.10.)

S U P P L E M E N T S

6.3.1 (see p. 762). The two uses of "regeneration," in a wide and narrow sense, by the Reformers and seventeenth-century divines are different from those in the patristic church, which grew out of the patristic view of the sacraments. Augustine, for example, employs the term to denote both the apparently and professedly regenerate and the really such. The former are members of the visible church, but not of the invisible; the latter belong to the invisible church also. The former may therefore fall away, the latter may not. He remarks as follows in Perseverance 21: "Of two [professedly] pious (piis) men, why to one should be given perseverance unto the end and to the other it should not be given is an unsearchable judgment of God. Yet to believers it ought to be a most certain fact that the former is of the predestinated, the latter is not. 'For if they had been of us,' says one of the predestinated who had drunk this secret from the breast of the Lord, 'certainly they would have continued with us.' " Again, in Rebuke and Grace 18, he says: "It is greatly to be wondered at that to some of his own children, whom he has regenerated in Christ and to whom he has given faith, hope, and love, God does not give perseverance also, when to the children of another [i.e., of Satan] he forgives their wickedness and by the bestowal of his grace makes

them his own children. Moreover, it is not less marvelous that some of the children of his friends, that is, of regenerated and good believers, departing this life as infants without baptism, although he certainly might provide the grace of this laver [of baptism] if he so willed, he yet alienates from his kingdom into which he introduces their parents; and some children of his enemies he causes to come into the hands of Christians and by means of this laver introduces into the kingdom from which their parents are aliens. Of both of which things we may exclaim, How unsearchable are the judgments of God."

From the above extracts it will be seen that Augustine held (1) that baptism is indispensable to regeneration, (2) that there are some nonelect dying infants, and (3) that some whom he calls "regenerate" may not persevere. On the first point he differs from Calvin; on the second he agrees with him; on the third he seemingly differs, but not really, because he employs "regeneration" in two senses, while Calvin employs it only to denote the really renewed. By the "regenerate" who are not elected and do not persevere, Augustine means those adults who have been baptized and are members of the visible church, but not of the invisible. In his day baptism was denominated "regeneration." By the "regenerate" who are elected and persevere he means those adults who are members of the invisible church as well as the visible. Employing the term in this double sense, Augustine, unlike Calvin and the Reformed creeds, holds to a genuine "regeneration" that springs from election and predestination and to a spurious "regeneration" that does not. The omission to notice the two uses of the word has led to the assertion by most Roman Catholic and some Protestant writers that Augustine's doctrine of election and predestination differs from that of Calvin. Both alike affirm that the truly regenerate are predestinated to perseverance and never fall away: "Let it not disturb us that to some of his [professed] children God does not give this perseverance. But this is far from being so, however, in the case of those who are predestinated and called according to the promise. For the former, while they live piously [i.e., reputedly in church communion] are [popularly] called the children

of God; but because they are afterward to live wickedly [i.e., inconsistently with church communion] and to die in wickedness, the foreknowledge of God does not call them God's children" (Rebuke and Grace 20). "Some of the children of perdition, who have not received the gift of perseverance to the end, begin [apparently] to live in the faith that works by love and live for some time faithfully and righteously and afterward fall away and are not taken from this life before this happens to them. Unless this had happened to some, men would not have that wholesome fear [of falling] by which the sin of presumption and self-security is kept down" (Rebuke and Grace 40; cf. 9, 11–12, 14, 16). Augustine maintains that all of the elect and predestinated are the subjects of true and spiritual regeneration and never fall away: "Says St. Paul, 'We know that God works all things for good to them that are called according to his purpose; because those whom he foreknew he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Of these no one perishes, because all are elected. And they are elected because they were called according to the purpose: the purpose, however, of God, not their own" (Rebuke and Grace 14).

Owen (Saints' Perseverance, preface), after abundant citations from Augustine's treatises Predestination and Perseverance of the Saints in proof that he held that the elect and predestinated will infallibly persevere, remarks that "there are in Augustine and those that agreed with him sundry expressions commonly urged by the adversaries of the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, which grant that many who were 'saints,' 'believing' and 'regenerate,' fall away and perish forever. The reader will find them gathered to his hand in Vossius, Grotius, and Goodwin. The seeming contradiction in Augustine and his followers—Prosper, Hilary, and Fulgentius—will easily admit a reconciliation if they are allowed to be interpreters of their own meaning. What weight in those days was laid upon participation in the sacramental symbols of grace and what expressions are commonly used concerning those who had obtained

that privilege is known to all. Hence all baptized persons continuing in the profession of the faith and communion of the church they called, counted, and esteemed regenerate and justified and spoke so of them; such as these they affirm might fall away into everlasting destruction; yet what their judgment was concerning their present state, even when they termed them 'regenerate' and 'believers,' in respect to the sacraments and a visible profession of faith, Augustine clearly delivers his thoughts, especially in his treatise on Rebuke and Grace. 'They were not,' says he, chap. 20, 'children, even when they were in the profession and name of children. Not because they deliberately simulated righteousness, but because they did not continue in it.' This righteousness he esteemed not to be merely feigned and hypocritical, but rather such as might truly entitle them to the state and condition of the children of God in the sense above expressed. These are the persons which Augustine and those of the same judgment with him do grant may fall away; such, namely, as upon account of their baptismal entrance into the church, their [outwardly] pious and devout lives, their profession of the faith of the gospel, they called and accounted 'regenerate' believers, whom yet they tell you, upon a thorough search into the nature and causes of holiness, grace, and walking with God, would be found not to be truly and really in that state and condition in which they were esteemed to be; of which they thought this a sufficient proof, that they did not persevere; which evinces that their judgment was that all who are truly, really, and in the sight of God believers, engrafted into Christ, and adopted into his family should certainly persevere."

The necessity of baptism by the church, in order to salvation, is the principal point of difference between Augustine and Calvin and explains the sacramentarianism, together with the double sense of regeneration, which are found in the system of the former but not in that of the latter. The following passages express it: "Take the case of any infant you please. If he is already in Christ, why is he baptized? If, however, he is baptized that he may be with Christ, it certainly follows that he who is not baptized is not with Christ; and because he is not 'with' Christ he is 'against' Christ" (Forgiveness and Baptism

1.55). Augustine did not hold the Romish doctrine that the mere application of water in the name of the Trinity regenerates the soul. His view of regeneration was spiritual; that it is the effect only of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. But he believed that God has inseparably connected the gift of the Spirit to regenerate with the ordinance of baptism administered to infants within his church. "From the infant newly born to the old man bent with age, as there is none shut out from baptism, so there is none in baptism who does not die to sin. But [baptized] infants die only to original sin; those who are older [when baptized] die also to all the sins which their evil lives have added to the sin which they inherited from Adam" (Enchiridion 43). "As in a certain manner the sacrament of Christ's body is Christ's body and the sacrament of Christ's blood is Christ's blood, in the same manner the sacrament of faith is faith. Now, believing is nothing else than having faith; and accordingly, when, on behalf of an infant as yet incapable of exercising faith, the answer is given [by his sponsor] that he believes, this answer means that he has faith because of the sacrament of faith and that he converts to God because of the sacrament of conversion. Therefore an infant, although he is not yet a believer in the sense of having that faith which includes the consenting will of those who exercise it, nevertheless becomes a believer through the sacrament of faith" (Letter 98.9–10 to Boniface, a.d. 408). "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned. Now who is unaware that in the case of infants being baptized is to believe, and not being baptized is not to believe" (Forgiveness and Baptism 1.40). Augustine, in these passages, defines a sacrament as "that which has some point of real resemblance to the thing of which it is a sacrament." It is a symbol or sign resembling the thing signified. The sponsors answer that "the infant believes," has "some point of resemblance" to actual faith, and this is the "sacrament of faith." His answer, also, that the infant "turns to God," Augustine calls "the sacrament of conversion." In thus making baptism and the promises of the sponsors the indispensable condition of the regeneration of the infant by the Holy Spirit, Augustine prepared for the materialistic view of grace formulated at Trent. His own highly

spiritual conception of the Holy Spirit's agency in regeneration as immediate and irresistible would logically exclude such a necessary dependence on an outward sign and ceremony. Calvin, a thousand years later, saw the inconsistency of the two things and modified Augustinianism by making salvation depend, as Augustine did, upon the new birth, but not by making, as Augustine did, the new birth to depend upon the baptism of the church. Baptism he held to be the appointed sign and seal of regeneration and is to be administered whenever it is possible because of the divine command; but when impossible its omission does not preclude regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Augustine's view leads to the position that salvation outside of the visible church is impossible; Calvin's view makes salvation outside of it a possibility.

The following extracts from Augustine are of the same tenor with those above cited: "If infants were hurt by no malady of original sin, how is it that they are carried to the physician Christ for the express purpose of receiving the sacrament of eternal salvation by the pious anxiety of those who run to him? Why rather is it not said to them by the church: Take hence these innocents; 'they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick'; Christ 'came not to call the righteous but the sinners'? There never has been heard, there never is heard, there never will be heard in the church such a fiction concerning Christ" (Forgiveness and Baptism 1.23). "Our Lord himself, wishing to remove from the minds of wrong believers that vague and indefinite middle condition which some would attribute to unbaptized infants, as if by reason of innocence they were included in eternal life and yet because of their unbaptized state were not with Christ in his kingdom, uttered that definite sentence of his which shuts their mouths: 'He that is not with me is against me' " (Forgiveness and Baptism 1.55).

6.3.2 (see p. 763). Edwards (Works 1.141) explains the exhortations "make you a new heart" and "be renewed in the spirit of your minds" as referring to the sanctification of believers: "It is objected that the apostle sometimes exhorts those to whom he writes to 'put off the old

man' and 'put on the new man' and to 'be renewed in the spirit of their minds,' as exhorting them to seek conversion. I answer that the meaning is manifestly only this: that they should mortify the remains of corruption or of the old man and turn more and more from sin unto God. Then he exhorts the Ephesians to be 'renewed in the spirit of their mind' (Eph. 4:22–23), whom yet he had before in the same epistle abundantly represented as savingly renewed already."

6.3.3 (see p. 768). Owen (Holy Spirit 3.5) describes the total operation of the Holy Spirit in adult regeneration as twofold: (1) moral suasion and (2) internal physical operation: "The Holy Spirit in the regeneration or conversion of all that are adult does make use of motives, arguments, reasons, and considerations proposed unto the mind by the preaching and reading of the word, which are adapted to influence the will and affections. There are none ordinarily converted who are not able to give some account by what considerations they were prevailed upon thereunto. But the whole of the work of the Holy Spirit in our conversion does not consist of this moral suasion. There is also a real physical work, whereby he infuses a gracious principle of spiritual life into all that are effectually converted and really regenerated and without which there is no deliverance from the state of sin and death. That the entire operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion does not consist in the presentation of motives and arguments, the ensuing reasons do sufficiently evince: (1) If the Holy Spirit works no otherwise on men in their regeneration or conversion but by proposing and urging upon them reasons, arguments, and motives, then after his whole work, and notwithstanding it, the will of man remains absolutely indifferent whether it will admit them or not, or whether it will convert itself unto God in view of them or not. For the whole of this work consists in proposing objects unto the will, with respect to which it is left undetermined whether it will choose and close with them or not. And this is what some plead for. For they say that in all men, at least all to whom the gospel is preached, there is such grace present with them that they are able to comply with the word if they please and so to believe, repent, or do any act of obedience unto God. And if they will,

they can refuse and continue in sin. This view ascribes the glory of our regeneration to an act of our own will and not to the grace of God. It also leaves it absolutely uncertain, notwithstanding the purpose of God and the purchase of Christ, whether anyone in the world will be converted. And, finally, it is contrary to many express testimonies of Scripture wherein actual conversion to God is ascribed to his internal operation: 'God works in us to will and to do' (Phil. 2:13). The act therefore itself of willing in our conversion is of God's operation; and although we ourselves will, yet it is he who causes us to will by working in us to will. (2) Moral persuasion, however advanced or improved and supposed to be effectual, yet confers no new supernatural strength unto the soul. For when the Spirit of God works by reasons, motives, arguments, and objective considerations and no otherwise, he is able only to excite and draw out the strength which we have, delivering the mind and affections from prejudices and other moral impediments; real aid and internal spiritual strength neither is nor can be conferred thereby. And he who will acknowledge that there is any such internal spiritual strength communicated unto us must also acknowledge that there is another work of the Spirit of God in us and upon us than can be effected by these persuasions." Owen fortifies his positions by extracts from Augustine's antipelagian writings, in which this same distinction is made in opposition to the views of Coelestius and Pelagius, who resolved the whole work of the Spirit into moral suasion.³⁵ He also cites from the Semipelagian fathers and Schoolmen, who indeed ascribed more to the inward operation of the Spirit than did the Pelagians, but when it came to the question whether the determination of the will to holiness in conversion is wholly or only partly the effect of divine grace, affirmed the latter.

6.3.4 (see p. 768). The agency of God and man in regeneration is different from that in sanctification. In the first instance there is the creative and enlivening energy of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit. In such agency there is no division of the work between the divine and the human. Man does not cooperate with God in it. The entire quickening and creating anew is the act of God alone. The proper

phraseology for it is actuating, enabling, and inclining. In the second instance, that of sanctification, there is a union of the divine with the human energy and a division of the work between the two. The now regenerate will cooperates with the Holy Spirit. It "works out its salvation with fear and trembling, because God works also within it to will and to do" (Phil. 2:12–13). The proper phraseology for this is helping, assisting, and stimulating. When the Holy Spirit actuates and inclines the human will, he does the whole. But when he helps, excites, and assists it, he does a part. In actuating, enabling, and inclining, the parties are not coordinate, each working on its own basis and contributing a divine and a human factor to the common result, but one is subordinate and the other controlling. In regeneration God moves upon the human soul prior, in the order of nature, and the soul then moves in conversion (not regeneration) as a consequence. The agency of each, in this instance, is total and undivided, not partial and shared with the other. God quickens, actuates, enables, and inclines the human will without the will's assisting or helping in this because as ungenerate it sinfully resists; and the will, as the effect of this divine agency, converts, in the acts of faith and repentance, without God's sharing in this converting activity. As man does not participate and share in the regenerating and inclining of the will, so God does not participate and share in the believing and repenting of the will. God is the sole author of regeneration, and man is the sole actor in conversion, namely, in faith and repentance. Thus there is no cooperation between the divine and the human in either regeneration or conversion. God alone regenerates as the cause. There are not two causes of regeneration, one divine and one human. Man alone converts, that is, believes and repents as the effect of regeneration. There are not two faiths and repentances—one in God and the other in man. But in sanctification the case is different. Here the growth and increase of the principle of holiness is an effect of the union and cooperation of the agency of the Holy Spirit with that of the regenerate will.

The neglect to distinguish between creating anew, enabling, actuating, and inclining the human will and helping, assisting, and

stimulating it has led to much error. Synergism in regeneration results from overlooking this distinction. What is true of sanctification alone is transferred to regeneration.

6.3.5 (see p. 770). If the affections, as in the elder Calvinism, are regarded as modes of the inclination of the will, we may speak also of the expulsive power of a new inclination. The regeneration of the will is the origination *de novo*³⁶ of a new inclination to God as the ultimate end, and this expels the old inclination, inherited from Adam, to self and the creature. This expulsion, however, leaves some remainders of the old inclination, which act like the old inclination in every respect, excepting their degree. They have the same spontaneousness and self-motion, only less strength. They do not wholly dominate the man as the old inclination, or "old Adam" as St. Paul calls it, did. And they grow weaker, as the "old Adam" does not in the unregenerate. The regenerate man dies more and more to sin and lives more and more to holiness. The "new man" or new inclination is the stronger man within the house and has bound the "strong man" who still remains in it and keeps up a conflict that is severe and exhausting, but is a losing battle and a defeat in the end.

Now it is to be observed that in this process of progressive sanctification there is the freedom of self-determination, but not of optional choice. These remainders of original sin or of sinful inclination are a self-motion that antagonizes the self-motion of the new inclination. One self-determination is opposed to another. The two are "the flesh, which lusts against the spirit, and are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would" (Gal. 5:17). These remainders of sinful self-determination cannot be removed by a power to the contrary inherent in themselves, but must be expelled by the superior energy of the new inclination to holiness. Sin must be driven out by holiness, not convert itself into holiness. This would be the casting out of Satan by Satan, which our Lord asserts to be a contradiction and impossibility. There is no evolution of holiness out of sin or transmutation of sin into holiness by the exercise of a power of contrary choice.

6.3.6 (see p. 772). Since regeneration precedes conversion in the order of nature, not of time, it precedes justification in the same order, because faith precedes justification, and faith is one of the acts of conversion. An unbeliever is not justified: "A man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 4:28). But it does not follow from this that regeneration is the cause or ground of justification, as Dorner asserts in objection to this statement (Christian Doctrine 4.206). One thing may be antecedent to another, and yet not the cause of it: *post hoc, non ergo propter hoc*.³⁷ The cause or ground of justification is wholly objective, namely, the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ. Nothing subjective (and both faith and repentance are subjective acts) enters into the cause or ground of justification. A sinner is not justified, that is, pardoned and accepted as righteous, because he is regenerated. The divine life implanted in regeneration cannot satisfy justice for sin nor merit eternal life for the sinner, both of which are requisite in order to justification. But the sinner cannot appropriate Christ's objective satisfaction but by the act of faith in it, and he cannot exercise this faith if the Holy Spirit does not incline and enable him to it. And this inclining and enabling is one consequence of the new birth and new life in the soul: "Whosoever believes is born of God" (1 John 5:1).

6.3.7 (see p. 776). Howe (Redeemer's Tears) thus speaks of the sinner's agency in respect to regeneration: "Here, perhaps, sinners will inquire, Is there anything, then, to be done by us, whereupon the grace of God may be expected certainly to follow? To which I answer: (1) That it is certain that nothing can be done by us to deserve it or for the merit of which we may expect it to follow. It were not grace if we had obliged or brought it under bonds to us by our deserts. (2) What if nothing can be done by us, upon which it may be certainly expected to follow? Is a certainty of perishing better than a high probability of being saved? (3) Such as live under the gospel have reason to apprehend it highly probable that they may obtain that grace which is necessary to their salvation, if they be not wanting to themselves. (4) For there is generally afforded to such that which is

wont to be called common grace. Now, though this grace is not yet certainly saving, yet it tends to that which is so. And none have cause to despair but that, being duly improved and complied with, it may end in it. Let the consciences of men living under the gospel testify in the case. Appeal, sinner, to your own conscience: have you never felt anything of conviction by the word of God? Had you never any thought injected of turning to God, of reforming your life, of making your peace with God? Have no desires ever been raised in you, no fears? Have you never had any tastes and relishes of pleasure (Heb. 6:4–5) in the things of God? Whence have these come? What! from yourself, who is not sufficient to think anything as of yourself, i.e., any good or right thought. All must be from that good Spirit that has been striving with you and might still have been so unto a blessed issue for your soul, if you had not neglected and disobeyed it.

"And do not go about to excuse yourself by saying that all others have done so too, at one time or another; and if that therefore be the rule and measure, that they that content against the strivings and motions of God's Spirit must be finally deserted and given up to perish, who then can be saved? Think not of pleading so for your neglecting and despising the grace and spirit of God. It is true that herein the great God shows his sovereignty; when all that enjoy the same advantages for salvation deserve by their slighting them to be forsaken alike, he gives instances and makes examples of just severity and of the victorious power of grace, as seems him good. But our present design is not to justify your condemnation, but to procure your salvation; and therefore to admonish and instruct you, that though you are not sure, because some others that have slighted and despised the grace and Spirit of God are, notwithstanding, conquered and saved thereby, it shall therefore fare as well with you, yet you have reason to be confident and hopeful it will be well and happy for you, if now you despise and slight them not."

6.3.8 (see p. 781). In saying that if the unregenerate "suppresses conviction of sin and nullifies common grace, then God may withdraw all grace," conditional preterition does not logically follow.

God may do this, but it is not infallibly certain that he will. He is sovereign to do as he pleases. He does not invariably condition his preterition upon the sinner's action, invariably refusing regenerating grace to all who nullify common grace and invariably bestowing it upon all who according to the Arminian view do not nullify it. God does not pass by one of two persons in the bestowment of saving grace because of original sin or of actual transgression (Rom. 9:11) or of foreseen perseverance in sin or of foreseen resistance of common grace, for these are all of them characteristic of both persons alike and would be a reason for passing by both of them. Westminster Larger Catechism 68 declares that the nonelect "may be and often are outwardly called by the ministry of the word and have some common operations of the Spirit and for their willful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never come to Jesus Christ." This is a statement of the possibility and probability, not of the decreed certainty in the case. As the right use of common grace makes it probable but not infallibly certain that saving grace will follow (see pp. 776–77), so the abuse of common grace makes it probable but not infallibly certain that saving grace will not follow. The catechism says that the nonelect "may be and often are justly left because of their neglect of common grace"; but it does not say that they are always and invariably left because of this neglect. If it did, it would teach conditional preterition.

6.3.9 (see p. 781). Respecting the encouragement which the sinner has to seek salvation because of the probability, in distinction from the infallible certainty, that the right use of common grace will be followed by saving grace, Howe (Blessedness of the Righteous, chap. 17) thus remarks: "Why should you imagine so sad an issue as that after your utmost endeavors grace should be withheld and leave you to perish, because God has not bound himself by promise to you. What promise have the ravens to be heard when they cry? Experience tells the world that God's unpromised mercies freely flow everywhere. The whole earth is full of his goodness. God promises sinners, indefinitely, pardon and eternal life, for the sake of Christ,

on condition that they believe on him. He gives of his good pleasure that grace whereby he draws any to Christ, without promise directly made to them. His discovery of his purpose to give such grace, indefinitely, amounts not to a promise claimable by any; for if it be said to be an absolute promise to particular persons, who are they? whose duty is it to believe it made to him? God [in common grace] binds himself to do what he promises [namely, to save on condition of faith]; but has he anywhere bound himself to do no more? Did he promise you your being, or that you should live to this day? Did he promise you the bread that sustains you or the daily comforts of your life? Yea, what is nearer the present purpose, did he promise you a station under the gospel or that you should ever hear the name of Christ? If ever his Spirit have in any degree moved upon your heart and inclined you at all seriously to consider your eternal concernments, did he beforehand make you any promise of that? A promise would give you a full certainty of the issue, if it were absolute and unconditional; if conditional, as soon as you perform the condition. But can you act upon no lower rate than a foregoing certainty, a preassurance of the event? My friend, consider a little, that it is hope, built with those that are rational upon rational probability, with some oftentimes without hope at all, which is the great engine that moves the world, that keeps all sorts of men in action. Does the husbandman foreknow when he plows and sows that the crop will answer his cost and pains? Do you foreknow when you eat, it shall refresh you? when you take physic, that it shall recover your health and save your life? The Lord knows that in these cases men can be confident and active enough without a promise of infallible success. Will you not, upon the probability and hope you have before you, do as much for your soul?"

6.3.10 (see p. 782). Ursinus (Christian Religion Q. 74) thus replies to the objection that infants should not be baptized because belief is the requisite to baptism and infants cannot believe: "We deny the proposition which denies that infants do believe; for infants of believers regenerated by the Holy Spirit have an inclination to believe, or do believe by inclination; for faith is in infants potentially

and by disposition, albeit faith be not in them actually as in those who are of age and understanding. And as unregenerate infants who are without the church have no actual impiety and wickedness, but an inclination only to wickedness, so godly infants who are in the church have not actual piety and godliness, but an inclination only to godliness; not by nature, indeed, but by the grace of the covenant. Infants have the Holy Spirit and are regenerated by him, as John was filled with the Holy Spirit when as yet he was in the womb; and it was said to Jeremiah, 'Before you came out of the womb I sanctified you.' If infants have the Holy Spirit, then, doubtless, he works in them regeneration, good inclinations, new motions, and all other things which are necessary unto salvation; as Peter says, 'Who can forbid water from them who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?' Wherefore Christ numbered little children among believers: 'He who offends one of these little ones which believe in me.' Wherefore infants do not profane baptism, as the Anabaptists slander us."

In answer to the objection that if infants are to be baptized they should also partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Ursinus Q. 74 replies: "Unto baptism, regeneration by the Holy Spirit and faith or an inclination to faith and repentance suffices; but in the supper conditions are added and required which hinder the use thereof to be granted unto infants. For in Scripture it is required (1) that they who use the sign show forth the death of the Lord and (2) that they try themselves whether they have faith and repentance or no. And seeing the age of infants cannot do these things, it is manifest that infants are for good cause excluded from the supper but not from baptism."

1 1. WS: In the older theological treatises, regeneration commonly does not constitute a separate topic, but is discussed under vocation.

2 2. ἀνανεοῦσθαι

3 3. ἀνακαινώσει

4 4. ἀνακαινοῦνται = is renewed

5 5. ἀνανεῶω = to renew

6 6. ἀνακαινῶω = to renew

7 7. γεννάω = to give birth to

8 8. κτίζειν = to create

9 9. γεννάω = to give birth to. Shedd has gennan (γεννάν), which is probably a typo for gennaō (γεννάω), judging by the present context.

10 10. ζῳοποιεῖν = to make alive

11 11. ἀνανεοῦσθαι = to be renewed

12 12. ἀνακαινοῦνται = to be made new

13 13. ἀνακαίνωσις = renewal

14 14. *Conversio habitualis seu passiva fit per habituum supernaturalium infusionem a Spiritu Sancto.*

15 15. *Conversio actualis seu activa fit per bonorum istorum habituum exercitium, quo actus fidei et poenitentiae, et dantur a deo, et homine eliciuntur.*

16 16. WS: Edwards denominates it the origination of a new "principle": "By a principle I mean that foundation which is laid for any particular kind of exercise of the faculties of the soul. A new holy disposition of heart is not a new faculty of will, but a foundation laid for a new kind of exercise of the faculty of will" (*Affections* 3.1). Similarly, Owen remarks: "As the principle of holiness has the nature of a habit, so also has it the properties thereof. And the first property of a habit is that it inclines and disposes the subject wherein it is unto acts of its own kind" (*On the Spirit* 4.1).

17 17. WS: Owen, *Works* 2.357–58 (ed. Russell).

18 18. φύσις = essence

19 19. φύσις = essence

20 20. WS: Meyer in loco explains *eti* (ἔτι) literally: "Still from his mother's womb." After birth, he was still the subject of the Holy Spirit's influences as he was before it.

21 21. *Quicquid recipitur, recipitur in modum recipientis.*

22 22. from the outside

23 23. *Proprium est dei movere voluntatem, maxime interius eam inclinando.*

24 24. point of time

25 25. point of time

26 26. φρόνημα

27 27. WS: In the case of an adult, the precedence of regeneration to conversion is of order and nature only, not of time. Regeneration immediately exhibits its fruit in the converting acts of faith and repentance. In the case of infant regeneration, there is an interval of time between regeneration and conversion.

28 28. WS: The words in James 1:18 are sometimes quoted to prove that the truth is a means of regeneration: "Of his own will, he gave us birth with the word of truth." The original is *boulētheis apekyēsen hēmas logō alētheias* (βουληθεῖς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας); Revised Version: "According to his purpose, he brought us forth by the word of truth." *Apokyein* (ἀποκυεῖν = to bring forth) denotes the maternal, not the paternal act; as *τῆ* (*yālad*) primarily does in Ps. 2:7: "I have begotten you." And *logos alētheias* (λόγος ἀληθείας = word of truth) means the gospel, as in Eph. 1:13: "After that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation"; and in Col. 1:5: "Whereof you heard before, in the word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you as it is in all the world." The teaching, then, of St. James in this text is that "in accordance with the divine purpose man is born a child of God, under the gospel dispensation." There is a similar statement in 1 Pet. 1:23: "Being born again (*anagegennēmenoi, ἀναγεγεννημένοι*) not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." The "word of God," here, is not the "incorruptible seed" itself from which the birth proceeds. The Holy Spirit is this. But it is the sphere within which the birth takes place. It denotes the gospel dispensation, like the "word of truth" in James 1:18. Christians are born again of incorruptible seed, namely, of the Holy Spirit, under the Christian dispensation. The Revised Version rendering of this verse is "having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God."

29 29. WS: On legal and evangelical humiliation, see Edwards, *Affections* 3 in *Works* 3.137–38; Howe, *Blessedness of the Righteous*, chap. 17; Owen, *Works* 2.309–10 (ed. Russell).

30 30. WS: Cf. "if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me" and "my word shall not return unto me void." These texts do not mean that every single individual shall be saved, but describe the general and common effect of the gospel.

31 31. WS: See Bunyan's account of his own experience in *Grace Abounding*; Edwards, *Manner of Seeking Salvation in Works* 4.386–87; *Pressing into the Kingdom in Works* 4.381–82.

32 32. WS: See the admirable remarks of Calvin entitled "Prayer the Principal Exercise of Faith" in 3.20.1–17.

33 33. WS: The regenerate child, youth, and man believes and repents immediately. The regenerate infant believes and repents when his faculties will admit the exercise and manifestation of faith and repentance. In this latter instance, regeneration is potential or latent faith and repentance.

34 34. WS: Westminster Confession 7.3; 8.8; 9.4; 10.1; 14.1; Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 32; Q. 59; Q. 67; Q. 72.

35 35. As noted by Benjamin Warfield in *Perfectionism*, the same comment would apply to the theology of Charles Finney.

36 36. anew

37 37. after this, yet not therefore on account of this

Man and Sin

by Thomas Manton

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6)

In this chapter there are two parts: in the first, the apostle lays down the comfortable fruits and privileges of a justified estate; in the second, he argues the firmness of these comforts, because they are so rich that they are scarce credible, and hardly received. The firmness and soundness of these comforts the apostle representeth by a double comparison:—(1.) By comparing Christ with Christ; and (2.) Christ with Adam. Christ with Christ, or one benefit that we have by him with another, from the text to ver. 12; then Christ with Adam, the second Adam with the first, to the end of the chapter.

1. In comparing Christ with Christ, three considerations do occur: — [1.] The efficacy of his love toward us before justification, with the efficacy of his love toward us after justification. The argument standeth thus: If Christ had a love to us when sinners, and his love prevailed with him to die for us, much more may we expect his love when made friends: if when we were in sin and misery, shiftless and helpless, Christ had the heart to die for us, and to take us with all our faults, will he cast us off after we are justified and accepted with God in him? This love of Christ is asserted in ver. 6, amplified in ver. 7 and 8, and the conclusion is inferred in ver. 9: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

[2.] The second comparison is of the efficacy of the death of Christ, and the efficacy of the life of Christ. It is absurd to think that Christ rising from the dead, and living in heaven, should not be as powerful to save, and bring us to God, as Christ dying was to reconcile us to him.

[3.] The third comparison is the privative mercy, or being saved from hell, with the positive mercy, or obtaining a title to heaven: “And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement,” ver. 11.

2. For the comparison between Christ and Adam, the sum of it is, that Christ is more able to save than Adam to destroy, and therefore justified persons need to fear nothing. As Adam was a public person, and root of mankind, so is Christ a public person; for Adam was *tupo* "tou mellonto", "the figure of him that was to come," ver. 14. Adam was a public person, but a finite person, having no intrinsic value in himself, and only was all us by divine institution; but Christ, beside the institution of God, was an infinite person, and therefore there is a *pollw/ mallon*, a "much more," upon Christ. His sacred virtue exceedeth that cursed influence of Adam in many particulars, amply set down in the latter end of the chapter by the apostle.

The words begin the first comparison. In them,—

1. The condition wherein we are by nature is set forth by two notions—ungodly, and *without strength*: the one noteth that we have no worth to move God to help us, for we were “ungodly”; the other, that we have no power to help ourselves, for “we were without strength”: we were “without strength,” and so need help; “ungodly,” and so refused help.

2. The means of our recovery, *Christ died for us*.

3. The seasonableness of our redemption, *in due time*.

For the first notion, whereby our natural estate is expressed, “ungodly,” I shall pass it by; the next notion, “without strength,” will yield us this point:— Doct. That man, fallen, is destitute of all power and means of rising again, or helping himself out of that misery into which he has plunged himself by sin.

This will appear, if you consider his condition with respect to the law, or with respect to the gospel, and those terms of grace which God offers in Christ. The former more properly falls under the consideration of this place; but, because of the method of this exercise, you expect the discussion of the latter also, I shall take occasion from hence to speak of that.

Man's Condition with Respect to the Law

First, With respect to the law. That will be understood by a view of that scripture that expresseth the tenor of the law: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the words of this law to do them,” Gal. 3:10; where is considerable, —

1. The duty it exacts.
2. The penalty it inflicts.
3. The operation that both these have upon the fallen creature.

1. The duty it exacts. An innocent nature, that is presupposed; for the person must “continue.” It doth not say, “now begin”; the sentence of the law doth not suppose man as lapsed and fallen, or as having already broken with God; but as in a good and sound estate. And then universal, perpetual, perfect obedience is indispensably required: he must “continue in all things” with all his heart, and that continually; if he fails in one point, he is gone. This is personally exacted of all men, as long as they abide under Adam’s covenant: “He that doeth them shall live in them”; and “the soul that sinneth, it shall die,” Ezek. 18:4; 20:11. Now if God should call us to an account for the most inoffensive day that ever we passed over, what would become of us? “If thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”¹ Ps. 130:3. Better never born, than to be liable to that judgment, when the law shall take the sinner “by the throat,” and say, “Pay me that thou owest,” Matt. 18:28. What shall the poor wretch do? So that here we are “without strength,” altogether unable to come up to the obedience of the law of works. The law can make nothing perfect, because it is become “weak through our flesh,” Rom. 8:3. To fallen man it establisheth a course of punishing sin, not of taking away sin: we may increase the debt, but we cannot lessen it. If our obedience were exact for the future (let us suppose it), yet the paying of new debts doth not quit old scores. They that could not keep themselves when entire and innocent, cannot recover themselves when lost and fallen.

2. The penalty it inflicts: “Cursed is every one.” How cursed? Cursed in all that he hath, Deut. 28:15-18. All his enjoyments become a snare, and temporal comforts do but harden him, and prepare him for a greater misery. Cursed in all that he doeth: his prayer is turned into sin; his hearing, the “savour of death unto death”; all his toil and labour in outward service is to no purpose: “The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?” Prov. 21:27. At the best it is but an “abomination.” God will not accept an offering at his hands; much more when it is polluted with sinful and evil aims. But this is not all; he is cursed for evermore: the law bindeth him over, body and soul, to everlasting

torments; and in time he shall hear that dreadful sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” Matt. 25:41. There is but the slender thread of a frail life that hinders the execution of this sentence upon him: a sinner stands upon the very brink of hell, and ever and anon is ready to be cast in; where he shall eternally lie under the wrath of God. So that here we are “without strength,” because we cannot satisfy the justice of God for one sin, but are always satisfying, and can never be said to have satisfied; like a poor man that pays a debt of a thousand pounds by a farthing a week.

3. Consider how this works with him. An exaction of duty under so severe a penalty doth either terrify or stupefy the conscience; he that escapeth the one suffereth the other; or else, thirdly, doth irritate corruption; or, fourthly, obtrude us upon a sottish despair, so as to give over all endeavours and hope of salvation.

First, Sometimes it terrifieth. That is easily done; the conscience of a sinner is a sore place; they are “all their lifetime subject to bondage,” Heb. 2:15. There is a hidden fear in the heart of a wicked man, not always felt, but soon awakened, either by a sound conviction from the word, or some sore judgment, or by the agonies of death, or serious thoughts of the world to come. Felix trembled when Paul did but mention God’s “judgment,” Acts 24:25; the prisoner makes the judge tremble. A sinner is afraid to think of his condition, if God do but a little break in upon his heart: do what he can, he lies under the bondage of a wounded spirit, and wherever he goes, like the devils, he carrieth his own hell about with him.

Secondly, If it terrifieth not the conscience, it stupefieth the conscience, that they grow senseless of their misery, “past feeling,” Eph. 4:19. And that is a dangerous crisis and estate of soul, when once a man comes to that, and goeth like a fool to the correction of the stocks.

Thirdly, It irritateth their inbred corruption: “The commandment came,” that is, in full conviction and power, and “sin revived, and I died,” Rom. 7:9. The more we understand of the necessity of our subjection to God, the more opposite is the soul to him; as a dam makes a river or strong stream the more violent, or as a bullock at the first yoking becometh the more unruly. Or,

Fourthly, It breedeth a sottish despair: “There is no hope; therefore we will walk after our own devices, and do every one according to the evil imaginations of our own heart,” Jer. 18:12. It is to no purpose to speak to us, or strive further about us; as if they had said, There is no hope; and therefore we will live as we list, without any further care of turning to God. This is the worst kind of despair, when a man is given up to his “own heart’s lust,” Ps. 81: 12, and runneth headlong in the way of destruction, without hope of returning. There is more hope of them that are under despairing fears or a terrified conscience than there is of those who are under despairing resolutions or a stupid and sottish obstinacy. Thus as to the law, man is helpless.

Man’s Condition with Respect to the Gospel

Secondly, Consider man as to terms of grace offered in the gospel. He is still “without strength”; not only in a damnable condition by the law, but, without grace, unable to accept the gospel. This will appear by two considerations: —

1. By those emphatical terms of scripture by which the case and cure of man are set forth.
2. By those positive assertions whereby all power is denied to man to convert himself to God, or to do anything that is spiritually good.

1. Those emphatical expressions which represent his case and his cure.

[1.] His case. The scripture sets forth man’s condition thus: that he is born in sin, Ps. 51:5; and things natural are not easily altered. Greedy

of sin: "He drinketh in iniquity like water," Job. 15:16; it noteth a vehement propension, as greedy to sin as a thirsty man to drink. Thirst is the most implacable appetite; hunger is far better borne. But this, you will say, is but now and then, in a great temptation or vehement passion. No; "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is" evil, "only evil," and that "continually," Gen. 6:5. By how many aggravating and increasing circumstances is man's sin there set forth! There is in him a mint always at work: his mind coining evil thoughts, his heart evil desires, and carnal motions; and his memory is the closet and storehouse wherein they are kept. But may not a man be reclaimed? is not this his bondage and trouble? No; his heart is a heart of stone, Ezek. 36:26; that is, inflexible, insensible. When God useth the word, some common motions of his Spirit, some rousing providences, yet all is in vain; for man's "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. 17:9; inventing shifts and excuses to avoid God, and to cheat itself of its own happiness. But is not the New Testament more favourable than the Old? or is not man grown better, since there was so much grace discovered? I answer — No; there is a perfect harmony between the Testaments; there you will find man represented as a "child of wrath by nature," Eph. 2:3, even the elect as well as others to be a "servant of sin," Rom. 6: 17. Never such an imperious master, never such a willing servant: sin never leaveth commanding, and we love the work. You will find him again expressed as one averse from God, "alienated from his life," Eph. 4:18. It is a melancholy thought to a carnal heart to think of the life of God. As an enemy to the law, Rom. 8:7; one that neither can nor will please God. As "blind," and knoweth not what to do, II Peter 1:9; and this blindness spiritual is worse than bodily. A man that is blind in body seeketh for a fit guide; as Elymas, when he was stricken blind, "sought about for one to lead him by the hand," Acts 13:11. As weak and "without strength," here in the text; yea, stark "dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. 2:1-5; yea, worse than dead: a dead man doeth no more hurt, his evil dieth with him; but there is a life of resistance and rebellion against God that goeth along with this death in sin. Now, put all this together, and you may spell out man's misery, what a wretched, impotent creature he is

in his natural estate. The scripture does not speak this by glances or short touches; neither is it a hyperbole used once or twice, but everywhere, where it professedly speaks of this matter. Certainly man contributeth little to his own conversion: he cannot “hunger and thirst” after Christ that “drinks in iniquity like water”; there is nothing in nature to carry him to grace who is altogether sinful. If the scripture had only said that man had accustomed himself to sin, and was not “born in sin”; that man was somewhat prone to iniquity, and not “greedy” of it; and did often think evil, and not “continually”; that man was somewhat obstinate, and not a “stone,” an “adamant”; if the scripture had only said that man was indifferent to God, and not a professed “enemy”; if a captive of sin, and not a “servant”; if only weak, and not “dead”; if only a neuter, and not a “rebel”; — then there might be something in man, and the work of conversion not so difficult. But the scripture saith the quite contrary.

[2.] The cure. Certainly to remedy so great an evil requires an almighty power, and the all-sufficiency of grace; therefore it is good to see how conversion is described in scripture. Sometimes by enlightening the mind: “And the eyes of your understandings being enlightened,” &c., Eph. 1:18. Man, the wisest creature on this side of heaven, is stark blind in the things of God. Though he hath the light of nature, and can put on the spectacles of art, and dress his notions of divine things by the glass of the word, yet ere the cure is wrought, something must be done upon the faculty: the eyes of our understandings must be enlightened, as well as the object revealed. Ay! but this infusion of light is not all; the scripture speaks of opening the heart: “He opened the heart of Lydia,” Acts 16:14. God doth not only knock at the heart, but opens it. He knocks many times by the outward means, but finds no entrance. Yea, as one that would open a door, — he tries key after key, till he hath tried all the keys in the bunch; so does God use means after means; but till he putteth his fingers upon the handles of the lock, Song of So!. 5:4, 5, the door is not opened to him. Well, then, the mind must be enlightened, and the heart opened. If these words are not emphatical enough, you will find conversion expressed by regeneration: “Except a man be born

again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” John 3:3. Mark, we must not only be reformed, but regenerated. Now because generation is an ordinary work of nature, and often falls out in the course of second causes, therefore it is expressed by the metaphor of resurrection, Eph. 2:5. But that which hath been may be again; therefore it is called a creation: “We are” *ποίημα αὐτοῦ*, “his workmanship,” Eph. 2:10; II Cor. 4:6; 5:17; Ps. 51:10. Yea, further it is expressed by victory, I John 4:4; or the beating and binding of the “strong man,” by one that is “stronger than he,” Luke 11:21, 22; by “bringing into captivity every proud thought,” II Cor. 10:5. All these expressions doth the scripture use to set out the mystery of grace. One expression may not enough be heeded, and therefore are many types and figures of it used, that what is wanting in one notion may be supplied by another. As let us gather them up a little. There must be not only light in the mind, but the heart must be moved; and that not a little stirred, but changed, fashioned anew, born again. And because generation supposeth a previous disposition in the matter, not only is it called “regeneration,” but the term “resurrection” is used, in which the matter is wholly unprepared. But yet because still here is matter to work upon, therefore it is called creation, which was a making all things out of nothing. God works faith where there is no faith, and repentance where was no repentance; “and calleth the things that are not as though they were.” But now because sin makes us worse than nothing, and as in creation, as there was nothing to help, so there was nothing to resist and hinder, therefore it is expressed by victory; implying the opposition of God’s work, and the resistance that there is in the heart of man till it be overpowered by grace.

2. The next proof is from those assertions whereby all power is denied to man to convert himself to God, or to do anything that is spiritually good. As when it is said he cannot know, I Cor. 2:14; he cannot believe, John 6:44; he cannot obey, Rom. 8:7. Nay, to instance in single acts: he cannot think a good thought of himself, II Cor. 3:5; he cannot speak a good word: “How can ye, being evil, speak good things?” Matt. 12:34. He cannot do anything, John 15:5.

He doth not say, *nihil magnum*, but *nihil*; not “no great thing,” but “Without me ye can do *nothing*.” Well, then, when man can neither know, nor believe, nor obey, nor think, nor speak, nor do anything without grace, surely man is “without strength,” wholly impotent and unable to turn himself to God.

Obj. 1. But here is an objection: If it be so, how can these things stand with the mercy of God, as the Creator of mankind, to require the debt of him that is not able to pay? with the justice of God, as the judge of the world, to punish him with eternal death for the neglect of that which he could not perform? or with the wisdom of the supreme lawgiver, to exhort him by promises who hath no power to do what he is exhorted unto?

Ans. 1. I answer to the first — God doth not lose his right, though man hath lost his power; their impotency doth not dissolve their obligation; a drunken servant is a servant, and it is against all reason that the master should lose his right to command by the servant’s default. A prodigal debtor, that hath nothing to pay, yet is liable to be sued for the debt without any injustice. God contracted with us in Adam; and that obedience which he requireth is not only due by covenant, but by law; not only by positive law and contract, but by immutable right. It is harsh, men think, to suffer for Adam’s fault, to which they were not conscious and actually consenting; but every man will find an Adam in his own heart: the old man is there, wasting away the few remains of natural light and strength. And shall not God challenge the debt of obedience from a debtor that is both proud and prodigal? We are proud; for when we are miserable, we think ourselves happy; and when we are poor, we think ourselves rich; and when we are blind, we conceit ourselves very seeing; and when we are naked, we think ourselves well clad, Rev. 3:17. And therefore God may admonish us of our duty, and demand his right; if for no other reason but to show us our impotency, and that we may not pretend that we were not called upon for what we owe. And as man is proud, so he is prodigal. We spend what is left, and throw

away those relics of conscience and moral inclinations which escaped out of the ruins of the fall.

Ans. 2. As to the second, how God can with justice punish him for the neglect of what he could not do, I answer — Our natural impotency is voluntary. We must not consider man only as impotent to good, but as delighting in evil, and loving it with all his heart. As man cannot, so he will not, come to God, John 5:40. Our impotency lies in our obstinacy, and so man is left without excuse. We refuse the grace that is offered to us, and by continuing in sin, increase our bondage, our inveterate customs turning to another nature.

Ans. 3. As to the last, how God can exhort and persuade us, for answer, suppose we should say — This is only for the elect's sake, who certainly "are the called according to purpose," Rom. 8:28; whereas others are called *obiter*, "by the by," and as they live intermingled with them. If the elect did dwell alone, and were a distinct community by themselves, the objection were plausible; but they are hidden amongst others, and therefore the reprobate have the like favour in the external means with them. The world standeth for the elect's sake, yet the sun doth not shine upon them alone, nor the showers fall upon their fields alone. Or let me illustrate it thus: The sun shineth, though blind men see it not; the rain falls upon the rocks and mountains, as well as the fruitful valleys: so are exhortations of duty promiscuously tendered to good and bad. This might be answer enough; but that which I rather say is, that these exhortations have their use; for they carry their own blessing with them, to them to whom God means them for good. The word has a ministerial subserviency to the power of God; as when Christ said, "Lazarus, come forth," it raised him out of his grave. As for others that are not converted by them, it is for their conviction, and to bridle their fierceness, and a means to civilise them, and keep them from growing worse, whereby many temporal blessings do accrue to them; as Pagan Rome flourished in all manner of virtue and success as long as moral precepts were in force. But of this more in the next objection.

Obj. 2. If man be so altogether without strength, why do ye press him to the use of means?

Ans. I answer — Though man cannot change himself, yet he is to use the means; and that for several reasons: —

1. That we may practically see our own weakness. Men think the work of grace is easy, till they put themselves upon a trial: the lameness of the arm is found in exercise: “Apply thy heart to understanding,” then “cry for knowledge,” Prov. 2:2, 3. Whosoever sets himself in good earnest to get any grace, will be forced to cry for it before he hath done. We never seek strength at God’s hands in so feeling a manner, till our experience convince us of our weakness. When a man goes to lift up a piece of timber heavy above his strength, he is forced to call in help.

2. The use of the means we owe to God, as well as the change of the heart. We lie under a moral obligation to use them. God, that hath required faith and conversion, hath required prayer, hearing, reading, meditating; and we are bound to obey, though we know not what good will come of it: as Abraham obeyed God, “not knowing whither he went,” Heb. 11:8; and Peter, when there was little hope, saith, “Howbeit, at thy command,” &c., Luke 5:5. Our great rule is, we are to do what he commandeth, and let God do what he will.

3. To lessen our guilt. For when men do not use the means, they have no excuse: it is plain laziness and want of will, not want of power, when we will not so much as try to come out of our condition; we love our bondage, and shut the door upon ourselves; or, as that phrase, “judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life,” Acts 13:46; pass sentence upon our own souls. It is a sign we care not whether God show us mercy, yea, or no; for you will not so much as bestow a thought upon it; you come under the censure of wicked and slothful servants, Matt. 25:26.

4. There is encouragement in the use of means many ways.

[1.] If we do not something, we shall grow worse. Standing pools are apt to putrefy. Man is of an active nature, either growing better or worse: when we do not improve nature, we deprave it: “They corrupt themselves in what they know naturally,” Jude 10. Voluntary neglects draw on penal hardness; and so your impotency is increased. There is this benefit of using means — it prevents much sin and hardness of heart: it is like the embalming of a dead body; it keeps it from stinking, though it does not restore life.

[2.] Without the use of means they can never hope for anything: “How shall they believe without a preacher?” Rom. 10:14. If ever I meet with God, with Christ, it must be in this way; it is good to lie at the pool, as the poor man did who was unable to get in when the angel stirred the waters, John 5:3-5. Marriage is instituted for the propagation of mankind, yet the soul is of God only. No man abstaineth from marriage because he cannot beget a reasonable soul. So grace is of God; but hearing, reading, praying, are the instituted means; and we must not abstain from these means because grace is not of ourselves, but God.

[3.] It may be God will meet with us. It is the ordinary practice of his free grace so to do; and it is good to make trial upon a common hope: “Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee,” Acts 8:22. There is a great uncertainty, yet pray; it is God’s usual way to meet with them that seek him: “I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth,” Luke 11:8: “for his importunity’s sake,” *διὰ τὴν ἀναίδειαν*, “for his impudence.”² God is not engaged; but who knows what importunity may do? He may, and he may not, give grace; but usually he doth. It is God’s usual way to bless man’s industry; and yet all they that labour have not an absolute certainty of success. Who would forbear ploughing, because in one year of ten there may happen a dearth or a lean harvest? Act; God may come in (for usually he doth) with his influence and blessing.

Let me now give you some reasons why God permits this weakness and want of strength to lie upon the fallen creature.

1. To exalt the freeness and power of his grace. First, The freeness of his grace; for God hath shut up all under the curse, that there may be no way of escape but by his mercy; their eternal ruin and damnation is else certain and inevitable: “God hath concluded them all under unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all,” Rom. 11:32. *Suvéκλεισε*, that is the word: the state of unbelief is there compared to a prison, made sure and fast with iron bars and bolts; and by God’s permission man hath “shut up” himself in such a prison that mercy alone might open the door to him. Jew and Gentile lie fast bound with a chain that can be loosened by no hand but God’s. So, Gal. 3:22: “The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe”: it is the same word and notion: we may mourn and sigh through the grates of the flaming prison, but can never get out till God look upon us in mercy through Christ. And so also the power of his grace in rescuing us out of this misery: it is a mighty power that works in them that believe, Eph. 1:19. When we consider it, we may wonder at it that ever such a change should be wrought in us that are so carnal, so obstinate: “Who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light,” I Peter 2:9. It is indeed marvellous that ever we should get out of the prison of sin; more miraculous than Peter’s getting out of prison, having so many chains, and doors, and keepers upon him, Acts 12.

2. To humble the creature thoroughly by a sense of his own guilt, unworthiness, and nothingness. In our natural state we are “ungodly” and “without strength.” Why has God permitted it? “That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God, *ὑπόδικος τῷ θεῷ*, Rom. 3:19, liable to the process of his revenging justice; and so to humble us for our inability and obstinacy, that we may go complainingly to God, saying, “Lord, I am as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke,” Jer. 31: 18. Whosoever hath passed this trial, doth sensibly find it.

Use of all.

1. To the unconverted, — to be sensible of their condition, and mourn over it to God. Acknowledge the debt; confess your impotency; beg pardon and grace; and, in a humble sense of your misery, endeavour earnestly to come out of it. By such doctrines as these men are either “cut at heart,” Acts 7:54, or “pricked at heart,” Acts 2:37, which is the far more kindly work. Some men’s hearts and lusts are exasperated; and they rage and storm when they are warned of their danger by a closer application. Oh! it is better to bemoan yourselves, than fret against the Lord, and yield to a sottish despair. There is some hope when conviction ends in groaning rather than murmuring; and you do not fret against the Lord’s sovereignty, but complain to him of the naughtiness of your hearts, begging his grace for Christ’s sake. Therefore go and lie at his feet, and say, Lord, I have a blind mind, a froward heart; none more. I shall never of myself fly the evil forbidden, perform the good commanded, renounce these bewitching lusts, take up such a course of service to thy blessed majesty. Oh! take away this stony, untractable heart! &c. You are in prison, but you are “prisoners of hope,” if you do so.

2. To press the converted to thankfulness. We were once in such a pitiful case, till God plucked us as brands out of the burning; we were utterly miserable and destitute of all good. Oh! blessed be God, that opened the prison-door, and proclaimed deliverance by Christ to poor captives; and not only proclaimed it, but wrought it for us: none but an Almighty arm could loosen the bolts, and shoot back the many locks that were upon us. Peter, when the angel made his chains fall off, “considered” the matter, Acts 12: 12, and went to give thanks among the saints. Oh! when there were so many doors and bolts upon you, such difficulties and disadvantages in the way of your conversion, consider it, and bless God for your escape: “Blessed be the Lord, that gave me counsel in my reins,” Ps. 16:7.

3. Let us compassionate others that are in this estate. Poor souls! in what a sad condition are they! We have not usually such a deep sense

of their misery as we should have. Israel was to pity strangers, because they were once strangers in the land of Egypt: we ourselves have been in the house of bondage. Oh! pity poor captive souls. Especially doth this concern the ministry; they that do *induere personam Christi*, that “stand in the stead of Christ,” should *induere viscera Christi*, “put on the bowels of Christ”: “God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Christ Jesus,” Phil. 1:8. When we were “ungodly,” and “without strength, Christ died for” sinners; and wilt not thou labour for them, and employ thy talent to edification? Oh! if we had more weighty thoughts about the worth and danger of souls, we would not do the Lord’s work so sleepily as usually we do; but as “co-workers with God,” we would beseech you with all earnestness “not to receive the grace of God in vain,” II Cor. 6:1. Every advantage should be taken hold of: as a sinking, perishing man, if it be but a bough in the waters, catcheth at it, so should we press you to improve all closer applications and ministerial helps, and that with compassion and tenderness, as having ourselves been acquainted with the heart of a poor, impotent, captive sinner.

Notes

1. That is, *rectus in curia* — beable to make a bold defence.
2. And so fitly expressing our restlessness in the use of means.

But Spiritual Discernment is Wholly Lost Until we are Regenerated

by John Calvin

The following selection by John Calvin was taken from book 2, chapter 2 parts 18-21 of *The Institutes of The Christian Religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge, Esq. A must read for all Christians who aspire to better understand the Bible's teaching on man's spiritual impotence prior to the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

18. The limits of our understanding

We must now explain what the power of human reason is, in regard to the kingdom of God, and spiritual discernments which consists chiefly of three things - the knowledge of God, the knowledge of his paternal favour towards us, which constitutes our salvation, and the method of regulating of our conduct in accordance with the Divine Law. With regard to the former two, but more properly the second, men otherwise the most ingenious are blinder than moles. I deny not, indeed, that in the writings of philosophers we meet occasionally with shrewd and apposite remarks on the nature of God, though they invariably savour somewhat of giddy imagination. As observed above, the Lord has bestowed on them some slight perception of his Godhead that they might not plead ignorance as an excuse for their impiety, and has, at times, instigated them to deliver some truths, the confession of which should be their own condemnation. Still, though seeing, they saw not. Their discernment was not such as to direct them to the truth, far less to enable them to attain it, but resembled that of the bewildered traveller, who sees the flash of lightning glance far and wide for a moment, and then vanish into the darkness of the night, before he can advance a single step. So far is

such assistance from enabling him to find the right path. Besides, how many monstrous falsehoods intermingle with those minute particles of truth scattered up and down in their writings as if by chance. In short, not one of them even made the least approach to that assurance of the divine favour, without which the mind of man must ever remain a mere chaos of confusion. To the great truths, What God is in himself, and what he is in relation to us, human reason makes not the least approach. (See Book 3 c. 2 sec. 14, 15, 16.)

19. Man's spiritual blindness shown from John 1:4-5

But since we are intoxicated with a false opinion of our own discernment, and can scarcely be persuaded that in divine things it is altogether stupid and blind, I believe the best course will be to establish the fact, not by argument, but by Scripture. Most admirable to this effect is the passage which I lately quoted from John, when he says, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not," (John 1: 4, 5.) He intimates that the human soul is indeed irradiated with a beam of divine light, so that it is never left utterly devoid of some small flame, or rather spark, though not such as to enable it to comprehend God. And why so? Because its acuteness is, in reference to the knowledge of God, mere blindness. When the Spirit describes men under the term "darkness" he declares them void of all power of spiritual intelligence. For this reason, it is said that believers, in embracing Christ, are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," (John 1: 13;) in other words, that the flesh has no capacity for such sublime wisdom as to apprehend God, and the things of God, unless illumined by His Spirit. In like manner our Saviour, when he was acknowledged by Peter, declared that it was by special revelation from the Father, (Matth. 16: 17.)

20. Man's knowledge of God is God's own work

If we were persuaded of a truth which ought to be beyond dispute, viz., that human nature possesses none of the gifts which the elect

receive from their heavenly Father through the Spirit of regeneration, there would be no room here for hesitation. For thus speaks the congregation of the faithful, by the mouth of the prophet: "With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light," (Ps. 36: 9.) To the same effect is the testimony of the Apostle Paul, when he declares, that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," (1 Cor. 12: 3.) And John Baptist, on seeing the dullness of his disciples, exclaims, "A man can receive nothing, unless it be given him from heaven," (John 3: 27.) That the gift to which he here refers must be understood not of ordinary natural gifts, but of special illumination, appears from this - that he was complaining how little his disciples had profited by all that he had said to them in commendation of Christ. "I see," says he, "that my words are of no effect in imbuing the minds of men with divine things, unless the Lord enlighten their understandings by His Spirit." Nay, Moses also, while upbraiding the people for their forgetfulness, at the same time observes, that they could not become wise in the mysteries of God without his assistance. "Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and these great miracles: yet the Lord has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this, day," (Deut. 29: 2, 3, 4.) Would the expression have been stronger had he called us mere blocks in regard to the contemplation of divine things? Hence the Lord, by the mouth of the Prophet, promises to the Israelites as a singular favour, "I will give them an heart to know me," (Jer. 24: 7;) intimating, that in spiritual things the human mind is wise only in so far as he enlightens it.

This was also clearly confirmed by our Saviour when he said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him," (John 6: 44.) Nay, is not he himself the living image of his Father, in which the full brightness of his glory is manifested to us? Therefore, how far our faculty of knowing God extends could not be better shown than when it is declared, that though his image is so plainly exhibited, we have not eyes to perceive it. What? Did not

Christ descend into the world that he might make the will of his Father manifest to men, and did he not faithfully perform the office? True! He did; but nothing is accomplished by his preaching unless the inner teacher, the Spirit, open the way into our minds. Only those, therefore, come to him who have heard and learned of the Father. And in what is the method of this hearing and learning? It is when the Spirit, with a wondrous and special energy, forms the ear to hear and the mind to understand. Lest this should seem new, our Saviour refers to the prophecy of Isaiah, which contains a promise of the renovation of the Church. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee," (Is. 54: 7.) If the Lord here predicts some special blessing to his elect, it is plain that the teaching to which he refers is not that which is common to them with the ungodly and profane.

It thus appears that none can enter the kingdom of God save those whose minds have been renewed by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit. On this subject the clearest exposition is given by Paul, who, when expressly handling it, after condemning the whole wisdom of the world as foolishness and vanity, and thereby declaring man's utter destitution, thus concludes, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned," (1 Cor. 2: 14.) Whom does he mean by the "natural man"? The man who trusts to the light of nature. Such a man has no understanding in the spiritual mysteries of God. Why so? Is it because through sloth he neglects them? Nay, though he exert himself, it is of no avail; they are "spiritually discerned." And what does this mean? That altogether hidden from human discernment, they are made known only by the revelation of the Spirit; so that they are accounted foolishness wherever the Spirit does not give light. The Apostle had previously declared, that "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him;" nay, that the wisdom of the world is a kind of veil by which the mind is prevented from beholding God, (1 Cor. 2: 9.) What would we more? The Apostle declares that God has "made foolish the

wisdom of this world," (1 Cor. 1: 20;) and shall we attribute to it an acuteness capable of penetrating to God, and the hidden mysteries of his kingdom? Far from us be such presumption!

21. Without the light of the Spirit, all is darkness

What the Apostle here denies to man, he, in another place, ascribes to God alone, when he prays, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation," (Eph. 1: 17.) You now hear that all wisdom and revelation is the gift of God. What follows? "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." Surely, if they require a new enlightening, they must in themselves be blind. The next words are, "that ye may know what is the hope of his calling," (Eph. 1: 18.) In other words, the minds of men have not capacity enough to know their calling.

Let no prating Pelagian here allege that God obviates this rudeness or stupidity, when, by the doctrine of his word, he directs us to a path which we could not have found without a guide. David had the law, comprehending in it all the wisdom that could be desired, and yet not contented with this, he prays, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," (Ps. 119: 18.) By this expression, he certainly intimates, that it is like sunrise to the earth when the word of God shines forth; but that men do not derive much benefit from it until he himself, who is for this reason called the Father of lights (James 1: 17,) either gives eyes or opens them; because, whatever is not illuminated by his Spirit is wholly darkness. The Apostles had been duly and amply instructed by the best of teachers. Still, as they wanted the Spirit of truth to complete their education in the very doctrine which they had previously heard, they were ordered to wait for him, (John 14: 26.) If we confess that what we ask of God is lacking to us, and He by the very thing promised intimates our want, no man can hesitate to acknowledge that he is able to understand the mysteries of God, only in so far as illuminated by his grace. He who ascribes to himself more understanding than this, is the blinder for not acknowledging his blindness.

Of Effectual Calling

A Commentary on The Westminster Confession of Faith

by A. A. Hodge

Section I. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call,[1] by his Word and Spirit,[2] out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ;[3] enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God,[4] taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh;[5] renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good,[6] and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ:[7] yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.[8]

Scripture Proof Texts

1. Acts 13:48; Rom. 4:28, 30; 11:7; Eph. 1:5, 11; II Tim. 1:9-10
2. II Thess. 2:13-14; James 1:18; II Cor. 3:3, 6; I Cor. 2:12
3. II Tim. 1:9-10; I Peter 2:9; Rom 8:2; Eph. 2:1-10
4. Acts 26:18; I Cor. 2:10, 12; Eph. 1:17-18; II Cor. 4:6
5. Ezek. 36:26
6. Ezek. 11:19; 36:27; Deut. 30:6; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:23
7. John 6:44-45; Acts 16:14

8. Psa. 110:3; John 6:37; Matt. 11:28; Rev. 22:17; Rom. 6:16-18; Eph. 2:8; Phil 1:29

Section II. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man,[9] who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit,[10] he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.[11]

Scripture Proof Texts

9. II Tim. 1:9; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 9:11

10. I Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7-9; Titus 3:4-5

11. John 6:37; Ezek. 36:27; I John 3:9; 5:1

THERE is an outward call of God's Word, extended to all men to whom the gospel is preached, which is considered under the fourth section of this chapter. The first and second sections treat of the internal effectual call of God's Spirit, which effects regeneration, and which is experienced only by the elect. Of this internal call it is affirmed: --

1. That there is such an internal call, and that it is necessary to salvation.

2. As to the subjects of it, that they embrace all the elect, and only the elect.

3. As to the agent of it -- (1.) That the sole agent of it is the Holy Ghost, who uses (2.) The revealed truth of the gospel as his instrument; (3.) That the subjects of it, while they have freely resisted all those common influences of the Holy Ghost which they have experienced before regeneration, are entirely passive with respect to that special act of the Spirit it whereby they are regenerated; nevertheless, in consequence of the change wrought in them in regeneration, they obey the call, and subsequently more or less perfectly co-operate with grace.

4. As to the nature of it, it is taught that it is an exercise of the almighty and effectual power of the Holy Ghost acting immediately upon the soul of the subject, determining him and effectually drawing, yet in a manner perfectly congruous to his nature, so that he comes most freely, being made willing.

5. As to the effect of it, it is taught that it works a radical and permanent change in the entire moral nature of the subject, spiritually enlightening his mind, sanctifying his affections, renewing his will, and giving a new direction to his action.

1. That there is such an, internal call of the Spirit, distinct from the external call of the Word, and that it is necessary to salvation, are proved --

(1.) from what the Scriptures teach concerning man's state by nature as a state of spiritual death, blindness, insensibility, and absolute inability with respect to all action spiritually good, as has been sufficiently shown under chapter ix., section 8.

(2.) The Scriptures distinguish between the Spirit's influence and that of the Word alone. 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15; iii. 6; 1 Thess. i. 5, 6.

(3.) A spiritual influence is declared to be necessary to dispose and enable men to receive the truth. John vi. 45; Acts xvi. 14; Eph. i. 17.

(4.) All that is good in man is referred to God as its author. Eph. ii. 8; Phil. ii. 13; 2Tim. ii. 25; Heb. xiii. 21.

(5.) The working of the Spirit upon the hearts of the regenerated is represented as far more direct, powerful, and efficient, than the mere moral influence of the truth upon the understanding and affections. Eph. i. 19; iii. 7.

(6.) The result effected in regeneration is different from an effect proper to the simple truth. It is "a new birth," "a new creation," etc. John iii. 3, 7; Eph. iv. 24.

(7.) The Scriptures explicitly distinguish between the two calls. Of the subjects of the one it is said, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Matt. xxii. 14. Of the subjects of the other it is said, "Whom he called, them he also justified." Rom. viii. 30. Comp. Prov. i. 24, and John vi. 45.

All these arguments conspire to prove that this spiritual influence is essential to salvation. Whatever is the necessary condition of regeneration is the necessary condition of salvation, because "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3.

2. That this spiritual call embraces all the elect, and only the elect, is proved -- (1.) From what has been already proved, (a.) Chapter iii. sections 3 -- 5, that God has from eternity definitely and unchangeably determined who shall be saved; and (b.) Chapter iii., section 6, that God, having "appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto." Effectual calling being the actual saving of a soul from the death of sin by the mighty power of God, it is obvious that it must be applied to all who are to be saved, and that it cannot be applied to any who are not to be saved. (2.) The same is proved from the fact that the Scriptures represent the "called" as the "elect," and the "elect" as the "called." Rom. viii. 28, 30. Those with Christ in heaven are "called, elect, and faithful." Rev. xvii. 14. (3.) The Scriptures, moreover, declare that the "calling" is based upon the "election:" "who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Tim. i. 9; 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14; Rom. xi. 7.

3. That the sole agent in this effectual calling is the Holy Ghost; that he uses Gospel truth as his instrument; and that, while all sinners are active in resisting the common influences of grace before regeneration, and all believers in co-operating with sanctifying grace after regeneration, nevertheless every new-created soul is passive

with respect to that divine act of the Holy Spirit whereby he is regenerated, may all be proved under the following distinct heads: --

(1.) There are certain influences of the Spirit in the present life which extend to all men in a greater or less degree; which tend to restrain or to persuade the soul; which are exerted in the way of heightening the natural moral effect of the truth upon the understanding, the heart, and the conscience. They involve no change of principle and permanent disposition, but only an increase of the natural emotions of the heart in view of sin, of duty, and of self-interest. These influences, of course, may be resisted, and are habitually resisted, by the unregenerate. The fact that such resistible influences are experienced by men is proved -- (a.) From the fact that the Scriptures affirm that they are resisted. Gen. vi. 3; Heb. x. 29. (b.) Every Christian is conscious that anterior to his conversion he was the subject of influences impressing him with serious thoughts, convincing him of sin, tending to draw him to the obedience of Christ, which he for the time resisted. We observe the same to be true of many men who are never truly converted at all.

(2.) The distinction between regeneration and conversion is obvious and necessary. Under chapter ix. we saw that the voluntary acts of the human soul are determined by, and derive their character from, the affections and desires which prompt them; and that these affections and desires derive their character from the permanent moral state of the soul in which they arise. In the unregenerate this permanent moral state and disposition of the soul is evil, and hence the action is evil. Action positively holy is impossible except as the consequence of a positively holy disposition. The infusion of such a disposition must therefore precede any act of true spiritual obedience. Effectual calling, according to the usage of our Standards, is the act of the Holy Spirit effecting regeneration. Regeneration is the effect produced by the Holy Spirit in effectual calling. The Holy Spirit, in the act of effectual calling, causes the soul to become regenerate by implanting a new governing principle or habit of spiritual affection and action. The soul itself, in conversion,

immediately acts under the guidance of this new principle in turning from sin unto God through Christ. It is evident that the implantation of the gracious principle is different from the exercise of that principle, and that the making a man willing is different from his acting willingly. The first is the act of God solely; the second is the consequent act of man, dependent upon the continued assistance of the Holy Ghost.

That God is the sole agent in the act which effects regeneration is plain -- (a.) From the nature of the case, as shown above. The making an unwilling man willing cannot be co-operated with by the man while unwilling. (b.) From what was proved under chapter ix., section 3, as to man's absolute inability with respect to spiritual things. (c.) From what the Scriptures say as to the nature of the change. They call it "a new birth," "a begetting," "a quickening," "a new creation." "God begetteth, the Spirit quickeneth;" "We are born again," "We are God's workmanship." John iii. 3, 5 -- 7; 1John v. 18; Eph. ii. 1, 5, 10. See also Ezek. xi. 19; Ps. li. 10; Eph iv. 23; Heb. viii. 10. That, after regeneration, the new-born soul at once begins and ever continues more or less perfectly to co-operate with sanctifying grace, is self-evident. Faith, repentance, love, good works, are one and all at the same time "fruits of the Spirit" and free actions of men. We are continually conscious, moreover, that we are subject to divine influences, which we are either resisting or obeying, and which we are free to resist or obey as we please, while through grace we do prevailingly please to obey.

(3.) That the Holy Spirit uses the "truth" as his instrument in effectual calling is plain -- (a.) Because he never acts in this way where the knowledge of the truth is entirely wanting; (b.) Because the Scriptures assert that we are begotten by the truth, sanctified by the truth, grow by it, etc. John xvii. 19; James i. 18; 1 Pet. ii. 2.

4. That this divine action is in its nature at once omnipotent and certainly efficacious, and yet perfectly congruous to the rational and voluntary nature of man, follows certainly from the fact that it is the

act of the all-wise and all-powerful God in executing his self-consistent and immutable decrees. What God does directly to accomplish his own changeless purposes must be certainly efficacious and powerful. Eph. i. 18, 19. Besides, the very thing done is to make us willing, to work faith in us; and that is indubitably connected with salvation. Phil. ii. 13. That it is effectual is also asserted. Eph. iii. 7, 20; iv. 16.

That this Divine influence is perfectly congruous to our nature is plain -- (1.) From the fact that it is the influence of an all-wise Creator upon the work of his own hand. It is not conceivable either that God is unable or indisposed to control the actions of his creatures in a manner perfectly consistent with their nature. (2.) The influence he exerts is called in Scripture "a drawing," "a teaching," "an enlightening," etc. John vi. 44, 45; Eph. i. 18. (3.) By nature the mind is darkened and the affections perverted and the will enslaved by sin. Regeneration restores these faculties to their proper condition. It cannot be inconsistent with a rational nature to let in the light, nor to a free will to deliver it from bondage. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." 2 Cor. iii. 17; Phil. ii. 13; Ps. cx. 3. Every regenerated man is conscious -- (a.) That no constraint has been laid upon the spontaneous movement of his faculties; and (b.) That, on the other hand, none of his faculties ever acted so freely and consistently with the law of their nature before.

5. That this change is radical is proved from the fact that, as shown above, it consists in the implantation of a new governing principle of life; from the fact that it is a "new birth," a "new creation," wrought by the mighty power of God in execution of his eternal purpose of salvation; and that it is as necessary for the most moral and amiable as for the morally abandoned.

That this change is permanent will be shown under chapter xvii., on the Perseverance of the Saints.

That it affects the entire man -- intellect, affections, and will -- is evident -- (1.) From the essential unity of the soul. It is the one indivisible "I" which thinks, feels, and wills. If the permanent moral state of the soul is corrupt, all its functions must be perverted. We can have no desire for an object unless we perceive its loveliness; nor can we perceive intellectually the loveliness of that which is wholly uncongenial to our inherent tastes and dispositions. (2.) The Scriptures expressly affirm that sin is essentially deceiving, that innate depravity involves moral blindness, and that the natural man cannot receive the tidings which are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. ii. 14; 2 Cor. iv. 4; John xvi. 3. (3.) The Scriptures expressly affirm that all the "new-born" are the subjects of a spiritual illumination of the understanding as well as renewal of the affections. John xvii. 3; 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13; 2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. i. 18; 1 John iv. 7; v. 20. (4.) In the Bible the phrase "to give a new heart" is equivalent to effect regeneration; and the phrase "heart" is characteristically used for the entire interior man -- intellect, affections, and, will. Observe such phrases as "counsels of the heart," 1 Cor. iv. 5; "imagination of the heart," Luke i. 51; "thoughts and intents of the heart," Heb. iv. 12.

Section III. Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ, through the Spirit,[12] who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth:[13] so also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.[14]

Scripture Proof Texts

12. Gen. 17:7; Luke 1:15; 18:15-16; Acts 2:39; John 3:3, 5; I John 5:12

13. John 3:8

14. John 16:7-8; I John 5:12; Acts 4:12

The outward call of God's Word, and all the "means of grace" provided in the present dispensation, of course presuppose intelligence upon the part of those who receive them. The will of God, also, is revealed only as far as it concerns those capable of

understanding and profiting by the revelation. His purposes with respect to either persons or classes not thus addressed are not explicitly revealed.

If infants and others not capable of being called by the gospel are to be saved, they must be regenerated and sanctified immediately by God without the use of means. If God could create Adam holy without means, and if he can new-create believers in righteousness and true holiness by the use of means which a large part of men use without profit, he can certainly make infants and others regenerate without means. Indeed, the natural depravity of infants lies before moral action, in the judicial deprivation of the Holy Ghost. The evil is rectified at that stage, therefore, by the gracious restoration of the soul to its moral relation to the Spirit of God. The phrase "elect infants" is precise and fit for its purpose. It is not intended to suggest that there are any infants not elect, but simply to point out the facts - (1.) That all infants are born under righteous condemnation; and (2.) That no infant has any claim in itself to salvation; and hence (3.) The salvation of each infant, precisely as the salvation of every adult, must have its absolute ground in the sovereign election of God. This would be just as true if all adults were elected, as it is now that only some adults are elected. It is, therefore, just as true, although we have good reason to believe that all infants are elected. The Confession adheres in this place accurately to the facts revealed. It is certainly revealed that none, either adult or infant, is saved except on the ground of a sovereign election; that is, all salvation for the human race is pure grace. It is not positively revealed that all infants are elect, but we are left, for many reasons, to indulge a highly probable hope that such is the fact. The Confession affirms what is certainly revealed, and leaves that which revelation has not decided to remain, without the suggestion of a positive opinion upon one side or the other.

Section IV. Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word,[15] and may have some common operations of the Spirit,[16] yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore

cannot be saved:[17] much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever,[17] be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the laws of that religion they do profess.[18] And, to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.[19]

Scripture Proof Texts

15. Matt. 13:14-15; 22:14; Acts 13:48; 28:24

16. Matt. 7:22; 13:20, 21; Heb. 6:4-5

17. John 6:37, 64-66; 8:44; 13:18; cf. 17:12

18. Acts 4:12; I John 4:2-3; II John 1:9; John 4:22; 14:6; 17:3; Eph. 2:12-13; Rom. 10:13-17

19. II John 1:9-12; I Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:6-8

This section, taken in connection with the parallel passage in L. Cat., q. 60, teaches the following propositions: --

1. That the non-elect will certainly fail of salvation, not because a free salvation is not made available to them if they accept Christ, but because they never accept Christ; and they all refuse to accept him, because, although they may be persuaded by some of the common influences of the Holy Ghost, their radical aversion to God is never overcome by effectual calling. It has already been proved under sections 1 and 2 that the grace of effectual calling extends to all the elect, and only to the elect; hence the truth of this proposition follows.

2. That the diligent profession and honest practice of neither natural religion, nor of any other religion than pure Christianity, can in the least avail to promote the salvation of the soul, is evident from the essential principles of the gospel. If any person perfectly conformed to the amount of spiritual truth known to him in every thought and act from birth upward, however little that knowledge might be, he would of course need no salvation. But all men, as we have seen, are born under condemnation, and begin to act as moral agents with

natures already corrupt. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Rom. iii. 23. Hence it follows that an atonement is absolutely necessary, and consequently a personal interest in the redemption of Christ is absolutely necessary to salvation; for if a law, conformity to which could have given life, could have been given, Christ is dead in vain. Gal. ii. 21; iii. 21. To admit that men may be saved irrespectively of Christ is virtually to deny Christ.

3. That in the case of sane adult persons a knowledge of Christ and a voluntary acceptance of him is essential in order to a personal interest in his salvation is proved --

(1.) Paul argues this point explicitly. If men call upon the Lord they shall be saved; but in order to call upon him, they must believe; and in order to believe, they must hear; and that they should hear, the gospel must be preached unto them. Thus the established order is -- salvation cometh by faith, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Rom, x. 13 -- 17; Matt. xi. 27; John xiv. 6; xvii. 3; Acts iv. 12.

(2.) God has certainly revealed no purpose to save any except those who, hearing the gospel, obey; and he requires that his people, as custodians of the gospel, should be diligent in disseminating it as the appointed means of saving souls. Whatever lies beyond this circle of sanctified means is unrevealed, unpromised, uncovenanted.

(3.) The heathen in mass, with no single definite and unquestionable exception on record, are evidently strangers to God, -- and going down to death in an unsaved condition. The presumed possibility of being saved without a knowledge of Christ remains, after eighteen hundred years, a possibility illustrated by no example.

Irresistible Grace

by John Murray

In reference to all the aspects from which God's saving grace may be viewed we must always reckon with the reality and gravity of sin. The salvation God has provided is more than salvation from sin and its consequences. Its design embraces the exceeding riches of God's grace and contemplates the highest conceivable destiny that could be bestowed upon creatures, conformity to the image of God's own Son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren (cf. Rom. 8:29). But no such destiny could be envisioned or achieved without salvation from sin in all its ramifications and liabilities. In order to be salvation *to* it must first of all be salvation *from*.

We cannot assess the gravity of sin unless we probe to that which is central in its definition. If we say that sin is selfishness we do state something that belongs to the character of sin, especially if we think of self-centeredness and construe this as involving the worship of self rather than of the Creator (cf. Rom. 1:25). The iniquity of sin is thereby disclosed. Again, if we say that sin is the assertion of human autonomy versus the sovereignty of God we are saying something relevant. Sin is precisely that, and it became apparent in Eden when the sin of our race began.

But we must ask: are these analyses sufficient? To put it otherwise: does not Scripture warrant and compel a more penetrating description? When Paul says that "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7), he has surely provided us with what is ultimate in the definition of sin. Sin is the contradiction of God, contradiction all along the line of God's unique and essential glory. Nothing is more germane to God's glory than his truth; he is truth. The tempter was well aware of this and so his strategy was framed accordingly. To the woman he said: "ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). This was blatant contradiction of God's veracity. When the woman acceded to this

contradiction her integrity collapsed and to sin she became captive. Our Lord's indictment of the tempter is to the effect that his own fall from integrity was of the same character as that by which he seduced Eve. "He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Yes, the essence of sin is to be against God (cf. Ps. 51:4); it is the contradiction of God in the whole range of its connotation and application. When Paul wrote, "the carnal mind is enmity against God," he added, "for it is not subject to the law of God" (Rom. 8:7). It is significant that the law of God should be specified in this connection. The enmity manifests itself in insubjection to the law of God. And not only so. The insubjection may be said to constitute the enmity, the contradiction. For the law is the glory of God coming to expression for the regulation of human thought, word, and action consonant with the image in which man has been created. So sin can be defined in terms of law as "lawlessness" (I John 3:4).

The contradiction which sin offers to God and to his will, if it is not adequately described as resistance, involves and is expressed in resistance. Scripture sometimes uses this term or its equivalents to express the attitude of unbelief (cf. Acts 7:51; 13:45; Rom. 10:21; II Tim. 3:8; Tit. 1:9). It is obvious that sin consists in resistance to the will of God. If the claims of God were not resistible, there would be no sin. The claims of God come to expression in the gospel and all rejection of the gospel and of its demands is resistance. In the gospel we have the supreme revelation of the grace of God, and Christ is the embodiment of that grace. The glory of God is nowhere more effulgent than in the face of Jesus Christ. Hence unbelief is resistance of grace at the zenith of its disclosure and overture. So to say that all grace is irresistible is to deny the plain facts of observation and experience as also of Scripture teaching. Stephen was bold enough to indict his unbelieving audience with resistance to the Holy Spirit: "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). This is the enormity of unbelief; it is the contradiction of sin

expressing itself in resistance to the claims and overtures of supreme love and grace. “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light” (John 3:19).

When we speak of irresistible grace, therefore, it is not to assert that all grace is irresistible, nor is it to deny the numberless respects in which grace is resisted and resisted to the culmination of resistance in everlasting doom. In fact the truth of and necessity for irresistible grace may be most cogently demonstrated in the premise of resistible grace. The enmity of the human heart is most virulent at the point of the supreme revelation of God’s glory. So deep-seated and persistent is the contradiction that the Saviour as the embodiment of grace is rejected. It is when we recognize this that the need for irresistible grace is perceived.

In much of present-day evangelism it is assumed that the one thing man can do in the exercise of his own liberty is to believe in Christ for salvation. It is supposed that this is the one contribution that man himself must make to set the forces of salvation in operation and that even God himself can do nothing towards this end until there is this crucial decision on man’s own part. In this assessment there is total failure to reckon with human depravity, with the nature of the contradiction that sin involves. Paul tells us that not only is the mind of the flesh not subject to the law of God but also that it cannot be (Rom. 8:7). This impossibility extends to the gospel as well. It is the implication of Paul’s other word that “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor. 2:14). But to this truth we have the most pointed and express witness of our Lord himself. “No man can come unto me, except the Father who bath sent me draw him” (John 6:44); “no man can come unto me, except it were given to him of the Father” (John 6:65). Here is the witness of him who knows what is in man and who knows the Father as the Father knows him. And it is to the effect that it is a moral and spiritual impossibility for a man to come

unto him except by the free gift from the Father in his secret and efficacious drawing.

The foregoing words of our Lord must be coordinated with another in the same context. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). The giving on the part of the Father in this text has been understood as the election in Christ before the foundation of the world (cf. Eph. 1:4, 5) or, at least, in terms of giving to the Son correlative with or flowing from the election. But this does not by any means appear to be the action of the Father referred to in the text. There are two reasons for this conclusion. First, in this Gospel elsewhere, when Jesus speaks of those given to him by the Father, they are identified as those given to him out of the world, as those who had kept his word, as those who had known that all things given to him were from the Father, as those who had received the words given him and had come to know the truth that he, Jesus, had come out from the Father (John 17:6-8). These characterizations require much more than election before the foundation of the world; they involve a relation of faith. Second, in the more immediate context Jesus is referring to the effectual drawing and giving on the Father's part (John 6:44, 65). So we must conclude that the giving is the giving that occurs in the actual operations of grace, defined more specifically as drawing and giving in the realm of consciousness. The constraints of the Father's grace in the hearts of men are concomitant with or, perhaps, may be construed as donation on the part of the Father to the Son. God the Father draws men, places holy constraints upon them, calls them into the fellowship of his Son, and presents them to Christ as trophies of the redemption Christ himself has accomplished.

This constraint has been called "efficacious." No other inference could reasonably be drawn from John 6:44, 45. Jesus is speaking of coming unto him, that is, of the commitment of faith and of the impossibility apart from the Father's drawing. In making the exception it is surely implied that when the Father draws the

exception occurs— the person drawn does come. Furthermore, it would offend against all that may be conceived as to the nature and intent of the Father's drawing and giving in terms of verses 44, 65 to think of these actions as ineffectual. But John 6:37 puts this beyond all question: "All that the Father giveth me will come to me." Jesus does not say: all that the Father giveth me are brought to me. He uses the term that denotes motion on the part of the person—"will come to me." Coming to Christ is the movement of commitment to Christ, coming that engages the whole-souled activity of the person coming. It is not that he may come, not that he has the opportunity to come, not that he will in all probability come, and not simply that he is empowered to come, but that he will come. There is absolute certainty. There is a divine necessity; the order of heaven insures the sequence.

It is a moral and spiritual impossibility for a person to come to Christ apart from the Father's drawing. What we find now is that it is a moral and spiritual impossibility for the person given by the Father to the Son not to come. There is by Jesus' verdict the invariable conjunction of these two diverse kinds of action—"all that the Father *giveth* me *will come* to me." There is invincible efficacy in the Father's action and this means grace irresistible.

The reality of such grace is inscribed on Jesus' words. But the teaching also points to the *necessity*. The premise of our Lord's teaching is the impossibility of faith when only human agency obtains. The agency of the Father is interposed to meet this impossibility and the impossibility establishes the indispensability of the interposition.

Thus far attention has been focused upon the action of God the Father in the constraint that issues in faith. It is highly important that this emphasis of Scripture should be appreciated. Otherwise we dishonor God the Father and our view of the provisions of salvation is seriously distorted. The love of the Father is the fountain from which all the acts and processes of redemption proceed. But we must

also recognize that at the inception of salvation in possession lie the operations of grace of which the Father is agent. It is he who calls effectually into the fellowship of his Son (cf. Rom. 8:28, 30; I Cor. 1:9; Gal. 1:15, 16; Eph. 1:18) and he draws men to the Saviour. When sinners first experience the invincible attraction of the Redeemer, are entranced by his beauty, and invest their all in him, it is because the Father has made a donation to his own Son and placed upon men irresistible constraint. To conceive of all this as less than irresistible grace is to deny its character and impugn the efficacy of the Father's will.

Most frequently in theology irresistible grace has been thought to find its focus in regeneration, and regeneration is specifically the act of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:3-8). It would be easy to say that the actions of the Father referred to above are simply different ways of expressing regeneration. This is far too simplistic and fails to reckon with the manifoldness of the operations of grace. In the design of salvation there is an economy. In the once-for-all accomplishment of redemption there is an economy. That is, there are the specific and distinguishing functions of the distinct persons of the Godhead. There is also economy in the application of redemption and we must take full account of the diversity involved. To equate the actions of the Father with regeneration is to ignore the diversity; our theology is thereby truncated and our faith deprived of the richness which the economy requires.

Regeneration is specifically the work of the Holy Spirit, and our appreciation of the economy of salvation demands that we honor him in the distinctive functions he performs.

No ingredient in the manifold of God's saving operations bears more relevantly on the subject of irresistible grace than does regeneration. Again, our Lord's own teaching is basic. "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5). The impossibility we found earlier in connection with

faith appears here in connection with understanding of and membership in the kingdom of God, and birth from above, of water, and of the Spirit is the interposition that meets human impotence. It cannot be questioned that our Lord's assessment of man's situation is the total incapacity in reference to what is most germane to his well-being and is to the same effect as Paul's indictment of the natural man (I Cor. 2:14).

The provision of grace appears in this connection, as in John 6:44, 65, in the exception, born from above, of water, and of the Spirit, the exception that insures understanding of and membership in the kingdom of God. And the certainty of this outcome is implied not only in the "except" of verses 3 and 5 but is expressly affirmed in verse 6: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," a new person indwelt, directed, and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

It is John alone who records for us the Lord's discourse to Nicodemus. The profound effect this teaching impressed on John's thinking is evinced in his first epistle. On six occasions reference to regeneration occurs (I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). Pertinent to our present interest is the emphasis upon the invariable concomitance of birth from God and new life. "Every one who is begotten of God does not do sin . . . and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God" (3:9). "Every one who is begotten of God overcomes the world" (5:4). "Every one who is begotten of God does not sin . . . and the evil one does not touch him" (5:18). So the person born or begotten of God no longer lives in sin but has the victory, in a word, is converted.

When these data are placed in contrast with the impossibility of which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus, the only inference is that the new birth is invincibly efficacious and this is just to affirm irresistible grace.

It is significant that in the prologue of John's Gospel there occur the words, "who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of

the will of man but of God” (John 1:13). The cumulative negatives reinforce the positive and the lesson is that of divine monergism. It is not what man does but what God effects and God alone to the exclusion of all human volition or agency. The same monergism is patent in our Lord’s own teaching. In John 3:3-8 we cannot suppress the analogy on which the language of regeneration turns. When a person is begotten or born according to the flesh, it is not because he or she *decided* for this event. It was wholly by the volition and agency of others. So in the new birth. And by whose will and agency is not left in any doubt. The Holy Spirit is the agent and he alone. In terms of verse 3 the action is supernatural, in terms of verse 5 it is by radical purification and impartation, in terms of verse 6 it is invincibly determinative, in terms of verse 8 it is mysterious and sovereignly effective.

Why should there be any reluctance to accept the truth of irresistible grace? It is God’s interposition to do for us what we cannot do of ourselves. It is God’s amazing grace to meet our hopeless impotence. Here is the gospel of sovereign mercy. In evangelism it is the only hope of its success unto the salvation of lost souls. The Holy Spirit accompanies the gospel proclamation with his sovereign demonstration and power. The lost are born of the Spirit and the fruit is unto holiness and the end everlasting life.

In concluding, may we return to John 6:37, 44, 65. When a sinner comes to Christ in the commitment of faith, when the rebellious will is renewed and tears of penitence begin to flow, it is because a mysterious transaction has been taking place between the persons of the Godhead. The Father has been making a presentation, a donation to his own Son. So perish the thought that coming to Christ finds its explanation in the autonomous determinations of the human will. It finds its cause in the sovereign will of God the Father. He has placed upon this person the constraint by which he has been captivated by the glory of the Redeemer and invests in him all his interests. Christ is made wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, and

redemption. Here is grace surpassing; and it is grace insurmountable.

The Order of Application and Regeneration

by John Murray

THE provision which God has made in his providence for the sustenance and comfort of man and beast is not sparing or niggardly. He has made the earth to teem with good things to satisfy the needs of man and beast and to meet their varied tastes and appetites. Psalm 104 is the inspired lyric of praise and admiration. "These wait all upon thee;. that thou mayest give them their meat in due season . . . thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good" (vers. 27, 28). "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man, oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart" (ver. 15). And the psalmist exclaims: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (ver. 24).

The provision which God has made for the salvation of men is even more strikingly manifold. For this provision has in view the manifoldness of man's need and exhibits the overflowing abundance of God's goodness, wisdom, grace, and love. This superabundance appears in the eternal counsel of God respecting salvation; it appears in the historic accomplishment of redemption by the work of Christ once for all; and it appears in the application of redemption continuously and progressively till it reaches its consummation in the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

When we think of the application of redemption we must not think of it as one simple and indivisible act. It comprises a series of acts and

processes. To mention some, we have calling, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification. These are all distinct, and not one of these can be defined in terms of the other. Each has its own distinct meaning, function, and purpose in the action and grace of God.

God is not the author of confusion and therefore he is the author of order. There are good and conclusive reasons for thinking that the various actions of the application of redemption, some of which have been mentioned, take place in a certain order, and that order has been established by divine appointment, wisdom, and grace. It is quite apparent to every one that it would be impossible to start off with glorification, for glorification is at the far end of the process as its completion and consummation, and it is scarcely less apparent that regeneration would have to precede sanctification. A man must surely be born again before he can be progressively sanctified. Regeneration is the inception of being made holy and sanctification is the continuance. Hence it requires no more than the most elementary knowledge of these various terms to see that we cannot turn them around and mix them up in any way we please. But we may also look at a few passages of Scripture to show that there is clearly implied an order or arrangement in the various steps of the application of redemption.

If we take, first of all, such well-known texts as John 3:3, 5, our Lord told Nicodemus that except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God and except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Obviously, seeing and entering into the kingdom of God belong to the application of redemption, and our Lord indicates that apart from the new birth, regeneration, there cannot be this seeing or entering into the kingdom of God. It follows that regeneration is prior and it would plainly be impossible to reverse the order and say that a man is regenerated by seeing or entering into the kingdom of God. No, a man enters the kingdom of God by regeneration. As Jesus says again (John 3:6), "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

We may also examine a closely related text, I John 3:9: "Every one who is born of God does not do sin, because his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." John is dealing here, no doubt, with deliverance from the reigning power of sin. Such deliverance is part of the application of redemption. But the text demonstrates that the reason why a person is delivered from the reigning power of sin is that he is born of God, and the reason he continues in this freedom from the ruling and directing power of sin is that the seed of God abides in him. Here we have clearly the order of causation and explanation. The new birth causes and explains the state of freedom from the domination of sin and is therefore prior to such freedom. The regenerated person does not commit the sin which is unto death (I John 5:16) and the reason is that he is born of God and God's seed is always in him to keep him from that grievous and irreparable sin.

Still further, let us look at John 1:12. We may focus our attention on two subjects with which this text deals, namely, the reception of Christ and the bestowment of authority to become the sons of God. We may properly call them faith and adoption. The text says distinctly that "as many as received him, to them gave he authority to become children of God." The bestowment of this authority, which we may for, our present purposes equate with adoption, presupposes the reception of Christ, namely, faith in his name. This is to the effect of saying that adoption presupposes faith, and therefore faith is prior to adoption. So we should have to follow the order, faith and adoption.

Finally, we may glance at one passage in Paul, Ephesians 1:13: "In whom ye also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also having believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." The sealing with the Holy Spirit is that which follows upon the hearing of the word of truth and believing. Hearing and believing are therefore prior in order and cannot be made to follow the sealing of the Spirit.

These few texts have been appealed to simply for the purpose of showing that there is order which must be maintained and cannot be reversed without violating the plain import of these texts. These texts prove the fact of order and show that it is not empty logic to affirm divine order in the application of redemption. There is a divine logic in this matter and the order which we insist upon should be nothing more or less than what the Scriptures disclose to be the divine arrangement.

These texts, however, have not brought us very far in discovering what the order of arrangement is in connection with a good many of the actions which are comprised in the application of redemption. They have established a few things, indeed, but only a few. When we give a fuller enumeration of the several steps or aspects-calling, regeneration, conversion, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, glorification-we can see that several questions remain undetermined. Which is prior, calling or justification? Is faith prior to justification or vice versa? Does regeneration come before calling?

There is one passage of Scripture which affords us a great deal of light on this question. It is Romans 8:30: "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Here we have three acts of the application of redemption - calling, justification, and glorification. They appear in this text in that order. And the question arises: is this order intended to be the order of application and occurrence? Or is the order in the text simply one of convenience so that Paul could just as well have adopted another order?

One thing must be said by way of preface; it is that even if the order had been different, justification first and calling second, the main thought of the passage would not be disturbed. The main thought is the invariable conjunction and sequence of these divine acts and their indissoluble connection with God's eternal purpose of

foreknowledge and predestination. For here we have a chain of unbreakable links beginning with foreknowledge and ending with glorification.

But there are overwhelming reasons for thinking that the order Paul follows in verse 30 - calling, justification, glorification - is the order of sequence according to the divine arrangement. These reasons are not far to seek. There are so many intimations of order in this passage as a whole that we cannot but conclude that order of logical sequence is intended throughout.

1. In verse 28 there is the intimation of order in the expression, "called according to purpose." This means that purpose provides the pattern or plan according to which calling takes place. Therefore the purpose is prior to the calling, and, in this case, of course, eternally prior. The purpose is none other than that which is unfolded in verse 29 as consisting in foreknowledge and predestination. Hence we have a clear indication of order in verse 28.

2. We have the same in verse 29. It is not our interest now to expound the meaning of the word "foreknow" nor its relation to the word "predestinate." All that is necessary to note now is that there is progression of thought from foreknowledge to predestination. Here again we have an indication of order which will not allow us to reverse the elements involved.

3. In verses 29 and 30 we have a chain of events which find their spring in foreknowledge and their terminus in glorification. We cannot possibly reverse these two. There is not only priority and posteriority but a particular kind of such order, namely, foreknowledge as the ultimate fount and glorification as the ultimate end.

4. The same applies to both foreknowledge and predestination in reference to the three acts mentioned in verse 30. Foreknowledge

and predestination are prior to calling, justification, and glorification, and eternally prior at that. Reversal is inconceivable.

5. Even within the acts mentioned in verse 30, acts which fall within the sphere of the application of redemption and which are therefore temporal as distinguished from those of God's eternal counsel mentioned in verse 29, we are bound to discover an order of priority. Glorification could not be prior to calling and justification; it must be posterior to both. Hence, whatever may be true as regards the order of calling and justification in relation to each other, glorification must be after both. The only question that remains, therefore, is whether calling is prior to justification or the reverse.

We shall have to conclude that, since there are so many indications of intended order in this passage as a whole, the order which Paul follows in reference to calling and justification must be intended as the order of logical arrangement and progression. It would violate every relevant consideration to think otherwise. Consequently we must infer that Romans 8:30 provides us with a broad outline of the order in the application of redemption and that that order is: calling, justification, glorification. So we have the answer to one question, which has not so far been determined, namely, that calling precedes justification in the order of the application of redemption. And we might not have thought so if we were to rely upon our own logical reasonings.

The next question we may discuss is the relation of faith to justification. There is difference of judgment on this question among orthodox theologians, some holding that justification is prior, others the reverse. It must be understood that what we are dealing with now is not at all God's eternal decree to justify. That certainly is prior to faith, and, if we were to call that "eternal justification" (a misuse of terms), then such would be prior to faith just as God's purpose is always prior to every phase of the application of redemption. Furthermore, if we use the term justification as the virtual synonym of reconciliation (as it may be in Romans 5:9), then again such

justification is prior to faith just as the accomplishment of redemption is always prior to the application of it. But we are not now dealing with the eternal decree to justify nor with the basis of justification in the work once for all accomplished by Christ but with actual justification, which falls within the orbit of the application of redemption. With reference to such justification the Scripture undoubtedly states that we are justified by faith, from faith, through faith, and upon faith (see Rom. 1:17; 3:22, 26, 28, 30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:24; Phil. 3:9). It would surely seem impossible to avoid the conclusion that justification is upon the event of faith or through the instrumentality of faith. God justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus, in a word, believers. And that is simply to say that faith is presupposed in justification, is the precondition of justification, not because we are justified on the ground of faith or for the reason that we are justified because of faith but only for the reason that faith is God's appointed instrument through which he dispenses this grace.

There is another reason why we should believe that faith is prior to justification. We found already that calling is prior to justification. And faith is connected with calling. It does not constitute calling. But it is the inevitable response of our heart and mind and will to the divine call. In this matter call and response coincide. For that reason we should expect that since calling is prior to justification so is faith. This inference is confirmed by the express statement that we are justified by faith.

We are now in a position to give the following, slightly enlarged outline of the order in the application of redemption - calling, faith, justification, glorification.

If we think in Scriptural terms it is not difficult to insert another step. It is that of regeneration. It, in turn, must be prior to faith. Much controversy turns on this question and into all the angles of that controversy we need not enter. Still further, it will not be possible in this chapter to give all the evidence establishing the priority of regeneration. A good deal of that evidence will be

presented later. Suffice it at present to be reminded that as sinners we are dead in trespasses and sins. Faith is a whole-souled act of loving trust and self-commitment. Of that we are incapable until renewed by the Holy Spirit. It was to this our Lord testified when he said that no one could come unto him except it were given unto him of the Father and except the Father draw him (John 6:44, 65). And, again, we must remember John 3:3: "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Surely seeing the kingdom of God is the act of faith and, if so, such faith is impossible without regeneration. Hence regeneration must be prior to faith. We can affirm then on these grounds that the order is regeneration, faith, justification.

This does not settle the question as to the order in connection with calling and regeneration. Is regeneration prior to effectual calling or is the reverse the case? There are arguments which could be pleaded in favour of the priority of regeneration. No great issue would be at stake in adopting that order, that is to say, the order, regeneration, calling, faith, justification, glorification. There is, however, one weighty consideration (a consideration that will be developed later on), namely, that in the teaching of Scripture it is calling that is given distinct emphasis and prominence as that act of God whereby sinners are translated from darkness to light and ushered into the fellowship of Christ. This feature of New Testament teaching creates the distinct impression that salvation in actual possession takes its start from an efficacious summons on the part of God and that this summons, since it is God's summons, carries in its bosom all of the operative efficacy by which it is made effective. It is calling and not regeneration that possesses that character. Hence there is more to be said for the priority of calling.

If then we have the following elements and in the following order: calling, regeneration, faith, justification, and glorification, we have really settled all that is of basic importance to the question. The other steps can be readily filled in and put in their proper place. Repentance is the twin sister of faith - we cannot think of the one

without the other, and so repentance would be conjoined with faith. Conversion is simply another name for repentance and faith conjoined and would therefore be inclosed in repentance and faith. Adoption would obviously come after justification - we could not think of one being adopted into the family of God without first of all being accepted by God and made an heir of eternal life. Sanctification is a process that begins, we might say, in regeneration, finds its basis in justification, and derives its energizing grace from the union with Christ which is effected in effectual calling. Being a continuous process rather than a momentary act like calling, regeneration, justification and adoption, it is proper that it should be placed after adoption in the order of application. Perseverance is the concomitant and complement of the sanctifying process and might conveniently be placed either before or after sanctification.

With all these considerations in view, the order in the application of redemption is found to be, calling, regeneration, faith and repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, glorification. When this order is carefully weighed we find that there is a logic which evinces and brings into clear focus the governing principle of salvation in all of its aspects, the grace of God in its sovereignty and efficacy. Salvation is of the Lord in its application as well as in its conception and accomplishment.

Effectual Calling and Regeneration

by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Effectual Calling

As we now proceed to consider in detail what exactly it is the Holy Spirit does to us in the application of redemption, I would remind you that I am not insisting that the order which I shall follow is of necessity the right one, and certainly not of necessity the chronological one.

‘So how do you arrive at your order?’ asks someone. My answer is that I mainly try to conceive of this work going on within us from the standpoint of God in eternity looking down upon men and women in sin. That is the way that appeals to me most of all; it is the way that I find most helpful. That is not to detract in any way from experience or the experiential standpoint. Some would emphasise that and would have their order according to experience, but I happen to be one of those people who is not content merely with experience. I want to know something about that experience; I want to know what I am experiencing and I want to know why I am experiencing it and how it has come about. It is the child who is content merely with enjoying the experience. If we are to grow in grace and to go forward and exercise our senses, as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews puts it (Heb. 5:14), then we must of necessity ask certain questions and be anxious to know how the things that have happened to us really have come to take place.

My approach therefore is this: there is the truth of the gospel, and we have seen already that it is a part of the work of the Holy Spirit to see that that truth is proclaimed to all and sundry. That is what we called the general call — a kind of universal offer of the gospel. Then we saw that though the external or general call comes to all, to those who

will remain unsaved as well as to those who are saved, obviously some new distinction comes in, because some are saved by it. So the question we must now consider is: What is it that establishes the difference between the two groups?

And the way to answer that question, it seems to me, is to say that the call of the gospel, which has been given to all, is effectual only in some. Now there is a portion of Scripture which is a perfect illustration of this. The followers of Christ who were even described as 'disciples' were divided up into two groups. One group decided that they would never listen to Him again. They left Him and went home. And when He turned to the others and said, 'Will ye also go away?' Peter said, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the word of eternal life' (John 6:67–68). The one group disbelieved and went home, the others, who had heard exactly the same things, stayed with Him, wanted to hear more, and rejoiced in it. What makes the difference? It is that the word was effectual in the case of the saved in a way that it was not effectual in the case of the unsaved who refused it.

This, then, is something that is quite obvious. We can say that in addition to the external call there is this effectual call, and that what makes anybody a saved person and a true Christian is that the call of the gospel has come effectually. Let me give you some scriptures that establish that. The first, Romans 8:28–39 , is a great statement of this very thing. 'We know,' says Paul, 'that all things work together for good to them that love God ... ' Not to everybody but ' to them that love God '. Who are they? 'To them who are called according to his purpose,' and Paul goes on: 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' The saved are described as those who are called . And they have been called in a way that the others have not. That is, therefore, a scriptural statement of this effectual call.

Then, another one is to be found in 1 Corinthians 1:2 . It is a statement that you will find in other places as well: ‘Unto the church of God which is at Corinth to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints ...’. it is not simply that they are called saints, they are called to be saints. And then, in that same chapter, the Apostle repeats it. He says, ‘We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness’ — then notice — ‘but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God’ (1 Cor. 1:23– 24). Now there are people to whom the preaching of Christ is foolishness; they are the unsaved. But the saved he again describes as those who are called

And let me give you one other example. Take that great statement made by the apostle Peter: ‘But ye,’ he says, referring to Christian believers, ‘are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (1 Pet. 2:9–10). God has called them out, and because they are the saved, He has called them effectually. The call of the gospel has gone to many others but they are not the people Peter is talking about. He is talking about these people who correspond to Israel after the flesh in the Old Testament. He applies to them the very terminology that was applied to the Children of Israel, just as the Ten Commandments and the moral law were given to them. Peter uses the same words — they are the called, the ‘Israel of God’, called to show forth His praises. Now it is obvious therefore that in these people the call has been effectual; that is the teaching of these scriptures.

But there is another argument which states this perfectly. What is the meaning of the term church ? We are members of the Christian Church. But what is it — what does it mean? What is the connotation of the term? Well, the word church translates the Greek word, ecclesia ; and the ecclesia means the ‘called forth ones’. A church is a gathering of people who have been called forth, called out, separated out as the result of this call. As Peter puts it: ‘Who hath called you

out of darkness into his marvellous light'. That is the meaning of this term church . And therefore that very word in and of itself is sufficient to establish the statement that there obviously is such a thing as an effectual call, because the same message has gone to others but they have been called from the world into the Church.

What, then, is the difference between the external call and this call which has become effectual? And the answer must be that this call is an internal, a spiritual call. It is not merely something that comes to a person from the outside — it does that, of course, but in addition to that external call which comes to all, there is an internal call which comes to those who are going to be Christians, and it is an effectual call. The contrast, therefore, is between external, and internal and spiritual.

Now I want to go even further and again give you scriptural proofs of the fact that there is such an internal and spiritual call. We have only looked at it in general in the scriptures that I have given you so far, they are simply designations, descriptions. So I want to give you scriptures which specifically state that this is something that happens within; and first of all I go to the sixth chapter of John's Gospel. Incidentally, this particular doctrine is taught much more clearly, if I may use such a comparison, by John than it is by the apostle Paul. People sometimes tend to think that this is a doctrine conjured up only in Paul's mind, but it is much more evident in John's Gospel and particularly in this great sixth chapter.

Here, in verse 45 , is one statement of it: 'It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.' That is it; God gave the prophet this information and he recorded it. There will be certain people who shall be taught by God Himself, not taught by men only but in addition to that taught by God, taught by the Spirit. Some internal work is going to take place. 'Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me' (v. 45). You see the people who come to Christ are those who have been taught of God, who have learned of the Father by the Spirit, and they alone.

Now that is a crucial statement. But our Lord repeats it later on in verses 63–65 . His listeners have stumbled at His words and He says to them, ‘It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life. But,’ He says, ‘there are some of you that believe not.’ And John adds, ‘For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.’ They had responded to the external call and thought that they were Christians. Here it becomes evident that they were not; they had never been taught of God. They had held on to the shell, the external word, and they had not got the Spirit. John continues, ‘And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.’ And the Father had not given it to these people so they did not come and they went home. But He had given it to the others, so they remained and they rejoiced in it. That is a proof that there is this spiritual, this internal call. And that is what makes the call effectual. Or take another statement. It is from Ephesians 1:17 . Paul prays for the Ephesians ‘That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him’ In other words we cannot have knowledge of Him unless He gives us the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation — they are absolutely essential. And that was why Paul prayed that they might have the Spirit, it was in order that they might grow increasingly in this knowledge of God. Without this work of the Spirit we cannot attain unto such knowledge. Or again, in Ephesians 2:8 , we read, ‘For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.’ And then, of course, there is Philippians 2:12–13 , where Paul says the same thing: ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do ...’ God does an internal work and it is as the result of that that we are enabled ‘to will and to do of his good pleasure’.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:5 , Paul makes a most important statement in this connection: ‘For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.’ Now if you read that epistle, especially the first two chapters, you will find

that the Apostle goes on repeating that statement in different ways. He says that they received the word that came to them 'not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God' (1 Thess. 2:13). But what did he mean when he said 'For our gospel came not unto you in word only'? It did come in words, of course, the Apostle was speaking, but that was not the thing that had turned those idolatrous Thessalonians into saints. What was it, then? It was that it had come 'in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance'. It is this internal work that turns people from sinners into saints; this is preaching in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

And, indeed, the Apostle makes a very similar statement in 2 Timothy 2:25 . Here he is telling the young Timothy how to handle certain people who were opposing him. 'In meekness,' he says, 'instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.' Timothy, says Paul, I want you to instruct these people who are opposing you and my reason for doing so is this: it is not to suggest to you that you by your arguments or logic can convince them. If God does not do this work in them, they will never acknowledge the truth, but if God does work, they will acknowledge it. Indeed there is a statement that we can find more than once in the Gospels and which we have already quoted, which really says it all in one phrase: 'Many are called, but few are chosen' (Matt. 22:14). Take that especially in its context of the wedding feast. 'Many are called' — that is the external call — 'but few are chosen' — that is the effectual call.

So then, the next step which we take is this: we have seen that the Scripture teaches that the saved are the effectually called and that they are effectually called because of the work that goes on within them. 'But,' someone may say, 'why all this?' And the answer is that this is absolutely essential. Without this work within, no one would ever become a Christian; it is an utter necessity. Let me give you my proof for that. 'For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit' (Rom. 8:5). Now the Revised Standard Version puts it like this: 'They

that are after the flesh are interested in the things of the flesh and they that are after the Spirit, or in the Spirit, are interested in the things of the Spirit.’ But the natural man or woman — those ‘after the flesh’ — are not interested in the things of the Spirit at all. They find them dull and boring and uninteresting. They regard them as a waste of time and they hate them. But they that are after the Spirit are interested in the things of the Spirit: ‘For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because’ — and this is the final argument — ‘the carnal mind is enmity against God’ (vv. 6–7).

Now that is a very strong statement but it is true. Men and women, as they are by nature as the result of the fall, are at enmity against God. ‘The carnal mind ... is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God’ (vv. 7–8). To me that is a final statement. Men and women by nature are opposed to God; they hate God and they are not interested in Him, neither are they interested in the things of God. From that statement of the Apostle I deduce that the internal work of the Spirit is an absolute necessity before anyone can possibly believe in the gospel of God and accept it and rejoice in it.

However, let us go on and consider other statements to the same effect. Take the famous statement in 1 Corinthians 2:14 : ‘But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ That is a categorical statement, but do not suddenly become a philosopher and say, ‘Well, if that is true I do not understand this and that.’ No, let us face the statements of Scripture. We are dealing with things beyond our understanding. We are dealing with the inscrutable purposes of God, and if we are going to be foolish enough to put up our understandings or our philosophy against these categorical statements, then we deserve to remain in darkness. We must not approach the Scripture with such a conceit of ourselves that we think we can understand everything — we cannot. ‘Great is the mystery of godliness’ (1 Tim. 3:16

), and especially in this matter. But here is the statement that the natural man or woman not only does not receive it, but cannot receive it because these things are spiritually understood, judged and discerned.

Then there is the statement in 2 Corinthians 4:3–4 : ‘If our gospel be hid,’ says Paul, and it is quite clear that the gospel is hid to certain people; they hear it like everybody else but they see nothing in it, they do not want it, they blaspheme it, they treat it with scorn. ‘If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.’ And who are they? They are the people, ‘In whom the god of this world’ — the devil — ‘hath blinded the minds of them which believe not,’ lest they believe this glorious gospel. Could anything be plainer? They cannot believe because Satan has blinded their minds ‘lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them’ (2 Cor. 4:4).

And then, finally, we find the statement in Ephesians 2:1 : ‘And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins’ — dead! You cannot have anything stronger than that; that is their position spiritually. All these are statements to prove the absolute necessity of this internal work of the Spirit before the call — the external, general call of the gospel — can possibly be effectual.

So, then, what is this effectual, internal call that we are speaking about? Well, the most we can say about it is — and this must of necessity be true in the light of these scriptures — that it is the exercise of the power of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It is a direct operation of the Holy Spirit within us. It is immediate, it is spiritual, it is supernatural, miraculous. And what it does is to make a new mode of spiritual activity possible within us. Without this operation we are incapable of any true spiritual activity but as the result of this operation of the Holy Spirit upon us, we are rendered capable, for the first time, of spiritual activity and that is how this call now becomes effectual, that is what enables us to receive it.

Now this is very important and I want to emphasise the immediacy, the direct action. You see, what happens when the call comes to men and women effectually is not simply that the moral influence of the truth is exercised upon them. Some people have thought that; they have said that the gospel is preached and that the truth has a kind of general moral effect upon people. For instance, to take a human theme, a capable orator, a man wanting to persuade men and women to vote at an election for a given party, can put the case so well that he can exercise a moral influence upon his listeners. But it is not that. It is an operation of the Spirit upon the men and women themselves, in the depths. It is not merely that the Holy Spirit heightens our natural faculties and powers, it is more than that. It is the Spirit acting upon the soul from within and producing within us a new principle of spiritual action.

Now it must be that; it cannot be less than that. Because these things, says Paul, are all spiritual. And that is why the natural man does not understand them; and that is why, as I have often reminded you, we should never be surprised, or to the slightest extent disappointed or put out, when somebody brings us the argument that 'Christianity cannot be right because look at this great man and he doesn't believe it!' How often have you heard that argument! Someone says, 'You know, I cannot believe this, because if Christianity were true, it could not be possible that all these philosophers and scientists and all these great statesmen and other men do not believe it.'

In the light of these things, it is very natural and we can understand it perfectly well. The greatest natural intellect cannot receive this, he is 'a natural man'. And you need a spiritual faculty to receive the wonderful truth about the two natures in the one Person; the outstanding doctrine about the Trinity; the whole doctrine of the incarnation and the atonement, and so on. This is spiritual truth and to the natural person it is utter folly, it is foolishness, as Paul says. So when the Holy Spirit does enable us to believe it, it must be something beyond the heightening of our natural faculties. It is not simply that He brings the truth of His great moral suasion to us. No,

no. We need some new faculty, some new principle, and that is the very work that He does. He implants within us this new spiritual principle, this principle of spiritual vitality and activity, and it is as the result of this that the general call of the gospel comes to us in an effectual manner.

So, then, let me again give you some scriptural proofs of this, because I do have them. You will find a practical illustration in Acts 16:14 . Here is Paul, preaching in the town of Philippi. It is a very crucial passage for us because it was the Apostle's first visit to Europe and it was the first time that the Christian gospel was ever preached there. And do not forget that the first convert that the Christian gospel obtained in Europe was a woman called Lydia. She was the first person in the history of Europe to whom the call of the gospel came. How did it happen? We are told: 'A certain women named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us' — as many others did. The Apostle sat down and preached the word. There was the external call; he told them the gospel, the facts about the Lord Jesus Christ and the meaning of the facts. He said all this and we are told that among those listening was a woman called Lydia and that she heard this, as many have heard the gospel preached in a church or a chapel but have gone home in an unbelieving condition and have died as unbelievers. What was it, then, that made the difference with Lydia? Notice! '... whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.'

Now there it is perfectly. The word is preached, yes, but people do not pay attention to it. They look at one another while it is being preached, or they write in their books or they recite poetry to themselves or they are smiling at one another. In a sense they hear it, but they do not attend to it and you cannot be saved until you attend to it. What made Lydia attend? The answer is, 'whose heart the Lord opened '. The Lord put something in her heart, this internal work, and the result of that was that she paid attention, and she saw the gospel and received it. The external call became the internal call, the

general became effectual. She believed and was baptised and also her household. It is unmistakable — it was the Lord opening her heart that made the difference; but for that, she would never have believed.

And then, of course, we have a great theological statement in 1 Corinthians 2:10–15. Paul has just been saying that the princes of this world do not know God's secret wisdom, 'for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory' (v. 8). The princes had heard about these things but they had not believed. But we believe, says Paul. Why? What is the difference between us and the princes of the world? It is this: 'But' — and there is the contrast — 'God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so' — notice this — 'the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.' No man can know them, it is the Spirit of God alone who can know them. 'Now we have received' — we the believers, the Christians — 'we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God' — Why? — 'that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual' — and we are that, thank God — 'judgeth' — discerns, understands — 'all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.'

And again I could refer you to Ephesians 1:18 and to 1 Thessalonians 1:5 once more, and to Philippians 2:13. In other words, there are proofs positive of this statement that it is the internal operation of the Holy Spirit upon the soul and the heart of men and women that brings them into a condition in which the call can become effectual. And when the Spirit does it, of course, it is absolutely certain, and because of that some people have used the term — which I do not like

myself — irresistible grace . I do not like the term because it seems to give the impression that something has happened which has been hammering at a person's will and has knocked him down and bludgeoned him. But it is not that. It is that the Holy Spirit implants a principle within me which enables me, for the first time in my life, to discern and to apprehend something of this glorious, wondrous truth. He works upon my will. 'It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.' He does not strike me; He does not beat me; He does not coerce me. No, thank God, what He does is operate upon my will so that I desire these things and rejoice in them and love them. He leads, He persuades, He acts upon my will in such a way that when He does, the call of the gospel is effectual, and it is certain, and it is sure. God's work never fails, and when God works in a man or woman, the work is effective.

So let me plead with you to consider those great passages of Scripture that I have put before you. Study them, pray over them, meditate with them. And as you do so, I think you will agree with me that there is only one thing to say and it is this:

A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing.
—Augustus Toplady

I am what I am by the grace of God and by that alone.

Regeneration – a New Disposition

In the last lecture, we saw that the Bible teaches that in the case of the saved there is an effectual call. That call comes in such a way that they accept it and we realised that this is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in each person; it is a supernatural work which makes the call effectual in believers, in the saved. But of course even that does not bring to an end our consideration of this question.

We must now ask: What is it that the Holy Spirit does to enable those who become believers, who are saved in this way, to believe the truth? What exactly does He do in order to make the general call effectual? And the answer is, regeneration . Now you notice the order in which we are taking these doctrines. Earlier, we spent some time in considering the order of salvation, the order in which these things should be considered, and this seems to me to be the inevitable order: the general call; yes, but effectual in the saved. What makes it effectual? The Holy Spirit regenerates.

It is interesting to notice the relationship between this effectual call and regeneration. There is a sense, of course, in which regeneration precedes the effectual call.

‘Well, why didn’t you put them in that order?’ someone may ask. It was for this reason: having started with the general call we notice that there is this division into the two groups and it is clear that it must be effectual in some and not in others. When you ask what it is that makes it effectual, the answer is, regeneration. But looked at from the eternal standpoint, they come in the other order, and what happens is that the general call is responded to by the regenerate. In other words, the call becomes effectual because they are regenerate. That is largely — a technical matter and yet I think it is good for us to have these things clearly in our minds.

Here, then, is this great central and vital doctrine of regeneration. There can be no question at all but that from our standpoint this doctrine, together with the doctrine of the atonement, is incomparably the most important doctrine of all, and there is a sense in which we simply cannot understand Christian doctrine and Christian truth without being clear about the doctrine of regeneration. And yet I would suggest that this doctrine is seriously and sadly neglected amongst us. Oh, I know that lip service is paid to it and that people talk very glibly and generally about being ‘born again’. But to what extent do people study it? To what extent have we really looked into it and discovered what exactly it means?

No, there is undoubtedly a failure in this respect. Search the various hymnbooks and you will, I think, be struck by the paucity of good hymns on this theme of regeneration. We have seen that there is a defect in most hymnbooks with regard to strong doctrinal hymns on the Holy Spirit. The hymns we have are superficial, subjective and generally sentimental. And it seems to me that exactly the same thing can be said with regard to this great doctrine of regeneration. This is significant, I feel, because there is no doubt, as I hope to show you, that this doctrine is absolutely pivotal. Why is it that we persist in stopping with the idea of forgiveness only, and fail to realise that this other doctrine is as essential to us as the doctrine of the atonement leading to the forgiveness of our sins?

The only other general remark I would make is this: I have always been convinced, and I am now more convinced than ever, that people who are in trouble about these great doctrines of grace are generally so because they have never clearly grasped the significance and meaning of the doctrine of regeneration. If we only grasp this clearly, most of the other problems solve themselves. But of course, if we are not clear about this, if we do not realise exactly what happens to us in regeneration, then it is but natural that we should be in difficulties about the effectual call and many other subjects.

Let us, therefore, approach our subject by first of all simply looking at the various terms that the Bible itself uses with regard to this great event that the Holy Spirit produces within us. First, there is the word regeneration itself. In Titus 3:5 the apostle Paul speaks about 'the washing of regeneration'. That is actually the only instance in which the word 'regeneration' is used in the New Testament to describe this great, climactic event in the history of the saved soul.

Then there is a second group of terms which mean to beget or to beget again, to bear or to give birth; and there are quite a number of these. In John 1:13, for instance, in the prologue to this Gospel, we read, 'Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Then there are all those instances in

our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, in John 3:3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 and 8 . And you have the same word in several passages in the first epistle of John: 1 John 2:29 , 3:9 , 4:7 , 5:1 . 'Born of God' is a great statement in 1 John.

Next, there is another word which rather conveys the suggestion of bringing forth or begetting . This is found in James 1:18 , which reads, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.' Then there is a large group of words which carry the meaning of creating . We read in Ephesians 2:10 , 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus....' It is also in 2 Corinthians 5:17 : 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature' — a new creation. In Galatians 6:15 we read, 'For neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,' or a new creation; and again in Ephesians 4:24 : 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' Again, that is a term used to describe this amazing event in the history of the soul: it is a new creation.

And finally there is the word to quicken . Now the example of this is in Ephesians 2:5 , where we read, 'Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved).' You may be surprised that I do not say Ephesians 2:1 which reads, 'And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins', but the expression about quickening is not there in the original, but has simply been supplied by the translators for the sake of understanding, and rightly so. And then there is just one other example of that word, and it is in Colossians 2:13 , 'And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.' It is the parallel, of course, to the statement in Ephesians 2:5 , something that we constantly find with these two epistles.

Those, then, are the actual terms which are used in the Scriptures to denote and to convey the teaching concerning this great climactic change. So, what do we mean by regeneration? Now if you read the

history of the use of this term in the history of doctrine or of the Church, you will find great confusion, because it is a term that has been used loosely and even individual writers are not consistent in their use of it. Sometimes it has been used in a very restricted sense, but sometimes in a wide sense to include almost everything that happens to the believer — justification and sanctification as well as regeneration — and this is the practice, for instance, in Roman Catholic writers.

So as we consider what we mean by regeneration, the one important thing, it seems to me, is that we must differentiate it from conversion. And yet how frequently they are confused. But regeneration is not conversion and for this reason: conversion is something that we do whereas regeneration, as I shall show you, is something that is done to us by God. Conversion means a turning away from one thing to another in practice, but that is not the meaning of regeneration. We can put it like this: when people convert themselves or turn, they are giving proof of the fact that they are regenerate. Conversion is something that follows upon regeneration. The change takes place in the outward life and living of men and women because this great change has first of all taken place within them.

You can look at it like this: there is all the difference between planting the seed and the result of the planting of that seed. Now regeneration means the planting of the seed of life and obviously that must be differentiated from what results or eventuates from that. There is a difference between generation and birth. Generation takes place a long time before the birth takes place. Generation is one act. It leads subsequently, after certain processes have been going on, to the actual process of birth. So it is good to hold the two things separately in our minds, and remember that when we are talking about regeneration, we are talking about generation, not the actual bringing forth, the birth.

Now the effectual call comes in in the actual birth, and that is what gives a proof of the fact that men and women are alive. The call is effectual: they believe. Yes, but that means that the process of generation, the implanting of the seed of life, must have already taken place. I find it helpful to draw that kind of distinction because it will help us to differentiate not only between regeneration and conversion, but between regeneration and adoption. For again, people often confuse adoption into sonship with regeneration, and yet, clearly and patently, they are two different things, as we shall see.

So then, we define regeneration as the implanting of new life in the soul. That is it in its essence. If you like a definition which is a little more amplified, consider this: it is the act of God by which a principle of new life is implanted in a man or woman with the result that the governing disposition of the soul is made holy. And then the actual birth is that which gives evidence of the first exercise of this disposition.

Having put that to you as a precise definition, let us go on to consider the essential nature of what takes place when we are regenerated. This is obviously of very great importance and therefore we must start with certain negatives so that we may be quite clear as to what regeneration does not mean and what it does not represent.

The first thing we must say, negatively, is that regeneration does not mean that a change takes place in the substance of human nature, and the important word there is substance . The doctrine of regeneration does not teach that the substance, or the raw material, of what constitutes human nature, whatever it may be, is changed.

Or we can put it like this: we must not think that some actual, substantial physical seed or germ of life is introduced. Regeneration is not a kind of injection or infusion of actual physical substance into us. It is not anything physical, it is a spiritual change. Thirdly, we must not think that it means that there is a complete change of the

whole of human nature. The regenerate person does not become something entirely different. It does not mean that (and we shall see as we go on with these doctrines why all these negatives are important). In the same way, it does not mean that man becomes divine or that he becomes God.

‘Ah, but,’ says someone, ‘are we not partakers of the divine nature?’ Yes, but not in the sense that we suddenly become divine. We do not become like the Lord Jesus Christ with two natures — human and divine. We must be very careful to exclude that.

Another negative is that regeneration does not mean addition to or subtraction from the faculties or the essence of the soul. Now some people have thought that — and every one of these negatives is put in to safeguard against things that have been thought and said from time to time about regeneration. The five faculties of the soul are mind, memory, affection, the will and conscience and some people seem to think that what happens in regeneration is that an additional faculty is put in or that, somehow or another, one or more of the other faculties is taken out or is changed. But that is not the biblical doctrine of regeneration.

And my last negative is that regeneration does not just mean moral reformation. Again, some people have thought that. They have thought that all that happens in regeneration is that people’s wills are changed and that, because of this, they reform themselves and live a better life. But that is nothing but moral reformation; it is not regeneration.

Let us, then, come to the positive. What is regeneration? It is, let me repeat, the implanting of a principle of new spiritual life and a radical change in the governing disposition of the soul. Let me explain what I mean by that. The important thing to grasp is the whole idea of disposition . In addition to the faculties of our souls, there is something at the back of them which governs them all and that is what we refer to as our disposition. Take two men. They have the

same faculties, as regards their abilities there may be nothing to choose between them, but one lives a good life, one lives a bad life. What makes the difference? The answer is that the good man has a good disposition and this good disposition, this thing which is behind the faculties and governs them and uses them, urges him to use his faculties in the direction of goodness. The other man has an evil disposition, so he urges the same faculties in an entirely different direction. That is what one means by disposition.

When you come to think of it, and when you analyse yourself, your life and your whole conduct and behaviour, and that of other people, you will see at once that these dispositions are, of course, of tremendous importance. They are that condition, if you like, which determines what we do and what we are. Let me give you some other illustrations. Take people who have different interests and abilities. Take two people who are more or less opposite; one who is artistic and another who is scientific. What is the difference between them? Well, you cannot say that it is merely a difference in intellectual power, nor is it a difference in the faculties of their souls. No, but there is in every person a disposition which seems to determine the kind of person he or she is. It is this that directs the faculties and the abilities so that one person is artistic and the other scientific, and so on. Now I am making this point to show that what happens in regeneration is that God so operates upon us in the Holy Spirit that this fundamental disposition of ours is changed. He put a holy principle, a seed of new spiritual life, into this disposition that determines what I am and how I behave and how I use and employ my faculties.

Let me give you one great illustration to show what I mean. Take the case of the apostle Paul. Look at him as Saul of Tarsus. There is no question about his ability, nor about his understanding, nor about his will power. There is no question about his memory. His faculties are there and are clear and outstanding; he has always been a remarkable man. But there he is, persecuting the Church, regarding the Son of God as a blasphemer, and he goes down to Damascus,

‘breathing out threatenings and slaughter’, using all his powers to exterminate the Christian Church. But look at him later, preaching the gospel as it has never been preached before or since, with the same powers, the same abilities, the same personality, the same everything, but moving in exactly the opposite direction. What has changed? It is not the faculties of Paul’s soul — they are still the same: the same vehemence, the same logic, the same thoroughness, the same readiness to risk all, out and out, he is the same man, obviously. And yet the whole direction, the whole bent, the whole outlook has changed. He is a different man. What has happened to him? He has a new disposition.

Now, I am emphasising this for this good reason: it is only by understanding this that we are able to understand the difference between regeneration and a psychological change and process. You see, when men and women are regenerated, they do not become all the same, like postage stamps. But when they become the victims of a psychological movement they tend to become identical — a very important distinction. When people are regenerated, the particular gifts which make them the men and women they are always remain. Paul, as I reminded you, was essentially the same man when he preached the gospel as he was when he denounced and persecuted it. I mean by that that he was the same individual and did things in the same way. We are not all meant to be identical as Christians. We are not all meant to speak and to preach and to pray in the same way. The gospel does not make that kind of change, and if you think of regeneration as doing that, then you have a false doctrine of regeneration. What it does is to deal with and to change this disposition that is at the back of everything; this fundamental something that determines direction and way and manner. It is vital that we realise that the change in regeneration takes place in the disposition.

Then, secondly, because of the power of the disposition in us, it therefore follows of necessity that this change is going to affect the whole person. Does anybody think that I am contradicting one of my

negatives? I have maintained that the whole person is not entirely changed — am I now saying the opposite? I hold to my negative, but I do say that, in principle, because of the change in the disposition, the whole person is affected. The way I use my mind will be affected, the operation of my emotions will be affected, and so will my will, because, by definition, the disposition is at the back of all those and gives direction to them. So when this disposition of mine is changed, then I am like a person with a new mind. Before, I was not interested in the gospel; now I am very interested in it. Before, I could not understand it; now I do.

But the change in my disposition does not mean that I have a greater intellect now than I had before! No, I have exactly the same intellect, the same mind. But, because the disposition governing it is changed, my mind is operating in a different realm and in a different way and it seems to be a new mind. And it is exactly the same with the feelings. A man who used to hate the gospel, now loves it. A woman who hated the Lord Jesus Christ, now loves Him. And likewise with the will: the will resisted, it was obstinate and rebellious; but now it desires, it is anxious, it is concerned about the gospel.

The next thing we say is that it is a change which is instantaneous. Now you see the importance of differentiating between generation and coming to birth? Generation, by definition, is always an instantaneous act. There is a moment, a flash, in which the germ of life enters, impregnates; that is one instantaneous action. In other words, there are no intermediate stages in regeneration. Life is either implanted or it is not; it cannot be partly implanted. It is not gradual. Now, again, I do want to emphasise this point. When I say that it is instantaneous, I am not referring to our consciousness of it, but to the thing itself, as it is done by God. The consciousness, of course, comes into the realm of time, whereas this act of germination is timeless, and that is why it is immediate.

So the next thing — and this again is most important — is that generation, the implanting of this seed of life and the change of the

disposition, happens in the subconscious, or, if you prefer it, in the unconscious. Our Lord explained that fully to Nicodemus (John 3). It is a secret, an inscrutable operation, that cannot be directly perceived by us; indeed, we cannot even fully understand it. The first thing we know about it is that it has happened, because we are conscious of something different, but that means that we do not understand it and that we really cannot arrive at its secret.

Now, let me give you the authority for this. Nicodemus, like all of us, was trying to understand it. Our Lord said to him, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3). 'My dear Nicodemus,' He said in effect, 'you are trying to understand the difference between yourself and Me and what I am doing. Stop at once! It is not a question of changing, or of understanding, this or that particular thing, it is the governing disposition of your life that must be changed; you must be born again. It is something at the back of all these faculties that you are trying to use.'

'But,' Nicodemus said, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' (John 3:4). He wanted to understand, and our Lord kept on giving the same reply, and Nicodemus continued to argue.

Eventually our Lord put it to him like this: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth ...' There is something sovereign about it. You do not know when it is going to come and go, it decides its own time. You do not know where it starts and where it ends. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof' — you are aware that it is happening — 'but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth' (John 3:8). You do not see it; you can hear it, you can see things waving in the breeze, but you do not understand it. There is a mystery about the wind, something inscrutable. You cannot fathom it or grasp it with your understanding, but you see the results. 'So' — like that — 'is every one that is born of the Spirit' (v. 8).

Now there are some people who completely miss this because they would translate the wind in verse 8 as ‘the Spirit bloweth’ — the Holy Spirit. But patently it does not mean that, it cannot mean that, because our Lord is using an illustration. He is talking about the wind, the gale, if you like, not the Holy Spirit, nor any other spirit. ‘[It] bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof’ — you cannot see it, but you see the effects and the results — ‘so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.’ There is the essential nature of this great change.

My fourth point is that regeneration is obviously, therefore, something which is done by God. It is a creative act of God in which men and women are entirely passive and contribute nothing, nothing whatsoever. We read in John 1:13, ‘Which were born’ — you do not give birth to yourself — ‘not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God’ — entirely. God implants this principle, this seed of spiritual life. And again, of course, there are the words our Lord spoke to Nicodemus, ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh’ — and it cannot do anything about it — ‘and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’ (John 3:5–6). In other words, the terms are that we are born again . It is something that happens to us; we are begotten, we do not beget ourselves, we cannot generate ourselves. It is entirely the work of God in us and upon us.

We have not yet finished our consideration of this great and pivotal and central doctrine, but I do trust that, at this point, the great thought is clear in our minds and in our understanding, that it is there, in the disposition, that God operates, and it is God through the Holy Spirit who does it. We are born of the Spirit.

Now I hesitate to use the illustration, but you remember that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary but He was conceived of the Holy Ghost. Something comparable, similar to that — not the same thing, let me be clear about that — seems to happen here. This principle of spiritual life, this change, therefore, in

the disposition, is something that is done by the Holy Spirit of God. Human nature is not entirely changed by it but because the disposition is changed the whole man or woman is like a new creation. In every respect they are different people because this fundamental thing that governs all else has been changed in them.

The faculties, however, remain as before. Never try to be somebody else, be yourself. God wants you to be yourself. He has made you as He has made you, and you can best glorify Him by being yourself. Beware always of Christian people who always talk in the same way and are the same in most respects, that is more likely to be psychological than spiritual. The man or woman, each individual, remains what he or she was, and thus you have the glorious variety in the apostles and in the Christian Church throughout the centuries. All together testify to the same Saviour and the same grace, the same regeneration, the same change in the disposition, but revealed according to the gifts and faculties, the propensities and powers that God has given to each person.

What a wonderful salvation, what a glorious way of redemption! Oh, I like a word which is used by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews in the second chapter. It describes and defines perfectly what I am trying to say. Talking about this great salvation the author says of God, 'For it became him' — it was like Him, it was His way of doing it — '... in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering' (Heb. 2:10) — it became Him! And I trust that we all, having looked thus briefly and inadequately at this great doctrine, would say the same thing; it is a way of salvation that becomes Him, the almighty God.

The New Birth

We have, let me remind you, been asking how it is that the call of the gospel becomes effectual in certain people. And in the last lecture, we began to answer that question by saying that the call becomes effectual in men and women as the result of the Holy Spirit's work of

regeneration. It becomes effectual because in these people there is now a principle which was not there before which enables them to respond to this spiritual truth, this divine truth, that comes to them. And that is the difference between believers and unbelievers, those who are saved and those who are not. The latter have the 'natural mind', they are in the flesh, they are not spiritual, and that is why these things mean nothing to them. But they mean everything to the others and that is because they are now spiritual, and they are spiritual as the result of regeneration. So we began considering what the Bible teaches about regeneration. We considered the terms in Scripture and then we came to examine its real nature. It is not a mere change in some of the faculties of the soul, but is something behind that; and this we defined as being a change in a person's fundamental disposition.

Now as we proceed with our consideration, I want to emphasise again the profound nature and character of the change. It is something that is emphasised everywhere in Scripture, which talks about our being given 'a new heart' (Ezek. 36:26), and 'heart' in the Bible generally means, not merely the seat of the affections, as in current usage, but the very centre, the seat, of the whole personality. So when the Scriptures talk about giving us a new heart or a clean heart, they are talking about what I have described as the fundamental disposition, the thing that controls and determines everything else, the change is made there.

This whole question of regeneration, as we saw when we considered what our Lord said to Nicodemus, is, of course, a great mystery. It is a miracle, it is supernatural. Our Lord compared it to the wind in order to get Nicodemus, and all of us through Nicodemus, to see that there is a sense in which we just cannot finally understand it. 'Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit' (John 3:8). And yet it does behove us, as I am never tired of saying, to go as far as we can. So, in an attempt to make this wonderful change more or less comprehensible to us, I pass on to you what I, at any rate, regard

as the best illustration that I have come across. It is an illustration that is suggested by the Scripture itself, and it is that of the whole process of grafting.

You may be anxious, for instance, to grow a certain type of pear. Now a way in which it is often done is this: you are given just a graft, a portion, a shoot, of the variety you like. Then you take a common wild pear tree and hack into it and into that wound which you have made in the tree, you put this shoot, this sprout. Then you bind them together. And eventually you will have a wonderful pear tree, producing nothing but your chosen variety of pear.

But in the meantime you have many things to do. You do not merely leave it at that. What happens is that the strength and the power, as it were, the life and the sap that comes up through that wild pear tree, will enter into this shoot and it will produce fruit. Yes, but below the level of the grafting, the wild pear tree will still tend to throw out its own wild shoots and branches and want to produce its own fruit. So you have to lop off these natural branches. You have to cut them, prune them right down and, if you do that, a time will arrive when the tree will produce only this wonderful type of pear that you are anxious to grow.

You see, at first you seem to have two natures in the one tree, but if you prune off the old the new will gradually master the whole and you will eventually have a pear tree which is producing the type of fruit that you want. Now that seems to me to be incomparably the best illustration that has ever been used with regard to this matter. You are putting new life in so that at one stage you have got one tree but with two natures — the cultured, cultivated nature, and the wild nature. Yes, but if, by pruning off these wild branches, you see to it that the strength of that tree is only allowed to go into the grafted-in branch not only will that be strengthened and bear its fruit, it will gradually conquer and master the other. It seems to have a power to send its life down into the old until eventually you have the excellent pear tree that you desired at the beginning.

Now no illustration is perfect, but it does seem to me that that goes as far as we can possibly go. That is what happens, in a sense, in regeneration. There is still only one self, there are not two selves. But this new nature is put within us. We are called upon to mortify our members that are on the earth. We have to go on pruning and keeping under that which belongs to the old nature and, as we do so, this new life will grow and develop and produce fruit and the new nature will be increasingly in evidence. I am anxious to stress this point, because I am afraid we can even go further and say that some people, who regard themselves as truly evangelical, altogether deny the truth and the doctrine of regeneration. So I want to put this very strongly. In regeneration, a real change takes place and that within us. It is more than a mere change in our relationship to truth or to a person. A change takes place in us and not outside us only, and it is as definite as the grafting of a pear shoot into a pear tree.

Nor is this a change that remains only while we remain abiding in Christ. Now there is a very familiar teaching about sanctification which is put to us like this: the illustration is taken of a poker. There is the poker, it is cold, black and hard and cannot be bent. So you take that poker and put it into a fire and leave it there. And in the fire the poker becomes red hot and malleable, so that you can bend it. Ah yes, we are told, that is all right, but the poker remains red and hot and malleable only as long as it is kept in the fire. That is an illustration of abiding in Christ, and as long as you abide in Him there will be this new life, it is said, and this new way of living. But if you take that poker out of the fire and leave it out, it reverts completely to what it was before; it becomes black and cold and hard.

Now all that is taught to show the importance of abiding in Christ. It tells us that if we do not do so, we revert exactly to the condition that we were in before. But that, I suggest, is a denial of the doctrine of regeneration! Those who are Christians and who are born again, may backslide; they may not abide in Christ in this mystical sense, but, even then, they do not return to where they were before. They are born again; there is this new principle in them; the change has taken

place and the change is still there. They are not manifesting it fully but it is there and we must not describe those people as reverting to the precise position they were in before.

It is exactly the same with that other illustration about the lifebelt. The sinner is compared to a man in the sea who cannot swim, but, we are told, as long as he puts on the lifebelt he is held up. Yes, but if he wriggles out of the lifebelt, he will sink to the bottom. Now there again, it seems to me, is a denial of the doctrine of regeneration because it tells us that when the man is not abiding, he finds himself in exactly the same position in which he was before, as if nothing had happened to him and no change had taken place.

But as we have said, the doctrine of regeneration teaches that the change is one which takes place not merely in our relationship to the Lord or in our relationship to truth, but is something that God does within us. It is a new life put in us, a new principle of life and obedience, and therefore, of course, it is something which grows and develops and becomes progressively greater. Listen to the apostle Paul saying that: 'But we all,' he says, 'with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory' (2 Cor. 3:18). Now there, you see, is development and growth. Why? Because this principle of life has been put in. 'We are changed,' as Charles Wesley puts it, drawing upon that verse, 'from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place.' The work is within us, and we are changed, we are no longer the same. All these scriptural terms should surely have saved us from the error that is illustrated in the pictures of the poker and the lifebelt. We are talking of a rebirth, a new birth, of being born again, of a new creation. Each of us is virtually a new person.

Now I cannot emphasise that too strongly because it is not only something that is clearly taught in Scripture, but when we come on later to deal with the doctrine of sanctification, we shall of necessity see how important it is that we understand this particular teaching about regeneration. If we do not, we shall unconsciously be denying

the doctrine of regeneration altogether in our anxiety to get people to abide in Christ. It is right to exhort people to do that, and we shall do so when we come to that doctrine, but we must never put it in such a way as to give the impression that regeneration simply consists in a new relationship to Christ. That is to introduce a very real confusion.

So, then, having emphasised the profound inward character of the change, let me go on to ask a question: Why is this change absolutely essential? On what grounds have we the right to say that it is? Well, first of all Scripture teaches that. You remember again what our Lord said to Nicodemus: 'Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3). Then he also says: 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (v. 5). The rebirth is an absolute, utter essential. A man cannot even see the kingdom, let alone enter it, unless he has been born again.

Paul teaches the same thing in Galatians 6:15 : 'In Christ Jesus,' he says, 'neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision but a new creature.' That is the only thing that matters: not circumcision, nor the absence of it but the new creature, the new creation. And again, in Ephesians 4:24 , Paul says the same thing when he describes the new man, 'which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness'.

But, in many ways, one of the most important texts in this connection is Hebrews 12:14 : 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' Holiness is absolutely essential and, mark you, holiness there does not merely mean a sanctification that you may or may not receive. Without holiness no man shall — can — see the Lord. So it is no use saying that some Christians have received sanctification and some have not, and that those who have not are still going to heaven — without holiness heaven is impossible. And it is in regeneration that this holiness is implanted in us. This new life is a holy life, a holy principle is placed within us.

There, then, are the explicit statements of Scripture. But there are other statements which teach the same thing by implication. Eternal life is defined as a knowledge of God: ‘This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent’ (John 17:3). Our Lord says that He has come ‘that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly’ (John 10:10). He has come to give us eternal life and eternal life comprises this knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. And that in itself makes regeneration an absolute necessity. God is holy. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. So life eternal is to know Him and to have fellowship with Him. And, therefore, it means, of necessity, that my nature must correspond. There must be something in me which corresponds to that and can enjoy that.

Yes, but we know that, by nature, men and women as the result of the fall, and as the result of sin, are the exact opposite of that. And again, that is why our Lord puts it so plainly in speaking to Nicodemus. Nicodemus was trying to understand and thought he could go from where he was to the next position. No, no, says our Lord, ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’ (John 3:4), and there is nothing in common between them at all. You cannot mix the flesh and the Spirit, it simply cannot be done. It is no use arguing, He says, the thing is impossible. There is the spiritual, here is the sinful, that which belongs to the flesh, and you cannot bring them together. You must be born again. You must be made spiritual.

So the character of God and the character of men and women as the result of sin makes regeneration essential, because there is no such thing as an innate divine spark in human beings. Of course, the people who believe in a divine spark do not believe in regeneration and they are perfectly consistent. But it does seem rather odd that people who denounce the doctrine of the divine spark nevertheless seem to think that there is something in human nature which can do a great deal and which does not make regeneration an absolute and prior necessity.

So regeneration must come at the very beginning because if it is possible for me to do something which will eventually lead to my regeneration, I do not need regeneration. If I, by myself, as I am as the result of the fall and of sin, can appreciate spiritual truth, if I can appreciate the gospel and say, 'Yes I'm going to pay attention to that,' and then, as the result of my paying attention, I am born again, well then, I do not need the gift of life. If I have already got the ability and the power and the discrimination to recognise truth and to desire it, then I do not need to be regenerated. But the fact is, of course, that I do not have such a power. Men and women, as the result of the fall and of sin, do not desire this truth. They are at enmity against God. They are opposed to God. 'You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works,' says Paul (Col. 2:21). They hate the law of God. They have nothing to do with Him. They are carnal, carnally minded. They 'mind the things of the flesh' (Rom. 8:5). So regeneration is not only essential, but is essential at the beginning; you can have nothing without it. It is impossible for anything to happen in us which can make us Christians until regeneration has taken place.

Now that brings us on to the next question: How exactly is regeneration brought about in us? This is an interesting subject. It is not merely a question of the moral influence of the truth. Those who are not evangelical say that as people listen to the gospel, as they come under its influence and its power, it changes them. They like the ideas, they take hold of them, and the effect of the ideas and of the truth is such that they become different people; they are changed. But that is not it. We are talking about something that happens down in the depths of the personality, and this is what brings about change.

Moral influence can, of course, make a great difference. It can make people change their ideas. It can make them change their way of living; it can turn a drunkard into a teetotaller — it has often done it. You can present arguments and the argument may go home. Someone may give up drink completely, become very sober, and an

advocate of temperance, without Christ being mentioned at all. Under the moral effect of truth, and the moral influence of ideas, people can produce great changes in themselves. But that is not what we are dealing with here.

Secondly, it is not produced by baptism either. This is an old controversy, an old source of discussion. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that regeneration is produced and accomplished through the instrumentality of baptism, and only through baptism. You must be baptised before you can be regenerate. I do not want to anticipate a later lecture, but let us be clear at this point. In baptism, Roman Catholics teach that our sins are forgiven and that our moral nature is changed and renewed within us. We are told that baptism delivers us from the inherent power and defilement of original sin. You remember that, as the result of the fall of Adam and our connection with him, we are all defiled, and the power of sin has entered in upon us. Now Roman Catholics teach that when a child is baptised, it is delivered from the inherent power and pollution of original sin. All that it has inherited from Adam is washed away, blotted out, and not only that, by baptism we are made children and heirs of God.

The Anglo-Catholics also teach baptismal regeneration. And, strange though it may seem, the same is true of the Lutherans. Luther never quite got rid of this view, and neither have his followers. There is one difference between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic views. The Catholics say that you cannot be regenerate without baptism; the Lutherans say that you can but that the usual, normal manner is by means of baptism. Well, we do not teach that. We say that regeneration is not by baptism, that there is abundant scriptural evidence in the book of Acts alone to prove that the people who were baptised were those who gave evidence that they were already born again. Indeed, they were baptised because they had been born again. It was given as a sign and a seal to them because they had produced evidence of the new birth.

But to us a much more interesting and fascinating question is this: What is the relationship of regeneration to the word that is preached? There are a number of texts that suggest that our regeneration takes place through and by means of the word. Let me suggest two to you. James 1:18 : ‘Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth , that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.’ Then there is 1 Peter 1:23 : ‘Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.’ However, you will remember that in the last lecture I drew a distinction between the act of regeneration and the coming to birth and said that there may be a long interval between the two. Now I suggest to you that both these texts I have quoted are concerned about the bringing to birth. And it is certainly the word that does that. It is the effectual call, coming through the medium of the word, that, as it were, brings the seed of life to life, so that the birth takes place. But if you keep in mind the distinction between the generation and the actual coming to birth, I think you will see the difference. The word is used, not in the act of generating, but in the bringing out into life of that which has already been implanted within.

At this point some would quote the parable of the sower and the different types of ground, and emphasise that the life is in the seed and so on. But surely the whole point of that parable is to emphasise the character of the ground into which the seed is put. It is stony ground? Is it encompassed by thorns? And so on. Or is it good ground? In other words, the teaching in that parable is that what really matters is that fundamental something which we call the disposition. And if that has been changed and put right, then, when the word comes, it will be effectual; it will lead to the result; it will yield the fruit.

Indeed, the Scriptures do seem to teach that quite explicitly. Take, for instance, John 6:65 : ‘Therefore said I unto you,’ says our Lord, ‘that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.’ Now there were the people, hearing the same word, and as we have already seen, some came, some went away — what was the

difference? It is this, our Lord, says, ‘... except it were given unto them of my Father.’ And again I would remind you of what we are told about Lydia. It was because the Lord had ‘opened her heart’ that she attended to Paul and received the word. It was not the word that opened her heart, it was the act of the Lord. It was this that led to her reception of the word. That surely must be the order. And the argument of 1 Corinthians 2 , especially verses 12 to 15 , obviously teaches the same thing.

But there are two final arguments about this which are not only of great importance, but, it seems to me, of very great interest also. What about the Old Testament saints? Now when we were dealing with the doctrine of the covenant, we were at great pains to emphasise that the Old Testament saints are in the same position as we are. There is only one covenant in the Old and in the New Dispensations. And you and I today are the children of Abraham, Abraham is our father, because we are children of faith. There is a difference, of course, in the administration of the covenant in the Old and in the New, but only one great covenant of grace. Our Lord tells us that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be in the kingdom and that others will come from the east and from the west while the Jews will be left outside (Luke 13:28–29). In other words, the Old Testament saints were born again. David was born again, he was a new man, a new creature, and so were the patriarchs and the prophets.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews puts it like this at the end of chapter 11 . He said that those saints did not receive the promise in full. His argument is that it was kept back so that they should not, as it were, run ahead of us. Here it is: ‘And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect’ (Heb. 11:39–40). So we are made perfect together. But if those Old Testament saints were regenerate, as they must have been, it is clear that it is not the word that actually performs the act of regeneration. Regeneration is something that is not mediate

through the word, but immediate. It was the Spirit of God who dealt with them and operated upon them.

The other argument is that about children, especially about infants. Now we all believe, do we not, that there are infants and children who have gone and who will go to heaven and spend their eternity in the presence of God. Now how can a child be saved? Obviously every infant needs to be saved. If you believe in the doctrine of the fall and in the doctrine of original sin, you must believe that every child is born in sin and 'shapen in iniquity' (Ps. 51:5); every child is dead in trespasses and in sins (Eph. 2:21). They all inherit original sin and original guilt from Adam, every child that is born. How, then, can any child be saved? How can any child ever go to heaven?

Now, if you want to insist upon the fact that regeneration always follows upon hearing the word and believing it and accepting it — how can an infant be saved? The infant cannot receive truth, it does not have the ability; it does not have understanding, it has not awakened to these things. So is there no hope for any infant? We do not believe that, we obviously reject such a suggestion. And the answer is, of course, that a child is regenerated in exactly the same way as anybody else, because it is the action of this almighty being, of God Himself through the Holy Spirit. He can implant the seed of spiritual life in an unconscious infant with the same ease as He can do it in an adult person. Therefore you see why it is important for us to consider whether regeneration is something that happens indirectly through the word or whether it is indeed the direct operation of God upon us. And I am teaching again, as I did in the last lecture, that it is immediate, direct, it is God creating anew as He created the world out of nothing at the beginning.

And, finally, the last thing is that obviously, in the light of all this, regeneration is something that can never be lost. If you are regenerate, you will remain regenerate. It seems to me that this is absolutely inevitable because regeneration is the work of God. Yet there are those who seem to think that people can be born again as

the result of believing the truth and then, if they backslide or fall into sin or deny the truth, they lose their regeneration. But if they come back again and believe again, then they are regenerate again — as if one can be born again and die and be born again and die an endless number of times! How important doctrine is! How important it is that we should be clear as to what the Scripture teaches about these things! It tells us that regeneration is the work of God Himself in the depths of the soul and that He does it in such a way that it is permanent. ‘No man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand’ (John 10:29).

‘I am persuaded,’ says Paul, and let us notice this, ‘I am persuaded’ — he is certain — ‘that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Rom. 8:38–39). And when Paul says that, he is expounding regeneration. It is not merely the relationship between us, it is because God has put this life in me, that nothing can separate me from Him. And when we come to deal with the mystical union which follows directly from this, we shall see how still more inevitable this must be. This is a permanent work and nothing can ever bring it to an end.

Take those verses from the first epistle of John: ‘Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin’ — which means that such a person does not go on abiding in sin. Why? Well — ‘for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God’ (1 John 3:9). He cannot go on sinning because he is born of God. Let us be clear about that. The man or woman who is born of God, who is regenerate, simply does not and cannot continue — abide — in a life of sin. They may backslide temporarily, but if they are born of God they will come back. It is as certain as that they have been born again. It is the way to test whether or not someone is born again.

Or take that other word in 1 John 2:19 : ‘They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.’ They were members of the Church, these people, they appeared to be Christians, they said the right things and up to a point their life seemed to be right, but they ‘went out’. Why? They went out ‘because they were not of us’ — they were not regenerate. They had never been born again. That is why they have gone out, says John, in a sense, to give proof of the fact that they have never really had life.

‘But what about Hebrews 6 and 10 ?’ asks someone. The answer is that there is nothing in either of those chapters to suggest that those people were ever regenerate. They had had marvellous experiences, but there is nothing to say that they were born again. They were not, and that is the explanation. The regenerate abide. They may backslide, they may fall into sin, they may fail, but they abide, because the life is there. The others may appear to be fully Christian but if there is no life they will not abide. Life shows itself, it gives proof of its existence — as we shall go on to see.

Excerpt from Great Doctrines of the Bible: God the Father, God the Son; God the Holy Spirit; The Church and the Last Things by Martyn Lloyd-Jones

The Doctrine of the Application of the Work of Redemption

Chapter XIX: Calling and Regeneration

by Louis Berkhof

1. Calling. Calling in general may be defined as that gracious act of God whereby He invites sinners to accept the salvation that is offered in Christ Jesus.

It may be either external or internal.

a. External calling. The Bible speaks of this or refers to it in several passages, Matt. 28:19; 22:14; Luke 14:16-24; Acts 13:46; II Thess. 1:8; I John 5:10. It consists in the presentation and offering of salvation in Christ to sinners, together with an earnest exhortation to accept Christ by faith in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. From the definition it already appears that it contains three elements, namely, (1) A presentation of the gospel facts and ideas; (2) an invitation to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, and (3) a promise of forgiveness and salvation. The promise is always conditional; its fulfillment can be expected only in the way of true faith and repentance. The external call is universal in the sense that it comes to all men to whom the gospel is preached. It is not limited to any age or nation or class of men, and comes to the reprobate as well as to the elect, Isa. 45:22; 55:1; Ezek. 3:19; Joel 2:32; Matt. 22:2-8, 14; Rev. 22:17. Naturally this call, as coming from God, is seriously meant. He calls sinners in good faith, earnestly desires that they accept the invitation, and in all sincerity promises eternal life to those who repent and believe. Num. 23:19; Ps. 81:13-16; Prov. 1:24; Isa. 1:18-20; Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11; Matt. 23:37; II Tim. 2:18. In the external call God maintains His claim on the sinner. If man does not accept the call, he slights the claim of God and thus increases his guilt. It is also the appointed means by which God gathers the elect out of all the nations of the world, Rom. 10:14-17, and should be regarded as a blessing for sinners, though they may turn it into a curse, Isa. 1:18-20; Ezek. 3:18, 19; Amos 8:11; Matt. 11:20-24; 23:37. Finally, it also serves to justify God in the condemnation of sinners.

If they despise the offer of salvation, their guilt stands out in the clearest light, John 5:39, 40; Rom. 3:5, 6, 19.

b. Internal calling. While we distinguish two aspects of the calling of God, this calling is really one. The internal call is really the external call made effective by the operation of the Holy Spirit. It always comes to the sinner through the Word of God, savingly applied by the operation of the Holy Spirit, I Cor. 1:23, 24. In distinction from the external call, it is a powerful calling that is effectual unto salvation, Acts 13:48; I Cor. 1:23, 24. Moreover, it is a calling without repentance, one that is not subject to change, and is never withdrawn, Rom. 11:29. The person called will surely be saved. The Spirit operates through the preaching of the Word by making its persuasions effective, so that man listens to the voice of His God. It addresses itself to the understanding enlightened by the Holy Spirit, so that man is conscious of it. And it is always directed to a certain end. It is a calling to the fellowship of Jesus Christ, I Cor. 1:9, to inherit blessing, I Pet. 8:9, to liberty, Gal. 6:18, to peace, I Cor. 7:15; to holiness, I Thess. 4:7; to one hope, Eph. 4:4, to eternal life, I Tim. 6:12, and to God's kingdom and glory, I Thess. 2:12.

2. Regeneration. Divine calling and regeneration stand in the closest possible relation to each other. With respect to regeneration several points deserve consideration:

a. Its nature. The word 'regeneration' is not always used in the same sense. Our Confession uses it in a broad sense, as including even conversion. At present it has a more restricted meaning. In the most restricted sense it denotes that act of God by which the principle of the new life is implanted in man, and the governing disposition of the soul is made holy. In a slightly more comprehensive sense it designates, in addition to the preceding, the new birth or the first manifestation of the new life. It is a fundamental change in the principle of life and the governing disposition of the soul, and therefore affects the whole man, I Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 4:6; Phil. 2:13; I Pet. 1:8. It is completed in a moment of time, and is not a gradual

process like sanctification. Through it we pass from death into life, I John 3:14. It is a secret and inscrutable work of God that is never directly perceived by man, but can be known only by its effects.

b. Its author. God is the author of regeneration. Scripture represents it as the work of the Holy Spirit, John 1:13; Acts 16:14; John 3:5, 8. Over against the Arminians we maintain that it is exclusively the work of the Spirit of God, and not in part the work of man. There is no co-operation of God and man in the work of regeneration, as there is in the work of conversion. Moreover, it should be said that regeneration in the most restricted sense of the word, that is, as the implanting of the new life, is a direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit. It is a creative work in which for that very reason the word of the gospel cannot very well be used as an instrument. It may be said that Jas. 1:18 and I Pet. 1:23 prove that the word of preaching is used as an instrument in regeneration, but these passages refer to regeneration in a broader sense, as including the new birth. In that more inclusive sense regeneration is undoubtedly wrought through the instrumentality of the Word.

c. Its necessity and place in the order of salvation. Scripture leaves no doubt as to the absolute necessity of regeneration, but asserts this in the clearest terms, John 3:3, 5, 7; I Cor. 2:14; Gal. 6:15. This follows from the fact that we are by nature dead in trespasses and sin, and must be endowed with new spiritual life, in order to enjoy the divine favor and communion with God. The question is often raised which of the two is first, calling or regeneration. In answer to this it may be said that in the case of adults external calling usually precedes or coincides with regeneration in the restricted sense. Regeneration, as the implanting of the new life, precedes internal calling, and internal calling precedes regeneration in the broader sense, or the new birth. We find the greater part of this order indicated in the record of the conversion of Lydia, Acts 16:14, "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us (external call): whose heart the Lord opened (regeneration

in the restricted sense) to give heed to the things which were spoken by Paul (internal call)."

To memorize. Passages proving:

a. External calling:

Mark 16:15, 16. "And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation ("every creature," Auth. Ver.). He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."

Matt. 22:14. "For many are called, but few are chosen."

Acts 13:46. "And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

b. Calling of the reprobate:

Prov. 1:24-26. "Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man hath regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh in the day of your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

I Pet. 3:19, 20a. "In which also He (Christ) went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah."

Confer also the parables in Matt. 22:1-8, 14; Luke 14:16-24.

c. Seriousness of this calling:

Prov. 1:24-26, cf. above under b.

Ezek. 18:23, 32. "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? said the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way and, live?... For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live." Cf. also 33:11.

Matt. 23:37. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, .that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

d. The necessity of regeneration:

Jer. 13:23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

John 3:3, 7. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.... Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

e. Regeneration and the Word.

Jas. 1:18. "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures."

I Pet. 1:23. "Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth."

For Further Study:

a. Is calling a work of one Person of the Trinity or of all three? I Cor. 1:9; I Thess. 2:12; Matt. 11:28; Luke 5:32; Matt. 10:20; Acts 5:31, 32.

b. Is the word 'regeneration' used in the Bible? Tit. 3:5. What other terms does it use to express this idea? John 3:3, 5, 7, 8; II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13; Jas. 1:18; I Pet. 1:23.

c. Does Tit. 3:5 prove that we are regenerated by baptism? If not, how would you explain it?

Questions for Review

1. What do we mean by calling?
2. How do external and internal calling differ?
3. What elements are included in external calling?
4. In what sense is it universal?
5. What purpose does it serve?
6. How is the internal related to the external calling?
7. Are we conscious of it?
8. To what end is it directed?
9. What different meanings has the word 'regeneration'?
10. What is it in the most restricted sense?
11. What is the nature of the change wrought in regeneration?
12. Is regeneration a work of God alone or of God and man?
13. Is the Word used as an instrument in regeneration?
14. Is regeneration absolutely necessary? Proof.
15. What is the order of calling and regeneration?

Effectual Calling

by Francis Turretin

This calling is an act of the grace of God in Christ by which he calls men dead in sin and lost in Adam through the preaching of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit, to union with Christ and to the salvation obtained in him. In it, the two terms "from which" (a quo) and "to which" (ad quem) are to be considered. The term 'from which' (terminus a quo) is the state of sin and condemnation in which we lie (Eph. 2:1); darkness (Eph. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:9); the world (Jn. 15:19); and the things which are behind (to wit, earthly and mundane, Phil. 3:13). The term "to which" (terminus ad quem) is union with Christ (1 Cor. 1:9); holiness (Rom 1-7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 4-7); marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9); the kingdom of God (1 Thess. 2:12); eternal glory in Christ (1 Pet. 5:10); eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12). Hence it is at one time called a "holy calling" (2 Tim. 1:9), not only by reason of the principle (because God the author of calling is holy, 1 Pet. 1:15), but also by reason of the end (because it tends to holiness).

What of the reprobate?

Are the reprobate, who partake of external calling, *called* with the design and intention on *God's part that they should* become partakers of salvation? And, this being denied, *does it follow that God does not deal* seriously with them, but hypocritically and *rarely*; or that *he can be accused of* any injustice? We deny.

This question lies between us and the Lutherans, the Arminians and the patrons of universal grace, who (to support the universality of calling, at least as to the preaching of the gospel in the visible church) hold that as many as are called by the word are called by God with the intention of their salvation. For otherwise God would trifle with

men and not deal seriously but hypocritically with them, offering them grace which, nevertheless, he is unwilling to bestow.

Now although we do not deny that the reprobate (who live in external communion with the church) are called by God through the gospel; still we do deny that they are called with the intention that they should be made actual partakers of salvation (which God knew would never be the case because in his decree he had ordained otherwise concerning them). Nor ought we on this account to think that God can be charged with hypocrisy or dissimulation, but that he always acts most seriously and sincerely.

To make this more distinct, we must remark: (1) the external call is extended to the reprobate as well as to the elect; but in a different manner-to the elect primarily and directly. For their sake alone the ministry of the gospel was instituted to collect the church and increase the mystical body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). They being taken out of the world, preaching would no longer be necessary because the word of God cannot return unto him void (Is. 55:11). But to the reprobate, it is extended secondarily and indirectly because, since they are mingled with the elect (known only to God, 2 Tim. 2:19), the call cannot be addressed to men indiscriminately without the reprobate as well as the elect sharing in it (in order that the end ordained by God may be obtained); as a fisherman in casting his net intends only to catch good fish, but indirectly closes in his net the bad also mixed with the good.

(2) The end of calling can be considered in two ways: either on the part of God or on the part of the thing (which is called the end of the worker and the end of the work). Although each is conjoined in the elect, yet in others they are separated (as in the legal proclamation, the end of the thing is life by the law, but the end of God after man's fall cannot be the happiness of man, which through sin has become impossible to him by the law; rather the conviction of man's weakness and leading of him to Christ is the end of the law; so in the gospel call, the end of the thing is the salvation of man because by its

nature it tends to the bringing of him to salvation by faith and repentance; but not at once with respect to all the called is it the end of God, but only of those to whom he decreed to give faith and salvation).

Further, that end on the part of God is either common to all the called or special with respect to the elect or the reprobate. And as to the common, we ought not to doubt that it is the demonstration of the mode and way of salvation.

From Grace to Glory

by Octavius Winslow

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield--the Lord will give **grace** and **glory**--no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11

"Out of **nature** into **grace**, out of grace into **glory**."

[What Is Not the New Birth](#)

[What Is the New Birth?](#)

[The Evidences of the New Birth](#)

[The Fruits of the New Birth](#)

[The Assurance of Conversion](#)

[Anxiety for Conversion](#)

[The Trial of the New Birth](#)

[The Relapse and Recovery of the New Nature](#)

[Early Conversion](#)

[From Grace to Glory](#)

If the words of Jesus be true--and He who spoke them was Eternal and Essential Truth--"Except a man be Born Again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," then the human pen was never employed upon a subject of more vital importance than that which these pages but

briefly and imperfectly discuss. His aim throughout the volume is to show that, as the New Birth is a *spiritual* work, the Holy Spirit must be its Divine and sole Author, from its commencement in grace to its consummation in glory.

WHAT IS NOT THE NEW BIRTH

"You have a name that you live, and are dead."--Rev. 3:1

The reader, possessing a taste and an eye for the fine arts, must often have stood entranced before a picture of natural *still-life*, in which, with masterly genius, the artist had portrayed the subject with such vivid effect as to invest it with all the charm and power of reality. So successful is the illusion, and so intense the feeling produced, it would seem, while gazing upon the painting, that the fawn must bound from the canvas, the purple flow from the grape, and the perfume breathe from the rose. And yet, with all this appearance and glow of animation, it is but--a picture of *still-life*.

In the passage which suggests the leading thought of this chapter we find a striking analogy to this. It is the picture of *spiritual still-life*, or false conversion, sketched by the hand of a Divine Artist--"you have a name that you live, and are dead." This delineation of spiritual still-life--in other words, this description of the New Birth in profession and appearance only--is perfect. Here is conversion in all but its reality! Here is spiritual life--but it is the *appearance* of life only. Here is spiritual death--and it is a solemn *fact*. The one is an illusion, a fiction, a counterfeit; the other a grim, stern, cold reality. The very *life* itself is--*death!* Such is the spiritual state we are about to delineate in the present chapter--such the portrait for which thousands might stand as the original. And can the sanctified imagination conceive a state more sad or appalling? To believe that we are born again, to assume the exterior, and claim the privileges of

the truly converted, while yet dwelling in the region and shadow of spiritual death, is of all spiritual conditions the most dangerous and fatal.

In a treatise devoted to an exposition of the nature and evidences of the New Birth, it is proper that we take first the NEGATIVE bearings of the subject, showing what is *not* real conversion. We need scarcely bespeak the reader's solemn and prayerful consideration of this subject, for it bears upon its surface the impress of infinite importance. Surely, if apart from the New Birth there is no state of grace here, and no state of glory hereafter, the question must come home to every thoughtful bosom with irresistible impressiveness and power. "Is mine a *real* or a *false* conversion? Am I truly born again?" Instructed by the Divine Spirit, we propose to assist you in this momentous inquiry, by showing how far you may advance in a profession of Christianity, in the appearance of the New Birth, and *not* be born again--having a name to live, and yet dead!

1. And, first, let us remark that a *spiritually-enlightened understanding*, or a **mere intellectual acquaintance with Divine truth**, is not of itself the New Birth. Light is not life. We may admit through the window the morning's roseate beams in all their brilliancy and power into the chamber of death, but the corpse around which they play remains, pulseless and lifeless, a *corpse* still. The body is bathed with the light, the pallid countenance is illumined with its radiance, and the shroud is fringed with its hues, but all still is death. The sun has not quickened into life a solitary throb!

And thus there may exist in the religion of an individual an enlightened understanding, much intellectual acquaintance with Divine things, a sound judgment, and an intelligent mind, yet entirely dissevered from spiritual life. We may accept the Bible as wholly true--a great concession this!--may believe in it historically, understand it intellectually, and expound it ably, and not be born again--substituting speculative knowledge, or a theoretical

acquaintance with Divine truth, for the kingdom of God in the heart-religious light in the understanding, for spiritual life in the soul.

But the truth as it is in Jesus demands more than the mere assent of the understanding. It does not, indeed, bypass the province of reason, nor set aside the aid of the intellectual powers of man; but, while it appeals to this tribunal, and exacts its homage and its belief-carrying triumphant the noblest and loftiest powers of the soul--it enters the HEART, and there puts forth its mightiest power, achieves its greatest triumph, receives its profoundest love and conviction, claiming and securing the affections for Christ.

Believe me, my reader, your theology may be biblical, your creed orthodox, your mind well-furnished and fortified with Christian evidence, and yet all this may be accompanied with no more spiritual life than is produced by the moonbeams falling in cold, silvery luster upon an alpine peak.

2. Religious emotion is not the New Birth. You may be the subject of deep, intense, religious feeling; the conscience, brought into close contact with solemn truth, may be aroused; the sensibilities, appealed to, may be excited; the mind, reasoned with, may assent--and yet *death* in the soul maintain its gloomy scepter. A description of Christ's sufferings may dissolve you to tears, a picture of heaven's glory may entrance you with hope, a delineation of hell's woe may paralyze you with fear, and spiritual death still reign within your soul. No subject moves our natural feelings like religion. To nothing does our emotional nature so quickly and deeply respond as this. Hence how easy and how soon are those sensibilities of our being wrought upon which may assume all the resemblance and actings of life, and yet be spiritually dead. It is life, but, alas! it is *still-life*.

Real conversion does not petrify the natural or the moral feelings. Far from it. There is no real conversion apart from *feeling*, often the most profound and intense. A true spiritual conviction of sin will sometimes stir the soul to its lowest depths. It was so with the tax-

collector, and thus was it with the Philippian jailer. **There is nothing so startling, so appalling, so overwhelming, as a spiritual sight of the heart's depravity.** Who can have an insight into this dark, mysterious chamber of imagery, this seat of all iniquity, as unfolded by the Holy Spirit, and not shudder, and tremble, and weep, exclaiming, "What must I do to be saved? Lord, save! or I perish."

But, in all faithfulness we must add that, intense sensibility, deep religious feeling, and great alarm may co-exist with spiritual death in the soul--it may be found apart from real conversion. The stony-ground hearer received the word with *joy*. Herod heard John preach the gospel with *gladness*. The devils believe and *tremble*. Thus the opposite emotions of joy and fear may exist apart from a spiritual change of heart. Beware, then, of this deception!

3. Mere religious conviction is not real conversion. There may be in the subject some intelligent knowledge and insight of sin, some vivid apprehension of its existence and guilt, attended with pungent conviction and mental distress, springing from its present and remote consequences, without any spiritual sense of sin, *as sin*, against the holy Lord God. While there is no real conversion without the conviction of sin, mere natural conviction alone, unaccompanied with a spiritual renewal of the heart, cannot be denominated real conversion. An individual may for months and years be what is termed "under conviction of sin," and his soul yet remain without very decided evidence of spiritual life.

But, if these convictions which you have are of the Holy Spirit's producing, if they arise from the effectual work of Divine grace in your soul, they will, they *must*, before long, eventuate in your real conversion to God. If the result of animal excitement only, the mere emotional part of your nature stirred--if but a transient flash of thought, a sigh, a tear, a passing feeling--it will all evaporate, subside, and vanish as the foam upon the billow, as the morning cloud and as the early dew. There is, indeed, the appearance of life;

but, alas! it is spiritual *still-life*. *"You have a name that you live, but are dead."*

4. Nor does real conversion resolve itself into the **mere possession and exercise of spiritual gifts**. The history of the Church of God affords lamentable proof of the existence of the most splendid and powerful spiritual gifts not in alliance with one atom of converting grace. The Corinthian Church supplies a sad chapter to this history. If God endows an individual with great and brilliant parts, and that endowment is in connection with a religious profession--it may be the holy office of the Christian ministry--the inference is not necessarily logical and true that the individual so furnished and installed is spiritually and thoroughly and truly converted.

Our adorable Lord--that great Prober of the human heart--He who only knew what was in man--forewarned us of this. *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? and in Your name have cast out devils? and in Your name have done many wonderful works?"* And what is the solemn, the inevitable result? *"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you--depart from me, you that work iniquity."* Oh you who are endowed with popular gifts, who plume yourselves with your brilliant attainments, who walk amid the golden candlesticks, distinguished lights and brilliant orbs, tremble, lest in the deep treachery of the heart you should be found substituting these meretricious ornaments, these tinsel garnishings of the Christian profession, for that spiritual renewal of the heart which leads its possessor to walk holily and humbly with God. How easy the deception! how woeful the result! We may speak with the entrancing eloquence of men, or with the soft music of angels, without one spark of real love to God glowing upon the lifeless, flameless altar of the heart.

We shudder to think how far human intellectualism and eloquence may pass current in the office of the Christian ministry, with those who fill and with those who worship it, totally dissevered from all

spiritual life. These are grand weapons of Satan and of Error. Availing themselves of human learning, an acute intellect, and brilliant attainments, the eloquence of speech, and the fascination of address, those united foes of Christ and the Church--Satan and Error--seek to upheave the foundations of truth and righteousness, and to sow the seeds of "*damnable heresies*," consigning men's souls to everlasting perdition.

Great giftedness, disunited from great grace, has ever been the bane of the professing Church. The Lord lead us into solemn self-examination, and give us to prize one grain of *real grace* above all the most splendid gifts of nature, the most polished attractions of art, the noblest attainments of the schools that ever endowed and adorned the human intellect. To walk holily and humbly with God, to lie as a sinner at the feet of Jesus, to be living day by day upon the blood and righteousness of Christ, and to do the Lord's work in the spirit of self-abnegation, lowliness, and love, has more of holiness and heaven in it, and brings more honor and glory to God, than the most costly gifts and the most brilliant achievements ever possessed--apart from the grace that empties us of self, sanctifies our hearts, and fills us with the mind and temper of Christ.

5. A high standard of morality may exist apart from true conversion. The ungodly and unconverted world furnishes many and marvelous examples illustrating this thought. Men of integrity and uprightness in all the relations of domestic, social, and commercial life; who can walk among their peers with dignity and honor, who yet are living in the region of spiritual unregeneracy and death. True, most true, there is no vital religion without morality, but there may be morality of a high and commanding order without vital religion. The minor morals of life may bud and blossom upon human character and conduct separate from the root of grace in the soul, and the soul's vital engrafting into Christ. It is fruit, but not the fruit of righteousness, nor the result of faith and love. It is life, but not the life that is hid with Christ in God.

It is at best but a negative righteousness, such as the proud, vaunting Pharisee wrapped around him when, with supercilious disdain, he looked down from the height of his self-sufficiency upon his humble fellow-worshiper in the temple, who, meekly standing afar off, smote upon his breast, and exclaimed, "*God be merciful to me a sinner!*"

You may be able to dignify and adorn all the relations of life, be a man of virtue and honesty, benevolence and integrity, and yet not be born again of the Spirit. Your morality may have much of the appearance, attraction, and fascination of real holiness, but it is mere morality still; and mere morality is no passport, signed and sealed by the Great King, to a heaven of glory. It may *look* like the engrafting and the fruit of spiritual life, but it is life in alliance with death, cold, inanimate death, death in all but the name. "*You have a name that you LIVE and are DEAD.*" Yet more pointed and solemn the testimony of Him who spoke these solemn words, "*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"

6. Nor can **religious activity and usefulness** be regarded as either a substitute for, or a valid evidence of, real conversion to God. And yet we know not of a more specious and fatal danger than this. In a Christian age like the present, distinguished for its religious spirit and enterprise--an age in which the romance of pious zeal seems to have reached its highest culture, there exists a great and fatal temptation of substituting spiritual still-life for spiritual quickened-life, Christian activity for Christianity, and Christianity for Christ; the spasmodic throes and convulsions of religious zeal and excitement, for real, vital religion, the name to live while nothing really lives but--*death!*

Christian energy and success are, at best, but negative and dubious *data* upon which to predicate the actual existence of spiritual life in the soul. That an individual perfunctorily engaged in religious work may be useful in guiding the steps of others, as the sign-post planted midway between two diverging roads may direct correctly the

doubtful footsteps of the traveler, itself remaining stationary, numberless cases testify. We may point the pious pilgrim the right way to heaven, we may lead the anxious inquirer to Jesus--we may, in various ways, be employed in the cause of truth and in the kingdom of Christ--in praying and exhorting and preaching; in instructing the ignorant, in reforming the vicious, in reclaiming the wanderer--and the vineyard of our own soul remain untilled by one solitary act of spiritual culture--not a seed, or bud, or flower, or fruit of grace and holiness, relieving its barrenness, or evidencing its spiritual life.

Doubtless, the antediluvians were useful in aiding righteous Noah to construct the Ark for the saving of his house, while they themselves perished in the flood, clinging, perhaps, to the sides or clutching the keel of the vessel as it floated serenely on its way. The scaffolding is useful in the erection of the building, but, constituting no essential part of the structure, is removed when the edifice is complete. How delusive and unsafe, then, the evidence we glean from Christian activity and usefulness that we are personally born again, are truly converted to Christ. Such is the danger of becoming ourselves insensible to what we recommend and enforce, or assume that we possess it when in reality we do not.

We are overwhelmed with the apprehension that in a day of unexampled religious activity and stir, of enterprise and excitement, when association after association starts up, each demanding and each receiving a new host of volunteers, offering not only their wealth and influence, but their talents and time to the work, numbers may be beguiled into the belief that all this is saving religion, that all this is real conversion! Never doubting that they must experimentally know what they theoretically teach, and must spiritually love what they earnestly commend, they pause not to examine their own hearts as to their personal acquaintance with these things. In proportion, also, as these associations multiply, and with their multiplication the rate of activity and excitement increases, does the necessity of pausing for self-examination exist.

The increased magnitude and consequent velocity and din of the machinery of Christian activity must necessarily lessen the opportunity and the desire for a quiet converse with our own soul. The necessity, therefore, of special self-examination increases precisely at the same rate with the energy employed in promoting the spiritual well-being of others. Let it not be supposed that no individual can be employed in advancing the kingdom of grace who himself lives without grace; that we cannot promote the holiness of others without the possession of holiness ourselves; that we cannot be spiritually useful to others while we yet ourselves remain in an unrenewed state. He has studied the history of the Christian Church but to little advantage who has not learned that God has often employed unholy agencies for the accomplishment of His will and purpose; and that, when in His sovereignty He has so employed, He can in His sovereignty destroy them. "*For the scripture says unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth,*" (Rom. 9:17.) How should this truth, then, lead us to dive into our own hearts, bring our souls to the unerring touchstone of God's Word, drive us out of every subterfuge, and allow nothing--the most fair and plausible and good--to come between our hearts and their true, thorough conversion to Christ.

7. With many the idea is not less false and fatal, that **a diligent and externally-devout attendance upon the means of grace and ordinances of God's Church** constitute the great spiritual change of which the Bible speaks as essential to salvation. As though God would or could accept, in lieu of the heart spiritually renewed, divinely loving and holy--the mere *externals* of the Christian faith, the empty *signs* and *symbols* of Christianity! But, my reader, we must endeavor to dislodge this fatal delusion from your mind. You may be punctual in your attendance at the house of God, be externally a serious and devout worshiper; you may go to and fro with gilded Bible and Prayer-book in your hands, you may remain, when the great congregation is dispersed, and join the few who approach the solemn symbols of the Savior's dying love, and with all

this still continue unregenerate, unborn again, living in the distant region and dark shadow of spiritual death.

"We ate and drank in Your presence," will be the plea, earnestly but vainly urged, in the great day when no plea for admittance within the pearl gate that expands to admit the Bride to the marriage banquet of the Lamb will avail but the new birth. The only response to that appeal will be, *"Depart from me, I never knew you."* Oh yes! you may descend to the shades of endless despair--from the house of God--where judgment must first begin--from the table of the Lord, your lips moist with the dreadful symbols of a Redeemer's dying love, with no more valid hope of salvation than the deluded felon who stands beneath the fatal drop clasping the adored crucifix to his breast--another victim to the long, gloomy procession of lost souls, who presumed to substitute the lifeless forms of religion--*"Devotion's every offering but the heart"*-- for the great spiritual change of the new birth; having a name to live, and yet dead. Examine yourselves, prove your own selves in this matter.

8. Among the most plausible yet most fatal errors is, the **substitution of denominational religion** for the religion of the renewed heart. And yet how common is this delusion! To what an alarming extent does it denominationalism divide all classes of religionists! An individual may be a fiery partisan, a stern bigot, a martyr for his creed, a holocaust upon the altar of his Church, and vainly imagine that this is all that Jesus meant when He thundered with reiterated force those solemn words upon the ears of the Jewish ruler, *"You must be BORN AGAIN."*

But zeal for a denomination, love to a Church, a wedded attachment to an ecclesiastical system, may exist, and in numberless cases does exist, in alliance with a nature entirely unrenewed by the Holy Spirit, with a heart totally destitute of the love of God. We have known individuals who have sacrificed health, substance, and even life itself in the arena of ecclesiastical warfare, closing their deluded and melancholy history unrelieved with one solitary ray of true Christian

hope. What is this religion better than that of the Mohammedan, the Hindoo, or the Papist? There is nothing in it of spiritual vitality, nothing of Jesus, nothing of God, nothing of eternity. It may enable its partisan to pass muster with his peers, it may give him high position and great renown in his denomination, it may enthrone him upon the highest pinnacle of the temple, the demigod of his party. But, when the hour, the solemn, the appalling hour comes, to meet, whose tremendous reality, denominationalism, and ecclesiasticism, and priestlyism--systems, creeds, and sacraments--must all retire from the scene and give place to a foundation more real, to a religion more vital, to hope more substantial, what, oh *what* will this 'baseless fabric' of a denominational religion do for us then!

Reader, with all your denominational love, your party zeal, your earnestness and devotion and sacrifice to promote the ecclesiastical branch to which you belong, you must be *born again*, or share the fate that awaits all mere sects and systems, forms and ceremonies, rituals, creeds, and Churches. "O Lord, save us from so subtle, so dangerous, so fatal a delusion! Allow us not, in a matter of such infinite importance, to substitute a dream for a reality, a system for Christ, a lying fiction for a good hope of eternal life. Give us the reality and the earnestness and the vigilance of Divine grace to make *sure* work for eternity. Create in us a clean heart, and renew in us a right spirit!"

9. By how many is the fatal delusion fostered that, **afflictions, adversity, and sorrow are, of themselves, valid evidences of the new birth!** Were this a reality and not a phantom, the truth and not a lie, it would follow that this world, all enshrouded with the winding-sheet of woe, groaning and travailing in the throes and convulsions of suffering, sorrow, and death, is thronged with new-born and regenerate beings, temples of the Spirit, and heirs of the kingdom! We hasten to dispel the delusion.

There are both *judicial* and the *parental* judgments of the Most High God with the children of men. His afflictive dispensations with the

ungodly are those of a Judge; with the *righteous*, they are those of a parent. And, although the season of adversity, the hour of sorrow, is oftentimes, in the purpose and arrangement of God, the period of the new birth--the occasion of the translation of the soul from darkness to light, from death to life--the rod of affliction driving the man from his shattered idols, his blighted hopes, his false dependences, to the Savior; yet, there is not necessarily a solitary link between the darkest adversity, the most crushing affliction, the profoundest sorrow--and that spiritual new birth indispensable to a state of grace on earth, and a state of glory in heaven; nothing but a wide, dark chasm, which can only be spanned by Divine, sovereign, and regenerating grace.

Shall I suppose you, my reader, an illustrative case? God, perhaps, has afflicted you heavily. Wealth, hard earned and stored, has disappeared like Alpine frost beneath the burning rays of a meridian sun. Health, rosy and robust, has waned and drooped as a mid-summer day dissolving into the twilight shades of evening. Death has invaded the sanctuary of your home, sundering some fond tie, withering some beautiful flower, snapping some strong stem of domestic bliss, leaving its deep, dark shadow still lingering upon that spot of verdure, sunshine, and joy. And what is the effect? What the position of your smitten and bleeding spirit? Is it not that of sullen, gloomy, cold, involuntary resignation? You had no power to avert the catastrophe, no skill to ward off the blow, and now that it has fallen upon you, and fallen with an irresistible and crushing effect--you bow your head, but not your heart; you surrender your idol, but not your idolatry; you relinquish your treasure, but not your will; you are submissive, but not resigned to the dealings and government of God.

Perhaps the affliction has had, for the moment, a subduing and humbling effect. Your heart is softened, your pride is mortified, your lofty spirit is laid low, and the subject and the ordinances of religion, for a season, engage your thoughts, rouse your interest, and command your attention. While the heavy hand of God is upon you, you seem to lie in the dust at His feet. You read your Bible, repair to

God's house, retire from the haunts of worldly gaiety and from the scenes of sensual pleasure, and even suspend, for the time, the cares and anxieties of business.

But is this conversion? is this true religion? is this the dawn of grace? is this the spiritual birth of the soul? The RESULT shall supply the answer. The stunning effects of the blow are subsiding, your sorrow is lessening, your tears are drying, the deep shadows of your night of woe are dissolving into the morning's dawn of sunshine, and you have returned to the engagements and the cares of life--the mart of business and the haunts of pleasure--as indifferent to religion and the claims of your soul and the solemnities of eternity as if the hand of God had not touched you, and His voice had not uttered the admonition in your ears, "*Turn! turn! why will you die?*" And thus you supply another solemn confirmation of the truth that an individual may pass through all the stages of adversity and yet remain unregenerate, unsanctified, unsaved.

But has no precious visitation continue? no fearful responsibility incurred? does no solemn account remain? Yes! emphatically yes! God rode in that chariot-storm, spoke from that cloud of thunder, commissioned that crushing sorrow. He designed to humble you, to instruct you, to subdue you to repentance, and win you to faith and love. And while the cloud was upon your tabernacle, and the thunder of His power rolled above you, and the grief lay heavy upon your heart, you were awed and softened, thoughtful and mute. But, alas! the affliction passed away, the tempest subsided, health has taken the place of sickness, the dead are forgotten, and you are yet *unborn again*. Be not deceived! Do not think that because you have been chastened and afflicted of the Lord, that therefore you are a favorite of the Lord's. That, having drunk of the cup of sorrow at His hand, you have therefore tasted that He is gracious.

There is nothing essentially *converting* in the nature or power of affliction. Far from it. The furnace does not transmute base metal into gold, it burns and destroys it. And while the brass, the tin, and

the lead, the wood, the hay, and the stubble, are consumed and perish, the gold, the silver, and the precious stones, by the same fire, are purified, refined, and saved.

But, blessed, thrice blessed, are they who by the storm are driven to Jesus, the Refuge and the Hiding-place; who, when God cuts up all earthly hopes by the roots, blasts the human gourd, dries the creature spring, are led by the Spirit in the dark hour of adversity to discover that they have nothing to take hold of but Christ; that, knowing their sinfulness and condemnation and emptiness, are led to see the Lord Jesus Christ to be just the all-sufficient, able, willing, precious Savior that they need--and so, as amid the fire, and as by the fire, are saved from the worm that never dies and the fire that is never quenched. Oh, what countless harpers tread the gold-paved streets of glory, chanting the praises of 'sanctified trial', and testifying that, but for the fire, the whirlwind, and the earthquake of affliction, suffering, and adversity, they would never have basked in heaven's sunshine, nor bathed them in its sea of bliss!

10. It is important, in presenting the negative aspect of our subject, that we should give emphatic utterance to the truth that, **an external and avowed profession of Christ** is not real conversion. This, among all we have specified, forms, perhaps, the most popular, as the most plausible and fatal error. There is something in an avowed profession of Christianity so religious and holy in appearance, so apparently genuine and true, so like the actual and the real; and, added to this, there is with it a feeling of self-complacency so strong and deceptive, it is no marvel that multitudes should be ensnared by the delusion, that a Christian in *profession* is a Christian in *principle*, that a believer in name is a believer in reality; that nominal religion is vital religion, and that the external clothing of the sheep is all that is necessary to authenticate love to, and union with, the Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the flock.

How few will be found in society who are not 'professors of religion'. The great mass wear the distinctive external clothing of heaven, the

uniform of the Christian, the holy and sacred name of Christ. And yet it is one of the most appalling reflections how few will be found among these religious professors who are really savingly converted to God, being truly *born again*. The Word of God is solemn in its instances of this fearful and fatal delusion. Simon Magus was a religious professor, yet was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Demas was a religious professor, yet loved this present evil world. Judas Iscariot was a professor and an apostle, yet betrayed his Lord and Master. These men were types of a class the most popular and numerous in this professing age of the world--those who have a name to live, and are dead.

11. It follows that the **ordinances** of God's house--the institution of **Baptism and the Lord's Supper**, of which all religious professors are partakers--**possess of themselves no converting, sanctifying, saving efficacy**. Those who maintain that Baptism is an essentially *converting* rite, or that the Lord's Supper is a *saving* ordinance, contravene the direct teaching of God's Word, argue against the existence of facts the most incontrovertible and solemn. The '*automatic grace*' principle, as maintained by a certain school holding semi-Romanist views--with which, alas! so many professing Protestants secretly sympathize--is an unblushing denial and blasphemous ignoring of the official work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, reducing conversion--the divinest, most essential, and momentous change that can possibly revolutionize the soul--to the mere observance of an external rite, as destitute of its significance as of vitality and power. If this sacramental notion of the Romanized school of theology be *true*, then the teaching of the Bible on the subject of the new birth is *false*--for the two views are diametrically opposed the one to the other--a conclusion at which we shudder to arrive.

But let God be true, and every man who would contravene His word a liar. But what says the Scripture? The following declarations, because they cut from beneath us all ordinances as coming into competition with, and as substitutes for, vital godliness, cover the

entire question, and are as applicable to Christian institutions as to any Jewish rite whatever--"*In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a NEW CREATURE,*" (Gal. 6:15.) "*The kingdom of God*" (that is, the kingdom of grace in the soul) "*is not food and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy Spirit,*" (Rom. 14:17.)

The order here observed by the Spirit is most impressive. First, the *righteousness* of Christ forming the foundation of the believing sinner's acceptance; then, *peace*, the effect of righteousness; and then *joy*, a higher order of peace--peace in its bolder range. Righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit. And shall we reduce this great spiritual change, apart from which there is no salvation--no grace here, and no glory hereafter--to a mere submission to a rite, a symbol, a sign? This were to believe that thousands are regenerate, sanctified, and saved, and when they die will die the death of the righteous, who, once baptized, are now living in all the enmity of the carnal mind against God--the captives of Satan and the servants of sin! In view of this appalling conclusion, we hesitate not to pronounce the Romish dogma of sacramental grace--the Papistical doctrine of baptismal regeneration--to be the pre-eminent lie of Satan--the most subtle and fatal weapon which this arch-foe of our race ever forged for the destruction of men's souls in perdition.

With the deepest earnestness and solemnity of feeling we address you as holding this fatal error. We appeal to your sober judgment as to the truth of what we say. If baptism be the new birth in the Scripture sense, then whatever the Bible teaches concerning the expressions *regeneration, born again, or created anew*, will hold true of baptism. In this light read the following passage, substituting the word '*baptized*' instead of the *phrase 'born of God'*, and see how it sounds--"*Every one that is BAPTIZED sins not; but he that is BAPTIZED keeps himself pure, and the evil one touches him not.*" Is this true? Who will dare affirm that it is? And yet, to be consistent with your notion of baptismal regeneration, you must believe it to be true. Does baptism produce such a spiritual change in its subject as

that "*old things have passed away, and all things have become new?*" This is true of all who are born again. But we drop the argument. We appeal to your conscience, to your condition as a sinner, to your feeling as a dying man, to your prospect for eternity.

Do not build your hope of glory upon your baptism. You are lost to all eternity if you do. You *must* be born again if ever you enter the kingdom of heaven. If you are not born again of the Spirit, you have not the least ground of hope. Not a solitary bright ray trembles upon the dark cloud that enshrouds your future. Plunge into eternity, clutching the airy fiction, the fatal notion, that you passed from death into life in your baptism--that in baptism you were regenerated, adopted, justified, made holy and saved--and you have staked your eternal happiness upon the most fatal lie!

But yet there is hope. Feeling your lost and ruined condition as a sinner, quickened into spiritual life by the Holy Spirit, and by that same Spirit secretly led to a believing acceptance of the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus, you may, you must, you shall be saved. With a soul-loving, yearning heart, we entreat you to pause, examine, and reflect. You lose nothing by relinquishing your delusion of baptismal regeneration--you imperil everything by holding it. Abandon it, then, at once and forever. Seek a baptism more vital, a religion more saving, a foundation more sure, a hope more true. Implore the Holy Spirit to teach you the good and the right way; to breathe into your soul the breath of life; to reveal the Lord Jesus to you as He who died for us that we might live through Him; and from your spiritual ruin, corruption, and death you will emerge a beautiful, holy, living temple of God through the Spirit, filled with His love, reflecting His glory, and hymning His praise through eternity.

12. We recur again to the thought, that a **mere profession of Christianity, a submission to rites, an observance of ordinances**, constitutes not the New Birth. What! is *this* all that Jesus meant in His memorable conversation with Nicodemus? Is *this*

all the Bible means when it declares that, *"If any man be in Christ, he is a NEW CREATURE?"* My reader, be warned, be instructed, be entreated. Stake not your eternal well-being upon a lie so false and fatal as this. Attempt to keep this base, this spurious coin--bearing neither the image of Christ nor the superscription of the Holy Spirit--and yours will be the just and the terrible doom of the most daring, the most guilty, and the most fearfully condemned of all counterfeiters--the counterfeiter of a lying and spurious conversion!

13. We must limit our negative view of the question to but one more illustration. **A calm, tranquil, peaceful death** cannot safely be regarded as affording a valid evidence of that great, spiritual change which our Lord taught as indispensable to admission into heaven. "He died so peacefully, so calmly, so lamb-like," is the exclamation of many who dismiss the departed to the realms of bliss with no more authentic passport, no more assured hope than this! But what is the language of God's Word? *"I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For **there are no bands in their death**--but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men."*

How many pass out of this world wrapped in the profound stupor of spiritual insensibility, which, with those not enlightened of the Holy Spirit, passes for the tranquillity of 'divine peace', for the hope of real conversion, for the holy slumber of a sleep in Jesus! Alas! it is but the fatal security, the false repose, the spiritual insensibility of spiritual death. They pass out of **spiritual** death into **natural** death, and out of natural death into **eternal** death. But be not deceived! Because you have no fear of death, experience a composure in view of its dreadful solemnities, unruffled by a fear, undisturbed by a shudder, deem not yourself therefore really converted! It is a distinctive mark of the truly *regenerate* that, *"through fear of death they are all their lifetime subject to bondage."* It is a distinctive mark of the *unregenerate* that, *"they have no bands in their death."*

How unsafe, then, to rest our evidence of the New Birth upon a foundation so dubious and slender. You may, indeed, die a lamb-like death, at peace with yourself and with all mankind, and yet, with the untamed heart of the lion, at enmity against God, His Christ, and His truth. The death of the regenerate is truly a peaceful death. "*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright--for the end of that man is peace.*" And again, "*The righteous has hope in his death.*" But it is not the peace of spiritual insensibility, nor is it the hope of the self-righteous. It is the tranquil, peaceful, hopeful death of him who, while he lived, lived unto the Lord, and when he dies, dies unto the Lord, and going hence, he is ever with the Lord. No false peace is that, no spurious hope, which springs from faith, reposes on the blood and righteousness of Christ. Life's last hour may bring its momentary conflict and cloud, its rippled sea and shaded pathway; but this will only test the reality of the work of grace in the soul, and render all the more illustrious and precious the atonement of Jesus on the cross. But we must bring this chapter to a close.

This state of spiritual still-life which we have endeavored to portray is eminently *perilous* in many points of view. It is so, because it tends deeply to foster the fatal spirit of self-deception. So long as we have a name to live, while yet we are dead, we cherish the delusion that all is right with our soul. The very deception feeds and strengthens itself. And of all deceptions *self-deception* is the most fearful! To pass current for a true Christian, deceiving those who have recognized us as such, is most solemn; but to go down to the grave dreaming that we are truly converted, while yet the heart has known nothing of a sense of sin, faith in Jesus, and love to God, is more solemn still!

Such a state is perilous, also, because once it becomes fixed and permanent it is the most difficult of all states to remove. The Gospel proclaimed to the heathen mass completely ignorant of the existence and the very name of conversion would be a more hopeful task. The long-cherished delusion at length comes to be regarded as a reality; the fiction a fact; the profession of spiritual life for life itself. And so, all arguments and persuasions to the contrary, the unhappy victim of

the delusion passes away, in many instances, undeceived until the deception is too late to rectify. Awake, then, to the conviction of your real state as having only a name to live while yet dead. Compare the state of your soul with that revealed and unerring Word which is to confront and judge you at the last day, and in its divine and searching light see and know it as it really is, concerning the great, the solemn, the essential change--the change of the New Birth.

In conclusion, we must remark that the New Birth doubtless involves each and all these negatives in its nature and actings. While false conversion may exist with them, real conversion does not exist without them. In false conversion they are but counterfeit resemblances of the real, in true conversion they appear in all their genuineness and harmony. Thus far may we travel in a religious life, and yet stop short of real and vital religion. Having a name to live, we yet may be dead. Carrying the oil-less vessel with the untrimmed, unlit lamp of an outward Christian profession, we dream that all is safe until the startling summons to meet the Bridegroom awakes us to consciousness, to conviction, to despair!

But let no trembling soul close this chapter in hopeless despondency. If the Lord has given you a holy fear of self-deception, a deep, earnest, solemn dread of false conversion, and has set you upon the task of examining your foundation for eternity, and looking well to the state of your soul, we think you may safely accept your experience as an evidence that the work within you is true and genuine--even the work of God's Spirit in your heart. Look afresh from off yourself to Jesus. Lay your doubt, and fear, and trembling down at His cross, and then look up, and rest your believing eye upon the sin-atonement Savior; and that close, believing look at Jesus will resolve doubt into certainty, melt cloud into sunshine, and calm fear into perfect peace and repose.

Did He from that cross ever dismiss a soul unblest? **Look at that empaled body! gaze upon that purple stream! peer into those gaping wounds!** Do they seem as though Christ could reject

one true, penitent sinner who came to Him? Settle it, then, in your mind that no poor sinner ever descended from that cross into the shades of outer darkness in whose breast dwelt the holy fear that perhaps now trembles in your own. The spiritual impartation of the New Birth is not without its throes and pangs. The period may be protracted and painful. Many doubts and fears, many conflicts and despondencies may attend it, but the issue is certain, the advent glorious; and angelic strains, chiming sweetly with those which broke upon the plains of Bethlehem at the birth of the infant Savior, will ring the glad tidings through the bowers of heaven, "An heir of glory born!"

WHAT IS THE NEW BIRTH?

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." John 3:3

We pass from the negative to the POSITIVE aspect of this great subject--the New Birth--purposing in the present chapter to consider its nature, author, and necessity.

1. The NATURE of the New Birth.

It is one of the most momentous questions we have to consider--pregnant with vital, precious, and deathless interests--**What is the New Birth?** All questions of human legislation, science, and learning dwindle into insignificance in comparison with this. The only inquiry worthy the study of a rational and immortal being is, "Am I converted, or am I not?" In conducting our study, we shall keep close to the teaching of God's Word; for the subject of our research is too vital and precious to be jeopardized by any other than a Supreme authority. In this matter we sit only at the feet of that Divine and Heavenly Teacher at whose bar we are to stand in

judgment. In His memorable conversation with Nicodemus, our Lord, pressing home upon his attention that great spiritual change indispensable to salvation, compares it to a *birth*; and because it is essentially alien from the first or natural birth, He denominates it the SECOND or NEW birth. "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."--born *over* again. Guided by the analogy, we shall in this point of light, mainly, present the positive bearings of the subject.

The emblem is most expressive. The first, or natural **birth, introduces us into a new world of being, of thought, and feeling.** It ushers us into a new state of existence, in which all things are new. Now, between this and the New Birth there exists a strong and significant resemblance. In conversion the soul is ushered into a new, spiritual world--emphatically *born again*. The first birth introduces us into the natural world, the second introduces us into a spiritual world. The first birthushers us into a world of sin, and woe, and death; *the second birth*, into a world of holiness, and happiness, and life. It is the birth of the soul into grace.

In keeping with our analogy, the New Birth is also represented as a *quicken*ing. "You has He QUICKENED, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." "And has QUICKENED us together with Him." It is described as "passing from death unto life." And by an appropriate and graceful image it is represented as a *resurrection*. "As the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will."

The New Birth, then, **takes us out of a state of spiritual death into a state of spiritual life**--reverses entirely our moral being. The truly-converted soul is a *living* soul, quickened from a death of sin into a life of righteousness. The life, the new-born life, which now animates him, is the life of God, communicated in virtue of his union with Christ, who is our life, and by the agency of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Quickener. All now is life--new, spiritual, holy, deathless life. The bitterness of spiritual death is past, its sovereign dethroned, its

dominion destroyed--and the glory, the reign, and the power of a divine and new-born life triumphantly enter the soul; and from henceforth exists an empire as lasting as the being of Him who created it.

And now the soul begins really to *live*. It swims in an infinite sea of life--the life of God. As from and in Him, so to and for Him that life is now lived. Christ is his life, and to Christ that life is consecrated. Spiritual death--dead faith, dead obedience, dead hope--is abolished, and the spiritually-quickened soul bathes itself in a divine ocean of vitality and bliss. Henceforth, for him to live is Christ; henceforth, whether he lives or dies, it is to the Lord. The tree, no longer exhibiting the fruitless bough, the seared and withered leaf, bursts forth into all the bloom, beauty, and fertility of *life*, laden with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ.

How precious are its *actings*! Prayer, is life breathing; faith, is life trusting; love, is life adoring; service, is life laboring; submission, is life patiently suffering. Life of God in the soul of man! how do you manifest your origin, prove your existence, and foreshadow your destiny, O divine and glorious thing!

My reader, here let us press the personal inquiry, Have *you* passed from death unto life? Do you feel the life of God pulsating within your soul? Are you expatiating in a new-born world of thought, and feeling, and action? In holy meditations on God, in spiritual breathings after holiness, in loving desires for Christ, and in ardent aspirations for glory? Does this living water--the indwelling of the Spirit of life--spring up, and ascend heavenwards? In a word, are you living for God? If so, then we confidently address you in the language of Paul, "*You has He QUICKENED, who were dead,*" for you are *born again!*

The New Birth likewise consists in **the restoration of the Divine image to the soul.** The moral image of God was effaced in the fall of the first Adam. Sin obliterated the divine holiness, and we became

more human and less divine. The righteousness and holiness in which God originally created us gave place to the empire and reign of sin; and the image and superscription of a usurped sovereign became enstamped upon the coin of the soul. But the New Birth is a restoration of the lost image of God to man. By Christ, the Second Man, it is effectually and indelibly recovered. In regeneration, the soul is formed in the likeness of Christ. The New Birth, then, is the restoration of the image of God to the soul of man.

But the apostle puts it yet more distinctly, "*The new man, which is after God [or, the image of God] is created in righteousness and true holiness,*" (Eph. 4:24.) We know not a more correct, and at the same time a more precious, view of the New Birth than this. It is nothing less, it cannot possibly be more than, the repencilling of the obliterated moral image of God--the image of holiness--upon the fallen but now regenerate soul. "*Partakers of the divine nature*"--"*Partakers of His holiness,*"--for these are the expressions of the Holy Spirit--we become, in regeneration, GOD-LIKE.

A higher, holier, diviner image than that which angels wear is ours. Theirs is the image of nature, ours the image of grace. Theirs is angelic, ours divine. They stand, by reason of their first creation, remote from the Sun--we, by reason of our second creation, stand in the inner circle, close to Christ the Center, the human assimilated to the Divine, mortal swallowed up in Immortality, the creature absorbed in the Creator, man in God! Again we press the inquiry, *Whose* moral image do you bear? Is your soul reinstated in the likeness of God? Does the Divine holiness attach to your being? Are you living in the cultivation of that holiness without which no man can see the Lord? If so, you then are *born again!*

A new or changed heart--a heart renewed and sanctified--enters essentially into the New Birth. "*A new heart will I give you,*" is the Divine promise pointing to this great change. What multitudes rest satisfied that they are converted who know nothing of the *renewed heart* involved in this great spiritual change. Vainly

imagining that the natural instincts of love and benevolence, of amiability and kindness, of virtue and truth, are the "*beauties of holiness*" which adorn and evidence the New Birth, they recognize not the necessity of being renewed in the spirit of their mind, and of seeking that purity of heart which only exists in the new-born soul, and without which none can see God. By *nature, the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*. But by *grace* it becomes penitent and believing, loving and holy, the temple of the Spirit, the home of the Savior, the shrine of God. Marvelous is the change! divine the conquest! The converting grace of God has achieved the wondrous revolution. The rebellious heart has become penitent; the proud heart, humble; the unclean heart, pure; the selfish heart, loving; the heart that despised Christ now embraces Him; that which was at enmity against God, now loves Him; that which strove with the Spirit, is now His willing sanctuary.

My reader, it is *here* the New Birth begins, it is here it carries on and terminates its mighty transformation. Its commencement, so gentle and veiled; its advance, so gradual and progressive; its victories, so unseen and noiseless; a mightier revolution than ever upheaved a dynasty, or overthrew an empire, has transpired, and none but God and the soul may know it!

Oh, it is a great thing to have a new heart--a heart reconciled to God in its affections, entwined with Jesus in its faith, pure and heavenly in its breathings, the temple of God by *the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit*. Allow no sight and discovery of your heart's deep-rooted sinfulness to persuade you that you are not a subject of the New Birth. Hail this discovery rather as an evidence that you are born again of the Spirit. You would be ignorant of the depravity of your nature, would feel nothing of the vileness of your heart, would weep and lament not over the deep and desperate evil within, were you not quickened to life by the Spirit. Here is holy sensibility, here is spiritual life. A Divine hand has withdrawn the veil from your heart, revealing the plague, the darkness, and the sin

of this chamber of abominations; and that same hand of love will perfect the work thus so divinely and so effectually begun.

There is not a solitary exercise of your soul at this moment that is not an evidence of your spiritual quickening. Your thirst for more grace proves your heart *gracious*. Your cry for stronger faith in God proves your heart *believing*. Your desire for intenser love to Christ proves your heart *loving*. Your panting for a deeper inspiration of spiritual life proves you a *living* soul. These evidence the work of grace within you, as the perfume wafted from a bank of violets upon the soft south wind divulges the flower whose fragrance it breathes. These holy aspirations--heaven-descending, heaven-returning--are the crystal-jets of the living water welled within you, "*springing up into everlasting life.*" Take courage, then, dear heart! Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees, for you have Christ in you the hope of glory.

In unfolding the nature of the New Birth, we must not omit a very important and impressive illustration. It is represented, and most appositely, as **a translation out of darkness into light**. Thus it is expressed, "*Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light,*" (1 Pet. 2:9.) And again, "*God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" The analogy between the natural and the spiritual creation in this particular will suggest itself to the reflective mind. Darkness covered as with a pall the whole earth when, "*God said, Let there be light, and light was.*" In a moment the mist rolled from off the face of creation, and a world clad in loveliness, resplendent in glory, and bathed in perfume, burst into view. By that same voice the *moral chaos* of man's soul gives place to the existence, symmetry, and splendor of a new-born spiritual creation. The spiritual darkness of the unrenewed mind, of the alienated heart, of the rebellious will, is such as might be felt. So deep, so impenetrable its gloom, no light can pierce it, no voice can change it, no power can uplift it but God's. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness speaks--"Let

there be light!" and in a moment spiritual light bursts upon the soul--*light is*--and a divine creation starts into being, and all the sons of God shout together for joy.

"*Marvelous light*" it truly is! Marvelous its power--marvelous its revelations--marvelous its glories--marvelous the grace and love from whence it flows. And now, the newborn soul sees its sin, beholds its Savior, and looks upon its reconciled God. Floating upon the wings of light, it soars towards its native skies, and loses itself in the "Fountain of light." Henceforth, that new-born soul stands, where stood the apocalyptic angel, *in the sun*, itself a center of light in the orbit in which it moves, living and walking and acting as a child of the light, scattering the rays of holiness and truth on a darksome world, his path of righteousness shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Again we press an individual application of our great subject, and inquire, Has this divine light shone in upon *your* soul? Revealing the blackness, the emptiness, the depravity within, has it led you to Jesus the true light; in His light to see light on the pardon of your sins and the acceptance of your person in Him the Beloved?

We will not protract our description of the new birth longer than briefly to remark that it is **a transfer of the soul into the kingdom of Christ**--"*Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.*" This illustration is remarkably relevant. Our nature in its unregenerate condition is under the dominion of the prince of darkness--the god of this world. Dreadful picture! But not less appalling than true. Each individual of the human race is either a subject of Satan or of Christ, is under the power of darkness or a subject of the kingdom of God's dear Son. But conversion reverses this state. The new birth is a translation--a divine translation--from the galling, degrading power of darkness into the light and rule, the privileges and liberty of the kingdom of Jesus.

There are two words employed by the apostle in this remarkable passage very significant--*delivered* and *translated*. The former--implying a spiritual state neither desired nor deserved by its subject--has reference to the uplifting of a dead weight from a pit. By God's Spirit we are taken up out of the horrible pit and miry clay of corruption, and are brought into a state of grace. In the passage under consideration, it is represented as a deliverance from the power of darkness, or the dominion and will of Satan, the prince of darkness, who rules in the children of disobedience, and maintains his ascendancy by ignorance in the mind, rebellion in the will, and hardness in the heart. Therefore *sinners* are called "*children of the night*," and *sins* are denominated "*the works of darkness*."

Thus, there must first be in the new birth this emancipation from the bondage of Satan--the Pharaoh of this world--before there is the translation of the soul into the kingdom of Jesus. The two dominions cannot co-exist in the soul. We must first be drawn out of the pit of corruption, delivered from the power of darkness, before we are placed in a state of grace, or translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Nor can the *two images* coexist in the same individual--the image of God and the image of Satan. The one must be erased and destroyed before the divine lineaments of the other can be drawn by the Spirit upon the soul. This deliverance from the power of Satan and the corruption of sin in the new birth is not such a deliverance as *totally* frees us from the indwelling of sin, or *entirely* emancipates us from the temptations and harassings of Satan. With these the regenerate have to contend until life's last hour. That which is born of the flesh remains flesh until this corruption shall put on incorruption. And Satan, the accuser, will hover around the hour of the saint's departure intent upon winging his fiery darts to the very last. But, notwithstanding this, it is a blessed and glorious deliverance and disenthralment which grace achieves. It is a deliverance from sin's guilt, condemnation, and reign. It is a disenthralment from Satan's dominion, rule, and power. And so God, in the exercise of His

sovereign grace, has delivered us who believe from the power of darkness, and for this deliverance heaven's high arches shall ever more ring with our shouts of praise!

But God not only delivers us from the power of sin, but **He puts us in a state of grace.** Hence the expression, "*Has TRANSLATED us into the kingdom of His dear Son.*" Translated, that is, transferred from one kingdom into another. It follows that, all who are born again are the subjects of Christ's rule and government and law. They have been translated into the mediatorial kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and henceforth are governed by His special grace, restraining and mortifying their corruptions, daily renewing them in the spirit of their minds, will, and affections, bringing every thought, aim, and desire into obedience to Christ.

Again, we pause, and press the inquiry, Have *you* been thus delivered and thus translated? Do you know what it is to have those galling fetters broken which bound you to the corruption of sin? Do you know what it is to have the yoke removed which bowed you under the service of Satan? This it is to be born again, and by this deliverance and translation you may know your condition as either regenerate or still unregenerate. And if by a careful examination of your real state as before God, and by bringing yourself to the unerring touchstone of the gospel, you are enabled to come to a scriptural and satisfactory conclusion that you are born again, hold fast the liberty with which Christ has made you free, and be not again entangled with the yoke.

Ever remember that you have *liberty* indeed in Christ Jesus, but that it is a spiritual and not a carnal, a holy and not a lawless, liberty. You have become freed from the curse of the law, Christ having been made a curse for you; from the rigor of the law, Christ having given it an exact and full obedience; and from the guilt, tyranny, and condemnation of sin, Christ having washed you in His own most precious blood. But you have no liberty **TO** sin, to use your liberty as an occasion for the flesh, but are bound by the most sacred, solemn,

and eternal obligations to *"deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present evil world."*

If the description which we have thus given of the nature of the new birth be true--and scripturally true we verily and solemnly believe it to be--no lengthened argument will be needed to establish the proposition that **it is a DIVINE and SUPERNATURAL work.** Holy ancestry does not insure it, pious parentage does not convey it, human eloquence does not inspire it, moral persuasion does not produce it. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high is the accomplishment of this work above created power. How clear does the Holy Spirit put this--*"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe in his name. Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,"* (John 1:12, 13.) *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit."* *"Born again"*--marg., *"born from above."*

But we wish in this necessarily brief statement to concentrate the reader's attention upon a single truth--the divine agency of the Holy Spirit in the accomplishment of the new birth. One passage from God's Word will suffice to establish this point--**"IT IS THE SPIRIT THAT QUICKENS, THE FLESH PROFITS NOTHING."** Clearly and indisputably, then, to be born again is, to be *"born of the Spirit."* Now, **HOW does He produce this great change?** By what steps does He conduct the soul to this divine and heavenly birth?

There is first, the Holy Spirit's work in the **convincing of sin.** He uplifts the veil that enshrouds the heart, and shows its plague and sin and defilement. He makes the sinner to *know himself*--the first step in real conversion. He breaks up the fountain of feeling, produces godly sorrow, inspires holy contrition, awakens true and saving repentance. It was by His power that Job exclaimed, *"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."* It was by His power that David cried out, *"Against you and you only have I sinned, and done this evil in*

your sight." It was by His power that the tax-collector prayed, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" Has He wrought this repentance for sin, beloved, in *you*? Uplifting the veil, has He given you an insight into the chamber of imagery within your breast; in other words, has He so uncovered and revealed and dissected your heart to your own eye as to force from you the exclamation, "I am vile! I am undone! Lord, save me, or I perish!" O blessed discovery! O glorious revelation! O life-breathing cry! You are *born again!* Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you. Unregenerate nature never sent to heaven such an appeal. Spiritual death never breathed to Jesus such a living cry. It is the Spirit who has shown you your blackness, your vileness, your ignorance, your death, and having thus begun the good work in you, He will conduct you from grace to grace, and from glory to glory.

The next step of the Holy Spirit is to **lead the soul to Christ.** He deals not cruelly with the poor sinner--revealing the plague, and not the remedy; wounding, and withholding the balm; showing the sinner himself, and veiling Christ from the eye. Having wrought **repentance** towards God, His next step in the process is to work in the heart **faith** in the Lord Jesus Christ. Making the soul to feel the sickness of sin, He leads it to the balm that is in Gilead, and to the Physician who is there. He takes of the precious things of a precious Christ, and shows them to the soul. He leads to the atoning blood, and applies it. He takes the robe of righteousness, and imputes it. He conducts the trembling soul to Jesus, and unveiling His love, and grace, and merits, brings it to a believing recumbence upon Christ; resting, not only in the blood and righteousness of Jesus, but resting in Jesus Himself.

And what a life-giving, hope-inspiring discovery is JESUS! Penitent, heart-broken, humble sinner, Jesus is just the Savior you need, just the Friend you seek. You have come to the end of your own righteousness, and strength, and striving--you have besought in vain every physician, and have tried every remedy with no avail, and now you have lain you down to die--helpless, hopeless, despairing! Behold the Lamb of God, wounded, bleeding, slain for you! He took

your sins, endured your curse, bore your condemnation, paid your debt, and now invites you to the cleansing of His blood, to the investiture of His righteousness, to the pavilion of His love, to the free acceptance of all the precious things of His grace. *"Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and none else."* *"Come unto me and I will give you rest."* Doubt not either His ability or His willingness to accept and save you to the *uttermost* extent of your sinful, unworthy, and hopeless condition.

But we must advert to the **INSTRUMENT** which God has ordained in accomplishing in the soul the new birth. The Spirit of God being the Divine and efficient *Agent*, *the Word of God* is the Divine and passive instrument of regeneration. A few quotations from this Divinely-inspired Word will establish this. *"Being BORN AGAIN, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, BY THE WORD OF GOD, which lives and abides forever,"* (1 Peter 1:23.) *"Of His own will He BEGAT us WITH THE WORD OF TRUTH,"* (James 1:18.) The apostle gloried in the gospel of Christ, because it was *"the power of God unto salvation."* The psalmist testified to this truth--*"The law of the Lord is perfect, CONVERTING the soul."* But the testimony of the Lord Himself sets the question at rest--*"The WORDS THAT I SPEAK UNTO YOU, they are spirit and they are life."*

Thus then, the revealed word of God is, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, the appointed and Divine instrument of our being born again. As God never works apart from instrumentality, when instruments are made ready for His use, so the Holy Spirit never accomplishes this great and marvelous change in the soul apart from the truth of God. In His hands the gospel is a rod that works the miracle, a sword that pierces the soul, a fire that burns the dross, a hammer that breaks the rock, a light that dispels the darkness, a balsam that heals the wound, a seed that germinates, a voice that awakes the dead. And all this it does because it is the Word of the living God.

Shall we impugn its Divine authority--tracing thus its miraculous and marvelous effects? There are those who dare to do so! But, we

ask the bold skeptic, can that be other than a mirror of Divine construction which, faithfully upheld to the soul, brings to view every thought and feeling, purpose and aim, deep-veiled within its secret cloisters? Would the God of truth invest a *lie* with the mission and power which clothes the gospel of His grace? Would He from whom comes down every good and perfect gift bless a fiction, a falsehood, a myth, as He has blest the gospel in the conversion of countless myriads of souls, of all nations, and tongues, and peoples, who, in the great day of His coming, shall crowd the throne of Christ the Lamb, all attesting its divinity, and witnessing to its effects?

What has wrought such moral revolutions in the world, achieved such spiritual changes, conferred such intellectual freedom, battered down such strongholds of error, as the Gospel of God? If the devotee of superstition has been converted by it, the slave of sin disenthralled by it, the captive of Satan delivered by it, the soul raised from death by it--if it has made the spiritual blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, has tamed the lion, transformed the wolf into the lamb, and the vulture into the dove--if it soothes the deepest anguish of the heart, calms the fiercest tempest of the soul, sweetens the bitterest calamity of life, and in life's last hour unfurls the banner of victory over death, and sheds upon the Christian's tomb the radiance of a glorious immortality--then, achieving such marvels, attended by such signs and attested by such evidences, we accept the Gospel as of God, believe in its Divine authority, bow to its ultimate decisions, and stake our eternal all upon its doctrines, promises, and hopes. *"Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."*

"Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

What mighty power, then, has the Word of God in the hands of the Spirit! What heavenly dew distills from its promises; what spiritual life breathes from its doctrines; what sanctifying power flows from its precepts; what a heaven of glory is unveiled in its hopes! "One word of the gospel, a single sentence, has erected a heavenly trophy in a soul, which all the volumes of the choicest mere reason could never erect. One plain scripture has turned a face to heaven that never looked that way before, and has made a man fix his eye there against his carnal interest. One plain scripture has killed a man's sins, and quickened his heart into eternal life. One word of Christ remembered by Peter made him weep bitterly; and two or three scriptures pressed by the same Peter upon his hearers pierced their hearts to the quick. How has hell flashed in the face of the sinner out of the small cloud of a threatening, and heaven shot into the soul from one little diamond-spark of a promise. A little seed of the word, like a grain of mustard-seed, changed the soul from a dwarfish to a tall stature." (Charnock.)

This, and this only, is the preaching which will beget souls again, people the world with new creations, and erect, from the ruins of the fall, living temples of the Holy Spirit. Before it the wisdom of man dwindles into foolishness, and the power of man dissolves into weakness, and the glory of man pales into insignificance. To supplement it with human teaching is to blunt the edge of the sword, and to veil the luster of the diamond, and to render the Word of God of no effect. God has made His Word the tabernacle for the Sun of Righteousness to move in, and he who preaches it not fully and faithfully, without reserve and without deceit, throws the pall of hell's darkness around that divine Orb, and leaves the endangered and deathless soul to plunge, unillumined by one ray, into the darkness that is outer and eternal.

We reiterate the important truth that, the Word of God--than which the Church on earth possesses not a treasure so divine, costly, and precious--is the instrument employed by the Spirit in commencing,

carrying on, and completing that work of grace on earth which is the soul's preparation for the enjoyment of glory in heaven.

For one moment we venture to detain the reader with a glance at some of the **OPERATIONS** of the truth of God in the soul. As God's word of wisdom, it *makes wise* unto salvation. As the word of life, it *quicken*s. As a divine word, it *converts* the soul. As the truth which is after godliness, it *sanctifies*. As a nourishing word, it promotes *growth in grace*. As a word of consolation, it *comforts*. As a storehouse of supply, it thoroughly *furnishes us unto all good works*. As the divine light, it is our *guide*. As a spiritual sword, it is *a mighty weapon in the hands of the Spirit*. And when the books are opened, *it will judge us at the last day*. Such is the word of God, which lives and abides forever.

Our Lord, in announcing the momentous doctrine of the new birth to the inquiring ruler, emphatically and solemnly insisted upon its necessity. "*Marvel not that I said unto you, You MUST be born again.*" Were this great spiritual change a matter of no moment in its relation to our future; were it placed upon the same footing in the Bible with baptism, or the Lord's Supper--institutions, the observance of which is not *essential* to salvation--we could afford to view it with comparative indifference. But, seeing that **it is an indispensable condition of salvation**, and seeing that without it we cannot enter into the kingdom of grace on earth, and must be forever exiled from the kingdom of glory in heaven, it is a change, the absolute *necessity* of which we must press with all the arguments which the Scriptures supply, and with all the solemnity which eternity inspires.

What are some of the grounds of **the ABSOLUTE NECESSITY of the new birth**? Briefly these. It is *necessary*, in order to fulfill the eternal purpose of God with regard to His people. All His saints are born again. In the mystery of the Spirit's operations--viewless, noiseless as the wind; in the *sovereignty* of His grace--that wind

blowing where it wills--all His elect people pass through the process of the heavenly birth. "*So is every one that is born of the Spirit.*"

It logically follows that the new birth is necessary in order to authenticate our spiritual union with the Lord's people. We possess no scriptural, valid evidence that we are the true disciples of the Lord Jesus, or that the privileges of God's Church, and the immunities of the heavenly citizenship are ours, until we are born again. The true Church of God is composed alone of *living* stones; the Family, of reconciled and adopted children, the Kingdom of Jesus, of living subjects made willing in the day of His power. All other materials now outwardly mixed up with this--the wood, the hay, the stubble--will be consumed in the fire of the last day, for that day shall try every man's religion and hope of what sort it is.

Solemn thought! Reader, is your conversion of such a nature as to stand this fiery test? Are you spiritually, truly born again? Away with your rites and rituals, your forms and ceremonies, your morals and splendid virtues, your ecclesiastical relations, lifeless creeds, and costly doings. It is written, *yes, it is written, "You MUST be BORN AGAIN!"*

The New Birth is *necessary*, also, to the bringing forth of real holiness. There is not one grain of holiness in our unrenewed, unsanctified nature. There dwells in the flesh *no* good thing. In vain we garnish and adorn this sinful and corrupt humanity with the *external* beauties of holiness--it is but an embalmed *corpse*. We admit that the moral virtues are necessary to the adornment and well-being of human society. For what would this fallen world be apart from this restraint? And yet, spiritually viewed, what are they, in their highest cultivation, but 'refined flesh'? A picture is not a living being, a glow-worm is not a star, the sun reflected from a lake is not a sun; so, nature 'improved' is not nature 'renewed'; and the soul beautified with virtues is not the soul sanctified by grace; and the life regulated by the recognized laws and conventional manners of society is not a life quickened, ennobled, consecrated by the

indwelling Spirit of God. Apart, then, from the New Birth, there is no true holiness, and "*without holiness no man can see the Lord.*"

The last plea for the New Birth is a solemn one--without it there is no admission within the kingdom of heaven. Eternity begins with time--heaven commences on earth--glory has its first fruits in grace. The soul must be educated and disciplined for heaven, brought into holy sympathy and moral assimilation with its nature, character, and employments. An unholy being could not exist for one moment in glory. Its atmosphere would be too pure, its society too holy, its worship too spiritual, its enjoyments too refined. If the pilot, soaring to a lofty altitude above the earth, finds the air too thin to exist; surely an *unholy* being, in a moment translated to heaven, would discover that in its perfectly pure and holy atmosphere he could not for a moment breathe.

To be fitted for glory, we must be *gracious*; to dwell in heaven, we must be *heavenly*; to see God, we must be *pure* and *holy* in heart; to be forever with the Lord, we must partake His nature, cultivate His image here, and, constrained by love, confess His name, and bear His cross until we pass from grace to glory.

"Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again."

The EVIDENCES of the New Birth

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature--old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."--2 Cor. 5:17

It demands great skill in the holy art of dealing with Christian *evidence*--the evidence of the life of God in the soul of man. The fact we seek to confirm is so momentous, the evidences of that fact so varied, and the counterfeits of those evidences so many, that the work of sifting the true from the false, the genuine from the spurious,

is more difficult and delicate than appears upon the surface. He who undertakes faithfully to delineate the new creation of the soul has need to adopt as his sole guide the landmarks of God's Word, watchful of the false lights which gleam along the narrow channel through which he courses his intricate way, which seek to decoy the unwary voyager upon the shoals and quicksands of error which line the shores.

It is thus we must deal with the subject of which the present chapter treats--the EVIDENCES of the New Birth in the soul. That these evidences vary, and that they are counterfeited, we have already intimated. It is of the utmost significance, then, that no reader of these pages should in matters of such infinite importance be misled. Born again or not born again, spiritually dead or spiritually alive, are the two spiritual conditions of our present being. And, seeing that between these two conditions there is no neutral position, and that either one or the other decides and foreshadows our *future state* of being, how great the responsibility resting upon him who deals with these evidences! Solemnly conscious of this, we shall adhere as closely as possible to the description which the apostle gives us of the New Birth, in the words placed at the head of this chapter, "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature--old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new;*" and, presenting what Bacon terms, "a gentle crush of Scripture," shall give a running exposition of the passage in its order.

1. The doctrine of the indwelling of the renewed soul in Christ is the first truth that arrests our attention. "*If any man be IN CHRIST.*" To be in Christ is to be in union with essential life. Life can only communicate life. The soul quickened with spiritual life is a reproduction of the life of Jesus. It is not that the soul lives, as that Christ lives in the soul. In Christ our death is quickened into His life, our demerit is merged into His merit, our unrighteousness merges into His righteousness, our blackness is lost in His loveliness. And thus Christ is the Divine principle, the root, the substance, the alpha and the omega of all that is godly in us.

"Christ, who is our life." From the commencement to the completion of grace in the soul--from the first tear of godly sorrow wept on earth, to the first note of holy joy sounded in heaven--Christ is essentially and indivisibly one with His people. The spiritual life of the soul springs from the cross, is entwined with the cross, is fed by the cross of Jesus; and, when that life springs into heaven, it will be from the foot of the cross that shaded and sheltered it in all the vicissitudes through which it passed in its journey from grace to glory.

The New Birth, then, is the spiritual reinstating of the soul into Christ. Sin broke the stem of Eden's beautiful flower--the sinless creature man--and flung it, a poisoned weed, upon the dark, seething waters of the curse, henceforth to drift away upon the treacherous current toward the yawning gulf of endless woe. But the New Birth recovers this broken stem, reinstates it into Christ, henceforth to bear the precious fruits of grace here, and, in full bloom, to be laden with the golden fruits of glory hereafter.

With every step in this divine and marvelous recovery of man it is instructive to trace the union of the Lord Jesus--how all flows from Christ, leads to Christ, and through Christ conducts us up to the Father, from whose ineffable love it first springs, and to whose divine glory it shall eternally redound. The Church was loved in Christ, chosen in Christ, blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, is called in Christ, preserved in Christ, and with Christ will be ultimately glorified. How clearly and impressively does His inimitable figure illustrate this truth, *"I am the vine, you are the branches."*

Sweet to trace all 'streamlets of grace' to JESUS--eternal election, preservation in unregeneracy, effectual grace, full pardon, free justification, divine adoption, full salvation, endless glory. Not a link can we strike in this golden chain of covenant blessing but it echoes the name of Jesus! Touch the lowest on earth, and it sends its vibration of faith and love up to the central throne of heaven, where

sits and reigns and intercedes the Lamb that was slain. O believer, how ennobling your union, how exalted your position, how secure your standing! You are in Christ--vitaly, inseparably one with Him, your life is with His life, your heart is enshrined within His heart, your interests are entwined with His interests, your hand is locked in His hand, and His eye, beaming with love, bends ever over you. The Lord, having espoused your person, has become surety for all your interests, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

So entirely are you spiritually incorporated with Christ, your sins are drowned in His blood, your demerit is lost in His righteousness, your hell-deservings are annihilated in His heaven-winning merits, your entire self is absorbed in Him, and you stand before God without one law-condemning charge, or one guilt-effacing spot. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."*

What! am I now and forever acquitted at the bar of infinite justice--all my accusers silenced, all my charges met, the indictment quashed, and the sentence of full and free justification pronounced? Yes! Jesus has done it all, leaving me nothing to do but *believingly* to accept the free gift of His love. His obedience honored the precepts of the law, His death satisfied the claims of justice, His resurrection ratified and sealed the engagements He undertook, and I go forth to breathe the free air and to bask in the warm sunshine of a present and a full salvation. The debt is cancelled, the prison is thrown open, the lawful captive is delivered, and heaven shall ring with hallelujahs, and God shall be eternally glorified. "Be astonished, O heavens, at this!"

Reader, endeavor to get into Christ. Rest not short of it. Be not satisfied without the assurance that it is your true position. Christ is an open door to all poor comers--enter and be saved. Wait not to mend one filthy rag, to obliterate one dark spot, to heal one festering wound; approach and enter, all sinful and unworthy as you are, and once in Him, your filthy garments are exchanged for beautiful attire, your soul is made whiter than snow, the bruise is healed, the scar is effaced, and *you are COMPLETE in Him.*

What a consolatory truth is this, also, in deep trial! Christ's interest in His people is not a divided interest. He does not separate their *persons* from their *circumstances*. One with you, He is one with *all* that appertains and attaches to you. He moulds and pencils all the events of your life--giving to each its form and complexion; is pledged to the supply of every need, to guide each step, sustain in every sorrow, and to keep you by His power unto the end. Oh, the blessedness of being *in Christ!* Here alone is liberty, security, and peace. The foe cannot assail you, the arrow cannot wound you, the storms cannot reach you, encompassed by His divine perfections, and pavilioned within His living, loving heart.

Living in Christ, it is the privilege of the believer to depart hence in Christ. "*Those who sleep in Him.*" It is not death to die in the Lord. It is life in all but the name. We call it death, but He "*has abolished death,*" and the believer in Jesus shall not see death. And when the last enemy approaches, all armed for the dread battle, he finds the soul he had thought to claim as his victim has become his victor, and he retires vanquished from the field amid the shout of the departing conqueror, "*O death! where is your sting?*" And when the Lord shall descend from heaven, all those who died in the Lord shall swell His train. "*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.*" "*And the dead in Christ shall rise first.*"

2. A new creation. But the second truth brings us still nearer to our present subject, "*If any man be in Christ, HE IS A NEW CREATURE,*" or, **a new creation.** The Word of God scarcely supplies a simile more expressive of the New Birth than this. Was not that a new creation when God, from the disorder and darkness of chaos, educes this magnificent world, teeming with life and radiant with beauty? It is true, matter existed, but the earth was without form and void, and darkness flung its sable mantle over all. But the Spirit of God moved upon the face of creation, and a new world floated into view.

The spiritual analogy is perfect. The New Birth of the soul is emphatically a new spiritual creation. The same Divine power that formed the original elements of creation, that woke it from its deep sleep, quickened it with life, and clothed it with light, recreates the soul of man, and forms it a new creature. Behold all things are new! The regenerate soul has found a new life, for the Second Adam, who is a quickening Spirit, has breathed into him the breath of life. He never before felt the power, or tasted the sweetness of life until now. He surveys the past of his existence, and it seems as if he had been dwelling in a tomb, wrapped within the winding-sheet of death. But now born again from above, quickened by the Spirit, he emerges from his "grave of sin" into newness of life, and henceforth he lives for God. A new principle of life animates him, a new atmosphere of life encircles him, a new object of life engages him, and he finds himself bathing his soul in a new element of existence, worthy of his dignity and destiny as a rational, accountable, and immortal being.

Even the world of NATURE seems to him as a new-born creation now that he has passed from death unto life. The sun shines brighter, the air breathes softer, the flowers smell sweeter, the landscape is clad with deeper verdure and richer loveliness; in a word, the whole creation appears in new-born beauty and sublimity, since seen by an eye that traces in all a Father's hand.

It may be truly said, that the spiritual creation of the soul in the New Birth presents the being and character of **GOD** in a new light. It is like a new revelation of Jehovah to the mind. The unregenerate man does not worship the God of the Bible. The God therein revealed and made known to us, only in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Worshiping a god of his own imagination, he rears his altar to "THE UNKNOWN GOD." Divesting the God of Scripture of His divine perfections--His holiness, His justice, His truth, His power--he completely undeifies Him, robbing Him of His glory, and annihilating His very being.

But, now born again, a new creature, lo! the God of the Bible bursts upon his new-found vision and his wondering gaze, as a newly-

revealed God. Clothed with new attributes, arrayed with new perfections, bathed with new glory, standing in a new relation, the new creature falls down at His feet in adoring admiration and love, exclaiming, *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear--but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."* Never did the being of God appear so true, the perfections of God so glorious, the character of God so great, the government of God so holy, the relation of God so endearing as now. Born into a new world, the GOD Sun of that world--the GOD of the new creation--unveils to the eye as infinitely, ineffably lovely.

Like a being born and grown up in a dark mine, and brought to the earth's surface to gaze upon the sun in its noontide effulgence, the new created soul is astonished, bewildered, overpowered by the splendor, glory, and greatness of the being, character, and perfections of Jehovah.

Reader, test your conversion by the experience of this truth. What is God, the God of the Bible, the God who gave us Christ, the God whose glory shines in the face of Jesus, the God who has revealed Himself as reconciled--what is this God to you? What is He as a God of **holiness**, of spotless purity, who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence? What is He as a God of **righteousness**, just and upright in all His ways? What is He as a God of **truth**, keeping covenant, fulfilling His word, in which it is impossible for Him to lie? What is He as a God of **love**, sending His dear Son into the world that we might live through Him--a God **pardoning** iniquity, transgression, and sin? What is He as a God pacified in Christ Jesus, all His perfections harmonized, bending upon you a Father's eye, and sending His good Spirit into your heart, awakening the response, "Abba, Father?"

Oh, see if the God you love, the God you adore, the God you worship, the God you hope to dwell with through eternity, is the God who sent the Bible, who gave His beloved Son to die for sinners, who was in Christ reconciling us to Himself, not imputing our trespasses unto

us. This is the God who dwells amid the new creation of the soul, pronouncing it very good, taking infinitely more delight in it than when He spoke the universe out of nothing, irradiating every faculty of the soul with His glory, and tuning every power with His praise.

And in what a new-born light does *the SAVIOR* appear to the new creature! Until that moment of quickened life, when the veil is withdrawn from the heart, and the scale falls from the eye, Christ was never truly, experimentally, savingly known. He may have acknowledged Him with the lip, have bent the knee at the mention of His name, and called Him, 'our Savior,' and this was all he knew of Jesus. But, born again, he has found a new Savior, has discovered who Jesus is, and what He is, and he marvels that he never until now saw His glory, discovered His beauty, realized His presence, or felt His love.

Now he sees Jesus to be the Sin-bearer, the Atoning Sacrifice of His people, the physician, not of the whole, but of the sick; the Savior, not of saints, but of sinners; receiving and saving, not the righteous and the worthy, but the vile, the ruined, the lost. Probably there is nothing which more truly and distinctly evidences the new birth than the revolution it creates in all our apprehensions of the Lord Jesus Christ. It transposes every view, changes every conception, transforms every thought, and revolutionizes every feeling relating to the glorious and precious Savior of sinners.

The soul quickened with spiritual life is brought to its grand center, Christ. Finding that center, it has found God; it stands in the focus of His love, in the sun of His glory. The Lord Jesus Christ is both the Revealer and the Revelation of God. *The fullness of the Godhead bodily dwelt in Him*, and, *"no man knows the Father but he to whom the Son shall reveal Him."* How glorious and excellent does Christ, then, appear to the soul born again of the Spirit! How the eye admires Him, how the heart loves Him, how the spirit adores Him, how closely, inseparably, and supremely does every faculty, power,

and desire of the whole being center in, and entwine around, this matchless, peerless, altogether lovely One--the Lord Jesus Christ!

How **precious**, also, to the believing heart, does He now become. His Person, as the God-man--precious. His blood, cleansing from all sin--precious. His righteousness, justifying from all things--precious. His grace, subduing all iniquity--precious. His sympathy, soothing every sorrower--precious. His intercession, presenting us to God in heaven--precious. His name, as ointment poured forth--precious. Truly, *"unto those who believe He is PRECIOUS."*

My reader, what do you think of this Christ? Is He lovely to your eye and precious to your heart? Is He the Teacher at whose feet you sit, the Pattern whose example you imitate, the Savior in whom you trust, the All in All of your soul? Then you are born again! Flesh and blood revealed not to you this wondrous Christ; nature taught you not to admire and accept, to love and serve Him whom the world hates, despises, and rejects. The love that glows in your heart to Him, though it appears but as a spark; the discovery of His excellence which you have made, though but partial; the sight of His cross which you have caught, though but dim; and the desire to depart and to be with Him which you cherish, though but feeble--all evidence the great, the spiritual, the blessed change through which, in the sovereignty of Divine grace, your whole being has passed.

You are a new creation. Jesus is its Sun, the Spirit its Author, and God its glory. On earth there are none to be compared with Jesus; in heaven there are none to surpass Him. Whom have you in heaven but Christ, and who is there on earth that you desire before Him?

"Jesus! the very thought is sweet!
In that dear Name all heart-joys meet;
But sweeter than the honey far
The glimpses of His presence are.

"No word is sung more sweet than this,
No Name is heard more full of bliss;
No thought brings sweeter comfort nigh,
Than Jesus, Son of God, Most High.

"Jesus! the hope of souls forlorn,
How good to them for sin who mourn,
To those that seek You, oh, how kind!
But what are You to those that find?

"No tongue of mortal can express,
No pen can write the blessedness;
He only who has found it knows
What bliss from love of Jesus flows.

"O Jesus! King of wondrous might,
O Victor glorious from the fight,
Sweetness that may not be expressed,
And altogether loveliest!"

The reader will infer from the preceding statement, touching the nature and evidence of the New Birth that, as a spiritual and divine work its **Author must be supernatural**. The Scriptures of truth leave us in no doubt as to this essential point. We are told by our Lord emphatically that, *"it is the Spirit who quickens, the flesh profits nothing."* Again--*"Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* To the Holy Spirit, then, the third person of the ever blessed Trinity, the breathing of the divine life in the soul, the new spiritual creation of man, is ascribed. Having already adverted to this truth in the preceding pages, a brief reference to it in this connection is all that will be required. And yet, how momentous it is that we keep perpetually and distinctly in view the divine and sole agency of the Holy Spirit in conversion! Ignore or lose sight of this doctrine, and Baptismal Regeneration is in the ascendant. And from this soul-destroying heresy the Lord deliver His Church!

The Spirit of God **commencing** this work of the new creation of the soul, **carries it on** to final and eternal completion. He who unsealed the first tear of godly sorrow for sin, and created the first trembling touch of faith, and inspired the first thrill of holy joy, carries forward the work from step to step, from stage to stage. It is the Spirit who teaches us more of Jesus, increases our knowledge of God, deepens our sanctification, seals to us the pledge of our inheritance, witnesses to our sonship, speaks the promise, and conveys the consolation of the Lord of all comfort to our soul. Oh, the debt, the deep, the eternal debt, we owe to the Spirit--what arithmetic can compute it? Shall we not give Him divine honor, acknowledge His personal glory, listen to His still small voice, obey His holy injunctions, and in all things seek to please and magnify Him?

My reader, is your professed conversion the work of the Spirit? Is He the author of your hope for eternity? Has He discovered to you your guilt, danger, and universal corruption of your nature? Has He roused you from a state of carnal security, of spiritual stupidity and indifference, to an affecting view of the holiness of God, of the purity and strictness of His law, of the terrors of its penalty, of the great evil of sin, and of your exposure to the Divine displeasure because of it?

Has He, thus giving you to pass through these pangs and throes of the New Birth, unveiled to you the cross of Calvary, revealing to your faith the Redeemer of men, the Savior of sinners, hanging upon that tree, wounded and bruised, bleeding and dying for our transgressions?

Has He enabled you to let go everything else--baptism, and sacraments, and church, self-righteousness, and unrighteousness--and look to the cross, and touch the Savior, and grasp Him as the limpet the rock, and stake your eternal salvation upon the blood, the righteousness, the merit, the finished work of the Lord Jesus? Have you got, as Rutherford expresses it, "a grip of Christ?" These are vital questions, which must be met and answered and disposed of

graciously and savingly now, or to our eternal confusion and condemnation in the great day of judgment.

But there is one view of this new creation which we must earnestly vindicate and scripturally and distinctly place before the reader, seeing that there exists so many ideas that are vague and erroneous concerning it. Let it be clearly understood that the new creation of which we speak is not an integral, component part of the old creation, or a mending and improvement and development of the fallen and corrupt nature which we possess in the first Adam. Far from this. It is entirely, totally, essentially different.

It is a new, a divine, a holy nature imparted to the soul; so that the believer becomes the possessor of two natures--the one, the old nature, essentially and totally sinful; the other, the new nature, essentially and totally holy. The new creation of the believer is not a superadded, supplementary thing engrafted upon the old; it is a substitution, a thing wholly and entirely distinct in itself, essentially, incorruptibly holy. The Scripture statements of this truth are clear and unmistakable. *"That you put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be RENEWED in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the NEW MAN, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,"* (Eph. 4:22-24.)

It is in the light of this truth we get some insight into the meaning of the apostle John, when, personifying the renewed nature, he employs this remarkable language, *"Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him--and he cannot sin because he is born of God."* This, and similar declarations in the epistles of the same evangelist, have received various interpretations from different writers. Some, by an unwarranted accommodation of the passage, have pressed it into the service of teaching, and countenancing the doctrine of *sinless perfection*. But nothing can be clearer than that the apostle, neither here or elsewhere, nor any of the apostles, taught a doctrine so opposed to the whole teaching of divine truth, and so

contradictory to the uniform experience of the entire Church of God. *"If we say that we have NO SIN, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."*

Others have interpreted the text as teaching the inability of the Christian to sin wilfully, or habitually, or, "in such a sense as to lose all true religion, and be numbered with transgressors." But neither can we accept *this* as the mind of the Holy Spirit by the apostle. What, then, is the meaning?

The evangelist is now speaking of the new nature, which is the divine nature in the soul of the regenerate. He *personifies* this new nature thus--*"And that you put on the NEW MAN, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,"* (Eph. 4:24.) *"And have put on the NEW MAN, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him,"* (Col. 3:10.) Now, it is of this new, this divine nature in the soul of the regenerate of which the apostle speaks that *IT cannot sin. "He"--the new man--"cannot sin, because he is born of God."*

The new nature of the believer is so essentially holy, it cannot be tempted to sin, for it is incorruptible; it is so essentially divine it cannot of itself sin, for it is of God. *"We know that whoever is born of God sins not."* Such we believe to be the true and only logically correct interpretation of this remarkable text. That the best of God's saints have fallen into the worst of sins, is a fact patent in the history of the Church of God. That the most holy and matured Christian is perpetually battling with the existence of sin and the propensities to evil within, is equally true. To what conclusion, then, can we arrive but this, that, while in the flesh of the regenerate dwells no good thing--flesh remaining flesh until corruption returns to corruption--there exists in the renewed soul *"the NEW MAN, created according to God in righteousness and true holiness;"* and this *"new man,"* essentially, perfectly, and unchangeably holy, is not, as we have previously shown, an engrafting of grace upon the old and fallen nature by which its evil is either exterminated or else changed into

good; but is a separate and distinct nature in the believer, intrinsically divine and holy, the result of the creative operation of the Holy Spirit, and forms the germ of his future, higher, and nobler state of spiritual being, before long to be unfolded in its perfection and glory in heaven, dissevered from all that would taint its purity, mar its beauty, or shade its luster.

3. The evidence of the new birth.

But from this unfolding of the nature of the new creation in the soul of the regenerate, we pass to consider its **evidence** as laid down by the apostle. "*Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.*" This is the Spirit's comment upon His own previous declaration. "He is a new creature," says the Spirit. The evidence?-- "*Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.*" The first idea suggested by these words is, **the VISIBILITY of the New Birth**. We are invited to look upon it. "*Behold!*" The change produced by the internal regeneration of the Spirit is often thus described as open and seen. It is the visible expression of an invisible work; an alteration of *life* consequent upon a change of *heart*. If conversion revolutionizes our entire being, molding our principles, sanctifying our minds, purifying our hearts, shaping and tinting our spiritual feelings, our words and actions, then the passing away of old things and the taking their place by new must be discerned by ourselves and be discernible to others. The great spiritual change is so real that it cannot be concealed--the effect on the life is so palpable it cannot be mistaken.

The WORLD takes knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. They behold our light--for it *shines*. They mark our faith--for it *works*. They trace our love--for it *constrains*. They behold our religion--for it *influences*. How writes the apostle Peter? "Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will SEE your honorable behavior, and they will believe and give honor to God when he comes to judge the world." 1 Peter 2:12.

The best of men, as were Christ and His apostles, are exposed to the shafts of an ungodly world. The man of God may not always be able to avoid false accusation, misinterpretation, and malicious calumny--even the doctrines he holds and the good he does shall be evil spoken of. But, by the grace of God, he may so live as to refute the calumny and even to convert the calumniator. We thus see that the New Birth is a visible thing in its effects. It should be so. Our Lord and Master justly expects that those who assume His name should honor it; that those who profess His religion should exhibit it; that, confessing Him and His words before men, they should everywhere be known and recognized as truly His disciples. That, *children of the day*, they should let their heavenly light shine, as lighthouses shine, illumining the dark ocean of life, and guiding, it may be, the perilous pathway of some benighted and bewildered voyager, so bringing glory to God.

The religion of a child of God should be visible and unmistakable. An *epistle of Christ*, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God--a *living* epistle--the writing should be manifest, legible, and readable. He should not so live as that those who see him are surprised when they are informed that he is avowedly a professor of religion, a disciple of Christ, a guest at the table of the Lord. "What! *he* a Christian, a follower of the Savior, a partaker of the Spirit of Christ? I would not have thought it possible!" But, if old things are passed away and all things are become new, it will be said of him, "*Behold an Israelite indeed!*" Be this our highest aim to reflect the image of Christ.

If Christ in truth is in us, our Christianity will be as the light, pure and visible, transparent and illuminating. It will not be that *we* are seen so much, as that *Christ* is seen in us. The New Birth will be manifest in our Christlike temper and mind and spirit. The old things of our unrenewed nature will give place to the new things of our regenerate nature--and this will be manifest and visible. The moroseness and churlishness, the pride and selfishness, the worldliness and frivolity, the levity and man-pleasing which cropped up so luxuriantly from the soil of our unsanctified heart, will now, in

a great measure be supplanted by the fruits of righteousness springing from a heart changed, sanctified, occupied by the Spirit of God. The walk and conversation of a renewed man will be the outward and visible reflection of an inward and invisible grace.

As the stream cannot ascend higher than its level, neither can fall below it, so the holiness of the Christian's *life* will be in proportion to the sanctification of his *heart*. As the hands of a clock moving upon the face of the dial indicate the condition and working of the hidden mechanism of the timepiece, so the holy living and conversation of the regenerate point to the divine power from which they originate, and evidence the renewed and sanctified heart from whence they flow.

Let, then, beloved, your conversion be manifest, your religion be molding and visible. Let it impress its divine shape and impart its hallowed tint to all your actions, pursuits, and recreations. Let it influence and sanctify all the domestic, professional, and social relations and doings of life. Let its *home* power be visible and influential. Move amid the domestic circle as a new creature, a being of holiness and love, living for eternity; a beam flowing from the infinite sun, irradiating, softening, cheering in its hallowed influence on all around. As a parent, and as a child, as a brother, a sister, a domestic, so let your light shine, so let your life evidence its reality, so let your religion be visible in its lowliness and gentleness, its loveable and loving spirit, as to command from all who see it the admiring exclamation, "*Behold!* old things are passed away, and all things are become new!"

O Lord, let the new nature within me be an open vision, a luminous and faithful copy of Your own. It is Your nature, united though it be with frail, and sinful, suffering flesh; Your own divine workmanship, destined hereafter and forever to reflect Your glory and hymn Your praise--and upon Your head, O Christ, shall the crown flourish!

The effect produced by the new creation of the soul is *radical and thorough*. "*ALL things are become new.*" The work of God, like Himself, is perfect. The conversion which *man* would effect has respect to a partial reformation only, leaving the *heart* untouched and unchanged. But God's work of grace is radical and thorough. It begins at the center and works its way to the farthest circumference of the whole man.

The heart--once so hateful and hating--has now become a fountain of sweet waters, transmitting its pure and holy streams throughout the whole soul, changing the entire conduct of the individual, and working out, in its degree, a universal holiness of his whole being. "*Old things have passed away.*" The world he once loved is now as a crucified thing. The pleasures he once indulged have lost their charm. The sins he once committed are now loathed and forsaken. The society he once enjoyed no longer attracts or pleases. In a word, old things have passed away with the old nature, and with the advent of a new nature behold all things are become new! How comprehensive the words, how vast the change!

Trace it in some of its radical results--

IMPENITENCE is replaced by a broken and a contrite heart. The old hardness and insensibility of the unrenewed nature have passed away, and God has made the heart soft by grace, and the Holy Spirit has wrought that godly sorrow for sin which lays the mouth in the dust, and dissolves the soul into holy contrition at Jesus' feet. Sweet contrition! Sweeter far the bitterest tears for sin at Christ's cross, than the sweetest pleasures of sin in tents of worldly enchantment.

Reader, has the old impenitence and hardness of your heart passed away, succeeded by a heart spiritually softened and divinely sealed? Has the Spirit emptied, humbled, and laid you low? You know nothing experimentally and savingly of Christ until He has. He is the Great Healer, but He heals with His blood and binds up none but sin-wounded consciences and guilt-broken hearts. "*The sacrifices of*

God are a broken spirit--a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." What, my reader, is yours?

The old principle of **UNBELIEF** is passed away, and the new and divine principle of *faith* in Christ has succeeded. And with this new-born principle in the soul, behold, all things are become new. Faith changes the character and the aspect of everything in the experience of the believer. It revolutionizes the entire range of his vision. It diminishes things that are present, and enlarges things that are future. The visible things fade upon the sight, the invisible things unveil their grandeur. It is *microscopic* in its view of things that are seen and temporal, it is *magnifying* in its view of things that are unseen and eternal. It looks alone to Christ, and in Him it sees the Father revealed, and beholds the glory of God in that face once marred more than the face of any man. It deals only with the blood and righteousness of Christ, rests alone and confidently in His merits, obedience, and sufferings, and commits the keeping of the soul to His hand, and exclaims, "*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.*" Thus the old unbelief which rejected Christ, and excluded the soul from salvation, has passed away, and behold the new principle of faith which receives Christ, and rests in Christ, has succeeded it; and with the advent of this divine and new-born principle are the first fruits of glory in the soul.

My reader, do *you* believe in the Son of God? Have you the faith that travels--sinful, poor, and empty-handed, to Christ, and accepts with child-like, unquestioning trust, the full and complete salvation which Jesus purchased at a price so costly, and gives with a love so free?

Not less conspicuous among the evidences afforded of the reality of the New Birth is, the essential change which takes place in the views and feelings of the regenerate with regard to **SIN**. Originally shaped in iniquity, and conceived in sin, the love of sin, and the hatred of holiness, are born with us. But when by the Holy Spirit we are born *over* again, and are made partakers of the Divine nature, this original

and natural love of sin, and hatred of holiness, are reversed. A new and heavenly principle is implanted which leads the regenerate to hate sin and love holiness. In nothing are the reality and divinity of this momentous change more apparent than in this.

We have shown that the *new nature* in the regenerate is essentially and inalienably holy. It not only is of itself uncorrupted, but it is *incorruptible* by any power whatever--it *CANNOT sin*. Now, it is in this divine principle that the love of holiness in the believer is implanted, and a power in antagonism to sin is implanted in his heart. What a reverse now transpires! The regenerate now love what they once hated, and hate what they once loved. We loved sin, lived in sin, in some of its many forms--intellectual sin, gross sin, refined sin, open sin, secret sin. "*The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life,*" the power of Mammon, the fascination of the world, the idolatry of the creature, the love of self, some or all these forms of sin maintained the supremacy, held their unbroken, undisputed rule.

Oh, how changed a man is he now! The sins which he before committed, the objects which he loved, the tastes which he cultivated, the sensualities in which he indulged, have lost their power to fascinate, to please, and to enthrall. The principle of sin may still exist embedded in the renewed heart; but the new man, day by day increasing in strength, advancing in holiness, and, growing in grace, gradually obtains the ascendancy; and so the believer puts off the old man with his deeds, and puts on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

O Lord, give to me this evidence, that I am born again! Implant in my heart the *principle* of holiness, deepen in my heart the *love* of holiness, strengthen in my heart the *power* of holiness, adorn my heart with the *beauties* of holiness, and enrich my heart with the *fruits* of holiness. Whatever brilliant gifts You withhold, whatever active service You forbid, whatever great achievements You restrain, whatever sacred honor You shade, oh, grant that I may be a true and humble partaker of that divine HOLINESS--deepening, ripening,

perfecting--arrayed in which I shall behold Your face in righteousness, satisfied when I awake with Your likeness. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*

The spirit and carriage of the renewed soul *under ADVERSITY* is no slight evidence of the reality and blessedness of the New Birth. Adversity before conversion, and adversity after conversion, seem not the same discipline. Affliction BEFORE the New Birth transpires in the soul, unsanctified by the grace of God, stirs up the enmity of the natural heart, increases the rebellion of the carnal mind, and arms the hostility of the will against Jehovah. The natural man kicks against God, flies in the face of His providence, and is as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.

But when the new nature, descending from heaven, makes its triumphant and glorious entrance into the soul, oh, how changed is everything! The rebellion of the will transformed into submission, the enmity of the mind changed into love, the hostility of the soul subdued into harmony, the afflictive and corrective dealings of God are now interpreted and received as the righteous, wise, and loving discipline of a Father, who because He loves chastises us, who because we are sons scourges us.

Mark the spirit of the chastened believer--"*And Aaron held his peace.*" Listen to the language of the afflicted child--"*The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?*" Contemplate the picture of the sorrowful saint--"*I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother--my soul is even as a weaned child.*" Truly have old things passed away, and all things have become new! Afflicted and chastised one! be your spirit and demeanor under God's present dealings a bright reflection of this. The hand of God may be heavy upon you. Dark may be the cloud shading your tabernacle, mingled the draught brimming your cup, and painful the sword which enters into your soul--nevertheless, in all this God is *love*--paternal love, unchanging love; and His present discipline of sorrow is but to bring your soul more deeply into the

experience of His love, and to increase and burnish the evidences of your new and heavenly birth.

You are traveling the family-road to heaven--the King's highway to glory, trodden by the King Himself. Through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom. Your present affliction, your present trial is in the covenant, appointed and ordained by everlasting love, infinite wisdom and righteousness. God, your own covenant God and Father, has appointed all, has shaped all, is overruling all, and is with you in all. Dark and mysterious as is this event, it involves a wise and loving *needs be*. God deals intelligently as well as righteously, wisely as well as lovingly, with His children. Every trial has its mission, every cross its lesson, every sorrow its blessing.

We little comprehend how much wise love is contained in what at first sight seems directly adverse to our best interests, to militate against our true happiness. A trial that seems a severe correction is often a wise prevention; a cross that wears a threatening aspect often proves a timely and wholesome check. The path of worldly sunshine, and often that of spiritual prosperity, may be as a sea of ice; and so God strews it with the sand of affliction, that our feet may not slide. He roughens the smooth way, that we may be safe.

When the Holy Spirit restores to the renewed soul the lost image of God, repencilling it with the lineaments of His holiness, the Lord sees fit that the newly-created vessel should pass through the fire, in order to deepen, consolidate, and perpetuate the sacred imprint. The Divine likeness is burned indelibly in the soul. This led the holy but afflicted Job to exclaim, "*When He has tried me I shall come forth as gold.*" And so shall every furnace-tried believer issue forth a vessel purified and fit for the Master's service.

Do not think, then, O afflicted one, that God is dealing with you strangely! It is by the discipline of sorrow--it may be sickness, bereavement, loss of earthly substance, or the calamity befalling one we love--that our Lord is assimilating us to Himself. And is there not

a holy congruity that the disciple should be as his Lord? Who would not be like Christ? Shall the Head be thorn-crowned and tried, and the Body be exempt from sorrow and suffering? Shall the Bridegroom be a man of sorrows, and the Bride a wife of pleasures? Oh, no! forbid it, love! forbid it, faith! forbid it, hope of glory! Jesus left us an example of *suffering*, that we should follow His steps.

The Lord *tries the righteous*, in order to deepen, mature, and bring forth their righteousness in noontide light. Sanctified trial develops and advances the new nature in the soul. The effects of trial in the godly are in striking contrast with the effects of a similar discipline of the ungodly. While affliction stirs up the corruption of the unregenerate heart, it stirs up the grace of the renewed heart. The one emits a noxious and loathsome exhalation; the other breathes its sweet and fragrant aspirations, bounding heavenward as the springing of a fountain of perfume. Oh, marvelous grace, that can extract purity and sweetness from hearts so vile as ours!

Lord, of Your own we give You; Your grace shall wear the diadem of praise, of all that is divine, and holy, and lovely within us! In the light, beloved, of these truths read the present discipline of God. He may now seem to be taking you down, but it is only to build you up and put you together again--a fairer, lovelier, and more symmetrical temple. He is *teaching* you, also, by trial as you could learn in no other school. *Now* you interpret the dark symbol which before was so difficult to decipher--that the saints' afflictions stand for God's *blessings*--blessings, indeed, when He is blessed for sending them. "*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, BLESSED be the name of the Lord.*"

What if He has imposed a daily cross, heavy, and chafing? You have not long nor far to carry it. "*This light affliction is but for a moment.*" The "little while" of cross-bearing, of furnace-trial will soon be past and gone--gone like the foam that crests the ocean billow--and you will stand triumphant upon that shore, washed by no waves but bliss,

and will awake the golden strings of your harp to the sweetest praise of Immanuel for every cross, tribulation, and trial.

Oh, could we even now but see the *reason* God has for appointing each sorrow--the wisdom that ordained it, the goodness that sends it, the power that controls it, the grace that sanctifies it, the sympathy that soothes it, and the mission of love on which it bends its dark wing to our abode--we would not feel a moment's anxiety or trouble in our mind; but, like David, behave and quiet ourselves as a weaned child, calmly, confidently waiting the blessed outcome--our more perfect fitness by grace for a perfect heaven of glory.

Let, then, your spirit and deportment under trial evidence, beloved, that with you old things are passed away and that all things are become new. Glorify God in the fires. Be meek, mute, resigned. Nothing but *love* is in this deep, dark calamity. Then shall grace triumph over nature, and your heavy affliction shall but unveil the love, illustrate the power, and increase the glory of Jesus. He, once the sorrowing and the suffering One, but now the loving and the sympathizing One, has not left you alone in this adversity. In all your afflictions He is afflicted; and His grace will heal the sorrow, and His love will control the grief, and His power subdue the rebellious will, and His sympathy soothe the suffering; and so the name of the Lord Jesus shall be glorified in you.

We ought to refer for one moment to the ***INDESTRUCTIBILITY*** of the new nature in the regenerate. Old things have passed away, never more to reassert or regain their ascendancy. The new nature may pass through varied and trying vicissitudes, for the Christian life has its lights and shadows; but it continues the same nature still, uncorrupted by the sin in which it dwells, unmixed with the alloy of earth through which it travels, unshaded and unextinguished by the clouds and waves through which it courses its way to glory; its path is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.

"He that has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Nothing shall arrest its progress or imperil its safety. It is a *good* work, and what is good is imperishable; it is *God's* work, and God's work is perfect. And since He annihilates nothing that He has made, not an atom of matter, do you think that He will destroy, or allow to be destroyed, the work of His new creation in the soul? Will He permit one grain of precious faith to perish, one spark of holy love to expire, one life-look at Jesus to be death-glazed? Will He allow a soul redeemed with the heart's-blood and the death agonies of His Son, quickened by His Spirit, called by His grace, kept by His power, to perish? Never, no *never!*

The new nature of the believer is as holy, as indestructible, as immortal as the God who created it. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. He will never revoke a pardon He has given, call back a grace He has bestowed, efface a divine lineament He has pencilled upon the soul. Angels shall never be summoned to hush their harps to silence because of the apostasy, the final ruin, of one over whose repentance and conversion those harps once woke their jubilant melody.

Cheer up, then, dear heart! You weak and trembling saint, your touch of faith has saved you; your look of love has won the heart of Jesus, and no poor sinner that once crowned Him with the weakest faith, or clung to Him with the faintest love, shall ever hear Him say, "Depart!" Listen to His own assurance, and with this we close the argument of the final perseverance of all the regenerate--"*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man (any one) pluck them out of my hand.*" And thus the new creature which could not sin because it was born of God, and which could not perish because God was in it, shall advance towards its destined completion, from grace to grace, until it is changed from glory to glory.

Before we close, let us solemnly and personally ask the reader, **Have you these evidences of the New Birth?** Are you a real Christian, a visible Christian, a thorough Christian, a growing Christian? Do not think that we exaggerate the importance of the great change, or that we demand evidences of its reality so high that you cannot attain unto them. If you question the correctness of our view of the subject, examine the Scriptures for yourself. Suppose that, after all, we should be right. Then what is your hope for eternity? And that we are right, it is spoken--spoken by Him who is the Truth, and who cannot lie--"you MUST be born again." What could be more explicit or more solemn? It is unequivocally appointed of God that you pass through this spiritual change. It is absolutely necessary in order to your entrance into heaven. Your eternal and changeless destiny turns upon the balance. Heaven or hell--the undying worm or the unfading crown--the quenchless fire or the eternal song--with demons and lost souls, or with Christ and glorified spirits forever are the solemn, momentous issues suspended upon your decision. Search the Scriptures, examine your heart, look into your life, and ascertain if of a truth you are BORN AGAIN.

But there yet remains one test of the reality of the new creation of the soul--the last and most solemn, the all-important hour when **DEATH**, the foe of nature but the friend of grace, approaches, loosens the silver cord, and translates the believer from earth to heaven. That all death-beds of God's people are precisely alike, that all exhibit the same jubilant joy, and exultant hope, and triumphant entrance into glory, we do not affirm. But whatever may be the dying experience of the departing saint--whether God puts His child to sleep in the dark or in the light--whether he departs hence with the lowly prayer of the tax-collector, or with the triumphant song of the martyred apostle breathing from his lips, the renewed nature will evidence its reality and exhibit its power; and no holy watcher of the solemn scene shall retire from that chamber but with the conviction that it was not the Christian, but *death* that died.

You may go down to the bank of the river in fear, in gloom, and in tears, but you shall pass through it in confidence, in light, and in song. Oh, how will the new creature prove its heavenly birth, unveil its divine wonders, and evidence its deathless existence *then!* Emerging from its long and deep veiling--the sin that enwrapped it, the infirmities that impaired it, the sorrows that shaded it, the body of sinful, suffering flesh that imprisoned it--it will burst forth into a reality and a grandeur that will awe while it delights, astonish while it entrances the spirits of saints and angels gazing down intent upon the spectacle.

In all this, how glorious and precious will Christ appear! Living or dying, Christ is all in all to the believer. *IN* Christ has been his heaven below; *WITH* Christ will be his heaven above. To Him we owe all the grace that saves us now, and will ascribe all the glory that glorifies us hereafter. Blessed Lord Jesus! You who stooped to my fallen, sinful, sorrowful nature to raise it into union with Your own divine, pure, and happy nature--You who carried my cross in weariness, in shame, and woe, that I might sit with You upon Your throne--oh, claim my heart for Yourself, and rule and reign without a rival!

"My heart is fixed, Eternal God,
Fixed on Thee;
And my immortal choice is made--
Christ for me.
He is my Prophet, Priest, and King,
Who did for me salvation bring;
And while I live I mean to sing,
Christ for me.

"In Him I see the Godhead shine,
Christ for me.
He is the Majesty Divine,
Christ for me;
The Father's well-beloved Son,

Co-partner of His royal throne,
Who died for human guilt alone,
Christ for me.

"Let others boast of heaps of gold,
Christ for me;
His riches never can be told,
Christ for me.
Your gold will waste and wear away;
Your honors perish in a day;
My Portion never can decay,
Christ for me.

"In pining sickness or in health,
Christ for me;
In deepest poverty or wealth,
Christ for me.
And in that all-important day,
When I the summons shall obey,
And wing my heavenly flight away,
Christ for me!"

The FRUITS of the New Birth

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God."--Phil. 1:11

From tracing some of the more distinctive marks of the New Birth, we pass to a consideration of its FRUITS--a more advanced view of the same subject. There may be certain marks or features in a tree which, to a skillful eye, indicate its *genus*, while it is the fruit the tree bears which alone clearly proves the *species* to which it belongs. We

have thus far in these pages reviewed but the elementary principles of conversion, sufficiently distinctive, however, to enable the general reader to arrive at a correct conclusion as to the real state of his own soul for eternity. The present chapter will present the New Birth in its more developed or advanced stage--tracing some of the more appropriate and matured *fruits* of the great change from death unto life.

If we infer, and correctly so, that the individual is born again by his hating the things he once loved, and loving the things he once hated, we have more than inferential proof, we have *positive* and unmistakable evidence of the fact in the ripened fruits of holiness which adorn and sanctify his life. We trace not the gentle bud, or the opening blossom of grace merely, but the mellowed and golden fruit of righteousness, yielding yet loftier praise and richer glory to God. *"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God."*

The figurative language of the passage will be familiar to the reader of his Bible. It is a favorite mode of address with the Holy Spirit. Believers are called, *"trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified."* In landscape scenery, God has constituted the tree the principal object of beauty. In the spiritual world it is the Church. The Church of God is the beauty of the world--its only adornment and sanctity. Take the saints out of the world, and the salt is removed--its real conservative element is gone, and nothing is left but spiritual putrefaction--fuel for the flame.

Now, the leading thought we wish to place prominently before the reader is, that of **APPROPRIATENESS**. The tree is a *"tree of righteousness"*--the fruit it bears is the *"fruit of righteousness."* This idea must not be superficially passed over. It supplies all infallible *test* of Christian character, a sure criterion of real conversion. Believers are known to be trees of righteousness, or righteous trees, by their righteousness of life. The tree is known by its fruit. The deadly upas tree is distinguished by its shadow of death. The sandal

tree is known by the fragrance which it breathes. In the spiritual world it is precisely the same, with this difference--that the test is yet stronger, and the result more certain.

An **UNCONVERTED**state will bear fruit corresponding with its own nature. It must, in the nature of things, be so. It would be a miracle, a miracle of grace, were it not. "*Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*" So is it in the spiritual world. The enmity against God of the carnal mind, the rejection of the Lord Jesus, the governing principle of SELF, the supreme ascendancy of the world, the slavery of sin, indicate, unmistakably, the unrenewed, unregenerate nature from which they spring. Old things have not passed away. We do not expect you to yield the fruits of holiness from an unholy nature. The life you live is in keeping with the unrenewed heart you possess. You are of the earth, earthly. It is consistent with your unregenerate nature that you should be of the world, should love the world, and that the world should love you and claim you as its own--that the things of the world--its pursuits, and pleasures, and sins--should harmonize with your nature, charm your taste, delight your senses, and bind your affections in their spell. It is only the thistle and the thorn yielding the fruit proper to their nature.

You walk, as others, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, and so you clearly evidence that you are not born again. In the absence of the fruits of righteousness, your present religious condition, and your future and eternal destiny, are melancholy and perilous in the extreme. Lose not a moment in examining your true position for eternity! With death all around you, its sentence upon you, eternity before you, the judgment-seat of Christ soon to confront you, postpone not the consideration of the great matter of conversion, lest you should be compelled to take up the lamentation, "*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved!*"

But we turn to the **RENEWED nature**. We enter the Church of God where the trees of righteousness His own hand has planted grow. What a sacred and solemn enclosure is this!--a spot reclaimed from the world's wilderness by sovereign grace, and walled around with the ineffably glorious attributes of Jehovah. And now we stand amid the wonders and the glories of the new creation of the soul! Truly it is the garden of the Lord, the spiritual Eden of this fallen universe. A new and Divine sun quickens into deathless life every tree and flower and fruit. A new and heavenly atmosphere encircles it; new and exhaustless springs water it, a new and eternal heaven shines above it--lo! Christ has in His Church made all things new. It is a field which the Lord has blessed, does bless, and will through eternity bless. Such is the one, elect, redeemed Church of God, composed of all the trees of righteousness--trees of various sizes and forms and degrees of beauty and fruit, yet all trees of righteousness--of His own right hand planting, that He might be glorified.

But it is the *fruit* of the new nature of which we are now more especially to speak--the fruits of holiness which at once indicate its divinity and evidence its vitality. One word expresses emphatically the idea--"RIGHTEOUSNESS." "*The fruits of righteousness.*" The bitter, poisonous fruits of unrighteousness meet us at every turn. They confront us in every species and shape and tint. Oh, what an *ungodly* world is this! Who would not sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done beneath the sun of heaven? The impurity, the insanity, the frivolity, the fraud, the oppression, the wrong, the cruelty, the injustice, the selfishness, the baseness, the torture, the profanity, the hypocrisy, the utter, total defiance of God, disbelief of His Word and rejection of His Son, all, *all* unite to confirm the truth of the inspired declaration, "*The whole world lies in wickedness*"--in the Wicked One. Such are some of the fruits borne by the unrighteous tree.

But the plants of God's setting, the trees of His own planting, are righteous, and the fruit they bear corresponds with their nature--divine, fragrant, precious fruit of righteousness by which His great

and holy name is glorified. The regenerate are emphatically the righteous. The language is strong which sets this forth. Speaking of the Church of God, the prophet says, *"This is the name with which she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness."* The very name applied to the Lord Jesus is here given to His Church! It is fit that the Lamb's Wife should bear the name of her Divine and Royal Husband--"The Lord Our Righteousness." Standing in His **imputed** righteousness, the believer is counted as righteousness in Christ. *"Their righteousness is of me, says the Lord." "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."*

In addition to this external imputation of righteousness--constituting the full and free justification of the Lord's people--is the **internal** righteousness of the Spirit--the germ of holiness implanted in regeneration, which, as remarked, is the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Such, then, is the nature of the fruit the believer bears. While all other trees--at the root of which the axe is laid prepared to fell them to the earth at the bidding of God--bring forth not good fruit, these, through electing love and sovereign grace, in the springtide of youth and in mellow old age bring forth good fruit, even the fruits of righteousness, and God is glorified.

What are *you*, O reader? A tree of righteousness, or of unrighteousness? What is the fruit you bear? What is the life you are living? Think of your responsibility, remember your accountability, meditate upon your immortality! Are you sowing to the flesh or to the Spirit, for time or eternity, for a harvest of woe or a harvest of bliss, for heaven or hell? Rest not short of real conversion. Until you pass into the experience of the new birth, all the moral fruit you bear--though like the apples of Sodom, lovely and pleasant to look upon--is but the bitter fruit of a sinful, unregenerate nature, supplying fuel for the last, the terrible, the eternal fire. *"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the tree--therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."*

But there is fruit that endures unto eternal life. Let us examine it. Having stated its nature, let us attempt a brief classification. The apostle speaks in the plural--"*fruits* of righteousness." The Lord's trees of righteousness bear all manner of holy fruit. For, "*the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*" Let us consider some.

In the foreground of our picture we place the *fruit of FAITH*. The contrast in this particular with the unregenerate is very striking. *Unbelief* is the great characteristic--the master sin--of the world. Referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit, our Lord intimates this. "*When He has come, He will convince (or convict) the world of sin, because they BELIEVE NOT on me.*" We live in a world *unbelieving* as to all that relates to the world to come. It will believe *everything* as to the world that now is, though it be the most ridiculous illusion that ever floated before the wildest fancy; it will believe *nothing* as to the world to come, though God, who spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.

But *faith* is the grand characteristic of the trees of righteousness. Basing his belief upon the BIBLE as a divine revelation, receiving it as the Book of God without demur or qualification, the Christian believes all that the Holy Scriptures of truth make known. The faith that accepts and spiritually understands the Bible, possesses and understands the Library of the universe. Marvelous volume! Without it what a blank would the annals of the present world be, and how bewildered would be our historians and sociologists, philosophers and moralists, to account for a large proportion of the phenomena which meet them at every step! How inexplicable the creation of the world, the introduction of natural and moral evil, the history of the primogeniture of the race, the manners and customs of the early ages, the multiplicity of races and of languages existing on the earth, the history of that most astonishing of all people the Jews, the remarkable phenomena in the internal structure of the earth, as well as the existence of 'marine remains' found upon the summits of some

of the loftiest mountains far remote from the sea! And yet, there are those in this enlightened age who, with the solemn vows of God upon them to believe and defend the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, are endeavoring to shake our faith in their integrity.

But the most prominent characteristic of the faith of the Christian is its repose in the Lord Jesus Christ as its great Object of reliance. There is no true faith in God, or in His Word, where there exists unbelief in Christ--the Christ whom God's Word reveals as the Sent of God. We may have just that faith in the existence of God which saves us from absolute *atheism*, but not that faith in God which brings us into actual *theism*. An ocean plant exquisitely formed, a coral reef curiously constructed, a simple flower shedding its fragrance amid alpine snows, may, in their silent, convincing eloquence, testify to you of '*a God*'--that *He* formed that marine plant so exquisitely; created the insect that piled up that coral reef so curiously; pencilled the flower that blooms amid those frosts so sweetly; but, believing only in God as the God of nature and not in Him as the God of grace--the God who sent His beloved Son into the world to save it--your faith still leaves you in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity--the servant of sin and the slave of Satan.

The carnal mind is at enmity against God; and faith in His 'natural attributes' will not dissolve into love one atom of its malignity. And what regard has God for the faith which brings to Him but the Cain-offering of fruit and flower, while it disbelieves in His beloved Son, rejects His unspeakable gift, and brings no Abel-offering of *faith* in atoning sacrifice for sin? It is the utterance of Jesus Himself--"*He that honors not the Son, honors not the Father who sent Him.*"

But the faith of the true believer embraces Christ, and believing in the Son, it embraces also the Father--"*Then Jesus cried out, When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.*" Such is the fruit clustering in all its beauty and fragrance upon the trees of righteousness! And no language can adequately describe the worth and preciousness of that faith that

accepts without hesitation or qualification, on God's terms, the Lord Jesus Christ. The honor which this act of faith brings to JEHOVAH--the diadem of glory which it places upon His head--can but find its expression in the words of Jesus--*"This is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

The confused and vague conceptions which many cherish of faith tend very much to render the fruit of this grace slender and sickly. It is impossible to entertain views *too simple* of the nature and operation of faith. Departing from the teaching of God's Word, and submitting themselves to human reasoning--the definitions and teachings of man, which tend to obscure rather than to elucidate Divine truth--they are lost in endless and fruitless speculations touching this most Divine, most fruitful and precious grace of the Spirit. And yet, taking the Bible as our manual, nothing is more simple and clear than its teachings concerning faith. What is faith? It is simply to *believe* what God says. The words are--*"Have faith in God."* *"BELIEVE that I am able to do this?"* *"BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ."* *"Lord, I BELIEVE."* *"Be it unto you according to your FAITH."* *"Your FAITH has made you whole."* *"Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have BELIEVED."* *"It is of FAITH, that it might be by grace."*

Now, the faith that receives Christ is the most direct, simple, and saving exercise of this marvelous grace, and the most lovely and precious exhibition of this fruit. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is everything to the soul. An eternity of bliss is involved in it. Believe in Christ, and the treasures of heaven are swept into your bosom. Believe in Christ, and a present salvation is yours. Believe in Christ, and the hope of glory dawns upon your soul. Believe in Christ, and you are linked with the bliss of eternity.

You have nothing to do, only to BELIEVE. Away with conditions--away with reasonings--away with questionings--and immediately, simply, only BELIEVE that Jesus Christ came into the world to save

sinners, and you are SAVED! It is when faith in Christ is simple that it is strong; when its hand is empty that it is full; when it comes in its deepest poverty that it is rich; and when it is the most weak in created dependencies that it is the strongest in God. See, then, that you bear this fruit of righteousness, and so evidence your new creation. Have faith in God--in His word of promise, in His infinite power, in His immutable faithfulness.

Take Him at His word, and though He slays you, yet trust in Him. Be your faith that before whose far-seeing eye the present pales, the future brightens; which *diminishes* the present things of trial, and suffering, and need, and *magnifies* the future things of happiness, fruition, and glory. Be your faith that which purifies the heart, which works by love, which walks humbly with God, which lies securely and peacefully at anchor upon the promise in the storm, which reposes quietly in the very bosom of Him whose chastening hand has smitten you. O glorious fruit of righteousness! Lord, let Your sun warm, let Your springs water, let Your hand prune my soul, that I may be filled with this precious fruit of faith, to the greater honor and glory of Your holy name!

In close proximity to the fruit of faith is that of **LOVE**. Love is that Divine principle which more than all others, perhaps, assimilates us to the Divine nature. "*God is love.*" And when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, sanctifying our character, molding, influencing, and constraining us, we are *like God*. The religion of Jesus is the religion of LOVE. It is the revelation of love--the sacrifice of love--the story of love--the love of the Savior to sinners; and, as the subjects of His religion, the fruit of love will be seen in the life we live. Love, then, is the fruit of the new birth--"*Love is of God, and every one that LOVES is BORN OF GOD, and knows God.*"

The *absence* of this fruit of righteousness--love to God supreme influencing and assimilating; love to Christ constraining us to obedience and conformity; love to the saints because they are saints, tiding over all differences of judgment, prejudices, and infirmities,

manifesting our love to the Lord in the disciple; love to the Word of God, delighting in it more than in our necessary food, sweeter to our taste than the honeycomb, and more precious in our estimate than pure gold--*negates* our claim to the possession of the new birth; for, if we are begotten of God we shall partake the nature and reflect the image of God, and shall love, not only Him that begat, but them also who are begotten of Him.

How truly lovely and precious is this grace of *love!* The obedience that springs from it is sweeter far and more honoring to the Lord than the obedience which is the result of *fear* only. As fruit forced in a conservatory has not the flavor of fruit of spontaneous growth, fruit brought to perfection by the sun, so the obedience that is coerced by the *law* lacks the sweetness and fragrance of the obedience that is constrained by the *gospel*. *Love* makes all the difference!

Now, in proportion to the growth of the Divine nature within us, and the fidelity of our likeness to God, will be our *love*--love to Jesus Christ and to all His saints--the poorest, the lowest, the weakest. And we ought to love the saints wherever we meet them, *unlovely* though their natural properties may be. Does not the Lord Jesus, the great High Priest, bear engraven upon His heart the names of all His people? Then, surely we, as a royal priesthood, ought to bear upon our hearts, in affection, sympathy, and charity, all who thus are borne upon the heart of Christ. No, more, we are called upon, as partaking of the Divine nature, to love our *enemies*--"*I say unto you, Love your enemies.*"

An unregenerate man will love his friend, but hate his enemy; a regenerate man, under a proper and holy influence, will love both--his friend and his foe. Such is the fruit borne by the renewed nature. But, oh, how lamentably deficient are we of this fruit of love! How little of it exists in the professing Church of God! Here and there a cluster is seen--its very rarity increasing its preciousness--but the easily offended demeanor of ecclesiastical and doctrinal systems too thickly veils it from view, even where it exists; and so the Church of

God is robbed of much of her loveliness and power, and God and Christ of much of their praise and glory.

But, oh, cultivate this fruit of righteousness! Look well to this, the badge of your Christian discipleship, the evidence of your new birth. Lacking it, what though you speak with the tongues of men and of angels; what though you have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; what though you have all faith, so that you could remove mountains; what though you bestowed your goods to feed the poor, and give your body to be burned--yet, lacking the grace of charity, or LOVE, you lack the most genuine and authenticating evidence that you are *born of God*; and all else is but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, (1 Cor. 13:1-3.)

And what precious fruit of righteousness is that which appears in **the breathing of the renewed and devout soul after GOD and HOLINESS!** One of the finest pages in David's recorded experience is that traced with these holy breathings--"*O God, You are my God; early will I seek You--my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.*" Here is the divine nature ascending to its Divine Savior, rising to its level; and where it exists, to that Savior it will ever ascend. That which is divine reaches after the divine. That which is holy breathes after holiness. That which is of and from God is, in its nature and actings, godly.

The moral gravitation of the unregenerate is *earthward*--that of the regenerate *heavenward*. Having borne the image of the earthly, the believer now bears the image of the heavenly. Oh, it is a holy and impressive spectacle that of the soul breathing after God! When none but God will satisfy your longings; when your spirit pants for Him as the deer pants for the water-brooks, and more intensely; when, amid the din and turmoil of the world, like Isaac, you go forth to meditate in the field at eventide, your heart ascends to God in holy breathings, devout desires, and spiritual prayers, it is as though earth were kissing heaven, the human rising to the Divine, the finite losing itself in the Infinite. Such is prayer! a worm basking in the sun; a beggar at

the beautiful gate; a child in communion with its parent; a sinner in audience with the Savior; a saint in fellowship with God. Drawing near to God in either of these relations, the nature and the actings of the renewed heart are exhibited in one of their holiest and most impressive forms.

Beloved, seek earnestly more of this religion--the religion of *vital communion with God*. Earth has no sweets, the creature no delights, sense no joys like this. It is the only religion that proves its divine source and its heavenly nature. It is the only religion that meets the yearnings of the soul, that satisfies its desires, quenches its thirst, and sustains it amid afflictions and trials--the religion that deals closely, filially, humbly with God. Whatever heaviness, leanness, or sadness you may feel--when you have not a word to express, nor a heart to pray--never be tempted to give up prayer, to forsake the throne of grace. Go with your dullest, lowest frame--go with your shaded spirit, your sealed lips--and if you but lie in the presence of the Lord, detained, sad and mute, before the Ark, you will yet be conscious of a presence and a power which, soft and silent as the light, will diffuse life, joy, and radiance through your soul. Oh, give yourself to *prayer!*

God knows your sorrows, Christ interprets the language of your tears, the Holy Spirit understands the meaning of your groans. May this fruit of righteousness abound in us, who through grace believe, more and more! May our Christianity be more marked by poverty of spirit and mourning for sin; more faithful dealing with conscience and with our own hearts; more intense thirsting after holiness and more close communion with God; in a word, more of that divine vitality that ascends to, and loses itself in, God, the infinite Fountain of uncreated bliss! *"As the deer pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God."*

But by whose grace and vitality does the believer bring forth these fruits of righteousness? The apostle tells us--"*Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, WHICH ARE BY JESUS CHRIST.*"

Here is the true source of our fruitfulness. We bear no holiness but in union with Him--"*From Me is your fruit found.*" Engrafted into Christ, we necessarily become one with Christ; and in virtue of this vital and spiritual union we bear the fruits of righteousness. One with Christ, we are one with Deity, are one with mediatorial life, and so one with all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Surely, if ever there existed a true, vital graft, it is this. Blessed union! one with the Lord Jesus! One with Him, as the branch is one with the vine. Thus united to Christ, by Christ dwelling in us through the Spirit, we partake of His life, and His life germinates in us; and so we yield the fruits of righteousness by Him.

Not only in virtue of our union with Christ, but in consequence of our *receiving from* Christ, we become fruitful. Once more we quote that most remarkable and significant declaration in Hosea--"*From Me is your fruit found.*" The New Testament echo of these Old Testament words is in John 15:4--"*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.*" Now, this abiding in Christ is the believer's own act, and involves the life of faith he lives on the fullness, sufficiency, and person of the Lord Jesus. As the branch extracts its life and nourishment from the vine, and thus becomes fruitful, so the believer receives out of Christ's fullness grace following upon grace, strength succeeding strength, life quickening life; and thus he is filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ.

Oh, it is by the life of Jesus, the supplies from Jesus, the intercession of Jesus--drawing constantly and largely from His overflowing fullness--taking to Him every corruption, confessing every sin, unveiling to Him every sorrow--that we become fruitful in faith, and love, and prayer. From Christ, and not from ourselves, we derive the skill by which we foil our foe; the grace by which we accomplish our service; the strength by which we sustain affliction; the life, the energy, the self-denying spirit by which, in whatever position we are placed, we glorify God. Leaning thus upon Christ--abiding thus in

Christ--traveling thus to Christ--associating Christ with every duty, and cross, and trial, and service--doing nothing, undertaking nothing, enduring nothing without Jesus--we shall be filled with holy fruit.

How sweet it is thus to have Jesus blended with every thought, and feeling, and act! Conscious of His presence, to enter upon every self-denying service, to bear every painful cross, to lay down every precious idol, to drink every bitter cup to which He calls us--this it is to bear fruit by Jesus Christ. It is *our* fruit, indeed, but it is *from Him* we derive and by Him we bear it. Oh, how kind and gracious of the Lord to call it *our* fruit, as if it were all our own, and not all from Him! But this is so like Jesus. He takes the crown, as from His own head, and places it upon that of His saints. "*YOUR FAITH has saved you.*" And yet, that faith was all the work of His own Spirit and the free gift of His own grace. And still He commends and crowns the lowly recipient, as though the merit and the achievement of the faith were all our own! Oh, what a gracious, condescending Savior is ours!

Lord, we give You back the crown You would place upon the head of our graces; for, from You alone is our fruit found, and to You belong, without a rival, the garland of our praises and the diadem of Your own glory. Without You, severed from You, we can do *nothing*. Shade Your sun, suspend Your showers, withdraw Your life, and we droop, wither, and die. Every grace perishes. Faith falters and fails; hope droops and is crushed; love wanes and expires; and we become barren and unfruitful, cast forth as a branch that is withered.

Look, then, O believer, to Christ the living vine to make you fruitful of holiness. No spiritual fertility of soul will be promoted by looking either within yourself or to your duties. You must *ABIDE in Christ*. Realizing your union with Him, your acceptance and completeness in Him, your supplies of grace as from Him; looking to Christ, living upon Christ, associating everything with Christ--you will become filled with the fruits of righteousness. "*Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples.*"

The great END of all our fruitfulness is, *the praise and glory of God*. And what an appropriate and sublime conclusion is this! It is a solemn, and yet a glorious truth, that everything God has created shall terminate in Him as its great and final end. All shall result in His glory. "*I have created him for my glory.*" "*The Lord has made all things for Himself.*" The salvation of the righteous, and the everlasting destruction of the wicked, shall alike show forth His praise and illustrate His glory. Yes, those fruits of righteousness--that lowly faith, that humble love, that feeble grace, that imperfect service, that weak endeavor to please Him, that victory over the tempter, that conquest of sin, that heavy cross carried, that bitter cup drank, that long, lingering illness, that suffering of death--all, *all* shall redound to the praise and glory of JEHOVAH'S grace when the Lord shall come to be admired by His saints, and to be adored in all those who believe. If only the preparation of the soil, the sowing of the seed, the culture of the plant, the maturing of the fruit, brought such praise and glory to the Lord God *here*, oh, how great will be the revenue of praise and glory He will receive when all the golden sheaves are sickled, and the fruit is garnered, and heaven resounds with the song of the HARVEST HOME!

The ASSURANCE of Conversion

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."--2 Tim. 1:12

If there is one question involving our personal well-being upon which, above all others, there should not linger the shade of a shadow of uncertainty and doubt, it is the momentous question of our conversion to God--our preparedness for death and eternity.

Other questions relating to the present life may reasonably admit of distrust and postponement, even of indifference and neglect; but, the question of our New Birth--the issues of which are solemn as eternity--admits of no uncertainty or delay.

In the preceding pages we have represented the new nature of the believer as a thing visible in its transforming effects. The spiritual change of the heart is evidenced by the moral revolution of the life. The world beholding it, exclaims, "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new!" Now, if this great moral change is thus so evident to those who only trace its external evidence, how much more so should it be to the regenerate themselves! Surely, if others recognize and acknowledge it, we ourselves ought to be *quite sure* that we have passed from death unto life--are born again of the Spirit. Such is the holy state which we purpose in the present chapter to present--such the truth we shall endeavor to unfold--the believer's spiritual certainty, or, Divine authenticity, of his conversion to God. "I know whom I have believed." The points we shall briefly illustrate are--real conversion a self-evidencing fact--the way this assurance may be attained, and then the blessedness of its attainment.

I. Real conversion is a self-evidencing fact.

By a self-evidencing thing we, of course, mean that which is of itself so convincing and demonstrative, as to require no process of reasoning to establish. We say of the Bible that its divinity is self-evidencing; that, apart from collateral proof of its Divine inspiration, to an honest and intelligent mind it possesses in itself the proof and evidence of its divinity, cumulative and conclusive; so that, no ingenuous and devout inquirer can rise from its study without the overwhelming conviction that it demonstrates and authenticates its Divine authorship--as the book of God. Now, the new birth admits of a similar line of proof. The moral change it produces is so great and radical, so spiritual and divine, its happy subject *knows* that he is a new creature--that he is regenerated, adopted, pardoned, justified beyond the shadow of a doubt, and can say, "*I KNOW whom I have believed.*"

That we are not placing too lofty a Christian attainment before the reader, the following few declarations of God's Word, which seem to inculcate the state of assurance as attainable by the believer, we think will show. "*We KNOW that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*" "*We KNOW that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness.*" "*KNOWING, brethren beloved, your election of God.*" In Col. 2:2, the apostle speaks of "*the full assurance of understanding.*" In another place he employs this language--"*Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.*" Thus it will be seen that the doctrine of assurance is a truth of Divine revelation, that it rests upon the Bible as its basis. Corresponding with these divinely-inspired declarations is the experience of God's saints in all ages of the world. Job could say with assurance, "*I KNOW that my Redeemer lives.*" David could exclaim with assurance, "*When I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me.*" How full of sweet and holy assurance was the exclamation of Thomas, "*My Lord, and my God!*" We need not multiply these quotations; they are sufficient to

convince the mind that the feeblest believer in the Lord Jesus may arrive at a moral certainty that he is born again of the Spirit.

But the point of light in which we desire to place this subject is that of a *present salvation*--a truth as replete with comfort as it is with sanctification. Our object will be to confirm the believer in the assurance of the fact that he is *saved*--saved *now*--saved as *certainly* as he will be when the redemption of the body shall be as complete as the redemption of the soul. We predicate this fact upon the declaration of the Lord, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on Him that sent me, HAS everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but HAS PASSED from death unto life.*" The language of the apostle speaks as assuringly of the same fact--"*By grace you ARE SAVED.*" Such is the truth we present. We earnestly desire to confirm you in the scriptural assurance of your *present* standing before God, knowing how much your comfort and holiness are involved in its experience.

Take, for example, the state of **PARDON** in which Divine grace places the believer. Is it a present or a future pardon of sin which he receives? Most assuredly a *present* one. If pardoned, it is a pardon now, a pardon full, and a pardon forever. It is not a blessing we have to hope for or expect. If we are truly converted, really born again, Divine and sovereign grace has put us in a present forgiveness, in the personal and holy enjoyment of which it is our privilege to walk. How consonant with this truth is the Word of God, which alone could reveal it. "*You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened together with Him, HAVING FORGIVEN you all trespasses,*" (Col. 2:13.) And what the language of Jesus to the penitent woman bathing His feet with tears? Did He dismiss her still laden with guilt, still polluted with sin? No! Listen to His words--oh, words none more precious!--"*And He said unto her, Your sins ARE FORGIVEN.*" Need we multiply, which we could to a great extent, these proofs?

Beloved, knowing your election of God, we write these things unto you. If your souls are really regenerate, the blotting out of your sins is not a thing to be realized and experienced at some future period of your life, but is a *present* blessing, and should be a *present* enjoyment. If washed in the atoning blood of Jesus, you are clean every whit. Not more fully pardoned are the glorified spirits in heaven than you are at this moment. For this you have the Divine asseveration--"*I HAVE blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins.*" He has done it, and having done it, He will never undo it. Once pardoned, fully pardoned; pardoned freely, and pardoned forever. Oh, realize your present standing as a pardoned sinner! Do not keep going over the great debt as still existing against you.

Suppose that the original amount has been fearfully augmented by superadded debts--debts infinite in number and aggravated in character? Be it so. Still it is written--"*Having forgiven you ALL trespasses.*" "*Your sins ARE FORGIVEN you for His name's sake,*" (1 John 2:12.)

Do not think that God, whose work is perfect, works this His master-work partially and imperfectly. Is it like Him to exercise this the highest prerogative of His moral government and the greatest act of His grace in a way that would lower its dignity, impair its power, and neutralize its effects? No! His pardons are worthy of His infinite greatness and love. He pardons like a God. "*Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?*"

Again, we press upon you the realization of your present state as standing in God's sight, washed in the blood of Christ from all past, present, and future sin. Never was there a more entire annihilation, a more perfect canceling of anything, than the forgiveness of sin which has passed upon all God's people. "*In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be NONE; and the sins of Judah, and they shall NOT BE*

FOUND--for I will pardon them whom I reserve," (Jer. 50:20.) "You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," (Micah 7:19.) Timid child of God! loving disciple of Christ! see your sins all cast into these unfathomable depths. Sought for by justice, by the law, by Satan, by yourself, you shall never find them--all, *all* entirely and eternally forgiven--annihilated by God Himself. Walking in the happy sense of a present forgiveness, you will walk carefully, circumspectly, holily, hating your sins, and the sin still dwelling within you, all the more that God, your sin-pardoning God, has entirely and forever forgiven you.

Take the state of **ACCEPTANCE**. Is it a present or a future blessing? Is it a state the believer first enters into when he enters into glory? or, does he enter into it *now*, as the condition and the earnest of that glory? Most assuredly, if we are not brought into a state of justification by grace here, we have no pledge of a state of justification in glory hereafter. The act of justification passes upon the believing soul in this life, and is his title-deed to the inheritance of the life which is to come. The language of the Holy Spirit is confirmatory of this truth--*"To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He HAS MADE US ACCEPTED in the Beloved."* *"BEING JUSTIFIED by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* And then we have the statement respecting the righteousness of Christ, which justifies. It is declared to be, *"unto all and UPON all those who believe."* Believe this to be your present state before God. Not more fully, though more openly and declaratively, justified will you be when the Lord shall extend the welcome, *"Come, you blessed of my Father,"* than you are now if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to the salvation of your soul. "ACCEPTED"--present time--not may be, or shall be, but, *"ACCEPTED in the Beloved."*

Oh, what peace will follow from the Spirit's witness to this your present condition as in the sight of God! Realizing that you are clothed in white garments--that God looks upon you only in Christ, lovely through His loveliness put upon you--you will daily clasp the

belt of prayer and faith round the robe of righteousness, and so walk with Jesus in all the growing holiness of a full, a free, a present justification of your soul by Jesus Christ our Lord.

A present salvation, also, involves a present act of **ADOPTION**. This cannot possibly be a future, remote exercise of God's love. If we are in a state of regeneracy, born again by the Spirit of adoption, then, beloved, *"Now are we the sons of God."* *"And because you ARE Sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."* It is on the basis of this our present adoption that we draw near unto God as our Father who are in heaven. We call Him "our Father"--we feel Him to be our Father--He responds to us as a Father, and when we depart out of this life, in the words of Jesus, our Elder Brother, we *"go to the Father."*

Walk, then, with God, beloved, in the sweet, holy consciousness of your present adoption. Not more fully adopted, not more really will you be a child of God when you arrive in heaven and see your Father there, than at this present moment, if, born again, you have received in faith the Lord Jesus Christ. *"As many as received Him, to them gave He power [or privilege] to BECOME THE SONS OF GOD, even to those who believe on His name."* Such is your present filial standing before God. Oh, what a motive to walk worthy of so high a relationship!--what an encouragement to draw near to God as to a Father, acknowledging sin, unveiling sorrow, revealing need, and in all circumstances and places--in mental sadness, in heart-grief, in temporal need--pouring all into that Father's ear, embosoming all in that Father's heart!

Equally, also, is our **SANCTIFICATION** by the Spirit a present attainment of grace. It is of great importance to keep this prominently before us, since our holiness here is our fitness for our glory hereafter. "Sanctification, indeed, unlike the parts of the new creation we have referred to, is a gradual work, yet, seminally, it is a complete thing. In its growth progressive, yet in its nature perfect. Still, gradual and incomplete, as our personal holiness is, it is an

actual and a present grace, and may be advanced to a high standard of culture. *"This is the will of God, even your SANCTIFICATION."* Again we read, *"God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through SANCTIFICATION of the Spirit."*

For this high attainment let us press onward. Possessing in the renewed nature the germ of perfect holiness--its perfection arrived at only in glory--let us seek its development and growth, that we may be more holy, more separate from the ungodly world, more decidedly on the Lord's side, fairer copies of the mind, the loveliness, and example of Christ, maturing in grace here, amid all its opposition and difficulty, for the glory that is to be revealed in us at the coming of the Lord Jesus.

II. The way this assurance may be attained

The question now arises, **how** may the believer arrive to this assurance of his personal and present salvation? That it is attainable, we have shown from the precepts and examples cited from the Word of God. The question is, how may I attain unto this grace?

1. We answer, first, **by a direct and simple dealing with the Lord Jesus.** An assurance of salvation must necessarily spring from the great Object of salvation. We only know that we are in the light by coming to the light. No one immured in a dungeon can speak of the warmth and radiance of the sun experimentally. He must emerge from his darkness and stand in the light. A sick man could hardly expect to derive healing but from the process of healing. He could not reasonably expect to be cured but by the remedy prescribed for the cure. Now, how may we arrive at a comfortable assurance that we are saved? By dealing with the Lord Jesus, by whom and in whom we *are* saved. We derive light only from the sun, vitality only from the air, sustenance only from the bread. It is by a personal, believing, simple apprehension of Christ, looking only to Him, resting only in Him, receiving only from Him, that we can possibly know that we are saved.

Assurance will never arise from looking at ourselves, or from mixing up anything with Christ. How can we possibly know that our guilt is cleansed, but as we wash in the blood? how that our people are justified, but as we put on the righteousness? how that God has accepted, and delights in us, but as we know that we stand in the Beloved? This is assurance of salvation--the full, unqualified acceptance of Christ. Approaching as a poor, empty, miserable sinner, and standing in this Divine Sun, all bathed in His light, all invested with His beams, all covered with His glory, we shall no more question the fact of our being saved, saved now, and saved forever, than we should, in our right minds, doubt the fact that the sun shines at noon while gazing upon its meridian splendor. **This is assurance of salvation, looking believably at the Savior.**

What ground have we for knowing that we are saved, but as we see our great debt paid by the offering and sacrifice of Jesus? our sins forgiven through His atoning merit? our persons justified, and we counted as righteous through the imputation of His obedience? We must in faith behold the Lord Jesus answering for all as our Surety, undertaking all as our Mediator, accomplishing all as our Divine Redeemer, before we can possess a firm persuasion that we are saved. The blood and righteousness of the Lord constitute the basis of assurance. Taking our stand upon this, we can exclaim with humble assurance, "*I KNOW whom I have believed.*" I believe in Jesus, that He has merited all, suffered all, perfected all for me--paying all my debt, enduring all my punishment, endowing me with all His wealth, and investing me with all His glory."

You have, perhaps, dear reader, long been in want of the *assurance* that you are *saved*. But you have sought it in yourself, and not in Christ. You have been searching for evidences amid the shadows and the taint of your own heart, the imperfect traces of your own doings, the varied exercises of your mind, and have sought them in vain. But now try the experiment--an experiment that has never failed one poor soul--of finding the evidence of your present salvation in a believing looking to a present Savior. Rest in Jesus from the burden

and the guilt of sin; rest in Jesus from the conflict with doubt and fear; rest in Jesus from the fear of death and the dread of condemnation; rest in Jesus from your entire self; rest in His finished work, in His accepted sacrifice, in His boundless grace, in His unchanging love, and present intercession, and your assurance will be built upon a rock, against which no force of Satan or unbelief shall ever prevail.

The chief instrument by which assurance is obtained is, FAITH. It flows through the channel of *believing*. Indeed, the best definition of assurance of present salvation is, a lively and continuously-acting faith on the Lord Jesus. Assurance is *believing*, and nothing more. Believing that Jesus died for sinners--believing the record God has given concerning His Son--believing that His death was a sufficient atonement, and that His resurrection was its acceptance of the Father--simply, unquestioningly believing this--faith laying hold of the great salvation with a believing and assured grasp--hope sweetly and firmly resting upon it, yes, as sweetly and as firmly as upon the everlasting hills--assurance of salvation will follow, as any effect follows its cause. Now, according to the degree and strength of your *faith* will be the degree and strength of your *assurance* of salvation. In proportion as you believe in the Lord Jesus, faith will bring into your soul the peace, joy, comfort, and hope which ever follow in its channel; and the deeper and the wider the channel, the deeper and the wider will be the *blessings* which it conveys to your soul. It shall be unto you according to your faith.

Oh, then, cease to do, and labor, and desire--all which exercise profits nothing. Cast overboard the oars with which you have impelled your bark against the tide, and spread your canvas to the heavenly gale. Trust to the irresistible power of *believing prayer*. Let your faith, dropping every other confidence, take hold of Christ--His person, His love, His word of promise. And the sun which shines, and, in its shining, warms into life, loveliness, and fertility the landscape of nature, will not diffuse more vitality, gladness, and song, than will that simple faith which clasps its arms around the

Savior, and so brings the ocean-fullness of a present salvation into your soul.

In proportion, then, to the simplicity of your faith in the Lord Jesus will be the personal conviction of your safety. Brood not over your sins, but confess them with a humble, lowly, and believing heart to Jesus, and the assurance of *pardon* will follow. Be not dismayed at your demerit, but take it to the infinite merits of Christ, and the assurance of *acceptance* will follow. Rescued by a lifeboat from drowning, I am saved; if, however, I have any doubt of the fact that I am actually within the rescuing vessel, my conviction and joy of safety must be seriously diminished by that doubt. But, firmly believing that I am in the vessel, floating securely and calmly upon the foaming billows, at which now I smile, the assurance that I am actually saved, and the transport springing from that assurance, will be unimpaired and unclouded by a doubt. In proportion to the hold which your believing heart has upon the Lord Jesus--the Divine Lifeboat of the soul--for He came into the world to *save* sinners--will be the strength and the joy of your personal salvation. Believe that you are actually in Christ--realize your union with Him--deal only with the infinite sufficiency of His person and the complete fullness of His work--receive Him as a sinner all guilty, as a bankrupt having nothing to pay, as sin-diseased, having resorted to every physician, having tried every remedy, and as being nothing bettered but rather grown worse--dealing simply, and fully, and only with Jesus the Savior--and, with the holy apostle, you, also, shall triumphantly exclaim, "*I KNOW whom I have believed.*"

In addition to the assurance of salvation which a believing apprehension of the Lord Jesus imparts, we have **the witness of the Holy Spirit** testifying to our possession of the new nature. Having formed this new and divine nature within us, it is His office, as His delight, always to authenticate its existence and unveil its glories. In the new creation of the soul, the noblest achievement of His creative power, He has made His personal and permanent abode. "*He [the Spirit] shall ABIDE with you forever.*" "*The Spirit himself*

bears WITNESS with our spirit that we are the children of God." Thus we have the highest source of assurance--the testimony of God the Holy Spirit Himself. Earnestly seek it. His seal, His attestation, His endorsement will quell every fear, annihilate even doubt, and not the shadow of a shade shall veil the existence or becloud the luster of God's new creation in your soul.

Eternal and blessed Spirit! though I have slighted, grieved, and wounded You times without number, stifling the still small voice of Your love, and checking the gentle constraints of Your grace, yet shine upon Your new creation in my soul, awaken the joys of God's salvation in my heart, dispel my sadness, dissolve my darkness, and turn my night of weeping into a morning of joy!

Such are some of the channels through which the assurance of a present state of salvation flows to us.

The means of its attaining assurance.

Let us, in conclusion, glance at some of the means of its attainment. **PRAYER** shall be the first we quote. For this great, comforting, and sanctifying attainment in grace the Lord will be inquired of to give it. It comes not forth but by *prayer*. As communion with God is the chief characteristic of the new creature, the life of God in the soul, so it is by this means that that life is kept vigorous, health, and progressive. The willful *neglect* of prayer--the soul withdrawing even from what is holy, that it might enter into the "Holy of Holies" for secret communion with the Invisible One--will seriously affect the assurance of our salvation. But closeness of walk with God, frequent communion with Jesus, will keep the heart in bloom, will nourish the germ of holiness, and so encompass the soul as with a shield as shall prevent the accumulation of these corroding doubts and fears around the heart which render its spiritual action sluggish and feeble. Then, give yourself to prayer! Draw near unto God, and He will draw near unto you. He inspires prayer, loves prayer, listens to prayer, answers prayer; and by prayer you shall live in the happy, holy experience of a

present salvation, walking in the full assurance of your saving interest in Christ, of your adoption into the family of God.

Meditation on God's Word essentially aids our comfortable assurance. The truth as it is in Jesus is the manna of the renewed soul, the spiritual nourishment of the life of God within us. *"Your words were found, and I did EAT them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."* *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by EVERY WORD that proceeds out of the MOUTH OF GOD."* There is nothing so nourishing to the new nature--nourishment so appropriate to the new man--as the pure wheat of God's Word. Its glorious doctrines of grace strengthen it, its divine precepts mold it, its precious promises comfort it, its blessed hopes animate it. It is from this Divine granary that the true nutriment is drawn by which the new man lives. Hold fast God's Word in its integrity, contend earnestly for the faith, live upon every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, let your soul stand in awe of His Word, read it meditatively, study it prayerfully, treat it reverentially, believe it fully--so shall it feed and nourish and render fruitful the new nature of God within your soul. Thus shall you be a man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Nor would we fail to remark that full assurance is only found in the way of **holy obedience**. Speaking of the relation of Christian evidence with evangelical holiness, our Lord says, *"If any man will DO His will, he shall KNOW of the doctrine whether it be of God."* By the same test--doing the Divine will--a man of God may know his heavenly calling. Ever remembering that, *"to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,"* reverence for the lowliest command of Christ will be a deep and prevailing sentiment of the true believer. Obedience to one divine command will be, in his estimation, of more importance than the costliest sacrifice. Now, in this path of holy, unreserved obedience the Lord meets His disciples with tokens of His favor.

In seeking to carry out the Lord's will in the small as the great precepts of His Word, in the minor as the more important concerns of life, in all things and under all circumstances doing the will of God, the believer shall lack no evidence of his new birth. *"You meet him that rejoices and works in righteousness, those that remember you in your ways."* Oh, rich the comfort, deep the peace, unclouded the assurance which will flow into his heart who seeks to stand complete in all the will of God.

Christian assurance and unreserved obedience are inseparably linked in the experience of God's saints. This, perhaps, may suggest a defect in your walk, my reader. You have been seeking the assurance of your salvation, but not in the path that has been most honoring to the Divine commands as a child of God. Examine well your obedience! Is there any command of Christ wilfully dishonored, any divine precept knowingly slighted, any required cross daily neglected in your Christian walk? Then marvel not that the trembling fear, the anxious doubt, the darkling cloud intercepts the comfortable possession of your interest in the Savior. Take up the cross, however self-denying, and follow the Lord fully, and you shall know from most happy experience that in keeping His commands there is great reward.

To sum up the whole matter--prayerfully and watchfully avoid whatever tends to impair and becloud your assurance. A distant following of Jesus, much contact with the world, too close communion with cold-hearted, half-hearted Christians and inconsistent religious professors, trifling with conscience, neglect of confession of sin, dealing slightly with atoning blood, looking into self instead of looking unto Jesus, needless exposure to temptation, reserves in obedience, a shrinking from the cross, undervaluing the means of grace--because of these things many of the Lord's people are weak and sickly, and many sleep, and walk not in the peaceful, joyous, holy experience of a *present salvation*.

But, **beware of making a savior of assurance.** This were to rob you of the blessing altogether. Whatever in the experience of the believer displaces Christ, casts a deep shadow upon his soul. Whatever is exalted above its proper place, or is exaggerated beyond its legitimate position in the plan of salvation, must materially affect the happiness of the Christian. Christ is all in our salvation. The alpha and the omega, the first and the last. Place assurance of salvation upon a level with salvation itself, and you have introduced a disturbing element. Exalt any part of Christian experience to a level with Christ, make it essential to salvation, and you dishonor the Lord Jesus, and veil the sun from your soul.

Assurance that you are saved is not an essential principle of your salvation. It may be necessary to your holy and happy walk to be fully persuaded that you are a believer in Christ, but it is not necessary to your standing with acceptance before God. Christ, and Christ alone. Christ, and nothing more. Christ, and nothing less. Therefore, in the absence of that full and comfortable persuasion of your eternal safety which you desire, still keep your eye intent upon Christ, who can save you, and is prepared to save you and bring you to His eternal glory, though in weeping and mourning, you follow Him to the grave. Mary weeping at the tomb had no assurance that her Lord was alive; and yet how she loved, and how He loved, and how near Jesus was to her! Look not, then, to your assurance, but--look simply, directly, and only to Christ.

But, **make sure work of conversion!** Let not this essential, all-important, all-momentous change be a dubious, uncertain, unauthenticated matter with you. So long as you remain *unconverted*, your condition is one of imminent peril. What, if leaving your home in the morning radiant with life, before nightfall you are borne back to it--*a corpse*? For what is life but a vapor? And among all uncertainties what more uncertain than it? "*In the morning it flourishes and grows up, in the evening it is cut down and withers.*" What, if amid the still hours of midnight, the summons should be heard, "Your soul is required of you?" and,

before morning light, your body lies a 'ruined tent' upon the ground? Are you in readiness to meet the solemn change? We beseech you, then, make *sure work* of the NEW BIRTH. Take nothing for granted in a matter involving interests so momentous and precious. Be satisfied only with LIFE in your soul. All things new, the divine image restored, Christ precious, the new nature blooming and fruitful, maturing beneath the Sun of Righteousness for its native paradise on high. But scorn it, trifle with it, postpone it if you will—
"This fearful truth will still remain,
The sinner must be BORN AGAIN,
Or sink to endless woe!"

Thus living upon a present Savior--present ever at your side, in all places and at all times--you will live upon a present salvation. It is with the *present*, fleeting though it be, rather than with the future, we have more immediately to do. The present is more solemn and momentous than the future, since the future is all that the present makes it. A present of *grace* involves a future of *glory*. The Lord has graciously provided for the present of the believer in the life of faith He has appointed him to live. The life he now lives in the flesh, with all its needs, sorrows, and trials, is by the faith of the Son of God. So live! Go and tell the Lord Jesus every present need, perplexity, and trial. "*To whom COMING.*" Coming *now*--coming *incessantly*--*ever* coming--coming with the same trials and needs, the same backslidings and infirmities, the same sins and sorrows--never ceasing to come so long as the heart has a corruption to be subdued, earth a sorrow to be comforted, or life a service to be done.

What an evidence is afforded of the DIVINITY of the Savior in the assurance which the apostle expresses, and into which we desire to mold every Christian reader of this volume! What was the treasure which Paul committed to Jesus Christ? It is something personal, something valuable, something precious. What was it? What but his immortal soul--his redeemed body--his whole interests for eternity? Would he entrust this deposit--a deposit compared with which the wealth of the universe were as the dust in the balance--to a creature--

a man--a mere man--an arm of flesh--a human savior? Oh, extreme of folly! Oh, dream of madness! He knew whom he believed. He knew Him to be GOD--absolute God--the "*Almighty God*"--the only-begotten Son of God--the "*brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person*"--"*God manifest in the flesh.*" To no other hands but those of a DIVINE REDEEMER can we safely confide our undying soul.

Who that possesses a sense of the value of his soul--that has an enlightened view of its relation to eternity, its sinfulness, its accountability, its immortality, its exposure to an ever-living death--would confide its deathless interests to any than to Deity? My reader, Paul never dreamed of entrusting the keeping and salvation of his soul to a *created* Redeemer. Man, though Christ was, Paul knew that the light of Divinity gleamed from His eye, that the thunder of Divinity slumbered in His arm, and that the words and power of Divinity were upon His tongue. Well, also, did he know that, possessing all the essential attributes of God, Christ had attested His Divinity by the miracles which He wrought. He transformed water into wine, fed thousands with a few loaves, raised the dead, restored the paralyzed, healed the sick, ejected demons, controlled the elements, and trod the earth, as a province of His empire, with the keys of the invisible world pendent from His belt. And then dying, all nature testifying her sympathy with her expiring Creator, He burst from the imprisonment of the grave, and was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. We marvel not at the bold, triumphant language of Paul, "*I know whom I have believed.*"

To that same Divine Redeemer, as unto a faithful Creator, you too, O believer, have entrusted the salvation of your soul; and with like precious faith, and with like full assurance, you may confide your interests for time and for eternity--your present of grace and your future of glory--confidently and safely in the hands of Jesus. Oh, do you think that He will not securely keep what you have committed to His care against the great day of judgment? Do you think that he will

not guard, as with unslumbering eye, the soul for which he sorrowed and sobbed in Gethsemane--suffered, bled, and died on the cross? Stagger not, then, at this Divine and precious truth through unbelief. Command your doubts to be gone. Give your fears to the winds. Jesus will keep to the end, and will conduct in safety and in triumph from grace to glory, the lowest, weakest of His saints. Not one shall perish. The hand that touched with trembling faith the border of His robe, shall sweep the golden harp of heaven to His praise. The eye that caught the dimmest view of His cross of humiliation, shall gaze with unclouded vision upon the throne of His ineffable glory. Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied, and both the Savior and the saved shall rejoice together through eternity. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

ANXIETY FOR CONVERSION

"What must I do to be saved?"--Acts 16:30

Many readers of this work may have traveled through its pages to the present chapter with a sad conviction that hitherto their spiritual state touching the momentous subject of which it treats has been unmet. Feeling that they cannot lay claim to Christian experience so advanced, they are ready to close the book in despair of having any part or lot in the matter--as possessing no scriptural evidence of spiritual quickening in the soul. To meet the case of such, whose very anxiety is no small sign of life, we devote the present chapter of our work, designed **to exhibit conversion in its incipient form**--the sincere, earnest anxiety of a soul to be converted. We select, as the illustration of this stage, the often-quoted and familiar, but not less appropriate and instructive, case of the Philippian jailer. The inquiry which he proposes must, more or less intense, be the inquiry of every individual born again. All must commence their spiritual course from

this starting-point--all with that momentous inquiry, "*What must I do to be saved?*"

It is an inquiry which only God can answer, as it is a state which only the Holy Spirit can produce. It is the most profound, the most weighty, the most solemn question that ever stirred human feeling or awakened human thought. Traverse the circle of human inquiry, and select the most learned, important, and thrilling subject that ever engaged the intellect or called into being the energy and enterprise of man, and place it in contrast with this single, simple question--"What must I do to be saved?"--and it pales into the profoundest insignificance. It is as the child gathering pebbles on the shore, compared with the diver searching for the pearl, or the miner excavating for the diamond. It will be seen, then, how much importance we attach to the first or incipient stage of the new birth. So far from despising the day of small things in grace, so far from regarding with indifference the anxious, trembling state of mind which the question betrays, it presents itself to our view as the most important, touching, and lovely stage of conversion.

Can there be any difficulty in tracing this anxiety for salvation to other than its proper and legitimate SOURCE? Man could not convey it, nature could not inspire it, flesh and blood could not reveal it. It is of God. We turn to the trembling jailer. Two great convulsions were transpiring at the same moment. The one was *natural*--the earth quaking; the other was *supernatural*--the soul morally convulsed from a sense of sin. God is at no loss for means to bring to Himself His chosen people. He can employ an earthquake, a flash of lightning, a thunder-clap, a sudden bereavement, to rouse the soul to the all-important concerns of eternity. Tell us not that, that conversion is not genuine, that, that spiritual change is not real, because produced by some stirring, alarming event of God's providence--a convulsion of nature, the prostration of health, the loss of property, the knell of a departed soul. "*Lo, all these things works God oftentimes with men.*"

God grant that the solemn, startling events of His providence in your history, my reader, may not be without their spiritual impress upon your soul! Sad, yes, most dreadful, if, when your present probation closes in a destiny changeless as the throne of Him who will appoint it, it should appear that you were deaf when God spoke, you trifled when God was serious, were impenitent when God called; and that all His startling providences, solemn warnings, earnest and touching appeals tended but to fit you all the more for condemnation, as the sun's heat seasons the fuel for the flame. But we address the soul anxious for salvation.

We approach the consideration of this state of mind with solemn and tender interest. If the angelic host contemplate the spectacle with wonder, and find in its study material for joy--beholding in it the fruit of Christ's death and the wondrous working of God's grace, the struggles and the pangs of a soul passing into the new birth--surely we are justified in regarding it as possessing vital and transcendent interest, worthy of our deepest, tenderest consideration.

Anxiety for salvation is, as we have remarked, conversion in its latent or incipient state. It may arise from various causes, but essentially it is the same. You feel yourself a lost sinner. You have made the startling, momentous discovery that you are *not* saved! Hitherto, living in ignorance of yourself as a sinner, and of your state as under condemnation; living for the world as your portion and for self as your god, you now awake as from the sleep of death, and find and feel yourself lost, guilty, self-destroyed. Your great anxiety now is--*how* you may be *saved*. Shall we attempt to analyze your anxiety? You feel yourself--a *SINNER*. This is the great concern of your soul. Sin is your distress, your burden, your alarm. Sin as sin against God, sin as polluting your entire being, sin as exposing you to condemnation, sin as the most oppressive weight that ever crushed you to the earth, sin as separating you from the holy on earth and from the glorified in heaven, is the cause of present conviction, anxiety, and alarm.

But, startling and solemn as this discovery of your condition as a sinner is, be not more startled if we pronounce it as most *blessed!* It is the first dawn of light, the first pulse of life in your soul. Before you are healed, you must feel that you are *diseased*. Before you are cleansed, you must feel that you are *unclean*. Before you are saved, you must feel that you are *lost*. Before you repair to the Savior, you must feel that you are a *sinner*. Do you see the fitness of all this?

Administer medicine to a corpse, and supply it with nourishment. Is there a fitness, a harmony in the means you are employing to the end? Most assuredly not. But, let there be life--conviction of disease, sense of hunger--and your proceeding is rational and proper. Now, all this will apply to your spiritual condition. None come to Jesus but under the vital drawings of the Spirit. None come for healing but the sin-sick. None repair to Him for the bread of life but the soul hungering for salvation. I am now supposing this to be your case. You are inquiring the way of life. You are anxious to be converted. You long to be saved. This is just the process the Holy Spirit is taking to bring you to the Savior. The illumination of the understanding, the conviction of sin, the enkindling of godly sorrow, is a work supernatural and divine. To withdraw the mental veil, to remove the spiritual cataract from the spiritual eye, to unlock the chamber of the heart, to crush the rebellion of the will, and to subdue the whole soul before the cross, oh, this is the work of God the Spirit, and is the sure precursor of that New Birth, which, transpiring in grace here, shall be perfected and eternized in glory hereafter.

The soul-anxiety you now feel, being the fruit of the Holy Spirit, will terminate in your full conversion to God. Conversion does not depend upon the depth of sin-conviction, nor upon the clearness of faith's eye. In one night the Philippian jailer repented and believed, was converted, saved, and baptized. That night that heard, amid the trembling of the earth, the earnest inquiry of the alarmed and anxious penitent, heard songs of gladness in heaven over one sinner that was saved.

And why not *you*? In one hour you may be awakened, converted, saved. Listen to the recorded conversion of an eminent saint of God in tracing the way the Lord brought him to Himself--"As I was alone in the field, all my past life was opened plainly before me, and I saw clearly that it had been filled up with sin. I went and sat down in the shade of a tree, where my prayers and tears, my longing and striving for a better heart with all my doings, were set before me in such a light that I perceived I could never make myself better, should I live ever so long. Divine justice appeared clear as condemnation, and I saw that God had a right to do with me as He would. My soul yielded all to His hands, fell at His feet, and was silent and calm before Him. And while I sat there I was enabled by Divine light to see the perfect righteousness of Christ, and the freeness and richness of His grace, with such clearness that my soul was drawn forth to trust in Him for salvation, and I wondered that others did not also come to Him who had enough for all. The Word of God and the promises of His grace appeared firmer than a rock, and I was astonished at my previous unbelief. My heavy burden was gone, tormenting fears were fled, and my joy was unspeakable. Yet this change was so different from my former ideas of conversion, that for above two days I had no thought of having experienced it. Then I heard a sermon read which gave the characters of the children of God, and I had an inward witness that those characters were wrought in me--such as a spirit of prayer, a hatred of sin, an overcoming of the world, love to the brethren, and love to enemies; and I conclude that I then had the sealing of the Spirit of God, that I was a child of His. New ideas and dispositions were given me; the worship and service of God and obedience to His will were the delight of my soul. I found such happiness therein as I never had in all the vanities of the world." (Memoir of Rev. Backus of America.)

Such may be the joyous termination of your present serious impressions, anxious feelings and desires. Your inquiry is--*how* you may be *saved*. If so, then your mind is brought into sympathy with the greatest work in which the God of heaven ever embarked--the work of saving sinners. Salvation! It is but one word, and yet, oh how

pregnant with significance! How glorious its meaning! Salvation was the one thought of the Father from eternity, when He devised the scheme of its accomplishment. Salvation was the one thought of Jesus when he made His advent to our world, with the blood-sweat, the sighs, and sobs of Gethsemane, the cross, the agonies, and the passion of Calvary confronting Him. His one mission was to--*save*. He objected not at the price, hesitated not at the terms, shrank not from the sacrifice. Though it involved such humiliation, and such sorrow, and such suffering, and such a death, and such a sacrifice as convulsed the universe--struck terror into hell and awoke amazement in heaven--the Son of God dying for the chief of sinners!--yet he voluntarily undertook and faithfully finished the salvation of countless millions. One life sacrificed--and by that one life sacrificed innumerable lives saved. *"He saved others, Himself He cannot save."* Such is God's salvation, worthy in all respects of Him who embarked His all of love, and power, and wealth in its accomplishment!

Contemplate it in **some of its transcendent blessings. WHAT IS IT TO BE SAVED?**

1. To be saved is to be delivered from the guilt and despotism of sin. And what a salvation is this! Who can estimate its greatness and its preciousness, but he who has felt the burden of sin uplifted and removed, the corrodings of guilt cleansed and effaced entirely and forever? This the blood of Jesus effects. That blood was sacrificial and atoning, expiatory and cleansing. *"Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." "He bore the sin of many." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."*

What truth can be more luminous or what declaration more precious than this? What could avail to efface so deep a stain, to blot out so dark a spot, to annihilate so heinous a thing as SIN, but the atoning blood of Immanuel, the incarnate God? And *this* BLOOD has done

it!--has done it now, has done it fully, and has done it forever in the happy experience of all who believe in Jesus. Bring your sins, your crimes, your transgressions in believing contact with Christ! Let them touch the cross--and the cloud shall dissolve, the chains shall fall, the burden shall vanish, and no sounds shall linger upon your ear but the Words of Jesus--"*Your sins are forgiven--go, and sin no more.*"

2. To be saved is to be delivered from the condemnation of the law. In an unconverted, non-saved state, we lie under the curse, and are shut up to the eternal condemnation of the law. "*The law works wrath.*" "*Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.*" But the salvation of the Lord Jesus is a deliverance from the law in its anathematizing and condemnatory power. It flashes no more curse, and rolls no more condemnation over the heads of those who are in Christ Jesus. "*Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.*" And oh, what a salvation is this! The curse annihilated, the sentence repealed, the condemnation removed, and yet the law fully repaid, perfectly obeyed, divinely honored and magnified in the eyes of all holy intelligences, in the life of Him "*by whose obedience many are made righteous.*" Thus, our Lawgiver is our Law-Fulfiller; and His fulfillment of the law is imputed to us who believe; and so we become the righteousness of God in Him, which righteousness is unto all and upon all those who believe.

3. It follows from the preceding statement, strictly logical, that **the salvation of Christ insures our deliverance from the wrath which is to come.** If there is no present condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, then the future, with all its tremendous realities, its dreadful solemnities, unveils no dread, awakens no terror, to those who are saved. The Lord Jesus, offering Himself as our substitute, engaging as our surety, obeying for us, suffering for us, dying for us, has exhausted the curse of the law, drained the cup of wrath, and saved us from its future outpouring. Having by sovereign grace turned from idols to serve the living and true God,

we now *"wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come."* Oh, what a salvation this! Saved from the quenchless flames, from the undying worm, from the companionship of the lost, from the pangs of the death which is eternal! Who would not utter the cry--never ceasing to utter it, until, piercing the heart of the Savior, it brought down the gracious response--*"Lord, save, or I perish!"*

And still the great question remains unanswered--*"What must I do to be saved?"* We wish the anxious inquirer particularly to mark how the apostles--those sons of consolation, those blessed heralds of the cross, to whom was given the tongue of the learned, that they might know how to speak a word in season to the weary--met the question. They did not commence, as, alas! too many human teachers unskilled in the Word do, by investigating the nature or gauging the depth of the jailer's conviction; nor did they set him upon the hopeless task of doing something of himself to soothe the intense anguish of his soul; neither did they direct him to an external reformation of his habits--to go to the synagogue, to partake of baptism, or the communion of the Lord's supper--to fast, and pray, and read. Still less did they exhort him to throw off his serious thoughts, to drown his mental distress in scenes of worldly frivolity and excitement. Oh, no! Miserable comforters they would have been, physicians unskilled in the art of spiritual healing, to have employed means like these--means which must have proved a vain and cruel mockery of a case so peculiar and desperate.

But what did they? They at once preached to him JESUS--they uplifted the cross--directed his eye to the Crucified--brought him to the Savior. *"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."* What a marvelous announcement! How suitable, how simple the remedy! This was all they prescribed. Not a word about election, or baptism, or church, or reformation. The one **instrument** of healing was *faith*; and the one **Object** of that faith, *the Lord Jesus Christ*.

And such is the gospel, the glorious gospel, of the blessed God. It proclaims with clarion notes of sweetest melody, everywhere and to all, "BELIEVE, and be SAVED!" All man's working, all human merit, all self-doing of the anxious soul is utterly ignored. What says the Scriptures? "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his FAITH is credited as righteousness." Anxious soul, listen to the joyful sound!--welcome the good news of the gospel of the grace of God! Sinner though you are--the vilest, the greatest, the very chief--receive in faith the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!

Do not hesitate because of the feebleness or the dimness of your faith. Faith is not your Savior, but JESUS. The mightiest faith ever possessed would not save you, apart from the sin-atonement Lamb. Therefore it is that the weakest, dimmest faith ever exercised in the Lord Jesus will save from going down to the pit the greatest criminal. Jesus is mighty to save, is willing to save, is pledged to save, is eternally glorified in saving. Without a work, without one particle of merit--as a poor bankrupt sinner, having nothing to pay--He has promised, and is pledged to save you to the uttermost. Did He ever repel a sincere penitent? Did He ever reject an humble suppliant? Did He ever refuse to save a poor sinner? Did He ever scorn and reject a trembling, sorrowing outcast? Oh, never! That case is yet to transpire of a soul convinced of sin by the Spirit, and falling down at the Savior's feet seeking His pardoning mercy, on whom He bends a frown of anger, exclaiming, "Begone! you are too vile, too unworthy, too great a sinner to be saved; the sins of your youth, of riper years, of old age, exclude you from my mercy--place you beyond the pale of my salvation. You have resisted light, have stifled conviction, have striven with the Spirit, and there remains to you no room for repentance, no sacrifice for sin, no hope of *pardon*." We say, this fact is yet to transpire. And when it does, there will be a profound and prolonged silence in heaven, and a loud laugh of fiendish triumph in hell!

What, then, hinders your coming to Christ, and coming to Him *now*, O anxious soul? Is it *ELECTION*? Election is among your greatest encouragements to come to Christ; since, were you not one of His elect, the Holy Spirit would not have convinced you of sin, and Christ would not have inclined you to come, by His grace. All that the Father gave to Him shall come to Him; and your coming to Christ under the drawing of the Spirit is just the evidence that you are one of those given to Him of God. Who will dare affirm that you are not one included in the eternal purpose of God, whom He has made to see, feel, and deplore your impotence, vileness, and nothingness in His sight? "*Whom He predestinated, them He also CALLED;*" and the voice of His effectual grace is now calling you to Himself, and so you have irrefutable evidence that you are one of His. Making your *calling* sure, you will make your *election* sure; and so, taking hold by faith of the lowest link in the golden chain of God's salvation, you shall rise to the highest, and before long partake of the rapture of the saints, and find yourself in heaven--having passed from grace to glory!

What hinders you coming now to Christ? Is it your *SINS*? Why should this be a bar? Jesus made His advent into the world to save *sinners*; He shed His atoning blood to save sinners; He gave Himself a sacrifice to save sinners; He rose again from the dead to save sinners; and He is now exalted at the right hand of God to give repentance and remission of sins to poor sinners. In addition to all this, He has left on earth His great and glorious *promise*, that, "him that comes unto me, I will never cast out." Upon this magnificent, this precious promise you may venture, and hope, and rely.

This plank has saved many a drowning soul from going down into the yawning pit; and if you will with simplest faith grasp it, it will save *you*. Accumulate all the arguments, objections, and difficulties to your coming to Christ which it is possible for sin to allege, unbelief to suggest, or Satan invent, and hurl them in faith against this one Divine and gracious promise, and they will fall as powerless, broken, and scattered as the billows which launch their thunders against the

ocean's rock. Bunyan, in his own quaint but forcible way, thus puts it--"But, I am a great sinner,' say you. '*I will never cast out,*' says Christ. 'But, I am an old sinner,' say you. '*I will never cast out,*' says Christ. 'But, I am a hard-hearted sinner,' say you. '*I will never cast out,*' says Christ. 'But, I have served Satan all my days,' say you. '*I will never cast out,*' says Christ. 'But, I have sinned against light,' say you. '*I will never cast out,*' says Christ. 'But, I have sinned against mercy,' say you. '*I will never cast out,*' says Christ. 'But, I have no good thing to bring with me,' say you. '*I will never cast out,*' says Christ.

Thus might I go on, and show you that this promise was provided to answer all your objections, and to ease all your fears. Many, like you, have feared that the Savior would not receive them; but '*I will never cast out*' is a promise of Christ upon which millions more will yet rely, and which, when the grass is withered and the flower faded of all creature strength and glory, shall endure forever. You blessed spirits in glory! tell us, is it not a faithful saying that Jesus Christ saves sinners?" You Saul of Tarsus, who once gloated in the dying agonies of Christ's first martyr, yourself a Pharisee and blasphemer, tell us, is it not a faithful saying that Jesus receives and saves sinners, even the very chief? And you Mary Magdalen, once demoniacally possessed, tell us, is it not a faithful saying that Jesus has might to cast out the Evil One, and save to the uttermost the poor victim of his power? And you expiring malefactor, appealing in penitence and faith to the crucified Savior, at whose side you did languish and die, "*Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom,*" tell us, is it not a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners?

And what, my anxious reader, is the testimony which this great cloud of witnesses bears?--"Oh, yes, it is a most true and precious saying, worthy of all belief and acceptance. We came to Jesus as sinners, the vilest, the greatest, the very chief, and He welcomed and saved us; we washed in His blood, and we clothed us in His righteousness, and He saved us by His grace, and brought us home to glory, and now we

sing, Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Anxious soul! humble penitent! come to Jesus, and come *now!* For, "we believe that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they."

THE TRIAL OF THE NEW BIRTH

"The Lord tries the righteous."--Psalm 11:5

It is the perfection of God that He does everything for Himself; this, while it is the greatest imperfection of the creature, is the highest perfection of the Creator. The works of **creation** exhibit the glory of God. Not an insect floats in the sunbeam, not a flower blooms in the valley, not a dewdrop sparkles upon the rose leaf, but has its end in God. It is equally so in the works of **providence**. All its events--the greatest, the most minute, the mysterious, and the lucid illustrate His wisdom and promote His glory, and terminate in Himself. If in the kingdoms of creation and of providence it is so, how much more in the kingdom of **grace!** The fall of man from his original righteousness, to his recovery from that condition by electing grace, and his final translation to glory, is that masterpiece of Divine workmanship which will fill heaven with God's glory and replenish eternity with His praise.

We have a striking illustration of this thought in the subject to which the present chapter is devoted--the process of **trial** through which God permits the renewed nature of the believer to pass. It might seem to a superficial eye, or to the mind of a young convert to Christ, at first sight strange and incongruous that the Lord, who loves the righteous, as He does, should often subject them to trials so severe

and so prolonged. That He should impose sufferings so intense, and permit sorrows so many and deep, to come upon those whom He has pronounced the chosen objects of His love, in whom is all His delight, who are His peculiar and costly treasure, tender and precious to Him as the apple of His eye, seems mysterious, if not inequitable.

And yet, all is right! It is proper and befitting that the new nature of God in the souls of His people should **evidence** its genuineness, develop its power, and unveil its glory. And the mode which the God of love and wisdom has chosen for this is just that one the best adapted to promote and accomplish the great end--"*The Lord tries the righteous.*" Such is the view we are about to present to the reader of this volume. But a brief description in the first place of the "righteous" is necessary, since in a preceding chapter we have dwelt at length upon the character.

Contemplate the "righteous" in their **PRIVILEGE**, as righteous in the righteousness of God. It is called "*the righteousness of God,*" not because it is the essential or abstract righteousness of God, for this is incommunicable, and cannot, therefore, describe the righteousness in which the believer is justified. But it is called "the righteousness of God" because it is the righteousness of Christ, who is God. To quote a text more than once referred to in this volume, "*He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*"--observe, made the righteousness of God *in Christ*. Thus, we stand by imputation, in the righteousness of Christ--God in our nature, Immanuel, God with us; "The Lord our Righteousness."

What a vital and precious truth is this to the believer! The more the mind revolves round this doctrine, the more glory we see in it, and the more we seem to clasp it, as the drowning mariner the plank. And how some can talk of sin, and confess sin, and yet think of standing before God without this righteousness, is most puzzling! When we study the law of God--its spirituality and strictness; when

we think that for one thought, one glance of the mind, it curses and condemns; that, it demands the body, the soul, the time, the talents, yes, our all for God--else it were a most wicked law--that, its terms are blood for blood, life for life--how suitable, how perfect, how glorious does the righteousness of an incarnate God appear which has met every demand, honored every precept, and which is unto all and upon all those who believe!

And when we consider that there bends not a believer over this page, however weak his faith or small the buddings of Divine grace in his soul--he may have been the vilest sinner, and now the weakest believer--yet looking to Jesus, notwithstanding all his imperfections and failures, he stands complete in the righteousness of God, how magnificent and precious does this doctrine appear! O blessed truth! how it abases, and yet how it exalts! To know that while our feelings fluctuate, and our frames vary, and our experience ebbs and flows as the tide, yet our righteousness varies not, changes not, and that we are not justified one moment more really, more freely, more completely than another, is a mercy unspeakably great.

And when we examine our principles and their fruits, our aims and their results--striving to reach the center--the mark of the prize of our high calling--yet ever falling short, had we not this righteousness to stand in before God, how could we dare look up? O you saints of the Most High, you who are traveling on through much failure, through much infirmity, it may be through much trial and tribulation, shout the hallelujahs of heaven! Christ is yours, His righteousness is yours, His work is yours, His glory is yours, for *you are complete* in Him. Such are the "righteous" in their great privilege.

Let us look at them in their **CHARACTER**. They are denominated "*the righteous*." It is here the existence and vitality of the *new nature* appear so evident and illustrious. All the holiness that vitalizes and adorns the life of the child of God, all the righteousness which renders his path so luminous, his influence so sanctifying, his

character so glorifying to God, is the new and Divine nature in his soul exercising its power and putting forth its fruit. Born of God, believers advance in spiritual stature, from the babe in Christ to the young man, from the young man to the father, and from the father to the hoary head found in the way of righteousness. And, as they grow up into Christ, the new nature exhibits more and more of its vitality, unveils more and more of its loveliness, and accomplishes more and more of its achievement.

Growing up into Christ in all things, their religious progress is a gradual development of Christ's nature and image in them, and in the same ratio a gradual putting off the old man with his deceitful lusts and putting on the new. In other words, the believer growing up into Christ grows less like himself and more like Christ, less earthly and more heavenly. Thus does his newness of nature appear in the righteousness of life which he lives--*"He that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous,"* (1 John 3:7.)

This will constitute the grand distinctive feature of the human race in the great day of judgment--*righteousness*. The distinction of races and of languages, of rank and wealth, of churches and creeds, will vanish in that solemn day, and nothing will mark the great separating distinction of man from man but the righteousness of God imputed, and the righteousness of the Holy Spirit imparted, to those who shall be saved. *"They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him. Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serves God and him that serves him not,"* (Mal. 3:17, 18.)

"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness,
Your beauty, are my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

"When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
Even then shall this be all my plea—
Jesus has lived and died for me.

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While, through Your blood, absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

But, "the Lord TRIES the righteous." To this truth let us now direct our attention. Trial is an essential part of our advance in grace here, and of our fitness for glory hereafter. There never was a saint of God exempt from trial. As has been remarked, **God had but one Son exempt from sin, but never one exempt from suffering.** Thus it is said of Jesus, *"Though he was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."* Trial, as a part of **earth's discipline** for heaven's enjoyment, is nowhere a fact disguised or qualified in God's Word. It confronts us upon the very threshold of our conversion, that, if we become the true disciples of Christ, it must be by bearing His cross and following Him through much tribulation to the kingdom. God thus speaks of His Church, the remnant according to the election of grace--*"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried,"* (Zech. 13:9.)

The testimony of the New Testament is not less clear and emphatic. Thus taught the first apostles of the faith. They went forth preaching the gospel in every city, *"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through MUCH TRIBULATION enter into the kingdom of God."*

The very constitution of the renewed nature of the Christian implies its exposure to *trial*. Its existence in the living soul is where sin's empire is. It is a kingdom of light irradiating amid a kingdom of darkness--an empire of righteousness reigning amid an empire of

sin--a spark of fire glowing amid the heaving ocean. What is the daily life of the believer from the moment he raises his head from his pillow in the morning until he replaces it at night, but a battle with inward corruption and with external temptation? Thus our very constitution, as those that are born again, is in direct and incessant antagonism with evil, and, consequently, is one of perpetual comment upon the inspired declaration, "*The Lord TRIES the righteous.*"

The discipline of trial to which the righteous are subjected is essentially different to what the world blindly supposes it to be. In the world's estimate the *trial* of the saints is a retributive judgment--a penal evil--a divine condemnation. But, as represented by God, what is the trial of the righteous? It is variously denominated. Thus, for example, *trial* is the believer's testimonial for heaven, (Matt. 5:10;) the gift of God, (Phil. 1:29;) the Spirit of glory resting upon him, (1 Pet. 4:14;) a baptismal consecration, (Mark 10:38, 39;) a filling up of the Lord's sufferings, without which Christ's sufferings in His Church are not complete, (Col. 1:24;) the evangelical perfection of the righteous, (James 1:3, 4) a refining of their faith, (1 Pet. 1:7;) their enhancement of glory, (2 Cor. 4:17;) their conformity to Christ their Head, (2 Tim. 2:11, 12.) Such are a few of the lights in which the Holy Spirit, in the Word, places the process of trial by which the Lord tries the righteous.

It were a truism to remark that the *trials* of the Lord's people are **VARIOUS**. No individual can carefully and thoughtfully read and study God's Word, or his own personal history, without arriving at this conclusion. As the Lord's garden is planted with trees of various sizes--as God's family is composed of children of different growth--as Christ's body, the Church, is composed of different members; so the spiritual discipline of God with the righteous varies. Some of the Lord's people are tried in body and some in soul; some in their circumstances, and others in their families; some by the world, and some by the Church. Like a wise and loving parent, like a skillful and attentive physician, like an experienced and judicious husbandman,

the Lord adapts and moulds the discipline, the treatment, and the pruning in His trial of the righteous according to the nature and requirements of the case, so that every believer's cross and trial is just what the Lord makes it, and just what his case required.

But whatever the trial to which the Lord in His love and wisdom may see fit to subject the new nature, it will but result in its greater development and maturity. When we remember how much there is within us opposed to its progress, how much to veil its beauty, to weaken its power, to shade its luster, and almost to imperil its very existence, is it any marvel that He whose work, whose nature, and whose image it is--jealous of His own glory, as its Author--should subject the righteous to the discipline of trial, that their righteousness might appear as the light, and their judgment as the noonday?

The apostle Paul, in a passage already quoted, speaks of filling up that which is behind by the afflictions of Christ in his flesh. It was a noble sentiment worthy of his magnanimous spirit. But it expressed more than this. It sets forth a truth most consolatory to the believer--that is, that **the afflictions of Christ's people are the afflictions of Christ Himself**, so perfect is the oneness of Christ and His Church. Now, if it were an essential part of the Divine economy--if it were necessary as perfecting Him as the mediator of His Church, that Christ, the sinless Son of God, should pass through the process of trial--should be tried from every quarter and in every part, shall we count it a strange thing if God subjects His own work in our soul to the searching process of the crucible?

It is written, "*THE LORD tries the righteous.*" Sweet is this assurance, that it is *the Lord Himself* who tries them. Jesus is the Refiner. The work of our sanctification shall be His own. He will not allow His saints to fall into the hands of man for the perfecting of that which concerns them. The moment that the afflicted saint recognizes *the Lord* in the chastening, sees *God* in the calamity, he passes beyond the region of second causes--with which, alas! the

latent infidelity and atheism of our heart deal so much--and the chastened soul rests in the First Great Cause of all events--Jehovah. *"I was silent; I opened not my mouth, because You did it,"* and so he behaves and quiets himself as a child that is weaned of his mother.

Receive this strong consolation, chastened and afflicted one! *"God HIMSELF has done it,"* therefore it is well done. God can do nothing wrong. His work, like Himself, is perfect. And, if perfection traces His work of grace, shall we suspect imperfection in His work of providence? That be far from us! He who gave us His beloved Son, will He compromise our interests, imperil our happiness, rob us of one real blessing in the severest discipline of His hand? Oh no! infinite love prescribes, infinite wisdom shapes, infinite faithfulness and power execute all His purposes, thoughts, and doings concerning His people.

Again, we repeat the truth--He to whom you are more delightful and precious than myriads of planets like this; who laid all your sins and curse upon His beloved Son; who sustains to you the divine and the tender relation of a Father, has sent this present trial, this discipline of grief which bows your spirit to the dust. Look above the proximate causes of the event, and see the rod, the sword, the cup in your Father's hands, and hear Him say, *"I will do you no hurt,"* (Jer. 25:6.)

But you have in this present trial with which the Lord is trying your grace more than a negative, you have a positive assurance of good. See how the faith of Jacob pleaded it with God--*"You said, I will surely do you good."* Imitate the patriarch. God is honored when His people remind Him of His word of promise. Our faith has nothing stronger, yes, has nothing else to rest upon than the word of the living God. And faith asks no more. *"Your word is TRUTH,"* is the grateful acknowledgment of its deep, firm conviction. It deals with a God who cannot lie, whom it is impossible that He should deny himself, (Tit. 1:2.)

Change is written upon every being and object but God. All is passing away! The verdant grass withers, the beautiful flower fades, the tall cedar bows, the aged oak falls, and in one hour the light of the home is extinguished, its center and attraction gone! Time passes, and removes the friend around whom the heart's fibers fondly entwined, and, like the vine wrenched from its support, our hearts lie torn and bleeding in the dust. Events, unexpected and startling, transpire, and in one short day the whole scenery of life is changed!

And yet we go on in our creature idolatry, still loving, and clinging, and trusting; carving new idols, hewing out new cisterns, planting new gourds, so loath to hear the voice of love, which says, "*Arise and depart, this is not your rest; it is polluted.*"

But the unchanged and unchangeable, the infinitely blessed and all-satisfying One is--GOD! And He will assert His own supremacy in His people. Everything outside of Him is unsubstantial, unsatisfying, and passing away. Nothing is real, no one true, but God. It is often trial alone, and that the most painful and humiliating, that will school us into the experience of this truth. Emptied from vessel to vessel, earthly hopes crushed, creature blessings torn up by the roots, human resources failing, we then are shut up alone to God, and never knew until then what a Fountain of bliss He was.

Oh, what a true, all-satisfying, all-sanctifying portion is God! An infinite being, He is a boundless, inexhaustible Good. Creating the soul with a capacity to enjoy Him, He never intended that man should be happy in any other than Himself. And since the creature committed the crime of renouncing Him as its chief and only good--since man forsook Him, the Fountain of living waters--all His dealings in providence and in grace have been but to win and woo the soul back to Himself, its original, inalienable, and eternal Good. To accomplish this purpose, the Son of God--the same in divine essence with the Father, co-eternal and co-equal--assumed our nature, that the chain now broken, which once bound us in righteousness, and holiness, and love to God, might re-attach us to

His being, that henceforth and ever He might be the—
"The sea of love,
Where all our pleasures roll;
The circle where our passions move,
The center of our soul."

O Lord, though it were a trial that brings us to You; though to reach You we wade through billowy seas, walk over broken cisterns, tread upon withered flowers of human good, yet will we praise and bless You for all, if it but draw us nearer to Yourself, that we might loose ourselves in Your infinite bliss!

"I thank You for sickness, for sorrow and care,
For the thorns I have gathered, the anguish I bear,
For nights of anxiety, watchings, and tears;
A present of pain, a perspective of fears.
I praise You, I bless You, my King and my God,
For the good and the evil Your hand has bestowed.
The flowers were sweet, but their fragrance is flown,
They yielded no fruits, they are withered and gone;
The thorn it was poignant, but precious to me,
'Twas the message of mercy--it led me to THEE!"

Before we conduct this chapter to a conclusion, it may be profitable to mention some of the spiritual **BENEFITS** accruing to believers from the trials to which the Lord subjects His own new nature in the soul of the regenerate.

1. The first we quote is, ***the closer acquaintance into which it brings them with their own hearts.*** There are corruptions deeply embedded in the heart of the most holy, which the discipline of sanctified trial alone removes. It was not intuitively that the Church in the wilderness came into the experience of this fact. Thus we read, *"He led you through the wilderness these forty years, to humble you, and to prove you, TO KNOW WHAT WAS IN YOUR HEART,"* (Deut. 8:2.) Until the hour of trial, how little know we of

this the seat and chamber of all evil! What pride, what selfishness, what infidelity, what carnality, what idolatry, what ingratitude, what murmuring, what rebellion against God are there! Trial is searching in its tendency. It is the furnace alone that reveals the alloy, and separates it from the pure gold, and so brings to view the new nature in its reality, loveliness, and purity.

Speaking of His Church in Jer. 9:6-7, God says, "*Through deceit they refuse to hear me. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will melt them and try them.*" As though He had said, "I will cast them into my furnace of love, and then will I discover themselves to themselves, and they shall know what was in their hearts." Thus the Lord by the same process deals with us. And then, in astonishment, we exclaim, "Woe is me! what a heart is mine! Did I suspect the existence of such latent virulence, such deep-seated depravity? How ignorant of myself have I been! Where is my faith in God, my love to Christ, my strength in service, my patience in suffering, my rejoicing in tribulation, my power in prayer? Instead of this, what do I discover but self-love, creature-idolatry, distrust of God, earth-bound affections, rebellion of will, and discontent of spirit against my God, my Father, my Friend!

What sad memories, also, does my trial awaken! Since God has let in a little of His displeasure upon my soul, I am made, as it were, to recollect the sins of my youth, sins of riper years, sins of old age--so easily committed and so soon forgotten--and with the brethren of Joseph exclaim, 'We are certainly guilty concerning our brother.' Thus searching and humbling is trial.

But if, like the surgeon's lance, the Lord's trial of His people is sometimes painfully probing, it is equally salutary and healing in its result. All this sad discovery of our hearts drives us more entirely out of ourselves to the Lord Jesus. We value Him as we learn to undervalue our own selves. Our thoughts of Him rise as thoughts of ourselves sink. In proportion as we learn by experience--and there is no school like God's school of trial--our own emptiness and

nothingness, we learn what a full, all-sufficient, all-powerful Christ we have. Trial, deepening our self-acquaintance, deepens our acquaintance with the Lord; and to know more experimentally the Lord is worth all the discipline of chastening and of suffering it involves. Then we seek to straighten what is crooked, to strengthen what is weak, to restore what is lame, that it may not be turned out of the way, but that it may be rather healed.

2. By means of trial we are also ***brought into closer communion with God.*** In times of prosperity, there are many things which insinuate themselves between God and the soul. When the heart grows fat and is surfeited with creature-good, we are prone to forget and to forsake God, and even to kick against Him. Our communion with Him is invaded, and sometimes superseded. The compass is disturbed, and the needle of the soul swerves away from God.

But the Lord sends trial, and by it He restores the balance of the affections, attracting them again to their Divine and blessed Center. Responding to its touch, the truant heart flies back to God, under His most gracious restorings. Sensible of its backsliding, tasting the bitterness of its departure, it returns to its rest, and exclaims, "Lord, You have made my heart for Yourself, and it is restless and unquiet until it can rest in You." And, then, He who rebuked and chastened puts forth His hand, and receives back the weather-beaten dove, and the soul folds its weary wing upon the bosom of God.

To be stirred up to prayer is to be roused to our sweetest privilege and highest blessing. Therefore it is that God's tried ones are His most praying ones. The spirit of prayer is within them, but the lance of trial is often needed to draw it forth. "In return for my friendship they accuse me, but I am a man of prayer." David's adversaries gave themselves to persecution and wickedness, but he gave himself to prayer. The more they persecuted, the more he prayed. As his troubles multiplied, so did his heaven-sent petitions multiply.

So long as God keeps us in the furnace of trial, so long does He keep us on our knees at the throne of grace. *"Is any afflicted? let him pray."* Prayer is the true sweetener and solace of affliction. Affliction rouses us to prayer, and prayer in return soothes and hallows the affliction. Not only do our prayers multiply in trial, but they intensify. We pray not only more frequently, but more fervently. Of our blessed Lord it is recorded that, *"being in an agony, He prayed MORE EARNESTLY,"* until He sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Prayers that satisfied us in prosperity will not meet our state in adversity. Petitions which answered well enough for the day of peace and prosperity will not serve our turn when the hour of temptation comes, and the cloud of sorrow darkens. The remembrance of the cold, dreary, formal devotions which congealed as they rose to our languid lips, covers us with shame and confusion when the Lord tries us. It would seem as though we never knew the reality, the power, and the intensity of real prayer until now. And never did God listen to our voice with so attentive ear. *"O my dove, you who are in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs; let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice, for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is lovely,"* (Song 2:14.) Beautiful in His eye as was His dove, her wings covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold, most sweet as was the cadence of her voice, yet more beautiful is she now, bedewed with tears, trembling with emotion, and peering out from beneath the rock and the stair, that veiled her from His view. Yes, the Lord tries the righteous, that He might behold the loveliness of their countenance, and listen to the sweetness of their voice.

3. Trial, also, imparts to the new nature ***a more quickened and intense desire for the nutriment and sweetness of God's Word.*** The Bible is the book of the afflicted. We fly to it in times of correction. Then it is we read it more attentively, counsel with it more closely, understand it more clearly, relish it more sweetly, and receive it as the engrafted Word into the heart more experimentally.

But in times of worldly engagement or prosperity, the Word of God is apt to be slighted and unread. As we then pray to God carelessly, so we read God's Word carelessly. Prayer and the study of the Word go hand in hand. But God uses His rod, and by its discipline, like indolent or careless children, we are chastened to a closer and more diligent study.

This was David's testimony--"*It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.*" Divine chastening and instruction are thus connected. Again--"*Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but, my heart stands in awe of your word.*" While Saul and his princes were meditating his downfall, David was found meditating in God's statutes. While they were consulting with the oracles of hell how they might best sin, he was consulting with the Oracles of God how he might best not sin. While they were coming against him with the sword, the spear, and the shield of human might and prowess, he went forth in the name of the Lord of Hosts, armed only with the sling of God's Word, and the smooth stones of its exceeding great and precious promises.

Oh, how sweet and nourishing do we experience God's Word to be in times of soul-hunger and trial! "*The full soul loaths the honeycomb;*" but when God intensifies our spiritual hunger, even the bitterness of trial becomes sweet, because it endears Him to us who is the sweetness of the Word. He wisely and mercifully permits a famine, that He might show how He can keep our soul alive in its midst by the pure wheat of His own truth. "I have made," says one, "many a meal's food upon the promises when I have lacked bread." Oh blessed trial, that increases our love to, deepens our experience of, and satisfies our soul with, God's Word!

4. Another hallowed fruit of the Lord's trial of the righteous is, ***the examination and test of their salvation.*** It is when His afflictive hand is upon us that we more especially feel the necessity of

that sound evidence and assured conviction of our salvation, and of heaven, which, in its support and consolation, more than balances the heaviest trial. Before the hour that brings our religion to the test, with what superficial grounds, with what slight evidence, with what a dubious hope, are many religious professors satisfied! When the candle of the Almighty shines upon their tabernacle, when all is peace within and prosperity without, they can walk as upon high places, and float as upon the placid tide, and speak confidently of the haven of eternal rest. A little religious profession, and still less religion, goes a great way with them, just serving their present turn.

But, when the hour of adversity comes, when the storm breaks over them, when death knocks at the door, oh, then they discover that the 'fig-leaf covering' and the foundation of sand--the Christless, lifeless, prayerless religion--which sufficed for the sunny hour, fails now that the hand of God is heavily upon them. Oh, what a test of real religion, of vital godliness, of the new nature in the soul, is the hour of trial! Shadows and chimeras, dreams and phantoms, flee away then, and *one* scriptural, real, spiritual evidence of interest in Christ, of the love of God, is worth ten thousand worlds.

My reader, look well to your religion, look well to your hope of the future. Ask yourself, "Will this covering avail me when I appear in the presence of God? Will this faith sustain me when my heart and my flesh are failing? Will this love give me boldness in the day of judgment? Will this evidence answer the solemn purpose, when I lay me down to die?"

But the true believer finds evidence of real grace, of soundness of profession, of a fixed hope, in the time of trial. The crucible tests his religion, the furnace consumes the spurious, the sieve scatters the chaff; and when God has tried him, he comes forth as the fine gold, as the pure wheat, testifying to the sweets of adversity, and chanting the praises of correction, rejoicing that the Lord *tries* the righteous.

5. Not the least hallowed and happy result of the Lord's trial of the righteous, is, ***the mellowness which it imparts to the Christian character.*** There is much, in some believers, which, like iron in its native state, is hard and intractable. It will receive no impress, and yield to no mold. There is the absence of that refinement of feeling, and ripeness of Christian character, so marked and distinguished a characteristic of the believer disciplined by sorrow. But, like to the ore to which we have compared it, let it be subjected to the fiery trial of the furnace, and the grace that is in the believer can be molded to any shape, and will receive any impress God may please. "*I will melt and try you,*" says the Lord. "*God makes my heart soft,*" is the experience of Job.

No believer attains to anything like completeness of Christian grace, who has not been a *tried* believer. The fire has smoothed the roughness, the fire has softened down the sharp angularities of his character, imparting a tone and air so gentle and courteous and winning, as to rank him among those who 'wear soft clothing, and dwell in king's houses.' "*Each one resembled the children of a king.*"

Emerging from beneath the hand of God, the tried believer presents a more beautiful and perfect copy of the mind, spirit, and demeanor of the Lord Jesus--meek, lowly, and loving. Trial, while it has more vividly impressed the seal of genuineness upon his Christianity, has developed more of its intellectual robustness and moral beauty, imparting a new mold to the entire man. Oh, how needful is *affliction* to perfect us in grace and to fit us for glory! We shall read this truth, before long, in a serener, clearer light, and shall then fully see, what now we perceive so imperfectly, that our present trials were indispensable parts of our spiritual education for earth's service, and of our holy preparation for heaven's enjoyment. Then shall we learn that, with not a solitary trial could we have dispensed; that there was nothing arbitrary, unkind, or unwise in any of the dealings of our God; that, that event wrapped in such dreadful mystery--that calamity so fearfully crushing--that trial which, like a two-edged sword, pierced our hearts through and through, was the message of a

Father's wisdom and love, and formed an essential part of our holy training for eternity. Oh, to what lofty music shall we then wake our golden harp in remembrance of all the way the Lord our God led us home to glory, and home to Himself!

6. We have reserved for the last of the hallowed results of trial, its crowning and most precious one, ***the closer intimacy into which it brings us with the Lord Jesus.*** Much of our knowledge of Christ, before the Lord tries us, is but theoretical. Experience of Christ and His truth is only derived in the school of self-knowledge, and in the discipline of adversity. The soldier and the mariner are but mere theorists in their respective sciences, until the one stands amid the thunder of the battle-field, and the other amid the fury of the storm. It is thus God trains His Church for heaven. He will have us know His beloved Son not from books, or sermons, or hearsay only, but from a personal and heartfelt experience of what He is.

But it is to the school of trial we more especially refer. When clouds of adversity are gathering--when death is invading, and ties are dissolving, and friends are leaving, and resources are failing, and health is drooping, and the long-drawn shadows of sorrow are falling many and darkly upon the future of life's landscape, we turn to Christ, and the closer transactions into which we then are brought with Him deepens our intimacy and increases our knowledge; and then we more fully experience what a Redeemer, what a Friend, and what a Brother Christ is.

And now we rejoice in tribulation, since it has made us better acquainted with Jesus. **We have learned more of Christ in one sanctified trial than from all the books we ever read!** Sorrow brought us to Him, and brought Him to us; and so correction has been our teacher. Jesus loves to be where His saints are in trial. Are you in search of Him? Go where adversity in one of its many forms has found a home; go where there is a couch of weakness to strengthen, a pillow of sickness to sustain, a bed of death to cheer, a house of mourning to comfort, a wounded, sad, and lonely heart to

heal and solace, and *there* you will find Jesus. Imitate Christ, and, perhaps, in striving to help, strengthen, and comfort a suffering fellow-disciple, the sorrow concealed within the cloister of your own sad heart may be comforted with the comfort with which you have comforted another.

Here would we pause and inquire— What, my reader, is the hallowed fruit of *your* affliction? The Lord has, perhaps, brought you through fiery trial, out of much tribulation. You have had sickness, bereavement, loss of property, or, some crushing woe. Sit down, examine and reflect. Turn in upon your heart, and ask, "What spiritual benefit have I derived from my affliction?--what lessons have I learned from the catechism of trial?--what blessings have I received from the discipline of sorrow? Have I in suffering learned that there is no evil in the world like sin, and that there is no sin so great as that of my own heart? Have I found from experience that there is no good so great, no treasure so precious, and no Savior so suitable in the universe, as Christ? Do I come forth from beneath God's chastening hand a *converted* man--born again? Am I, as a Christian man, more deeply sanctified? Am I more like Christ? the world less in the ascendant in my thoughts? and the creature less the idol of my heart? Has the Word of God become more precious, and communion with God more sweet? Am I, in a word, as was the Captain of my salvation, *perfected through suffering*? God, my Father, has consecrated suffering to me; has suffering consecrated me to God?"

Such, my reader, be our self-examination. Oh, it is sad to taste the bitter root and not the sweet fruit of sorrow; to experience its curse and not its blessings--its fainting, but not its cordial. "*I have smitten you, yet have you not returned unto me, says the Lord,*" (Amos 4:9.) May our testimony to the hallowed results of divine correction be that of David--"*It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray--but now have I kept your word.*" Then shall we go down to the grave and up to glory, chanting the praises of sanctified correction, and in

eternity shall adore God for all the discipline of trial that fitted us for its endless enjoyment, and treasure up within the sacred ark of our memory, the rod of affliction that budded with blessings so many and so great.

Thus have we endeavored to trace in the present chapter, which now must close, the process of trial to which the Lord subjects the *new nature* of His people. If this nature, as represented by the Son of God, passed through suffering--though He was without sin--shall we marvel that the same nature in us, dwelling as it does amid so much that is unholy, is made to pass through much tribulation to the kingdom? Meekly, submissively, no, cheerfully, let us drink the cup which Christ's own hand has mingled, rejoicing that we are counted as worthy to drink of the cup that he drank of, and to be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized.

Soon--its coming speeds fast!--we shall require this training and this discipline no longer. We shall arrive unto the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, and our education and fitness by grace for glory will be complete. A few more 'winter days of suffering' and we shall be perfected. The last thorn of the crown will pierce us--the last cup of suffering will distress us--the last fiery dart will assail us--the last touch of sin will taint us--and we shall outshine the brightest angel, and sing more sweetly than the sweetest seraph, casting down our diadem of glory at the feet of Him whose atoning blood will have brought us there!

THE RELAPSE AND RECOVERY OF THE NEW NATURE

"O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more."--Psalm 39:13

Our blessed Lord, in those remarkable words addressed to His erring apostle, *"When you are converted, strengthen your brethren,"* unfolded one of the most authentic and sad, yet difficult chapters in the history of the believer. Peter, to whom the exhortation was spoken, was already a converted and gracious man. He had fallen, and fallen deeply, but he had not fallen from the *principle* and *possession* of grace. This he could never fully or finally lose. And yet the Lord speaks of his *conversion*--*"When you are CONVERTED."* The real state of the disciple will at once explain the meaning of the Lord.

Peter had backslidden. He had fallen, not, as we have intimated, from the principle and possession, but from the profession and power of grace. In denying his Lord and Master he had fearfully sinned, had awfully relapsed; the locks of his spiritual strength were shorn, and he was powerless in the hands of his foe. Jesus came to his rescue. Bending upon him a look of forgiving love, which in a moment dissolved his heart into penitence, he addressed those memorable words, "when you are converted, strengthen your brethren."

In other words, "When you are restored from your backsliding, turned back from your wandering, rescued from your fall, as an evidence and fruit and acknowledgment of your recovery, strengthen your brethren--your brethren who, through weakness of faith, littleness of grace, and manifold infirmities, are liable to fall through the force of a like temptation." We are to understand, then, by the *re-conversion* of the believer, his *restoration* from those spiritual lapses to which, more or less, all the Lord's people are subject, to that healthy and robust state of grace from which his soul had declined.

The experience of the Psalmist--which suggests the subject of the present chapter--harmonizes in its essential features with that of all

the people of God. David was now, as from a sick couch, taking a solemn and close survey of eternity. Anticipating his departure, he roused himself to the task of self-examination. The result of that scrutiny was the startling discovery of his soul's declension--the loss of spiritual vitality and strength. Hence his prayer--"*O spare me, that I may RECOVER STRENGTH, before I go hence and be no more.*" How much is there in this spiritual lapse of grace with which the condition of many believers corresponds!

Nothing is so liable to fluctuation, nothing more sensible of change, as the renewed nature of the believer. The conviction of spiritual loss to which this giant in grace was roused in view of his departure, describes the state into which many imperceptibly decline, and suspect not its existence, and are not conscious of their loss, until the solemn charge is heard, "*Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.*" Let us briefly consider some of the spiritual lapses to which the new nature in the soul is exposed, and the means of recovery.

It is a melancholy state thus portrayed--to witness a man of God drooping, a standard-bearer fainting, a stalwart competitor for the great prize acknowledging, just as he was about to finish his career and reach the goal, the decay of spiritual vitality and power, is a spectacle startling and painful in the extreme. And yet how frequent its occurrence! There is nothing in the renewed nature to exempt it from spiritual fluctuation. It is a divine, but not a *deified*, nature; it is of God, but it is not *God*. It dwells in a body of sin and of death, and is exposed to all those hostile influences which spring from the fallen and corrupt nature in the midst of which it dwells. Just as the barometer is depressed or elevated by atmospheric influences, or just as the compass is disturbed by the proximity of objects naturally affecting its regularity, so the new man is constantly exposed to deterioration from the opposite and baneful influences springing from our fallen and corrupt nature. The depressions, therefore, of the new nature arise not from any essential defect in that nature--for it is

incorruptible--but from the sin that dwells in us. Thus it is that the believer loses strength.

"That I may recover strength." The strongest may become weak, yes, weak as the weakest, when sin is allowed for a moment the ascendancy. But when conscious of the feebleness of our own native strength, of the fallibility of our own wisdom, of our soul's emptiness, poverty, and nothingness; when thus acquainted with, and so weaned from our own selves, then are we strong--strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might--strong and mighty in Jehovah. This was the testimony of Paul--*"When I am weak, then am I strong."*

But let us consider--In what is this loss of spiritual strength the most visible? Where is the child of God the most sensible, especially when he takes a close view of death and eternity, of soul-weakness?

With regard to the principle and action of **FAITH**, this decay of vigor may be visible. As faith is the 'parent grace' of all the Christian graces, the root of all the fruits of the Spirit, the mainspring of all the holy actings of the soul, it will be at once perceived that any decay, weakening, or slumber of this precious grace, must paralyze, in a measure, the entire Christianity of the soul. When faith droops, all the springs of the soul are down; when faith rises, the soul mounts as on eagle's wings. Peter trod the broken waves manfully so long as the eye of his faith rested upon Jesus, its Author and Object. But when the winds increased in might, and the sea grew more billowy, he looked from Jesus to his watery pathway, and his faith failing, he began to sink--*"Lord, save; I perish!"*

And how weakening to faith is the looking off from Jesus to our sins and infirmities--to our trials, difficulties, and dangers! The moment 'faith' forms an alliance with 'sense', it droops. A healthy body chained to a sick body would, before long, itself grow sickly. A living body fastened to a dead body would soon itself die.

Now, faith in itself, is a divine, healthy, vigorous principle. Left to its own actings, resting simply upon God's Word, looking only to the Lord Jesus, and dealing chiefly with the invisible, it will achieve wonders. It will overcome the world; it will foil the stratagems of Satan; it will deaden the power of sin; it will tread firmly the broken waters of trial; and will do and suffer all the will of God. What great things this divine principle wrought in the worthies of old! "By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. Women received their loved ones back again from death. But others trusted God and were tortured, preferring to die rather than turn from God and be free. They placed their hope in the resurrection to a better life."

With such a picture before us, how sad is the thought that our faith should ever suffer weakness or decay. And yet what a waning of the strength of faith may the believer discover in his soul just at the hour when he needs more than ever all the might and power of this wondrous grace!

My soul, is your faith weak, and does your heart tremble? Are you looking at the broken waves beneath you, at the dark clouds above you? Is it now the fourth watch of the night, and Jesus not come to you? Are resources narrowing, needs pressing, difficulties accumulating, and your heart dying within you? Fear not! He who trod the limpid waves with Peter, who gently said to him, "*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*" then stretched forth His hand and caught him, is at your side, and will not allow you to sink and perish beneath these waters. Hope in God; for you shall yet praise Him who is the health of your countenance, and *your* God.

There may likewise be a loss of strength in the **LOVE** of the renewed nature. The love of the changed heart to God is so pure, unearthly, and divine a sentiment--a feeling so spiritually sensitive--it is soon

affected by any change in the moral atmosphere by which it is encircled. How soon and how easily may it be wounded, chilled, and impaired! The ever-pressing cares of this life, the undue ascendancy of the creature, the captivity of sensual objects, the insidious power of the world, will, any single one of them, seriously affect the purity, simplicity, and intensity of our love to the Lord.

"Do you love me more than these?" is a question which we need our Lord to put to us on every occasion. How condescending His grace to place Himself in competition with the objects of sense! *"More than these?"* More than these creature claimants? More than these earthly honors? More than these worldly riches? More than these domestic comforts? More than parent or child, brother, sister, friend, or country? Do you love me singly, supremely, above all, and even amid ten thousand suitors for your heart?"

Oh, blessed they who from the depth of their sincerity can respond, *"Lord, You know all things, You know that love You!"*

And yet when life approaches its close--when human objects of love, and creature objects of interest, are losing their power and their hold, and the soul peers beyond the present into the solemn, mysterious future, how many a child of God has found reason to exclaim, *"O spare me, that I may recover strength!"* Love has lost its power; its strength is impaired, its luster is shaded, its hold upon Christ is weakened, and the soul begins to doubt all past, as all present experience of its existence. But, thank God, the principle of love to Christ can never utterly perish. It is a part of the new nature, is born in the soul when the soul is born again, and can only perish with the destruction of the ransomed, renewed, and saved soul itself--and this can never, *never* be! Watch, then, against the waning of your love, lest when about to fly to a world where all is love, you find how impaired is the vigor of this grace of the Spirit.

Reposing your head upon the lap of some too fond and too indulged creature-delight--be it the world, be it the creature, or be it SELF--

you awake to the startling discovery, how sadly the locks of its strength have been severed, and with how little of this heavenly grace you are about to enter heaven, and meet Him whose love to you had never, never faltered, chilled, or changed. *"O spare me, that I may recover strength."*

How frequently, too has it transpired in the experience of the child of God, that just at the hour that the **HOPE** of glory is about to enter upon its full fruition, its sun is setting amid darkling clouds! "Where now is my hope? My hope is perished from the Lord!" is the mournful exclamation of the departing Christian. Oh, sad and melancholy discovery! But is it really so that Christian hope--the good hope, through grace, enkindled in the renewed heart by the "God of hope"--hope reposing upon Christ, and entwined with His cross--hope which, like a brilliant star, poured its silver rays down upon many a tempestuous sea--hope which buoyed up the soul in many a season of sorrow and darkness, despondency and despair--hope which looked for the coming glory, and anticipated living forever with the Lord--can it be possible that *that* hope, however feeble its strength, or dim its luster, or obscure its vision, shall ever perish? Never! no, *never!*

There is hope in your end, O believer in Jesus; however weak and veiled that hope may be, it shall not make you ashamed; and when all other hopes--earth's fondest, brightest--languish and expire, the Spirit of God will fan this faint and feeble spark, and again shall its flame burn brightly, and pour its radiance upon the upward pathway of the departing spirit. And yet, at that solemn hour, when heart and flesh are failing, you may find it needful to breathe the prayer of David, *"O spare me, that I may recover strength."* Study to keep your hope lively--its lamp daily fed and brightly burning. *"The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may ABOUND IN HOPE through the power of the Holy Spirit."*

And thus, also, with regard to **EVIDENCES**, these may grow dim when the strongest evidences alone will meet the necessities of the

solemn case. Evidences of conversion and of safety, which amid the buoyancy of health, and the heyday of life, the excitement of religious activity, and the influence of religious ceremonial, pacified the conscience and tranquilized the feelings, are found to be unsatisfactory and insufficient when the soul is about to appear before God. Searching thus for evidences of salvation, many a child of God has for the first time discovered his loss of spiritual strength. One by one has failed him, and he is compelled to close his Christian course as he commenced it, in looking as a poor, empty, lost sinner to the Lord Jesus, clinging to that exceeding great and precious promise of the Savior, as the last and only plank that could sustain him--"*Him that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out.*"

He has now learned what books and sermons failed to teach him before--that the great, the grand evidence of our salvation is in a direct and simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; that it is not in looking to ourselves, or in searching within ourselves for evidences that we are enabled to say in humble assurance, "*I know whom I have believed;*" but in looking out of and off from our own selves, upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners, even of the chief. Such has been the experience of some of the holiest saints, whose piety and labors have adorned the Church or blest the world. Searching in that solemn moment for evidences of salvation, how many a believer has taken up the language of the Psalmist--"*O spare me, that I may recover strength.*"

The **SPIRITUAL LIFE** of the renewed soul is equally exposed to this loss of vitality and vigor. A long-existing and deep spirit of drowsiness may enwrap the believer, of which he is scarcely conscious. He knows that he has life in his soul, but he is not aware how depressed is its vitality, how low are its springs. Much has passed for life which was no real evidence of its existence. Periodical awakenings, spasmodic action, religious activity and excitement have, for the time, supplied the absence of that holy retirement, devout meditation, self-examination, secret prayer, closeness, and

watchfulness, and holiness of walk which formed the only safe and authentic evidences of the life of God in the soul.

But now that the spirit is about to enter the eternal world, the solemn discovery is made--"How low are the springs of life in my soul! How faint, how feeble, how imperceptible almost, is its pulse! 'O spare me, that I may recover strength.'"

But we need not multiply these varied lapses of grace in the soul of the believer. When there exists the element of spiritual declension and decay in any one part of the renewed nature, the whole is more or less sympathetically affected. The drooping of one grace will impart languor and feebleness to every other. Our true wisdom is to watch the *first* beginning of declension, and the moment it is discovered, to seek the remedy and apply the check.

One of the most solemn and affecting views of our subject is, that this decay of which we speak is always **secret, unnoticed, and unsuspected**. In the graphic language of the prophet, "*Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not,*" (Hos. 7:9.) Old age steals on, and we are insensible of its encroachment. The hair is silvered, the eye loses its luster, the limbs their elasticity, and memory its vigor, and yet we take no thought of time. In fact, we strive to banish from our mind the conviction that "old age" is actually advancing. Thus is it with the decay of grace. It goes on slowly, imperceptibly, and unsuspected, yet most sure. Spiritual strength becomes weakened, the eye of faith grows dim, its divine and precious Object becomes distant and obscure, the hand of faith upon Jesus loses its grasp, the spiritual action of the heart becomes languid, the pulse of life beats feebly, and the soul loses its zest and relish for divine things--for fellowship with God--for communion with saints--for the public means of grace, and for a spiritual, practical, Christ-exalting ministry. "*Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not.*"

Nor does he desire to know it. It is an unmistakable evidence of this state of decay of grace--the *reluctance* of the heart to know its real state before God. Just as some individuals would efface each new mark of growing years, and shrink from every sad memento of approaching senility--as if ignorance of the fact would arrest the march of time, and each evidence of its ravages obliterated would win back the spring-tide of youth! so the soul, losing its spiritual vitality and vigor, loves not to be reminded of its spiritual loss, declension, and decay, but is content to live on in its lukewarmness, making no effort to strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die, until, like David, the prayer is wrung from the trembling lip, "*O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more.*"

Alas! that the child of God should so lose his strength of soul as not only to frame excuses for his drowsiness, but even exclaim, "*A little more sleep, and a little more slumber.*" Such was the case of the Church in the Song--"*I sleep, but my heart wakes.*" What a contentedness was there here with her state of slumber! And, then, to Christ's approach--"*Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled--for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night,*" she replies, "*I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?*" She was not only in a state of drowsiness, a state of heart-departure from her Lord, but she was satisfied to be so, and framed excuses in justification of her continuance in that state. Distinctly did she recognize the voice of her Beloved. Well did she know that it was He who so gently was knocking at her door, while, as with irresistible tenderness, the heart-melting words were falling upon her still wakeful ear, "*My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night;*" and yet she loved the bed of sloth too well to arise and admit her Beloved.

Oh, what a sin was this! It was sin added to sin--it was sin begetting sin. There was first the sin that led to her slothful condition; then there was the sin of her backsliding; then the sin of contentedness

with her state; and then the crowning sin of all; the excuses with which she repelled the loving, tender appeal of Him who loved her, and whom yet she loved. In all this see we not ourselves? Behold, to what a low state of grace the renewed nature may decline! See how far the Christ-loving heart may wander from the Lord! See what excuses even a saint of God may frame for his sins!

But what a patient Jesus! Gaze upon the one picture and then upon the other, and mark the contrast! The backsliding saint--the still loving, clinging, wooing Savior! There is no slumbering of Christ's love towards His saints, no denial of them, no indifference to their circumstances. They may forget that they are His *children*, God never forgets that He is their *Father*. Listen to His touching, astounding language--"*Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you,*" (Jer. 3:14.)

There may be besides, as we have just remarked, **seasons of spiritual wandering or depression** in the Christian's experience, when he may lose sight of his adoption, may sink the character of the son in that of the slave, the heir in the servant; but God never forgets that they are still children, and He still a Father. And how tender and irresistible the invitation, "*Return unto me!*" And again--"*I said after she had done all these things, Turn unto me.*" Yet once more--"*Return, O backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you--for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity.*" Child of God! conscious of departure, bemoaning grievously your sad declension, shedding tears of bitter grief over your willful and aggravated backslidings, can you resist the gracious invitation of the God from whom you have wandered? "Return unto me; unto me from whom you have backslidden, against whose grace you have sinned, whose love you have slighted, whose Spirit you have grieved. Return to me, who will heal your backslidings, will love you freely, and will remember your transgressions no more forever. Look not at my holiness or my justice, but at my grace, my goodness, and my mercy; how can I put you away, for my compassion and my

pardoning love are kindled within me! Though you have backslidden a thousand times over, yet, return *again* unto me."

It may be proper in this part of the chapter to group together a few of those **CAUSES** which have a tendency to produce that spiritual weakness, that soul-declension which so many Christians discover and deplore when on the eve of entering upon the eternal world. The life of God in the renewed soul is so holy, and divinely sensitive, there is scarcely a quarter from which it may not be seriously affected.

The **WORLD** is a great robber of spiritual strength. It is impossible to go much into it, even when lawful duty summons us, and not be conscious of its deteriorating influence. How much more is this the case when we voluntarily and needlessly expose ourselves to its snares! Oh, how this world eats as a canker-worm into the spirituality of so many! We cannot unite Christianity and the world--walking with Jesus and association with the world--the pleasures of religion and the pleasures of the world--the strength of the strong and sinful conformity to the spirit, the dress, the enjoyments, and the gaieties of the world. The ungodly world is the great Delilah of the Church of God. Alliance with her in any shape will beguile the spiritual life, liberty, and power of the Church into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines, who will but mock the victim they have ensnared, and make merry with the weakness and disfigurement they have wrought.

Saint of God, you cannot be strong to labor, skillful to fight, powerful to testify for Christ and His truth, if you are indulging in worldly habits or recreations inconsistent with your heavenly calling. Marvel not that you are weak in faith, in prayer, in conflict, and are hastening to the solemn hour of your departure unassured of your salvation, and with but a dim prospect that that departure will be unclouded and serene.

There are other equally potent causes of spiritual decay, which we have only space to group together. Superficial views of sin--unmortified corruptions--unsanctified affections--the indulgence of unbelieving fears and of speculative doubts--a slighting of the means of grace--the habit of reasoning rather than of believing with regard to divine truth--an unsettled ministry--residing in a land where no living gospel springs are--acting as unto man and not wholly as unto the Lord--reserves in child-like obedience--a spirit of levity and humour unbefitting the saintly character--a profane and unhallowed dealing with God's Word--an uncharitable and unforgiving spirit--a tendency to look more at the difficulties than at the encouragements of the way, more at trials than at the promises, more at evidences than at the cross of Jesus, more at self than at Christ--all these, single or united, will sap and undermine the strength of the soul; and when the last enemy approaches, instead of the victorious shout of the mighty, will be heard the plaintive prayer of the feeble, "O spare me that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more!"

Conscious of spiritual relapse, oh, seek instantly and earnestly a *re-conversion* of your soul! Let your prayer be--"Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation." Without ignoring your past experience, denying not the converting, renewing grace of God in your soul, yet, in your return to Christ, begin at the beginning. Come as first you came--a poor, empty sinner to the Savior. Your first love lost, you may win it back by a renewed baptism of the Holy Spirit, by a fresh taking hold of Jesus. And remember that, one end of your re-conversion is that you may strengthen your brethren who are weak, warn those who sin, uplift those who have fallen, and win back those who have erred from the way, ever walking yourself humbly with God. (Ps. 51:12, 13.)

But it is often reserved for the solemn hour of death to discover to the believer the sad waning and loss of spiritual strength. It is at this appalling crisis that many of the saints for the first time awaken to a knowledge of their spiritual decay. Then they discover the "gray hairs" upon them in thick and startling array. About to battle with

the last foe, they find the sword has rusted in its scabbard, and the "armor of God" has become loose and poorly fitting. Then they pray, "Lord, yet a little longer spare me, that I may renew my strength, examine my hope, recover my evidences, and experience once more a renewed manifestation of Your love to my soul!"

This clearly was the experience both of David and of Hezekiah, and this may be ours. The prayer--breathed though as with the departing breath--is heard and answered; and divine grace, and strength, and hope are given for the dying hour. And now the departing soul, renewing its spiritual strength like the eagle, uplifts its pinions for the flight. Oh, what a marvelous change have we witnessed at that hour! We have seen spiritual life that throbbed so faintly, divine grace that looked so sickly, holy love that beat so languidly, Christian hope that shone so dimly, now emerge as from a long and dark entombment, clad with all the bloom and vigor of a new-born creation. The petition sent up from the quivering lip of death has been washed in the blood, perfumed with the merits, and presented through the intercession of the great High Priest, and accepted of God. Strength has been given, the foe has been conquered, and with the shout of the conqueror--"O death! where is your sting? O grave! where is your victory?"--waking the echoes of death's lonely valley, the renewed and ransomed soul has winged its flight to heaven.

"When death is near,
And your heart shrinks with fear
And your limbs fail,
Then lift your heart and pray
To Christ, who smooths the way
Through the dark valley.

"Death comes to set you free;
Oh, meet him cheerily,
As your best friend;
And all your fears shall cease,

And in eternal peace
Your sorrows end!"

EARLY CONVERSION

"All Israel will mourn for Abijah and bury him. He is the only one belonging to Jeroboam who will be buried, because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the Lord has found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." 1 Kings 14:13

God, who calls His people by His grace, calls them, for the most part, *early in life*. That there are countless exceptions to this we do not question; for the Lord God is a Sovereign, and He works all things after the council of His own will, and gives no account of any of His matters. Many, we admit, are called by grace in the meridian of life, others at the eleventh hour of its closing scene, and not a few even when the eleventh hour has passed, and the twelfth was about to strike its last solemn note. All that the Father has given to the Son shall come to Him sooner or later, whether it be the babe and the suckling--sanctified as from the womb--or the hoary-haired sinner being a hundred years old; not one shall perish.

But the majority of conversions are in favor of early life. Divine grace, in the sovereignty of its exercise, has ever delighted to engraft itself upon the spring-bud of youth bursting into beauty, or upon the tall and graceful sapling just shooting up into life, as if, while seeking emblems of its own loveliness and strength, it yet would illustrate the truth how infinitely the beauty of grace transcended and eclipsed the most surpassing loveliness and attractions of nature.

We have selected from God's Word a most touching and instructive confirmation of this fact. It places before us an example of early piety in its feeblest and most limited form. **Abijah**, to whom the case refers, was the young son of Jeroboam, and heir-apparent to the

throne. Jeroboam was one of the worst of the kings of Israel. Scarcely had he reached the throne than he turned aside from the worship of the only true and living God, and established in its place a system of the vilest idolatry. After a while his son Abijah was smitten with sickness. Jeroboam, a wily diplomatist, as an unholy man, sent his wife in disguise to inquire of the prophets of the Lord whether the child should recover. Why of the prophets of Israel did he inquire? Why not seek the gods his own hands had set up, and which he and his court worshiped? The fact supplies the solution of a solemn problem.

When God sends affliction and adversity upon ungodly men, they then discover how little faith they had in, and how little support they derive from, the vain confidences in which they had been accustomed to repose. The world, the heart's idols, and theoretical and speculative notions of God's Word, utterly fail to administer light, consolation, and hope when God's hand is upon them, when adversity crushes them, when health and wealth, creatures and reputation, take wing and fly. How often the most ungodly and profane discover that there is but *one* Being who can help them!--that one Being is GOD. How true the language of the prophet--rather, how true the word of the living God--"*Lord, in trouble have they visited You; they poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them,*" (Isa. 26:16.)

The wife of Jeroboam brought back to the king a sad and woeful message--that the entire family of the king, with a solitary exception, should die, dishonored, unmourned, and unwept. "*Him that dies of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dies in the field shall the fowls of the air eat--for the Lord has spoken it.*" All this came to pass. Thus we read--"Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of King Asa's reign in Judah, and he became the next king of Israel. He immediately killed all the descendants of King Jeroboam, so that not one of the royal family was left, just as the Lord had promised concerning Jeroboam by the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh." (1 Kings 15:28, 29.) To this terrible infliction of divine judgment

there was, as we have intimated, one solitary exception. It was Abijah, the young son of Jeroboam. Of him said the Lord, "All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only one belonging to Jeroboam who will be buried, because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the Lord, the God of Israel, has found anything good."

Let us now turn our attention to the SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTION which this remarkable instance of early piety inculcates.

1. The first important inference we draw is, **GOD'S TENDER REGARD FOR THE YOUNG.** It is a period of human life especially dear and interesting to the Lord. Christ in His own person passing through this stage of life, honored and sanctified it. He was "*the holy child Jesus.*" It is the golden period of human life. It is to life what the bright morning is to the day, and what the spring-time is to the year. It gives to the future its character, mold, and complexion. It is the preface to the history of our being, present and future; and he who ponders thoughtfully this preface may, without the sagacity of a prophet, form a correct conception of the character of the volume. As a young person sows in early years, so shall he reap in later life. Approach the crowd of hoary heads bending to the grave beneath the snows of many winters, and ask of each what relation their youth sustained to that distant and solemn period of life, and each will testify that, the memories of early years, sad or joyous, clouded or sunny, clustered around that closing scene; imparting to it a character, a solemnity, and an impressiveness indescribable and ineffaceable. Memories of early consecration to God, or of the sins of youth against Him; memories of a father's counsels and of a mother's prayers, of first religious thoughts and impressions, of prayers and promises and vows--oh, how they link the past with the present, sunny youth with hoary age, life's first dawn with its last sunset!

Such is the importance of youth in its relation to conversion. This period of human life passed unawakened, unsanctified by the new birth, the probabilities of conversion lessen with each revolving year.

We speak now after the manner of men. Well assured are we that all the Lord's hidden ones shall be brought in, were it when the twelfth hour of life were about to strike its last moment, or, were the working of a miracle necessary for its accomplishment. The eternal Word of the living God affirms it; the everlasting covenant of grace provides for it; the atoning blood of Jesus secures it; and the covenant engagement of the Spirit in conversion gives to it its fullest and most blessed realization.

Cheering, consolatory truth to those who, amid much discouragement and despondency, little or no fruit, and, perhaps, much difficulty and opposition, are laboring in the Christian ministry, or by other means, to win souls to Christ. What though you see no immediate result from your arduous, anxious, self denying labors, the promise yet remains sure--all Israel shall be gathered, and as many as are ordained to eternal life shall believe. You are only responsible to your Divine Master for the fidelity and integrity, the singleness of eye and honesty of purpose, the prayer, the earnestness, the watching, and the faith with which you plough the soil and sow the seed. The blessing, the harvest--the golden and waving grain, the sickled and garnered fruit--are the Lord's.

And yet, tracing the Lord's work in the sovereignty of His grace in conversion--especially in this the last of the latter days--the great majority of those who are called by grace are taken from the ranks of the young, the very babes and sucklings perfecting His praise. Oh, spectacle of surpassing loveliness! Earth has none to compare with it, the Church not one to surpass it.

2. The loveliness of **early piety** can only be equaled by its **ADVANTAGES**. They who are born again early in life; who, while the sun is but just seen above the horizon, have set out in the Christian pilgrimage, are thoroughly armed and equipped for the temptations, duties, and trials of their course. The pleasures of religion--transcending all pleasures--are theirs, amid the toil, the battle, and the sufferings of life. They begin their race with the

surrender of their hearts to Christ--continue it with His presence encompassing them--and close it with the crown of life, which His own hands will place upon their brow. And should their sun go down while it is yet day, it will but the sooner rise again in that land of glory where there are no more sunsets of life; for it is written, "*There shall be no night there.*" Oh, seek the Lord early in life, for He has said for your encouragement, "*I love those who love me, and those who seek me early shall find me.*"

But what made the youthful Abijah an exception to Jeroboam's family? "Because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." And what was that good thing? It was not rank, nor talent, nor influence. It was nothing of nature or of man. It was some good, some gracious, some spiritual, some holy thing, not born with Abijah, but implanted in his heart when, by the grace of God, he was *born again*. No interpretation but this fully meets the expression, "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." Observe, it had reference *to God*. It was "*toward the Lord God of Israel.*" It came from God, and it returned to God. What could it be but the new, spiritual creation of the soul--the converting grace of God--filial fear and holy love--"the root of the matter" implanted in his young heart by the power of the Holy Spirit? It is said, "*SOME good thing.*" The expression seems to imply the "incorruptible seed" sown, or the seed in the first stage of growth--just germinating, budding; perhaps, the first gentle blade bursting through the crustations of the heart.

How feeble and obscure may be the first appearance and growth of Divine grace in the soul. No one may discover it, know it, acknowledge it, but the Lord. Yes, he in whose heart the good thing is wrought may be the last one to recognize it. But the Lord knows His own work in the heart of a poor sinner--recognizes His own image in the renewed soul; and He who has begun the good work will perfect it. "As for God, His way is perfect." "Some good thing." What is it?

Is it **a broken and a contrite heart**? What a good thing is this! It is the beginning, the groundwork, the earnest of good things to come. Apart from true repentance for sin, there is no good thing. If the Lord the Spirit has given you, my reader, to see and know and feel yourself a sinner, a marvelous "good thing" has been wrought in your soul. The world thinks lightly of repentance; the formalist ignores it, the self-righteous despise it; but if there is a "good thing" in the heart of man in which God takes delight, over which saints and angels rejoice, and upon which all heaven looks down with ineffable wonder and praise, it is a penitential spirit, a broken and a contrite heart for sin; it is the spectacle of a soul prostrate in the dust--self-abased, self-aborred, sin-loathing--before the holy Lord God. If, beloved, you have nothing to offer to God except the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart, there is some good thing in you towards the Lord God of Israel; and a more costly and acceptable sacrifice you could not lay upon His altar, (Ps. 51:17.)

Is it **a simple, childlike, believing acceptance of the Lord Jesus** that marks us? Then, there is some "good thing" in our heart towards the Lord of priceless worth. Faith is a good and precious thing. There is more real good and worth in one infinitesimal grain of *real* faith wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit--the faith which gets the dimmest view of Jesus, which touches but His robe--than in all the good of which the world can ever boast. How small the degree of faith in the youthful Abijah! Yet God pronounced it "good."

As a young believer but just setting out in the Divine life, with but slight views of sin, little knowledge of self, still less of Christ, your faith may be weak and trembling; nevertheless, if it has led you to trample your own righteousness in the dust, and has brought you, as a sinner, to a simple, believing reliance upon the Savior, then you possess a "good thing" in reality, before whose beauty earth's highest type of loveliness fades, and the luster of its most dazzling gems pales into darkness. Is *this* good thing found in you? Do you *believe* in the Son of God? Has your faith led you to turn your back upon the world, and upon your sins, and upon a life of sense and sensuality--

henceforth to be the decided follower of the Lord Jesus? Then, God sees some good thing in you in which He delights.

And is there any degree of **real love in your heart towards the Lord God**? God has set a high estimate upon *love* to Him! Marvelous grace! wondrous condescension! that He should say, "*My son, give Me your heart.*" Standing, as it were, a lowly suitor at the door of your young affections, he says, "*I love those who love Me. Do YOU love Me? Does my beauty charm you? does my love win you? does my grace draw you? does my cross attract you? have my sufferings and my death subdued you to penitence, faith, and love? Am I dearer to you than earth's dearest attractions, more precious than the heart's most precious treasure? Can you part with all, and every one for Me?*"

Oh, if from that young heart, beating high with warm and noble impulse, there rises the gentlest response, "Lord, I love You! You who know my heart's most sacred cloister, who have Your finger upon its faintest pulse, read its most hidden thoughts, and know its most secret desire, You *know* that I love You!" then a "good thing" has been wrought in your heart which shall never perish.

"Do I not love You, O my Lord?
Behold my heart and see;
Gently dislodge each idol thence
That seeks to rival Thee.

"You know I love You, dearest Lord;
But, oh, I long to soar
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,
And learn to love You more!"

And who will say of the **prayer** of a young heart that there is not some "good thing" there towards the Lord God? It is a precious thing when a young person is led to *pray*. The spectacle in its spiritual beauty is unsurpassed. What would thrill the heart of a pious parent

with deeper joy, next to his personal salvation? Would it not be the intelligence that the child of countless parental prayers had now become himself a *praying* child? Would it not be to witness the door closed for prayer, and to hear the gentle breathings, the fervent petitions of the young heart as they ascended in holy prayer to God? Truly, if the heart is incited by the Holy Spirit to pray--feeble, imperfect, stammering as its accents may be--there is "some good thing" in that heart towards the Lord God which marks that soul as born again of the Spirit, as a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Once more mark the expression, "*some good thing.*" **It is not EVERY good thing.** Young believers are often perplexed and discouraged because they do not find in themselves *all* the grace and knowledge and Christian attainment they see in others. But this is not to be expected. It was not so with Abijah, the young son of Jeroboam. And yet there was some good thing in his heart towards the Lord God, and for that God marked him as His own. Thank God for the least degree of life, for the smallest measure of faith, for the faintest spark of love; and press on for more. Place no limit to your Christian attainments. Be not satisfied with your measured knowledge of the Lord Jesus. "That I might know Him," was the language and the desire of a saint of God far in the ascendant of the greatest saint among us. Imitate the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and, forgetting the things that are behind, press on to know Christ more--to love Him more--to serve Him more--to glorify Him more--that for you to live may be Christ, and that for you to die may be gain.

The young Abijah *died*, and God honored him in his death and burial. The Lord, my young reader, is perhaps taking you early home to glory. Disease, insidious and fatal, is slowly wasting your frame, and bringing you to an early tomb. The anticipations of youth, the hopes of life--once so ardent and bright--are now darkening with the shadow of death. Be it so! What a matter of rejoicing is this! **Early ripe, early gathered.** Think it not hard to die so soon, deem it not sad to relinquish life so early. Think of the sins and temptations, of the conflicts and the sorrows, you so soon and forever shall escape.

Think of the heaven of glory into whose joy and bliss and society you so soon and forever will enter. And let not the reflection distress you that you cannot be fitted for heaven because your Christianity has not been matured and tested by many years of experience--that your spiritual knowledge of the Bible has been so deficient--your acquaintance with Christ so short--your service for the Lord so unfruitful--your battles so few and your laurels so scanty--your holiness for heaven so imperfect.

Remember that, if there is only "*some* good thing in your heart towards the Lord God," you have an unmistakable evidence of being born again; and, born again, though but a babe in Christ, with the smallest faith, the weakest love, the dimmest hope--that faith, that love, that hope, the "good thing" wrought in your soul by the Holy Spirit--when you die, though your sun go down while it is yet day, Jesus will take you to His bosom, and your happy spirit shall repose within its Divine pavilion forever.

"It matters little at what hour of day
The righteous fall asleep; death cannot come
To those untimely, who are fit to die;
The less of this cold world, the more of heaven;
The briefer life, the earlier immortality."
—*Milman*

FROM GRACE TO GLORY

*"The Lord will give **grace** and **glory**."*--Psalm 84:11

We reach the last stage in this brief history of the new nature in the regenerate--its translation from a state of grace to a state of glory. God has not left His Church on earth without some pledges and

visions of heaven. Now and then the pearly gate of the celestial city expands to faith's far-seeing eye--perhaps, when attending some beloved saint to the brink of the river, or when, in seasons of rapt communion, we ascend the summit of our spiritual Pisgah--and then we seem, for a while, to be encircled with the sunbeams, to breathe the odors, and to hear the music of the glorified; and, like the disciples amid the scene of the transfiguration, we would gladly build our tabernacle and abide there forever.

We have had occasion to remark, in the progress of our little treatise, that the grace of God in the soul was the pledge of its coming glory. It is indeed more than the pledge, it is essentially and undeniably a part of the glory itself. Present grace is to future glory what the outline is to the picture, the seed to the flower, the twilight to the day. He who has the smallest degree of grace in his soul has the first beginnings of glory. The question of our final entrance into heaven is not the first which should engage our earliest and most anxious thought. There is another, a more immediate and important one. "Have I the *converting grace* of God in my heart? Am I *born again*?" If this question is fairly met and satisfactorily answered--if the Holy Spirit authenticates His own work in the soul, then the ulterior question of our final entrance into glory is forever set at rest, and set at rest in a way which should annihilate every doubt and quell every fear. The believing soul grasping the first and lowest link in the chain--converting grace--gradually ascends from link to link in the process of knowledge, and strength, and holiness, until, touching the last and highest, it finds itself in glory.

The fitness of the two states to the circumstances of the believer is evident. Grace is the believer's portion here; glory is his reward of grace hereafter. The one is an essential element of his present condition; the other of his future condition. Glory in its fullness cannot be realized on earth, seeing that it appertains to a perfect state of being; and grace cannot be exercised in heaven, seeing that it has reference to sin and sorrow in their endless forms, both of which are there utterly and forever unknown. So long as we dwell in this

imperfect state of being, we are sustained, sanctified, and comforted by grace; but when we are delivered from the burden of sin, and the soul is divested of its earthly vestments, the mission of grace is done, its work complete, and we are then received up into glory. The two things which will now briefly engage our attention, and thus close the volume, are--*Grace and Glory*. Both are the **gift** of God. "*The Lord will give grace and glory.*"

GRACE is one of the most precious and significant terms of the Bible. It tells of God's free and unconditional choice of a people, everlastingly loved. It speaks of His mercy to the miserable, of His pardon to the guilty, of His favor to the lost, of His free and boundless love to poor sinners. Seeing, then, that none are saved but those who are saved by grace--electing, sovereign, free grace--and seeing, also, that all the precious streams of sanctification, peace, joy, and hope flow from this Divine and marvelous Fountain, is it any wonder that from the lowest depths of the soul the believer should sing--

"Grace! 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear!
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear?"

"The Lord will give *grace*." This He does in the first place, *by giving Himself, the Infinite and Eternal Fountain of grace*. Who gives this grace? It is Jehovah, whose title is, "*The God of Grace*." He is so essentially. The light which flows from the sun, the water which gushes from the spring, are dependent elements upon a higher and creative power; and yet we may employ these figures to illustrate the spontaneity and freeness of this great blessing--the grace of God. The greatness of God is the greatness of *grace*. The infinitude of God is the infinitude of *love*. When Jehovah would portray Himself, is it not as the God of grace? Gaze upon the picture, wonder and admire! "*And the Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and GRACIOUS, long-suffering, and abundant*

in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," (Exod. 34:6, 7.)

Who could reveal the Divine nature thus but God Himself? Who could tell that He was merciful and gracious to sinners, to the most guilty, to the most vile, to those who had forsaken Him the fountain of living waters, who had rebelled against His government, who had derided His authority, who had sought to annihilate His very being, had He not revealed it himself? And when God would win us to confidence, and encourage our trembling heart to draw near to Him, all guilty as we are, what is the argument which He Himself employs? Oh, so like Himself! *"It shall come to pass, when he cries unto me, that I will hear; **for I am gracious!**"*

What a nature is our God's! What a heart is His! The Lord of all grace--all-pardoning, all-accepting, all-sanctifying, all-comforting grace to the ungracious, to the unworthy, to the poor, to the bankrupt, to the vile, the sinful.

See the spring-head of our ELECTION to eternal life! It was grace in eternity which chose us in Christ, and blest us in Him with all spiritual blessings, and, to the praise of the glory of that grace, made us accepted in Jesus Christ the Beloved. In this light I wish you, my reader, to study the character of God. Study Him not in the light of your sins--look not upon Him through the haze of your guilt; but behold Him in the Divine light of His boundless grace--look upon Him through the pure, gracious medium of the Son of His love. It is a delightful and consolatory reflection that no distortions of His character--no misrepresentations of His Word, or blind views of His conduct, consequent upon the guilt of our sin, or the working of our unbelief--can possibly affect His true character, or change the relation He sustains to His people. *"Though we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself."* Approach Him, then, as "the God of all grace." Confess your sins, make known your requests, unveil your sorrows. Cast upon Him all your care--acknowledge Him in all your ways--revere, honor, and glorify His great name, for, "God

is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Marvelous declaration! but not more marvelous than true!

The Lord Jesus, the unspeakable gift of God, is the **DEPOSITORY of this grace**. It is a treasure too divine and too precious to be placed in other hands--to be confided to the keeping or the administration of any other being than the beloved Son of God. As the God-man Mediator, the Lord Jesus is the Head and Fountain of all grace to His saints. *"It pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell."* *"Full of grace."* The first Adam became a bankrupt in grace, and impoverished and ruined his posterity. The Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is He in whom *"dwelt all the FULLNESS of the GODHEAD bodily."* His resources, like His being, are infinite--His supplies, like His nature, are inexhaustible. He has been administering this grace from the time of the first transgression until now, and will administer it until there shall no longer exist a vessel to receive out of His fullness.

Will you hesitate, then, saint of God, to sink your emptiness in this fullness--to drink abundantly from this supply--to go to Jesus with every sin, the greatest; with every temptation, the strongest; with every need, the deepest; with every trial, the severest; with your mental despondency, your lowest spiritual frame--yes, exactly as you are--and receive from Christ's boundless grace--grace to help you in the time of need? Hesitate not! Every drop of Christ's fullness of grace is yours! And you have not a sin this grace cannot cancel, not a corruption it cannot subdue--not a trial of faith or patience it cannot sustain--not a cross or burden it cannot enable you to bear.

Yes, the Lord will give grace! He will give us grace for every position in which His providence places us. He will give sustaining grace under every trial He sends us. He will give preserving grace in every path of peril along which He leads us. He will give comforting grace in every afflictive dispensation by which He seeks to promote our holiness here, and so to advance our fitness for glory hereafter. Yes,

He gives *more* grace. There is no stintiness, no limit in the Triune-God. He has given you grace for past exigencies, and He is prepared to give you *more* grace for present ones. The Lord keeps His people poor, that He might keep them dependent. They shall have no grace in hand, that they might live daily, hourly upon His bounty. It is under the pain and pressure of a present trial we learn the value and preciousness of this grace, and fly to its appropriate and boundless supply, and find in our personal experience the promise fulfilled, "*My grace is sufficient for you.*"

We only add, the Lord will give *dying grace*. That day, that solemn day so long anticipated, so fearfully dreaded, comes, but with it comes the GRACE that cheers its solemnity, sustains its sinking, strengthens its languor, quells its fear, disarms its dread, and transforms it into a scene of life, of bliss, of glory. You who, all your lifetime in bondage through the fear of death, die a thousand deaths in the anticipation of one, give your gloomy, desponding apprehensions to the winds, and calmly, hopefully wait the appointed hour. With your sickness will come the grace that sanctifies it; with your parting will come the grace that soothes it; with your dying will come the grace that sustains it; with your death will come the grace that disarms its sting, and glorifies God in it. He, who from His infinite fullness gave you grace to *live*, from the same boundless, exhaustless source will give you grace to *die!*

And then follows **THE GLORY!** "The Lord will give grace and **glory.**" If there is any one revealed truth more true than another, it is this, the final GLORIFICATION of all who believe in Jesus. "*Whom He justified, them He also GLORIFIED!*" The translation of the Christian is out of grace into glory. In the first place, the Lord gives the *first-fruits of glory* in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the renewed soul. First-fruits are specimens and pledges of the harvest. The apostle speaks of the saints of God as having "*the FIRST-FRUITS of the Spirit.*" And Christ our Lord is said, by the same apostle, to have "*risen from the dead the FIRST-FRUITS of those who slept.*" He, then, who has the Spirit of God dwelling in

him--and every soul *born again* has this--binds to his believing heart a sheaf of the first-fruits of heaven. Oh, realize this in your personal experience! Don't you know that if you are a temple of God, the Spirit of God dwells in you? And he in whom the Spirit dwells, by that very indwelling possesses the pledge, the seed, the dawn of future and eternal glory. Heaven opens to your believing eye. Often pause amid the weariness of your heavenward journey, and recline upon the sunny slopes of the Delectable Mountains, and gaze upon the glory so soon to burst in all its fullness and splendor upon your soul.

The Lord gives us ***FITNESS*** for glory. It is an impressive thought that each day's history in the life of the believer is a schooling, a training of his soul for heaven. The deeper discovery of indwelling sin, the more experimental teaching of the Holy Spirit, the increase of our intimacy with the Lord Jesus, the discipline of sickness, of sorrow, of trial, all, *all* is but to mature us for the inheritance reserved in heaven for those who, for that inheritance, are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Oh, accept every stroke of His rod, every lesson of His love, every dispensation of His providence, every gift of His grace, as sent to *prepare* you for the *prepared* glory! Let your interpretation be, "This affliction, this rebuke, this event is designed by my Father to promote my personal sanctity, to wean me from creatures, to disengage me from earth, and to set me to seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God, and to terminate in His own undivided and endless glory."

The Lord gives, also, *the TITLE* to glory. No individual can legally make good his claim to an earthly domain without a valid title. Look well to your title-deed to the inheritance of glory. There is but one--it is the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, received by faith, put upon us by the Holy Spirit, and authenticated by a holy and a godly life. This was the panting desire of the apostle, "*That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness,*

which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Christ's merit is our merit for heaven. Christ's worth is our worthiness for glory. Christ's cross is our ladder to the throne. The groundwork of our glory, then, is the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus--the finished work of Immanuel--the perfect obedience He gave to the law in His life, and the infinite satisfaction He offered to Divine Justice in His death. Invested with the righteousness of Christ--your own righteousness abjured and trampled in the dust--when you pass into eternity, and knock at the gate of glory, it will in a moment open to your touch, and usher you within its untold, its ever-telling, ever-deepening happiness and splendor; and so you shall ascend from grace to glory.

Then comes *the GLORY ITSELF!* Who can describe it? To stand in the presence of God--to behold Jesus in His glorified form--to be perfectly like Him--to mingle with the goodly fellowship of the apostles, with the noble army of martyrs, and with the spirits of just men made perfect--to be reunited with the saints from whom we parted on the confines of glory--to come again with Jesus when He appears in the clouds of heaven--in a word, to be forever with the Lord in the new heavens and the new earth--oh, this, *this* is glory indeed! We know but little of heaven in its details. God has given us a grand outline in His Word, and this must suffice for our present limited range of knowledge, and satisfy our present ardent aspirations, until the blissful moment when our personal experience shall put us into possession of the fullness of joy that is in God's presence, and of the pleasures that are at His right hand for evermore. "*As for me, I will behold your face in righteousness--I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your likeness.*"

From these general statements let me, in conclusion, reiterate a few particulars of the coming glory of the saints. **1. It will be the glory of perfect HOLINESS.** Transporting thought! All remains of sin will be annihilated; and, body and soul pure and sinless as Christ is

pure, we shall be arrayed not only in the beauty, but resplendent with the *glory* of holiness. Oh, how the heart bounds in anticipation of that state!

2. It will be the glory of perfect LOVE. Dwelling in the home of love, standing in the Divine Center of love, and bathing in the crystal sea of love, our love to God and to the Church of God will be perfect. All that tainted and jarred and shaded it here below will be consumed in the conflagration of the last day, and we shall be complete in holy love.

3. It will be the glory of perfect KNOWLEDGE. That which is in part done away, we shall then know even as also we are known. The dark environment through which our intellectual powers now look will then be exchanged for the perfect expansion of all our faculties; and with the vast field of divine knowledge thrown open to our view, the unfettered, unclouded soul will expatiate in a world of study and thought, illimitable in its range, infinite in its resources, and eternal in its duration.

4. It will be the glory of perfect COMPANIONSHIP. The social instincts of our being, developed and sanctified in the highest and noblest degree, will then revel in the goodly fellowship of apostles and prophets, of the nobler army of martyrs, of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the whole assembly and church of the first-born, and an innumerable company of angels, with whom we shall sit down at the banquet of the Lamb. Oh, what a glory will encircle that august and blissful assembly!

5. There will be the glory of REUNION. Even the heathen philosophers cherished dim, vague conceptions of this. Socrates, before he drank his poison, cheered his last moments with the prospect of meeting and conversing with his beloved Orpheus and Homer. But Christianity not only reveals the fact, but unveils the glory of the future condition of the renewed soul. And not the least glory which it flashes upon the believing eye is, the certain, the

intelligent, and holy reunion and communion in heaven of all who knew and loved each other in this life, and who died in the assured hope of meeting again forever in the life which is to come.

6. But, transcending all glory will be **the glory of BEING FOREVER WITH CHRIST**. Whom, not having here seen, we loved; but beholding Him now in beatific vision, how intense will be our affection, and how consummate will be our glory! I marvel if for ages we shall desire to gaze upon any other object than Jesus! It would seem as though He would fill the entire orbit of our admiration, love, and bliss--the all-glorious, all-absorbing, all-satisfying One. Bending upon each saint a smile of ineffable complacency and love, how will He welcome each to glory as the precious fruit of His soul-travail, introduce each one to the Father, and enfold all within His loving and capacious bosom! Oh! is not this prospect worth living to gain, and worth dying to possess? Until then, let us seek to have more heavenliness, and to live more entirely for heaven. Looking and longing for the glorious appearing of the Lord, be it our aim to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world; that, at Christ's coming, we may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield--the Lord will give **grace** and **glory**--no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11

"Death comes to take me where I long to be;
One pang, and brighter blooms the immortal flower.
Death comes to lead me from mortality,
To lands which know not one unhappy hour;
I have a hope, a faith--from sorrow here
I'm led by death away--why should I start or fear?"

"A change from woe to joy--from earth to heaven--
Death gives me this--it leads me calmly where

The smile that long ago from mine were riven
May meet again! Death answers many a prayer.
Bright day, shine on! be glad--days brighter far
Are stretched before my eyes than those of mortals are!

"Death comes, but with it comes the Lord of death,
The Christ who gave His life a sacrifice for me;
And I with joy will yield my parting breath,
Wrapped in the splendor of the home I then shall see--
And thus from GRACE to GLORY I shall go,
Have passed from earth, with all its scenes of weariness and woe."

The Wind Blows Where it Wishes

by Rev. John Samson

In the early verses of John chapter 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus in no uncertain terms, the absolute necessity of being born again (or born from above). Unless a man is first born again (regenerated) he can never enter or even see the kingdom of God. Jesus stresses the fact that this new birth is not merely an optional extra. It is imperative. Jesus said, "You must be born again" (3:7).

Jesus didn't tell Nicodemus what he must do to be born again. Why? Because it was not within Nicodemus' power to perform this miracle. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6) Flesh can only reproduce flesh. It takes the Spirit to regenerate the human spirit. This miracle of regeneration cannot be achieved by human effort, or by self performed surgery.

The new birth is not the improvement of the old nature, but the creation of an entirely new one. It is a birth, a new birth, and like the first one we experienced, it did not occur because of our decision to be born. Our will was not a factor in any way. We were born as a result of the will of others - that of our parents, and of course, God's will to create us using the means of human, physical intimacy.

In contrast to our first birth, this new birth does not occur through human means. God alone brings about this new creation in Christ Jesus. As John, the Gospel writer had already pointed out in chapter 1:12, 13, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Jesus makes it clear that human flesh can only reproduce flesh. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can recreate human spirits. The Holy Spirit is the sole Agent working regeneration in the human spirit.

In explaining this phenomenon of the new birth, Jesus then speaks of something very mysterious - the wind. Wind is mysterious, not because it is not real, but because it is not something we've ever actually seen. Though we know when it is around because of its effects, we've never actually observed wind with our eyes. Oh, we've seen trees swaying, leaves falling, papers flying through the air. Sometimes the effects of the wind are so powerful that the only word we can use for its effects would be devastation. The wind can cause havoc on a massive scale, as the victims of hurricanes can testify. But wind is mysterious because we can't see it, and we are never sure about where it came from, or where it is going. It seems to have a mind of its own.

Concerning this, Jesus said, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (3:8)

The word "pneuma" in Greek, like the word "ruach" in Hebrew means "breath, wind or spirit." Jesus uses an obvious play on words

here, describing the activity of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

Of course, much more could and should be said about these opening verses in John chapter 3. But just for a moment, can we stop to appreciate the impact of verse 8? Here Jesus teaches us that when anyone is born of the Spirit, like the blowing of the wind, the invisible Sovereign Spirit of God has moved in mighty power. Yet in contrast to when a town or city experiences storm damage on a large scale, the effects of this "wind" are not in any way negative. Though powerful in the extreme, the Spirit's work is amazingly precise.

When someone is born again, it is evidence of the fact that God, the Holy Spirit has performed extensive Divine surgery. He has taken out the stony heart and put in a heart of flesh (using the biblical imagery of Ezekiel, flesh is spoken of in contrast to stone, whereas Jesus, in John 3 is using the word flesh in a different way, speaking only of physical, human flesh). Ezekiel 36:26-27 declares, "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." What an amazing miracle this is!

I remember going to a Christian service at age 14, not wanting to be there, hoping for the service to end (even though it had just begun). I was only there because my father had asked me to go. I had no interest in Christ, nor in what I was observing when the congregation sang, and certainly, had no interest in what the preacher (Rev. Cliff Beasley) had to say. But sometime during the message, my attitude changed. I became interested. In fact, I became intrigued. I was fascinated, and struck by the realities of heaven and hell, and the need for a Savior, and for the first time in my life, was attracted by a Treasure I had never seen before.

I didn't know it then, but I know now, that what happened in a little metal shed-like building in Chester, England that Sunday night of

May 10th, 1980 was this... God, the Holy Spirit, invisibly blew into that service, and while I was hearing the Gospel, in Sovereign and colossal power, yet with the skill of an expert Surgeon, went to work on my soul. In an instant in time, I was born from above, the old heart of stone was removed and a new heart was put in that with every beat, wanted to know the Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. This Jesus, so to speak, stepped off the old dusty pages of the Bible and became a living Person in my eyes. All of a sudden, I really wanted to know Him, I really wanted Him to save me, and I really wanted His will in my life. And when the Gospel appeal was made, I came to Christ willingly in repentance and faith.

If you are born of the Spirit, God did the exact same thing for you. The Reformation sola of Sola Gratia (Grace Alone) simply expresses in doctrine what God has done for His people in experience. It is God and God alone who has saved us. All the credit for it goes to Him, because this birth had nothing to do with our intelligence (that we somehow worked out who Jesus was for ourselves), or our humility (we having conquered our own pride, were able to humble ourselves to be able to respond in faith to the Gospel). No, a thousand times, no! We are Christians because of the all conquering power of the mighty Spirit of God, who graciously stormed our hearts and worked His Sovereign will. He brought us forth by the word of truth, causing us to find sheer delight in the presence of God both now and for all eternity.

When Lazarus was raised from death, he did not immediately seek an attorney in order to sue Jesus for violating his right to stay dead! Nor did all the town's people sue Jesus for not at the very same time raising all of their dead relatives from the graves. No, everyone marveled at the all-powerful call of Jesus. By the power of just His word, He actually brought a putrifying corpse back to life. Of course, no one was more thrilled with this Divine mercy than Lazarus himself.

Why do we speak so much about God's grace? Because with Lazarus we can say that by the effectual call of God, grace has conquered our hearts and brought us to life. When we were spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins (the Greek word for dead in Ephesians 2:1, "necros" means "dead like a corpse") God made us alive (Eph. 2:5).

C. H. Spurgeon once said, "The great King, immortal, invisible, the Divine person, called the Holy Spirit: it is He that stimulates the soul, or else it would lie dead forever; it is He that makes it tender, or else it would never feel; it is He that imparts power to the Word preached, or else it could never reach further than the ear; it is He who breaks the heart, it is He who makes it whole; He, from first to last, is the great worker of Salvation in us, just as Jesus Christ was the author of Salvation for us."

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience - among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved..." Eph. 2:1-5

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me...
Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved,
how precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed.

Prayer: "Heavenly Father, Sovereign King, hear our cry. As Your gospel is heralded around the world, may the Holy Spirit of God, like a mighty triumphant wind, conquer dead human hearts today! It is man's only hope! For Your great Name's sake and for Your glory alone. Amen."

A Simple Explanation of Monergism

by John Hendryx

Monergism simply means that it is God who gives ears to hear and eyes to see. It is God alone who gives illumination and understanding of His word that we might believe; It is God who raises us from the dead, who circumcises the heart; unplugs our ears; It is God alone who can give us a new sense that we may, at last, have the moral capacity to behold His beauty and unsurpassed excellency. The apostle John recorded Jesus saying to Nicodemus that we naturally love darkness, hate the light and **WILL NOT** come into the light (John 3:19, 20). And since our hardened resistance to God is thus seated in our affections, only God, by His grace, can lovingly change, overcome and disarm our rebellious disposition. The natural man, apart from the quickening work of the Holy Spirit, will not come to Christ on his own since he is at enmity with God and cannot understand spiritual things. Shining a light into a blind man's eyes will not enable him to see, since, as we all know, sight requires new eyes or some restoration of his visual faculty. Likewise, reading or hearing the word of God itself cannot elicit saving faith in the reader (or hearer) unless the Spirit first "germinates" the seed of the word in the heart, so to speak, which then infallibly gives rise to our faith and union with Christ. Like unto Lydia whom "**the Lord opened her heart to respond** to the things spoken by Paul," (Acts 16:14) He must also give all His people spiritual life and understanding if their hearts are to be open and thus turn (respond) to Christ in faith.

Since faith is infinitely beyond all the power of our unregenerated human nature, it is only God who can give the spiritual ears to hear and eyes to see the beauty of Christ in the gospel. God alone disarms the hostility of the sinner turning his heart of stone to a heart of flesh. So the problem of conversion is not with the Word or God's

Law but with man's prideful heart. The humility required to submit to the gospel (which is beyond man's natural capacity) is, therefore, not prompted by man's will but by God's mercy (John 1:13; Rom 9:16) since no one can believe the gospel unless God grants it (John 6:63, 65). The Spirit must likewise give all His people spiritual life and understanding if their hearts are to be opened and thus respond to Christ in faith.

Definition

The Century Dictionary's **definition of monergism** may be helpful:

"In theology, [monergism is] the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is the only efficient agent in regeneration [the new birth] - that the human will possesses no inclination to holiness until regenerated [born again], and therefore cannot cooperate in regeneration."

Etymology

The word "monergism" consists of two main parts. The Greek prefix "mono" signifies "one", "single", or "alone" while the suffix "ergon" means "to work". Taken together it means "the work of one".

Very simply, then, monergism is the doctrine that our new birth (or "quickenings") is the work of God, the Holy Spirit alone, with no contribution and without the cooperation of fallen man, since the natural man, of himself, has no desire for God and cannot understand spiritual things (1 Cor 2:14, Rom 3:11,12; Rom 8:7; John 3:19, 20). Man remains resistant to all outward callings of the gospel until the Spirit comes to disarm us, call us inwardly and implant in us new holy affections for God. Our faith comes about only as the immediate result of the Spirit working faith in us in the hearing of the proclamation of the word. But just as God does not force us to see against our will when He gives us physical eyes, so God does not force us to believe against our will when giving us spiritual eyes. God gives the gift of sight and we willingly exercise it.

Application

Monergism strips us of all hope to ourselves, reveals our spiritual bankruptcy apart from Christ, and thus leads us to give all glory to God alone for our salvation. As long as we think we contributed something, even a little bit (like good intentions) then we still think deep down that God saves us for something good he sees in us over our neighbor. But this is clearly not the case. Only Jesus makes us to differ from anyone else. We are all sinners and can boast in nothing before God, including the desire for faith in Christ (Phil 1:29, Eph 2:8, 2 Tim 2:25). For why do we have faith and not our neighbor? Please consider that. Did we make better use of God's grace than he did? Were we smarter? More sensitive? Do some naturally love God? The answer is 'no' to all of the above. It is God's grace in Christ that makes us to differ from our neighbor and God's grace alone that gave rise to our faith, not because we were better or had more insight. No other element but Jesus mercy alone.

When the Spirit enables us to see that we fail to live up to God's holy law, man will utterly despair of himself. Then, as C.H. Spurgeon said:

"... the Holy Spirit comes and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross. That Man died to save sinners; you feel you are a sinner; He died to save you." And then the Holy Spirit enables the heart to believe, and come to Christ."

To conclude, "...no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord', except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3)who is the deposit guaranteeing what is to come (2 Corinthians 5:5). Thus it should become plain to us that not everyone receives this redemptive blessing from Christ. God bestows it mercifully on whom He will according to His sovereign good pleasure (Rom 9:15-18; Eph 1:4, 5). The rest will continue in their willful rebellion, making choices according to their natural desires and thus receive the wrath of God's justice. That is why it is called "mercy" - not getting what we deserve. If God were obligated to give it to all men then, by definition, it would not longer be mercy.

This should not surprise us ... what should surprise us is God's amazing love, that He would save a sinner like me at all.

End

A Divine and Supernatural Light, Immediately Imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God, Shown to be Both Scriptural and Rational Doctrine

A Sermon by Jonathan Edwards

[Preached at Northampton, and published at the desire of some of
the hearers, in the year 1734.]

*Matthew 16:17 - And Jesus answered and said unto him,
Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath
not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

CHRIST says these words to Peter upon occasion of his professing his faith in him as the Son of God. Our Lord was inquiring of his disciples, who men said he was; not that he needed to be informed, but only to introduce and give occasion to what follows. They answer, that some said he was John the Baptist, and some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets. When they had thus given an account who others said he was, Christ asks them, who they said he was? Simon Peter, whom we find always zealous and forward, was the first to answer: he readily replied to the question, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.*

The Blessing of Peter

Upon this occasion, Christ says as he does *to* him, and *of* him in the text: in which we may observe,

That He knew Jesus to be the Christ

1. That Peter is pronounced blessed on this account. *Blessed art thou*

-- "Thou art a happy man, that thou art not ignorant of this, that I am *Christ, the Son of the living God*. Thou art distinguishingly happy. Others are blinded, and have dark and deluded apprehensions, as you have now given an account, some thinking that I am Elias, and some that I am Jeremias, and some one thing, and some another; but none of them thinking right, all of them misled. Happy art thou, that art so distinguished as to know the truth in this matter."

That God Had Revealed This to Him

2. The evidence of this his happiness declared; *viz.*, that God, and he *only*, had *revealed it* to him. This is an evidence of his being *blessed*.

First, As it shows how peculiarly favored he was of God above others; *q.d.*, "How highly favored art thou, that others that are wise and great men, the Scribes, Pharisees, and Rulers, and the nation in general, are left in darkness, to follow their own misguided apprehensions; and that thou shouldst be singled out, as it were, by name, that my Heavenly Father should thus set his love, on *thee, Simon Bar-jona*. This argues thee *blessed*, that thou shouldst thus be the object of God's distinguishing love."

Secondly, It evidences his blessedness also, as it intimates that this knowledge is above any that *flesh and blood can reveal*. "This is such knowledge as only my *Father which is in heaven* can give: it is too high and excellent to be communicated by such means as other knowledge is. Thou art *blessed*, that thou knowest that which God alone can teach thee."

God the Author of All Knowledge

The original of this knowledge is here declared, both negatively and positively. *Positively*, as God is here declared the author of it. *Negatively*, as it is declared, that *flesh and blood had not revealed it*.

All Moral Knowledge and business Skill from God

God is the author of all knowledge and understanding whatsoever. He is the author of the knowledge that is obtained by human

learning: he is the author of all moral prudence, and of the knowledge and skill that men have in their secular business. Thus it is said of all in Israel that were *wise-hearted*, and skilled in embroidering, that God had *filled them with the spirit of wisdom*, Exodus 28:3.

Yet Flesh and Blood Reveals It

God is the author of such knowledge; but yet not so but that *flesh and blood reveals it*. Mortal men are capable of imparting the knowledge of human arts and sciences, and skill in temporal affairs. God is the author of such knowledge by those means: *flesh and blood* is employed as the *mediate* or *second* cause of it; he conveys it by the power and influence of natural means.

God Alone the Author of Spiritual Knowledge

But this spiritual knowledge, spoken of in the text, is what God is the author of, and none else: he *reveals it*, and *flesh and blood reveals it not*. He imparts this knowledge immediately, not making use of any intermediate natural causes, as he does in other knowledge.

Proposition and Preview

What had passed in the preceding discourse naturally occasioned Christ to observe this; because the disciples had been telling how others did not know him, but were generally mistaken about him, and divided and confounded in their opinions of him: but Peter had declared his assured faith, that he was the *Son of God*. Now it was natural to observe, how it was not *flesh and blood* that had *revealed it to him*, but God: for if this knowledge were dependent on natural causes or means, how came it to pass that they, a company of poor fishermen, illiterate men, and persons of low education, attained to the knowledge of the truth; while the Scribes and Pharisees, men of vastly higher advantages, and greater knowledge and sagacity in other matters, remained in ignorance? This could be owing only to the gracious distinguishing influence and revelation of the Spirit of God. Hence, what I would make the subject of my present discourse from these words, is this

Doctrine

That there is such a thing as a spiritual and divine light immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means.--And on this subject I would,

I. Show what this divine light is.

II. How it is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means.

**III. Show the truth of the doctrine.
And then conclude with a brief improvement.**

I. I would show what this spiritual and divine light is. And in order to it, would show,

First, In a few things what it is not. And here,

Not Mere Conviction of Sin and Misery

1. Those convictions that natural men may have of their sin and misery, is not this spiritual and divine light. Men in a natural condition may have convictions of the guilt that lies upon them, and of the anger of God, and their danger of divine vengeance. Such convictions are from light or sensibleness of truth. That some sinners have a greater conviction of their guilt and misery than others, is because some have more light, or more of an apprehension of truth than others. And this light and conviction may be from the Spirit of God; the Spirit convinces men of sin: but yet nature is much more concerned in it than in the communication of that spiritual and divine light that is spoken of in the doctrine; it is from the Spirit of God only as assisting natural principles, and not as infusing any new principles. Common grace differs from special, in that it influences only by assisting of nature; and not by imparting grace, or bestowing any thing above nature. The light that is obtained is wholly natural, or of no superior kind to what mere nature attains to, though more of that kind be obtained than would be obtained if men were left wholly

to themselves: or, in other words, common grace only assists the faculties of the soul to do that more fully which they do by nature, as natural conscience or reason will, by mere nature, make a man sensible of guilt, and will accuse and condemn him when he has done amiss. Conscience is a principle natural to men; and the work that it doth naturally, or of itself, is to give an apprehension of right and wrong, and to suggest to the mind the relation that there is between right and wrong, and a retribution. The Spirit of God, in those convictions which unregenerate men sometimes have, assists conscience to do this work in a further degree than it would do if they were left to themselves: he helps it against those things that tend to stupify it, and obstruct its exercise. But in the renewing and sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, those things are wrought in the soul that are above nature, and of which there is nothing of the like kind in the soul by nature; and they are caused to exist in the soul habitually, and according to such a stated constitution or law that lays such a foundation for exercises in a continued course, as is called a principle of nature. Not only are remaining principles assisted to do their work more freely and fully, but those principles are restored that were utterly destroyed by the fall; and the mind thence forward habitually exerts those acts that the dominion of sin had made it as wholly destitute of, as a dead body is of vital acts.

The Spirit of God acts in a very different manner in the one case, from what he doth in the other. He may indeed act upon the mind of a natural man, but he acts in the mind of a saint as an indwelling vital principle. He acts upon the mind of an unregenerate person as an extrinsic, occasional agent; for in acting upon them, he doth not unite himself to them; for notwithstanding all his influences that they may be the subjects of, they are still sensual, having not the Spirit, Jude 19. But he unites himself with the mind of a saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new supernatural principle of life and action. There is this difference, that the Spirit of God, in acting in the soul of a godly man, exerts and communicates himself there in his own proper nature. Holiness is the proper nature of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit operates in the

minds of the godly, by uniting himself to them, and living in them, and exerting his own nature in the exercise of their faculties. The Spirit of God may act upon a creature, and yet not in acting communicate himself. The Spirit of God may act upon inanimate creatures; as, *the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters*, in the beginning of the creation; so the Spirit of God may act upon the minds of men many ways, and communicate himself no more than when he acts upon an inanimate creature. For instance, he may excite thoughts in them, may assist their natural reason and understanding, or may assist other natural principles, and this without any union with the soul, but may act, as it were, as upon an external object. But as he acts in his holy influences and spiritual operations, he acts in a way of peculiar communication of himself; so that the subject is thence denominated spiritual.

Not Mere Impressions on the Imagination

2. This spiritual and divine light does not consist in any impression made upon the imagination. It is no impression upon the mind, as though one saw any thing with the bodily eyes: it is no imagination or idea of an outward light or glory, or any beauty of form or countenance, or a visible lustre or brightness of any object. The imagination may be strongly impressed with such things; but this is not spiritual light. Indeed when the mind has a lively discovery of spiritual things, and is greatly affected by the power of divine light, it may, and probably very commonly doth, much affect the imagination; so that impressions of an outward beauty or brightness may accompany those spiritual discoveries. But spiritual light is not that impression upon the imagination, but an exceeding different thing from it. Natural men may have lively impressions on their imaginations; and we cannot determine but the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light, may cause imaginations of an outward beauty, or visible glory, and of sounds and speeches, and other such things; but these are things of a vastly inferior nature to spiritual light.

Not "New Revelations" Apart From Scripture

3. This spiritual light is not the suggesting of any new truths or propositions not contained in the word of God. This suggesting of new truths or doctrines to the mind, independent of any antecedent revelation of those propositions, either in word or writing, is inspiration; such as the prophets and apostles had, and such as some enthusiasts pretend to. But this spiritual light that I am speaking of, is quite a different thing from inspiration: it reveals no new doctrine, it suggests no new proposition to the mind, it teaches no new thing of God, or Christ, or another world, not taught in the Bible, but only gives a due apprehension of those things that are taught in the word of God.

Not Mere Religious Insight or Affection

4. It is not every affecting view that men have of the things of religion that is this spiritual and divine light. Men by mere principles of nature are capable of being affected with things that have a special relation to religion as well as other things. A person by mere nature, for instance, may be liable to be affected with the story of Jesus Christ, and the sufferings he underwent, as well as by any other tragical story: he may be the more affected with it from the interest he conceives mankind to have in it: yea, he may be affected with it without believing it; as well as a man may be affected with what he reads in a romance, or sees acted in a stage play. He may be affected with a lively and eloquent description of many pleasant things that attend the state of the blessed in heaven, as well as his imagination be entertained by a romantic description of the pleasantness of fairy land, or the like. And that common belief of the truth of the things of religion, that persons may have from education or otherwise, may help forward their affection. We read in Scripture of many that were greatly affected with things of a religious nature, who yet are there represented as wholly graceless, and many of them very ill men. A person therefore may have affecting views of the things of religion, and yet be very destitute of spiritual light. Flesh and blood may be the author of this: one man may give another an affecting view of

divine things with but common assistance: but God alone can give a spiritual discovery of them. -- But I proceed to show,

Secondly, Positively what this spiritual and divine light is.

Divine Light Defined

And it may be thus described: a true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God, and a conviction of the truth and reality of them thence arising. This spiritual light primarily consists in the former of these, *viz.*, a real sense and apprehension of the divine excellency of things revealed in the word of God. A spiritual and saving conviction of the truth and reality of these things, arises from such a sight of their divine excellency and glory; so that this conviction of their truth is an effect and natural consequence of this sight of their divine glory. There is therefore in this spiritual light,

A Sense of the Divinity and Excellency of the Things of Faith

1. A true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel. There is a divine and superlative glory in these things; an excellency that is of a vastly higher kind, and more sublime nature than in other things; a glory greatly distinguishing them from all that is earthly and temporal. He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He does not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing, but there is a sense of the loveliness of God's holiness. There is not only a speculatively judging that God is gracious, but a sense how amiable God is upon that account, or a sense of the beauty of this divine attribute.

There is a twofold understanding or knowledge of good that God has made the mind of man capable of. The first, that which is merely speculative and notional; as when a person only speculatively judges that any thing is, which, by the agreement of mankind, is called good or excellent, *viz.*, that which is most to general advantage, and between which and a reward there is a suitableness, and the like. And the other is, that which consists in the sense of the heart: as when there is a sense of the beauty, amiableness, or sweetness of a thing; so that the heart is sensible of pleasure and delight in the presence of the idea of it. In the former is exercised merely the speculative faculty, or the understanding, strictly so called, or as spoken of in distinction from the will or disposition of the soul. In the latter, the will, or inclination, or heart, are mainly concerned.

Thus there is a difference between having an *opinion*, that God is holy and gracious, and having a *sense* of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. A man may have the former, that knows not how honey tastes; but a man cannot have the latter unless he has an idea of the taste of honey in his mind. So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance. There is a wide difference between mere speculative rational judging any thing to be excellent, and having a sense of its sweetness and beauty. The former rests only in the head, speculation only is concerned in it; but the heart is concerned in the latter. When the heart is sensible of the beauty and amiableness of a thing, it necessarily feels pleasure in the apprehension. It is implied in a person's being heartily sensible of the loveliness of a thing, that the idea of it is sweet and pleasant to his soul; which is a far different thing from having a rational opinion that it is excellent.

A Conviction of the Truth of Divine Things

2. There arises from this sense of divine excellency of things

contained in the word of God, a conviction of the truth and reality of them; and that either directly or indirectly.

First, Indirectly, and that two ways.

1. As the prejudices that are in the heart, against the truth of divine things, are hereby removed; so that the mind becomes susceptible of the due force of rational arguments for their truth. The mind of man is naturally full of prejudices against the truth of divine things: it is full of enmity against the doctrines of the gospel; which is a disadvantage to those arguments that prove their truth, and causes them to lose their force upon the mind. But when a person has discovered to him the divine excellency of Christian doctrines, this destroys the enmity, removes those prejudices, and sanctifies the reason, and causes it to lie open to the force of arguments for their truth.

Hence was the different effect that Christ's miracles had to convince the disciples from what they had to convince the Scribes and Pharisees. Not that they had a stronger reason, or had their reason more improved; but their reason was sanctified, and those blinding prejudices, that the Scribes and Pharisees were under, were removed by the sense they had of the excellency of Christ and his doctrine.

2. It not only removes the hinderances of reason, but positively helps reason. It makes even the speculative notions the more lively. It engages the attention of the mind, with the fixedness and intenseness to that kind of objects; which causes it to have a clearer view of them, and enables it more clearly to see their mutual relations, and occasions it to take more notice of them. The ideas themselves that otherwise are dim and obscure, are by this means impressed with the greater strength, and have a light cast upon them; so that the mind can better judge of them. As he that beholds the objects on the face of the earth, when the light of the sun is cast upon them; so that the mind can better judge of them. As he that beholds the objects on the face of the earth, when the light of the sun

is cast upon them, is under greater advantage to discern them in their true forms and mutual relations, than he that sees them in a dim starlight or twilight.

The mind having a sensibleness of the excellency of divine objects, dwells upon them with delight; and the powers of the soul are more awakened and enlivened to employ themselves in the contemplation of them, and exert themselves more fully and much more to the purpose. The beauty and sweetness of the objects draws on the faculties, and draws forth their exercises: so that reason itself is under far greater advantages for its proper and free exercises, and to attain its proper end, free of darkness and delusion. -- But,

Secondly, A true sense of the divine excellency of the things of God's word doth more directly and immediately convince of the truth of them; and that because the excellency of these things is so superlative. There is a beauty in them that is so divine and godlike, that is greatly and evidently distinguishing of them from things merely human, or that men are the inventors and authors of; a glory that is so high and great, that when clearly seen, commands assent to their divinity and reality. When there is an actual and lively discovery of this beauty and excellency, it will not allow of any such thought as that it is a human work, or the fruit of men's invention. This evidence that they that are spiritually enlightened have of the truth of the things of religion, is a kind of intuitive and immediate evidence. They believe the doctrines of God's word to be divine, because they see divinity in them; i.e., they see a divine, and transcendent, and most evidently distinguishing glory in them; such a glory as, if clearly seen, does not leave room to doubt of their being of God, and not of men.

Such a conviction of the truth of religion as this, arising, these ways, from a sense of the divine excellency of them, is that true spiritual conviction that there is in saving faith. And this original of it, is that by which it is most essentially distinguished from that common assent, which unregenerate men are capable of.

How Divine Light Is Given By God

II. I proceed now to the *second* thing proposed, *viz.*, to show how this light is immediately given by God, and not obtained by natural means. And here,

Natural Faculties Are Involved

1. It is not intended that the natural faculties are not made use of in it. The natural faculties are the subject of this light: and they are the subject in such a manner, that they are not merely passive, but active in it; the acts and exercises of man's understanding are concerned and made use of in it. God, in letting in this light into the soul, deals with man according to his nature, or as a rational creature; and makes use of his human faculties. But yet this light is not the less immediately from God for that; though the faculties are made use of, it is as the subject and not as the cause; and that acting of the faculties in it, is not the cause, but is either implied in the thing itself (in the light that is imparted) or is the consequence of it. As the use that we make of our eyes in beholding various objects, when the sun arises, is not the cause of the light that discovers those objects to us.

Outward Means Also Involved

2. It is not intended that outward means have no concern in this affair. As I have observed already, it is not in this affair, as it is in inspiration, where new truths are suggested: for here is by this light only given a due apprehension of the same truths that are revealed in the word of God; and therefore it is not given without the word. The gospel is made use of in this affair: this light is the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ", 2 Cor. 4:4. The gospel is as a glass by which this light is conveyed to us, 1 Cor. 13:12. "Now we see through a glass." -- But,

Only God's Spirit Goves Divine Light

3. When it is said that this light is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means, hereby is intended, that it is given by God without making use of any means that operate by their own

power, or a natural force God makes use of means; but it is not as mediate causes to produce this effect. There are not truly any second causes of it; but it is produced by God immediately. The word of God is no proper cause of this effect: it does not operate by any natural force in it. The word of God is only made use of to convey to the mind the subject matter of this saving instruction: and this indeed it doth convey to us by natural force or influence. It conveys to our minds these and those doctrines; it is the cause of the notion of them in our heads, but not of the sense of the divine excellency of them in our hearts. Indeed a person cannot have spiritual light without the word. But that does not argue, that the word properly causes that light. The mind cannot see the excellency of any doctrine, unless that doctrine be first in the mind; but the seeing of the excellency of the doctrine may be immediately from the Spirit of God; though the conveying of the doctrine or proposition itself may be by the word. So that the notions that are the subject matter of this light, are conveyed to the mind by the word of God; but that due sense of the heart, wherein this light formally consists, is immediately by the Spirit of God. As for instance, that notion that there is a Christ, and that Christ is holy and gracious, is conveyed to the mind by the word of God: but the sense of the excellency of Christ by reason of that holiness and grace, is nevertheless immediately the work of the Holy Spirit. -- I come now,

The Proof and Benefits of Divine Light

III. To show the truth of the doctrine; that is, to show that there is such a thing as that spiritual light that has been described, thus immediately let into the mind by God. And here I would show briefly, that this doctrine is both *scriptural* and *rational*.

The Scriptural Proof of this Doctrine

Saints Possess This Knowledge and Sight of God

First, It is scriptural. My text is not only full to the purpose, but it is a doctrine that the Scripture abounds in. We are there abundantly

taught, that the saints differ from the ungodly in this, that they have the knowledge of God, and a sight of God, and of Jesus Christ. I shall mention but few texts of many. 1 John 3:6, "Whosoever sinneth, has not seen him, nor known him." 3 John 11, "He that doth good, is of God: but he that doth evil, hath not seen God." John 14:19, "The world seeth me no more; but ye see me." John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This knowledge, or sight of God and Christ, cannot be a mere speculative knowledge; because it is spoken of as a seeing and knowing, wherein they differ from the ungodly. And by these Scriptures it must not only be a different knowledge in degree and circumstances, and different in its effects; but it must be entirely different in nature and kind.

This Knowledge and Sight of God Given Immediately by God

And this light and knowledge is always spoken of as immediately given of God, Matt. 11:25-27: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Here this effect is ascribed alone to the arbitrary operation, and gift of God, bestowing this knowledge on whom he will, and distinguishing those with it, that have the least natural advantage or means for knowledge, even babes, when it is denied to the wise and prudent. And the imparting of the knowledge of God is here appropriated to the Son of God, as his sole prerogative. And again, 2 Cor. 4:6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." This plainly shows, that there is such a thing as a discovery of the divine superlative glory and excellency of God and Christ, and that peculiar to the saints: and also, that it is as immediately from God, as light from the sun: and that it is the

immediate effect of his power and will; for it is compared to God's creating the light by his powerful word in the beginning of the creation; and is said to be by the Spirit of the Lord, in the 18th verse of the preceding chapter. God is spoken of as giving the knowledge of Christ in conversion, as of what before was hidden and unseen in that. Gal. 1:15,16, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." The Scripture also speaks plainly of such a knowledge of the word of God, as has been described, as the immediate gift of God, Psalm 119:18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." What could the Psalmist mean when he begged of God to open his eyes? Was he ever blind? Might he not have resort to the law and see every word and sentence in it when he pleased? and what could he mean by those wondrous things? Was it the wonderful stories of the creation, and deluge, and Israel's passing through the Red Sea, and the like? Were not his eyes open to read these strange things when he would? Doubtless by wondrous things in God's law, he had respect to those distinguishing and wonderful excellencies, and marvellous manifestations of the divine perfections, and glory, that there was in the commands and doctrines of the word, and those works and counsels of God that were there revealed. So the Scripture speaks of a knowledge of God's dispensation, and covenant of mercy, and way of grace towards his people, as peculiar to the saints, and given only by God, Psalm 25:14: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

What Arises From This Divine Light

And that a true and saving belief of the truth of religion is that which arises from such a discovery, is also what the Scripture teaches. As John 6:40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life;" where it is plain that a true faith is what arises from a spiritual sight of Christ. and John 17:6,7,8, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For

I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me;" where Christ's manifesting God's name to the disciples, or giving them the knowledge of God, was that whereby they knew that Christ's doctrine was of God, and that Christ himself was of him, proceeded from him, and was sent by him. Again, John 12:44,45,46, "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in darkness." Their believing in Christ, and spiritually seeing him, are spoken of as running parallel.

Those Without Such Light Condemned

Christ condemns the Jews that they did not know that he was the Messiah, and that his doctrine was true, from an inward distinguishing taste and relish of what was divine, in Luke 12:56,57. He having there blamed the Jews, that though they could discern the face of the sky and of the earth, and signs of the weather, that yet they could not discern those times; or as it is expressed in Matthew, the signs of those times; he adds, yea, and why even of your own selves, judge ye not what is right? i.e., without extrinsic signs. Why have ye not that sense of true excellency, whereby ye may distinguish that which is holy and divine? Why have ye not that savor of the things of God, by which you may see the distinguishing glory, and evident divinity of me and my doctrine?

Those Possessing Divine Light Assured

The Apostle Peter mentions it as what gave them (the apostles) good and well grounded assurance of the truth of the gospel, that they had seen the divine glory of Christ. 2 Pet. 1:16, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." The apostle has respect to that visible glory of Christ which they saw in his transfiguration: that glory was so divine, having such an ineffable appearance and semblance of divine holiness, majesty

and grace, that it evidently denoted him to be a divine person. But if a sight of Christ's outward glory might give a rational assurance of his divinity, why may not an apprehension of his spiritual glory do so too? Doubtless Christ's spiritual glory is in itself as distinguishing, and as plainly showing his divinity, as his outward glory, and a great deal more: for his spiritual glory is that wherein his divinity consists; and the outward glory of his transfiguration showed him to be divine, only as it was a remarkable image or representation of that spiritual glory. Doubtless, therefore, he that has had a clear sight of the spiritual glory of Christ, may say, I have not followed cunningly devised fables, but have been an eyewitness of his majesty, upon as good grounds as the apostle, when he had respect to the outward glory of Christ that he had seen. -- But this brings me to what was proposed next, *viz.*, to show that,

The Rational Proof of This Doctrine

Secondly, This doctrine is rational.

That Divine Things Should Be More Excellent

1. It is rational to suppose, that there is really such an excellency in divine things, that is so transcendent and exceedingly different from what is in other things, that, if it were seen, would most evidently distinguish them. We cannot rationally doubt but that things that are divine, that appertain to the Supreme Being, are vastly different from things that are human; that there is that godlike, high and glorious excellency in them, that does most remarkably difference them from the things that are of men; insomuch that if the difference were but seen, it would have a convincing, satisfying influence upon any one, that they are what they are, *viz.*, divine. What reason can be offered against it? Unless we would argue, that God is not remarkably distinguished in glory from men.

If Christ should now appear to any one as he did on the mount at his transfiguration; or if he should appear to the world in the glory that he now appears in, as he will do at the day of judgment; without

doubt, the glory and majesty that he would appear in, would be such as would satisfy every one that he was a divine person, and that religion was true: and it would be a most reasonable, and well grounded conviction too. And why may there not be that stamp of divinity, or divine glory on the word of God, on the scheme and doctrine of the gospel, that may be in like manner distinguishing and as rationally convincing, provided it be but seen? It is rational to suppose, that when God speaks to the world, there should be something in his word or speech vastly different from man's word. Supposing that God never had spoken to the world, but we had noticed that he was about to do it; that he was about to reveal himself from heaven, and speak to us immediately himself, in divine speeches or discourses, as it were from his own mouth, or that he should give us a book of his own inditing; after what manner should we expect that he would speak? Would it not be rational to suppose, that his speech would be exceeding different from man's speech, that he should speak like a God; that is, that there should be such an excellency and sublimity in his speech or word, such a stamp of wisdom, holiness, majesty and other divine perfections, that the word of man, yea of the wisest of men, should appear mean and base in comparison of it? Doubtless it would be thought rational to expect this, and unreasonable to think otherwise. When a wise man speaks in the exercise of his wisdom, there is something in every thing he says, that is very distinguishable from the talk of a little child. So, without doubt, and much more, is the speech of God (if there be any such thing as the speech of God) to be distinguished from that of the wisest of men; agreeably to Jer. 23:28,29. God having there been reproving the false prophets that prophesied in his name, and pretended that what they spake was his word, when indeed it was their own word, says, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

That We Should Expect Such Excellent Divine Things to be Seen

2. If there be such a distinguishing excellency in divine things; it is rational to suppose that there may be such a thing as seeing it. What should hinder but that it may be seen? It is no argument, that there is no such thing as such a distinguishing excellency, or that, if there be, that it cannot be seen, that some do not see it, though they may be discerning men in temporal matters. It is not rational to suppose, if there be any such excellency in divine things, that wicked men should see it. It is not rational to suppose, that those whose minds are full of spiritual pollution, and under the power of filthy lusts, should have any relish or sense of divine beauty or excellency; or that their minds should be susceptible of that light that is in its own nature so pure and heavenly. It need not seem at all strange, that sin should so blind the mind, seeing that men's particular natural tempers and dispositions will so much blind them in secular matters; as when men's natural temper is melancholy, jealous, fearful, proud, or the like.

That This Knowledge Should Be Given By God Alone

3. It is rational to suppose, that this knowledge should be given immediately by God, and not be obtained by natural means. Upon what account should it seem unreasonable, that there should be any immediate communication between God and the creature? It is strange that men should make any matter of difficulty of it. Why should not he that made all things, still have something immediately to do with the things that he has made? Where lies the great difficulty, if we own the being of a God, and that he created all things out of nothing, of allowing some immediate influence of God on the creation still? And if it be reasonable to suppose it with respect to any part of the creation, it is especially so with respect to reasonable, intelligent creatures; who are next to God in the gradation of the different orders of beings, and whose business is most immediately with God; who were made on purpose for those exercises that do respect God and wherein they have nextly to do with God: for reason teaches, that man was made to serve and glorify his Creator. And if it

be rational to suppose that God immediately communicates himself to man in any affair, it is in this. It is rational to suppose that God would reserve that knowledge and wisdom, that is of such a divine and excellent nature, to be bestowed immediately by himself, and that it should not be left in the power of second causes. Spiritual wisdom and grace is that highest and most excellent gift that ever God bestows on any creature: in this the highest excellency and perfection of a rational creature consists. It is also immensely the most important of all divine gifts: it is that wherein man's happiness consists, and on which his everlasting welfare depends. How rational is it to suppose that God, however he has left meaner goods and lower gifts to second causes, and in some sort in their power, yet should reserve this most excellent, divine, and important of all divine communications, in his own hands, to be bestowed immediately by himself, as a thing too great for second causes to be concerned in!

That This Knowledge is Directly Given By God and Not By Natural Reason

It is rational to suppose, that this blessing should be immediately from God; for there is no gift or benefit that is in itself so nearly related to the divine nature, there is nothing the creature receives that is so much of God, of his nature, so much a participation of the deity: it is a kind of emanation of God's beauty, and is related to God as the light is to the sun. It is therefore congruous and fit, that when it is given of God, it should be nextly from himself, and by himself, according to his own sovereign will.

It is rational to suppose, that it should be beyond a man's power to obtain this knowledge and light by the mere strength of natural reason; for it is not a thing that belongs to reason, to see the beauty and loveliness of spiritual things; it is not a speculative thing, but depends on the sense of the heart. Reason indeed is necessary in order to it, as it is by reason only that we are become the subjects of the means of it; which means I have already shown to be necessary in order to it, though they have no proper causal in the affair. It is by reason that we become possessed of a notion of those doctrines that

are the subject matter of this divine light; and reason may many ways be indirectly and remotely an advantage to it. And reason has also to do in the acts that are immediately consequent on this discovery: a seeing the truth of religion from hence, is by reason; though it be but by one step, and the inference be immediate. So reason has to do in that accepting of, and trusting in Christ, *that* is consequent on it. But if we take *reason* strictly -- not for the faculty of mental perception in general, but for ratiocination, or a power of inferring by arguments -- the perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason, than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colours, or to the power of seeing to perceive the sweetness of food. It is out of reason's province to perceive the beauty or loveliness of any thing: such a perception does not belong to that faculty. Reason's work is to perceive truth and not excellency. It is not ratiocination that gives men the perception of the beauty and amiableness of a countenance, though it may be many ways indirectly an advantage to it; yet it is no more reason that immediately perceives it, than it is reason that perceives the sweetness of honey: it depends on the sense of the heart. -- Reason may determine that a countenance is beautiful to others, it may determine that honey is sweet to others; but it will never give me a perception of its sweetness.

Concluding Improvement

I will conclude with a very brief improvement of what has been said.

This Doctrine Leads Us to Reflect on God's Goodness

First, This doctrine may lead us to reflect on the goodness of God, that has so ordered it, that a saving evidence of the truth of the gospel is such, as is attainable by persons of mean capacities and advantages, as well as those that are of the greatest parts and learning. If the evidence of the gospel depended only on history, and such reasonings as learned men only are capable of, it would be above the reach of far the greatest part of mankind. But persons with but an ordinary degree of knowledge, are capable, without a long and subtile train of reasoning, to see the divine excellency of the things of

religion: they are capable of being taught by the Spirit of God, as well as learned men. The evidence that is this way obtained, is vastly better and more satisfying, than all that can be obtained by the arguings of those that are most learned, and greatest masters of reason. And babes are as capable of knowing these things, as the wise and prudent; and they are often hid from these things, as the wise and prudent; and they are often hid from these when they are revealed to those. 1 Cor. 1:26,27, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men, after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world --."

This Doctrine Calls Us to Examine Ourselves

Secondly, This doctrine may well put us upon examining ourselves, whether we have ever had this divine light, that has been described, let into our souls. If there be such a thing indeed, and it be not only a notion or whimsy of persons of weak and distempered brains, then doubtless it is a thing of great importance, whether we have thus been taught by the Spirit of God; whether the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, hath shined unto us, giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; whether we have seen the Son, and believed on him, or have that faith of gospel-doctrines which arises from a spiritual sight of Christ.

All Should Seek This Divine and Supernatural Light

Thirdly, All may hence be exhorted earnestly to seek this spiritual light. To influence and move to it, the following things may be considered.

1. This is the most excellent and divine wisdom that any creature is capable of. It is more excellent than any human learning; it is far more excellent than all the knowledge of the greatest philosophers or statesmen. Yea, the least glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Christ doth more exalt and ennoble the soul, than all the knowledge of those that have the greatest speculative understanding in divinity

without grace. This knowledge has the most noble object that is or can be, *viz.*, the divine glory or excellency of God and Christ. The knowledge of these objects is that wherein consists the most excellent knowledge of the angels, yea, of God himself.

2. This knowledge is that which is above all others sweet and joyful. Men have a great deal of pleasure in human knowledge, in studies of natural things; but this is nothing to that joy which arises from this divine light shining into the soul. This light gives a view of those things that are immensely the most exquisitely beautiful, and capable of delighting the eye of the understanding. This spiritual light is the dawning of the light of glory in the heart. There is nothing so powerful as this to support persons in affliction, and to give the mind peace and brightness in this stormy and dark world.

3. This light is such as effectually influences the inclination, and changes the nature of the soul. It assimilates the nature to the divine nature, and changes the soul into an image of the same glory that is beheld. 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This knowledge will wean from the world, and raise the inclination to heavenly things. It will turn the heart to God as the fountain of good, and to choose him for the only portion. This light, and this only, will bring the soul to a saving close with Christ. It conforms the heart to the gospel, mortifies its enmity and opposition against the scheme of salvation therein revealed: it causes the heart to embrace the joyful tidings, and entirely to adhere to, and acquiesce in the revelation of Christ as our Saviour: it causes the whole soul to accord and symphonize with it, admitting it with entire credit and respect cleaving to it with full inclination and affection; and it effectually disposes the soul to give up itself entirely to Christ.

4. This light, and this only, has its fruit in a universal holiness of life. No merely notional or speculative understanding of the doctrines of religion will ever bring to this. But this light, as it reaches the bottom

of the heart, and changes the nature, so it will effectually dispose to a universal obedience. It shows God's worthiness to be obeyed and served. It draws forth the heart in a sincere love to God, which is the only principle of a true, gracious, and universal obedience; and it convinces of the reality of those glorious rewards that God has promised to them that obey him.

Regeneration

Abraham Kuyper

XIX.

Old and New Terminology.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh."--John iii. 6.

Before we examine the work of the Holy Spirit in this important matter, we must first define the use of words.

The word "regeneration" is used in a limited sense, and in a more extended sense.

It is used in the limited sense when it denotes exclusively God's act of quickening, which is the first divine act whereby God translates us from death into life, from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. In this sense regeneration is the starting-point. God comes to one born in iniquity and dead in trespasses and sins, and plants the principle of a new spiritual life in his soul. Hence he is born again.

But this is not the interpretation of the Confession of Faith, for article 24 reads: "We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin." Here the word "regeneration," used in its wider sense, denotes the entire change by grace effected in our persons, ending in our dying to sin in death and our being born for heaven. While formerly this was the usual sense of the word, we are accustomed now to the limited sense, which we therefore adopt in this discussion.

Respecting the difference between the two--formerly the work of grace was generally represented as the soul consciously observed it; while now the work itself is described apart from the consciousness.

Of course, a child knows nothing of the genesis of his own existence, nor of the first period of his life, from his own observation. If he were to tell his history from his own recollections, he would begin with the time that he sat in his high chair, and proceed until as a man he went out into the world. But, being informed by others of his antecedents, he goes back of his recollections and speaks of his parents, family, time, and place of birth, how he grew up, etc. Hence there is quite a difference between the two accounts.

The same difference we observe in the subject before us. Formerly it was customary, after the manner of Romish scholastics, to describe one's experience from one's own recollections. Being personally ignorant of the implanting of the new life, and remembering only the great spiritual disturbance, which led one to faith and repentance, it was natural to date the beginning of the work of grace not from regeneration, but from the conviction of sin and faith, thence proceeding to sanctification, and so on.

But this subjective representation, more or less incomplete, can not satisfy us now. It was to be expected that the supporters of "free will" would abuse it, by inferring that the origin and first activities of the

work of salvation spring from man himself. A sinner, hearing the Word, is deeply impressed; persuaded by its threats and promises, he repents, arises, and accepts the Savior. Hence there is nothing more than a mere moral persuasion, obscuring the glorious origin of the new life. To resist this repulsive deforming of the truth, Maccovius, already in the days of the Synod of Dort, abandoned this more or less critical method to make regeneration the starting-point. He followed this order: "Knowledge of sin, redemption in Christ, regeneration, and only then faith." And this was consistent with the development of the Reformed doctrine. For as soon as the subjective method was abandoned, it became necessary in answer to the question, "What has God wrought in the soul?" to return to the first implanting of life. And then it became evident that God did not begin by leading the sinner to repentance, for repentance must be preceded by conviction of sin; nor by bringing him under the hearing of the word, for this requires an opened ear. Hence the first conscious and comparatively cooperative act of man is always preceded by the original act of God, planting in him the first principle of a new life, under which act man is wholly passive and unconscious.

This led to the distinction of the first and second grace. The former denoted God's work in the sinner, creating a new life without his knowledge; while the latter denoted the work wrought in regenerate man with his full knowledge and consent.

The first grace was naturally called regeneration. And yet there was no perfect unanimity in this respect. Some Scottish theologians put it in this way: "God began the work of grace with the implanting of the faith-faculty (*fides potentialis*), followed by the new grace of the faith-exercise (*fides actualis*), and of the faith power (*fides habitualis*). Yet it is only an apparent difference. Whether I call the first activity of grace, the implanting of the "faith-faculty," or the "new principle of life," in both instances it means that the work of grace does not begin with faith or with repentance or contrition, but that these are preceded by God's act of giving power to the powerless, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead.

For a correct idea of the entire work of grace in its different phases let us notice the following successive stages or milestones:

1. The implanting of the new life principle, commonly called regeneration in the limited sense, or the implanting of the faith-faculty. This divine act is wrought in man at different ages; when, no one can tell. We know from the instance of John the Baptist that it can be wrought even in the mother's womb. And the salvation of deceased infants constrains us, with Voetius and all profound theologians, to believe that this original act may occur very early in life.

2. The keeping of the implanted principle of life, while the sinner still continues in sin, so far as his consciousness is concerned. Persons who received the life-principle early in life are no more dead, but live. Dying before actual conversion, they are not lost, but saved. In early life they often manifest holy inclinations; sometimes truly marvelous. However, they have no conscious faith, nor knowledge of the treasure possessed. The new life is present, but dormant; kept not by the recipient, but by the Giver--like seed-grain in the ground in winter; like the spark glowing under the ashes, but not kindling the wood; like a subterranean stream coming at last to the surface.

3. The call by the Word and the Spirit, internal and external. Even this is a divine act, commonly performed through the service of the Church. It addresses itself not to the deaf but to the hearing, not to the dead but to the living, altho still slumbering. It proceeds from the Word and the Spirit, because not only the faith-faculty, but faith itself--i.e., the power and exercise of the faculty--are gifts of grace. The faith-faculty can not exercise faith of itself. It avails us no more than the faculty of breathing when air and the power to breathe are withheld. Hence the preaching of the Word and the inward working of the Holy Spirit are divine, correspondent operations. Under the

preaching of the Word the Spirit energizes the faith-faculty, and thus the call becomes effectual, for the sleeper arises.

4. This call of God produces conviction of sin and justification, two acts of the same exercise of faith. In this, God's work may be represented again either subjectively or objectively. Subjectively, it seems to the saint that conviction of sin and heart-brokenness came first, and that then he obtained the sense of being justified by faith. Objectively, this is not so. The realization of his lost condition was already a bold act of faith. And by every subsequent act of faith he becomes more deeply convinced of his misery and receives more abundantly from the fulness which is in Christ, his Surety.

Concerning the question, whether conviction of sin must not precede faith, there need be no difference. Both representations amount to the same thing. When a man can say for the first time in his life "I believe," he is at the same moment completely lost and completely saved, being justified in his Lord.

5. This exercise of faith results in conversion; at this stage in the way of grace the child of God becomes clearly conscious of the implanted life. When a man says and feels "I believe," and does not recall it, but God confirms it, faith is at once followed by conversion. The implanting of the new life precedes the first act of faith, but conversion follows it. Conversion does not become a fact so long as the sinner only sees his lost condition, but when he acts upon this principle; for then the old man begins to die and the new man begins to rise, and these are the two parts of all real conversion.

In principle man is converted but once, viz., the moment of yielding himself to Immanuel. After that he converts himself daily, i.e., as often as he discovers conflict between his will and that of the Holy Spirit. And even this is not man's work, but the work of God in him. "Turn Thou me, O Lord, and I shall be

turned." There is this difference, however, that in regeneration and faith's first exercise he was passive, while in conversion grace enabled him to be active. One is converted and one converts himself; the one is incomplete without the other.

6. Hence conversion merges itself in sanctification. This is also a divine act, and not human; not a growing toward Christ, but an absorbing of His life through the roots of faith. In children of twelve or thirteen deceased soon after conversion, sanctification does not appear. Yet they partake of it just as much as adults. Sanctification has a twofold meaning: first, sanctification which as Christ's finished work is given and imputed to all the elect; and second, sanctification which from Christ is gradually wrought in the converted and manifested according to times and circumstances. These are not two sanctifications, but one; just as we speak sometimes of the rain that accumulates in the clouds above and then comes down in drops on the thirsty fields below.

7. Sanctification is finished and closed in the complete redemption at the time of death. In the severing of body and soul divine grace completes the dying to sin. Hence in death a work of grace is performed which imparts to the work of regeneration its fullest unfolding. If until then, considering ourselves out of Christ, we are still lost in ourselves and lying in the midst of death, the article of death ends all this. Then faith is turned into sight, sin's excitement is disarmed, and we are forever beyond its reach.

Lastly, our glorification in the last day, when the inward bliss will be manifest in outward glory, and by an act of omnipotent grace the soul will be reunited with its glorified body, and be placed in such heavenly glory as becomes the state of perfect felicity.

This shows how the operations of grace are riveted together as the links of a chain. The work of grace must begin with quickening the dead. Once implanted, the still slumbering life must be awakened by

the call. Thus awakened, man finds himself in a new life, i.e., he knows himself justified. Being justified, he lets the new life result in conversion. Conversion flows into sanctification. Sanctification receives its keystone through the severing of sin in death. And in the last day, glorification completes the work of divine grace in our entire person.

Hence it follows that that which succeeds is contained in that which precedes. A regenerate deceased infant died to sin in death just as surely as the man with hoary head and fourscore years. There can be no first without including the second and last. Hence the entire work of grace might be represented as one birth for heaven, one continued regeneration to be completed in the last day.

Wherefore there may be persons ignorant of these stages, which are as indispensable as milestones to the surveyor; but they may never be made to oppress the souls of the simple. He who breathes deeply unconscious of his lungs is often the healthiest.

Touching the question whether the Scripture gives reference to this arrangement over the old, we refer to the word of Jesus: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he can not see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5); from which we infer that Jesus dates every operation of grace from regeneration. First life, and then the activity of life.

XX.

Its Course.

"No man can come unto Me, except the Father draw him." --John vi. 44.

From the preceding it is evident that preparatory grace is different in different persons; and that distinction must be made between the

many regenerated in the first days of life, and the few born again at a more advanced age.

Of course, we refer only to the elect. In the non-elect saving grace does not operate; hence preparatory grace is altogether out of the question. The former are born, with few exceptions, in the Church. They do not enter the covenant of grace later on in life, but they belong to it from the first moment of their existence. They spring from the seed of the Church, and in turn contain in themselves the seed of the future Church. And for this reason, the first germ of the new life is imparted to the seed of the Church (which is, alas! always mixed with much chaff) oftenest either before or soon after birth.

The Reformed Church was so firmly settled in this doctrine that she dared establish it as the prevailing rule, believing that the seed of the Church (not the chaff of course} received the germ of life even before Baptism; wherefore it is actually sanctified in Christ already; and receives in Baptism the seal not upon something that is yet to come, but upon that which is already present. Hence the liturgical question to the parents: "Do you acknowledge that, altho your children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to condemnation itself, yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of His Church ought to be baptized?"

In subsequent periods, less stedfast in the faith, men have shunned this doctrine, not knowing what to make of the words "are sanctified." This they interpreted to mean that as children of members of the covenant they were counted as belonging to the covenant, and as such were entitled to baptism. But the earnest and sound common sense of our people has always felt that this mere "counting in" did not do justice to the full and rich meaning of the liturgy.

And if you should inquire into the meaning of these words of the office of Baptism, "are sanctified," not of the weaker epigones, but of the energetic generation of heroes who have victoriously fought the

Lord's battles against Arminius and his followers, then you would discover that those godly and learned theologians, such as Gysbrecht Voetius for instance, never for a moment hesitated to break with these half-way explanations, but spoke out plainly, saying: "They are entitled to Baptism not because they are counted as members of the covenant but because as a rule they actually already possess that first grace; and for this reason, and this reason alone, it reads: `That our children are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of His body ought to be baptized.'"

By this confession the Reformed Church proved to be in accord with God's Word and not less with the actual facts. With few exceptions, persons who afterward prove to belong to the regenerate do not begin life with riotous outbreaks of sin. It is rather the rule that children of Christian parents manifest from early childhood a desire and taste for holy things, warm zeal for the name of God, and inward emotions that can not be attributed to an evil nature.

Moreover, this glorious confession gave the right direction to the education of children in our Reformed families, largely retained to the present time. Our people did not see in their children offshoots of the wild vine, to be grafted perhaps later on, with whom little could be done until converted after the manner of Methodism; [27] but they lived in the quiet expectation and holy confidence that the child to be trained was already grafted, and therefore worthy to be nursed with tenderest care. We admit that, latterly, since the Reformed character of our churches has been impaired by the National Church as a church for the masses, this gold has been sadly dimmed; but its original, vital thought was beautiful and animating. It made God's work of regeneration precede man's work; to Baptism it gave its rich development; and it made the work of education, not dependent on chance, cooperate with God.

Hence we recognize among the rising generation in the Church four classes:

1. All elect persons regenerated before Baptism, in whom the implanted life remains hidden until they are converted at a later age.
2. Elect persons, not only regenerated in infancy, but in whom the implanted life was early manifested and ripened imperceptibly into conversion.
3. Elect persons born again, and converted in later life.
4. The non-elect, or the chaff.

Examining each of these four, with special reference to preparatory grace, we arrive at the following conclusions:

Regarding the elect of the first class, from the very nature of the case preparatory grace has scarcely room here, in its limited sense. In its direct form, it is unthinkable with reference to an unborn or newborn child. In such it is only indirect--i.e., frequently, it pleases God to give such child parents whose persons and nature's practise a form of sin less outspoken in its war upon grace than other forms of sin. Not as, tho such parents had anything from which the child could be grafted, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh; nothing clean from the unclean; it is always the wild vine waiting for the grafting of the Lord. Nay, the preparatory grace in this case appears from the fact that the child receives from its parents a form of life adapted to its heavenly calling.

The same applies to the elect of the second class. Altho we concede that the divine call works upon such during their tender years, yet, while it prepares for conversion, it does not prepare for regeneration, which it follows. The call is ineffectual unless the faculty of hearing be first implanted. Only he that has an ear can hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches and to his own soul. Hence, in this case, preparatory grace is scarcely perceptible. Surely there are many agencies that imperceptibly prepare for his conversion; but this is

different from a preparing for regeneration, and we speak now only of the latter.

Properly speaking, preparatory grace in its limited sense is applied only to the third class of elect persons. It comprehends their whole life with all its turns and changes, relations and connections, heights and depths, events and adversities. Not as tho all these could produce the slightest germ of life or possibility of quickening. No; the germ of life can never spring from preparatory grace, any more than the preparation of ten cradles, of a dozen of clothes baskets, and of closets full of expensive infant-garments can ever juggle a single infant into any of those cradles. The vital spark is produced only by an act of the mighty God, independent of all preparation. But, from its birth, God guards that wild-vine and controls the growth of its wild shoots, so that in the hour of His pleasure, when He shall graft upon it the true vine, it may be all that it ought to be.

And this ends the discussion, for regarding the fourth class, by and by they will be separated from the wheat and blown away by the fan which is in His hand; hence preparatory grace is out of the question.

And from this it is evident that the proper work of the Holy Spirit regarding preparatory grace is scarcely perceptible.

Every feature of this work, so far presented, points directly not to the operation of the Holy Spirit, nor to that of the Son, but almost exclusively to that of the Father. For the circumstances of the child's birth--i.e., the hereditary character of his family and more especially of his parents, and the future course of his life until the moment of his conversion--belong to the realm of the divine Providence. The appointed place of our habitation, our generation and family, the formation of our immediate environment, the influences previously determined to affect us--all belong to the leadings of God's providence, ascribed by Scripture to the work of the Father. The Lord Jesus said: "No man can come unto Me, except the Father draw him." And altho this drawing of the Father has a higher aim and

must be spiritually understood, yet it indicates generally that the determining of those things, which afterward regulates their direction and course, is attributed particularly to the First Person.

We notice a work of the Holy Spirit in this matter only as far as He animates all personal life, since He is the Spirit of Life; and as He cooperates with the Father in that special providence which refers to the elect. For, altho in our mind we can analyze the work of grace, yet we may never forget that the eternal reality does not fully correspond to this part of our analysis.

Hence, in the elect, the work of providence and that of grace often flow together, being one and the same. Our Church has tried to express this, in her confession of a general providence which includes

XXI.

Regeneration the Work of God.

"The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath even made both of them."--Prov. xx. 12.

"The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath even made both of them." This testimony of the Holy Spirit contains the whole mystery of regeneration.

An unregenerate person is deaf and blind; not only as a stock or block, but worse. For neither stock nor block is corrupt or ruined, but an unregenerate person is wholly dead and a prey to the most fearful dissolution.

This rigid, uncompromising, and absolute confession must be our starting-point in this discussion, else we shall fail to understand the

claims of regeneration. This is the reason why every heresy that has conceded in one way or other that man has a share, most generally a lion's share, in the work of redemption, has always begun by calling in question the nature of sin. "Undoubtedly," they said, "sin is very bad--a terrible and abominable evil; but there is surely some remnant of good in man. That noble, virtuous, and amiable being, man, can not be dead in trespasses and sin. That may be true of some scoundrel or knave behind the bars, or of robbers and unscrupulous murderers; but really, it can not be applied to our honorable ladies and gentlemen, to our lovely girls, roguish boys, and attractive children. These are not prone to hate God and their neighbors, but disposed, with all their heart, to love all men, and render unto God the reverence due unto Him."

Therefore away with all ambiguity in this matter! This method of smoothing over unpalatable truths, now so much in vogue among the affable people, we can not indorse. Our confession is, and ever shall be, that by nature man is dead in trespasses and sin, lying under the curse, ripe for the just judgment of God, and still ripening for an eternal condemnation. Surely his being, as man, is unimpaired; wherefore we protest against the presentation that the sinner is in this respect as a stock or block. No; as man he is unimpaired, his being is intact; but his nature is corrupt, and in that corrupt nature he is dead.

We compare him to the body of a person who has died of an ordinary disease. Such a body retains all the members of the human organism intact. There is the eye with its muscles, and the ear with its organs of hearing; in the post-mortem examination heart, spleen, liver, and kidneys appear to be perfectly normal. A dead body may sometimes appear so natural that one is tempted to say: "He is not dead, but sleeping." And yet, however perfect and natural, its nature is corrupt with the corruption of death. And the same is true of the sinner. His being remains intact and whole, containing all that which constitutes a man; but his nature is corrupt, yea, so corrupt that he is dead; not

only apparently, but actually dead; dead in all the variations which can be played upon the term "dead."

Hence without regeneration the sinner is utterly unprofitable. What is the use of an ear except it hear, or of an eye except it see? Therefore the Holy Ghost testifies: "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made even both of them." (Prov. xx. 12) And since in the world of spiritual things deaf ears and blind eyes do not avail anything, the Church of Christ confesses that every operation of saving grace must be preceded by a quickening of the sinner, by an opening of blind eyes, an unstopping of deaf ears--in short, by the implanting of the faculty of faith.

And as the man that sat in darkness can see as soon as his eyes are opened, so we, without moving a hair's breadth, are translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. "Translated" does not denote here an actual going, nor does "to be translated" denote an actual change of place, but simply life entering into the dead, so that he that was blind can now see.

This wonderful act of regeneration may be examined in two classes of persons: in the infant and in the adult.

It is the safest way to examine it in the infant: not because this work of grace is different in an infant from what it is in an adult, for it is the same in all persons thus favored; but to the conscious observation of an adult the workings of regeneration are so mingled with those of conversion that it is difficult to distinguish the two.

But this difficulty does not exist in the case of an unconscious child, as, e.g., in John the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth. Such infant has no consciousness to create confusion. The matter appears in a pure and unmixed form. And thus we are enabled to distinguish between regeneration and conversion in an adult. It is evident that in the case of an infant which, like John, is still unborn, there can be nothing but mere passivity--i.e., the child underwent something, but himself did

nothing; something was done to him, and in him, but not by him; and every idea of cooperation is absolutely excluded.

Hence, in regeneration, man is neither worker nor coworker; he is merely wrought upon; and the only Worker in this matter is God. And, for this very reason, because God is the sole Worker in regeneration, it must be thoroughly understood that His work does not begin only with regeneration.

No; while the sinner is still dead in trespasses and sins, before the work of God has begun in him, he is already chosen and ordained, justified and sanctified, adopted as God's child and glorified. This is what filled St. Paul with such ecstasy of joy when he said: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate; and whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 29, 30). And this is not the recital of what took place in the regenerate, but the glad summing up of the things which God accomplished for us before we existed. Hence our election, foreordination, justification, and glorification precede the new birth. It is true that, in the hour of love when regeneration was to be effected in us, the things accomplished outside of our consciousness were to be revealed to the consciousness of faith; but so far as God was concerned all things were ready and prepared. The dead sinner whom God regenerates is to the divine consciousness a beloved, elect, justified, and adopted child already. God quickens only His dear children.

Of course, God justifies the ungodly and not the righteous; He calls sinners to repentance and not just persons; but it should be remembered that this is spoken from the point of view of our own consciousness of sin. The still unregenerate does not feel himself God's child, nor that he is justified; does not believe his own election, yea, often gainsays it; yet he can not alter the things divinely wrought in his behalf, viz., that before the supreme bar of justice God declared him just and free, long before he was so declared before the bar of his

own conscience. Long before he believed, he was justified before God's tribunal, by and by to be justified by faith before his own consciousness.

But, however wonderful and unfathomable the mystery of election may be--and none of us shall ever be able to answer the question why one was chosen to be a vessel of honor, and another was left as a vessel of wrath--in the matter of regeneration we do not face that mystery at all. That God regenerates one and not another is according to a fixed and unalterable rule. He comes with regeneration to all the elect; and the non-elect He passes by. Hence this act of God is irresistible. No man has the power to say, "I will not be born again," or to prevent God's work or to put obstacles in His way, or to make it so difficult that it can not be performed.

God effects this gracious work in His own way, i.e., He so royally perseveres that all creatures together could not rob Him of one of His elect. If all men and devils should conspire to pluck a brutal man, belonging to the elect, from His saving power, all their efforts would be mere vanity. As we brush away a spider's web, so would God laugh at all their commotion. The powerful steam borer pierces the iron plate not more noiselessly and with less effort than silently and majestically God penetrates the heart of whomsoever He will, and changes the nature of His chosen. Isaiah's word concerning the starry heavens--"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their hosts by number; He calleth them all by name, by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth " (Isa. xl. 26) may be applied to the firmament in which God's elect shine as stars: "Because of the greatness of His might, and that He is strong in power, not one faileth." All that are ordained to eternal life are quickened at the divinely appointed hour.

And this implies that the work of regeneration is not a moral work; that is, it is not accomplished by means of advice or exhortation. Even taken in its wider sense, including conversion, as, e.g., the

canons of Dort use it now and then, regeneration is not a moral working in the soul.

It is not simply a case of misunderstanding, the sinner's will being still uncorrupt, so that it requires only instruction and advice to induce it to choose rightly. No; such advice and admonition are wholly out of the question regarding the unborn son of Zacharias; and the thousands of infants of believing parents, of whom at Dort it was correctly confessed that they may be supposed to have died in the Lord, i.e., being born again; and regarding those regenerated before Baptism but converted later in life.

For this reason it is so necessary to examine regeneration (in its limited sense) in an infant, and not in an adult, in whom it necessarily includes conversion.

The following reasoning can not be disputed:

1. All men, infants included, are born dead in trespasses and sins.
2. Of these infants many die before they come to self-consciousness.
3. Of these gathered flowers the Church confesses that many are saved.
4. Being dead in sin, they can not be saved without being born again.
5. Hence regeneration does actually take place in persons that are not self-conscious.

These statements being indisputable, it is evident, therefore, that the nature and character of regeneration can be determined most correctly by examining it in these still unconscious persons.

Such an unborn infant is totally ignorant of human language; it has no ideas, has never heard the Gospel preached, can not receive instruction, warning, or exhortation. Hence moral influence is out of the question; and this convinces us that regeneration is not a moral, but a metaphysical act of God, just as much as the creation of the soul of an unborn child, which is effected independently of the mother. God regenerates a man wholly without his foreknowledge.

What it is that constitutes the act of regeneration can not be told. Jesus Himself tells us so, for He says: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou Nearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John iii. 8) And, therefore, it is befitting to investigate this mystery with the utmost discretion. Even in the natural kingdom the mystery of life and its origin is almost entirely beyond our knowledge. The most learned physician is entirely ignorant concerning the manner in which a human life comes into existence. Once existing, he can explain its development, but of the inception that precedes all else he knows absolutely nothing. In this respect he is just as ignorant as the most innocent peasant boy. The mystery can not be penetrated, simply because it lies beyond our observation; it is perceptible only that life exists.

And this applies in stronger sense to the mystery of our second birth. Post-mortem examination can detect the embryo and its locality, but spiritually even this is impossible. Subsequent manifestations are instructive to a certain extent, but even then much is uncertain and unsettled. By what infallible standard can it be determined how much of the old nature enters into the expressions of the new life? Is there no hypocrisy? Are there no conditions unexplained? Are there no obstacles to spiritual development? Hence experience in this respect can not avail; tho pure and simple, it can reveal only the development of that which is, and not the origin of the life unborn.

The only source of truth on this subject is the Word of God; and in that Word the mystery remains not only unrevealed, but veiled. And

for good reasons. If we were to effect regeneration, if we could add to or take from it, if we could advance or hinder it, then Scripture would surely have sufficiently instructed us concerning it. But since God has reserved this work altogether to Himself, man need not solve this mystery any more than that of his first creation, or that of the creation of his soul.

XXII.

The Work of Regeneration.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."--2 Cor. v. 17.

In our former article we contended that regeneration is a real act of God in which man is absolutely passive and unable, according to the ancient confession of the Church. Let us now reverently examine this matter more closely; not to penetrate into things too high for us, but to cut off error and to clear the consciousness.

Regeneration is not sacramentally effected by holy Baptism, relieving the sinner's inability, offering him another opportunity to choose for or against God, as the Ethicals maintain.

Nor is it a mere rectifying of the understanding; nor a simple change of disposition and inclination, making the unwilling willing to conform to the holy will of God.

Neither is it a change of ego; nor, as many maintain, a leaving the ego undisturbed, the personality unchanged, simply putting the evil ego in the light and reflection of the righteousness of Christ.

The last two errors must be refuted and rejected as positively as the first two.

In regeneration a man does not receive another ego; i.e., our being as man is not changed nor modified, but before and after regeneration it is the same ego, the same person, the same human being. Altho sin has terribly corrupted man, his being remained intact. Nothing is lacking. All its constituent parts, that distinguish it from all other beings, are present in the sinner.

Not his being, but his nature became totally corrupt.

Nature and being are not the same. Applied to a steam-engine, being is the engine itself, with its cylinders, pipes, wheels, and screws; but its nature is the action manifest as soon as steam enters the cylinder. Applied to man, being is that which makes him man, and nature that which manifests the character of his being and working.

If sin had ruined man's being, he would be no more man, and regeneration would be impossible. But since his being, his ego, his person remained intact and the deep corruption affected only his nature, regeneration, i.e., restoration of his nature, is possible; and this restoration is effected by the new birth. Let this be firmly maintained. In regeneration we do not receive a new being, ego, or person, but our nature is reborn.

The best and most satisfactory illustration of the manner of regeneration is furnished by the curious art of grafting. The successful grafting of a budding shoot of the cultivated grape upon the wild vine results in a good tree growing upon the wild trunk. This applies to all fruit-trees and flowering plants. The cultivated can be grafted upon the wild. Left to itself, the wild will never yield anything good. The wild pear and the wild rose remain stunted and chary of fruit and blossom. But let the gardener graft a finely flavored pear upon the wild pear, or a beautiful double tea rose upon the wild rose, and the former will yield luscious fruit and the latter magnificent flowers.

This miracle of grafting has always been a wonder to thinking men. And it is a wonder. The trunk to be grafted is absolutely wild; with its wild roots it sucks the saps and forces them into its wild cells. But that little graft has the wonderful power of converting the sap and vital forces into something good, causing that wild trunk to bear noble fruit and rich flowers. It is true the wild trunk vigorously resists the reformation of its nature by its wild shoots below the graft, and if successful its wild nature will forcibly assert itself and prevent the sap from passing through the bud. But by keeping down those wild shoots the sap can be forced to the bud with excellent results. Forcing down the wild trunk, the graft will gradually reach almost to the roots, and we nearly forget that the tree was ever wild.

This clearly represents regeneration so far as this divine mystery can be represented objectively. For in regeneration something is planted in man which by nature he lacks. The fall did not merely remove him from the sphere of divine righteousness, into which regeneration brings him back, but regeneration effects a radical modification in man as man, creating a difference between him and the unregenerate so great that finally it leads to direct opposites.

To say that between the regenerate and the unregenerate there is no difference is equivalent to a denial of the work of the Holy Spirit. Generally, however, no difference is noticed at first, no more than in the grafted tree. Twins lie in the same cradle; one regenerated, the other not, but we can not see the slightest difference between the two. The former may even have a worse temper than the latter. They are exactly alike. Both spring from the same wild trunk. Dissecting knife nor microscope could detect the least difference; for that which God has wrought in the favored child is wholly spiritual and invisible, discernible to God alone.

This fact must be confessed definitely and emphatically, in opposition to those who say that the seed of regeneration is material. This error occupies the same ground as the Manichean heresy in the matter of sin. The latter makes sin a microbe; and this makes the

seed of regeneration a sort of perceptible germ of life and holiness. And this falsifies the truth against which, among others, Dr. Boehl has earnestly protested.

The seed of regeneration is intangible, invisible, purely spiritual. It does not create two men in one being, but before and after regeneration there is but one being, one ego, one personality. Not an old and a new man, but one man--viz., the old man before regeneration, and the new man after it--who is created after God in perfect righteousness and holiness. For that which is born of God can not sin. His seed remaineth in him. "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17)

Yet the nature of the ego or personality is truly changed, and in such a way that, putting on the new nature in principle, he still continues to work through the old nature. The grafted tree is not two trees, but one. Before the grafting it was a wild rose, after it a cultivated one. Still the new nature must draw its saps through the old nature; apart from the graft, the trunk remains wild.

Hence before as well as after regeneration we lie in the midst of death, as soon as we consider ourselves outside of the divine seed. Wherefore, trying to avoid one false position, we must be careful not to run into another; trying to escape, the Siamese twinship of the old and the new man, and maintaining the unity of the ego before and after regeneration, we should not begin to teach that regeneration leaves our person unchanged, that it does not affect the sinner himself, but merely translates him into the sphere of an extraneous righteousness. No: the Scripture speaks of a new creature, another birth, a being changed and renewed. And this can not be reconciled with the notion that the sinner should remain unchanged.

Regarding the question, what it is in the bud that has the potency to regenerate the wild trunk, the best-informed botanist can not discover the fiber or liquid that might have this power. He only knows that every bud has its own nature, and possesses the potency

to produce another branch or tree of the same nature by its own formative power.

And this applies to the work of regeneration. In the center of our being, ego, personality rules our nature, disposition, form of being, and existence, imparting its impress, form, character, and spiritual quality to what we are and work and speak. That all-controlling center is by nature sinful and wicked. Under its fairest forms it is but unrighteous. Hence, willingly or unwillingly, we press upon our being, working, and speaking the stamp of unrighteousness. According to age and development this nature of the ego chisels out of the marble of our being an evil and sinful man, corresponding to the image contained in our nature from which it proceeds. In regeneration God performs in this controlling center of our being a wonderful act, converting this nature, this formative force into something entirely different. Consequently our being, working, and speaking are henceforth controlled by another commandment, law of life, and government; and this new formative force chisels another man in us, new and holy, a child of God, created in righteousness.

But this change is not completed at once. The tree grafted in March may remain inactive during that entire month, because, there is as yet no working in its nature. But this is sure: as soon as there is any action it will be according to the new, ingrafted nature.

And so it is here. The new, ingrafted life may lie dormant for a season, like a grain of wheat in the earth; but when it begins to work it will be according to the nature of the new life. Hence regeneration implants the life-germ of the new man, whom it contains in all his completeness, and from which it will proceed as surely as the wheat contained in the seed proceeds from it.

In order to assist us in our representation of this mystery, the greatest theologian of the Reformed churches has presented the divine plan in regeneration in the following stages:

(1) In His own mind God conceives the new man; whom (2) He modifies according to a particular person, thus creating the new man; (3) He brings the germ of this new man into the center of our being; (4) in which center He effects the union between our ego and this germinating life; (5) in that vital germ God supports the formative power, which at His appointed time He will cause to come forth, by which our ego will manifest itself as a new man.

XXIII.

Regeneration and Faith.

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."--1 Peter i. 23.

There is a possible objection to what has been said above concerning regeneration. It is evident that God's Word, and therefore our symbols of faith, offers a modified representation of these things which, superficially considered, seems to condemn our representation. This representation, which does not consider children, but adults, may thus be stated: Among a circle of unconverted persons God causes the Word to be preached by His ambassadors of the cross. By this preaching the call reaches them. If there are elect persons among them, for whom it is now the time of love, God accompanies the outward call with the inward. Consequently they turn from their ways of sin to the way of life. And so they are begotten of God.

Thus St. Peter presents the matter, saying: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible; by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." (1 Pet. i. 23) And also St. Paul when he declares, "That faith is by the hearing, and the hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. x. 17). It fully harmonizes with what St. Paul writes

concerning holy Baptism, which he calls the washing of "regeneration," for in those days Jew and Gentile were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, immediately after their conversion, by the preaching of the apostles.

For this reason our fathers confessed in their Confession (article 24): "We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the word of God, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man." And likewise teaches the Heidelberg Catechism (see question 65): "Such faith proceedeth from the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments." And also the canons of Dort, Third and Fourth Heads of doctrine, section 17: "As the almighty operation of God, whereby He prolongs and supports this our natural life, does not exclude, but requires the use of means by which God of His infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert His influence; so also the before-mentioned supernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated, in no wise excludes or subverts the use of the Gospel; which the most wise God hath ordained to be the seed of regeneration and food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to His glory and the abasement of all pride, and in the mean time, however, neglected not to keep them by the sacred precepts of the Gospel in the exercise of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline; so even to this day, be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the Church, by separating what He of His good pleasure hath most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent usually is this blessing of God working in us, and the more directly is His work advanced."

And now, in order to eradicate every suspicion that we contend against this representation, we declare openly and definitely that we give it our most hearty assent.

We only beg it be considered that in this presentation both Scripture and the symbols of faith always point to the mysterious background, to a wonderful work of God hiding back of it, to an inscrutable mystery without which all this comes to naught.

The canons of Dort describe this mysterious, inscrutable, and wonderful background most elaborately and most beautifully in article 12, Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine: "And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture and denominated a new creation; a resurrection from the dead, a making alive, which God works in us without our aid. But this is in no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the Gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation that, after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not; to be converted or to continue unconverted; but it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scripture inspired by the Author of this work declares; so that all in whose hearts God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe. Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence becomes itself active. Wherefore, also, man is himself rightly said to believe and repent, by virtue of that grace received." And also in article 11: "But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the Gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, He pervades the inmost recesses of the man; He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised; infuses new qualities into the will, which, tho heretofore dead, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree it may bring

forth the fruits of good actions." The Heidelberg Catechism points to this, in question 8: "Except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God." And also the Confession, article 22: "We believe that to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits."

This mysterious background, which our fathers at Dort called "His pervading the inmost recesses of man by the efficacy of the, regenerating Spirit," is evidently the same as what we call "the divine operation which penetrates the center of our being to implant the germ of the new life."

And what is this mysterious working? According to the universal testimony based upon Scripture, it is an operation of the Holy Spirit in man's innermost being.

Hence the question, whether this regenerating act precedes, accompanies, or follows the hearing of the Word. And this question should be well understood, for it involves the solution of this seeming disagreement.

We answer: The Holy Spirit may perform this work in the sinner's heart before, during, or after the preaching of the Word. The inward call may be associated with the outward call, or it may follow it. But that which precedes the inward call, viz., the opening of the deaf ear, so that it may be heard, is not dependent upon the preaching of the Word; and therefore may precede the preaching.

Correct discrimination in this respect is of greatest importance.

If I designate the whole conscious work of grace from conversion until death, "regeneration," without any regard to its mysterious background, then I may and must say with the Confession (article 24): "That this faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word, and the operation of the Holy Spirit, doth regenerate him and make him a new man."

But if I distinguish in this work of grace, according to the claims of the sacraments, between the origin of the new life, for which God gave us the sacrament of holy Baptism, and its support, for which God gave the sacrament of the holy Supper, then regeneration ceases immediately after man is born again, and that which follows is called "sanctification."

And discriminating again between that which the Holy Spirit wrought in us consciously and unconsciously, then regeneration designates that which was wrought in us unconsciously, while conversion is the term we apply to the awakening of this implanted life in our consciousness. Hence God's work of grace runs through these three successive stages:

- 1st. Regeneration in its first stage, when the Lord plants the new life in the dead heart.
- 2d. Regeneration in its second stage, when the new-born man comes to conversion.
- 3d. Regeneration in its third stage, when conversion merges into sanctification.

In each of these three God performs a wonderful and mysterious work in man's inward being. From God proceed quickening, conversion, and sanctification, and in each God is the Worker: only with this difference, that in the quickening He works alone, finding and leaving man inactive; that in conversion He finds us inactive, but makes us active; that in sanctification He works in us in such a manner that we work ourselves through Him.

Describing it still more closely, we say that in the first stage of regeneration, that of quickening, God works without means; in the second stage, that of conversion, He employs means, viz., the preaching of the Word; and in the third stage, that of sanctification, He uses means in addition to ourselves, whom He uses as means.

Condensing the foregoing, there is one great act of God which re-creates the corrupt sinner into a new man, viz., the comprehensive act of regeneration, which contains three parts--quickenings, conversion, and sanctification.

For the ministry of the Word it is preferable to consider only the last two, conversion and sanctification, since this is the appointed means to effect them. The first, regeneration, is preferably a subject of private meditation, since in it man is passive and God only active; and also because in it the majesty of the divine operation is most apparent.

Hence there is no conflict or opposition. Referring, according to the Confession, article 17, only to conversion and sanctification, the unstopping of the deaf ear as preceding the hearing of the Word is not denied. And penetrating into the work which antedates conversion, "In which God works in us without our aid" (article 12 of the canons of Dort), it is not denied, but confessed, that conversion and sanctification follow the unstopping of the deaf ear, and that, in the proper sense, regeneration is completed only at the death of the sinner.

Do not suppose that we make these two to conflict. In writing a biography of Napoleon it would be sufficient simply to mention his birth, but one might also mention, more in particular, the things that took place before his birth. Just so in this respect: I may refer either to the two parts of regeneration, conversion and sanctification, or I may include also that which precedes conversion, and speak also of the quickening. This implies no antagonism, but a mere difference of exactness. It is more exhaustive, with reference to regeneration, to speak of three stages--quickenings, conversion, and sanctification; altho it is customary and more practical to speak only of the last two.

Our purpose, however, calls for greater completeness. The aim of this work is not to preach the Word, but to uncover the foundations of the truth, so as to stop the building of crooked walls upon the

foundation-stone, after the manner of Ethicals, Rationalists, and Supernaturalists.

Exhaustiveness in treatment requires to ask not only, "How and what does the quickened sinner hear?" but also, "Who has given him hearing ears? "

And this is all the more to be insisted upon because our children must not be ignored in this respect. At Dort, in 1618, our children were taken into account, and we may not deny ourselves this pleasant obligation.

And herein lies a real danger. For to speak of the little ones without considering the first stage of regeneration--i.e., the quickening--causes confusion and perplexity from which there is no escape.

Salvation depends upon faith, and faith upon the hearing of the Word; hence our deceased infants must be lost, for they can not hear the Word. To escape this fearful thought it is often said that the children are saved by virtue of the parents' faith--a misunderstanding which greatly confused our entire conception of Baptism, and made our baptismal form very perplexing. But as soon as we distinguish quickening, as a stage of regeneration, from conversion and sanctification, the light enters. For since quickening is an unaided act of God in us, independent of the Word, and frequently separated from the second stage, conversion, by an interval of many days, there is nothing to prevent God from performing His work even in the babe, and the apparent conflict dissolves into beautiful harmony. Moreover, as soon as I regard my still unconverted children as not yet regenerate, their training must run in the direction of a questionable Methodism. [28] What is the use of the call so long as I suppose and know: "This ear can not yet hear"?

Touching the question concerning "faith," we are fully prepared to apply the same distinction to this matter. You have only to

discriminate between the organ or the faculty of faith, the Power to exercise faith, and the working of faith. The first of these three, viz., the faculty of faith, is implanted in the first stage of regeneration--i.e., in quickening; the power of faith is imparted in the second stage of regeneration--i.e., in conversion; and the working of faith is wrought in the third stage--i.e., in sanctification. Hence if faith is wrought only by the hearing of the Word, the preaching of the Word does not create the faculty of faith.

Look only at what our fathers confessed at Dort: "He who works in man both to will and to do produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also" (Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, article 14).

Or to express it still more strongly: when the Word is preached, I know it; and when I hear it and believe it, I know whence this working of faith comes. But the implanting of the faith-faculty is an entirely different thing; for of this the Lord Jesus says: "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh; and whither it goeth" (John iii. 8); and as the wind, so is also the regeneration of man.

The External and Internal Call

by Wilhelmus a Brakel

Thus far we have discussed the Surety of the covenant and the partakers of this covenant, the church. We shall now proceed to consider the ways in which the Lord brings these partakers of the covenant into the covenant, and how He leads them to the ultimate goal of eternal felicity. The first aspect of this way is the calling. The Calling: God's Declaration of the Gospel to Sinners

The calling is a gracious work of God, whereby He invites the sinner by means of the gospel to exchange the state of sin and wrath for Christ, in order that through Him he may be reconciled to God and obtain godliness and salvation. By means of this calling He also, by the Holy Spirit, efficaciously translates His elect into this state.

The calling is a gracious work of God: "And (the king) sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:3, 14); "...Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:3); "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9).

God calls neither by the law of nature nor by the works of nature, whereby, in doing good, He nevertheless does not leave Himself without witness to the heathen (Acts 14:17). "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him" (Acts 17:27). For in all this Christ is neither proclaimed to them nor are they exhorted to believe in Him. The heathen are subject to the covenant of works, and whatever God does in and toward them has reference to that covenant. They are thus obligated to live according to this rule, "Do this and thou shalt live." Therefore neither the law of

nature, nor God's works belong to the calling; the heathen are not called.

This call also does not occur by way of the moral law of Scripture . The moral law must be viewed in a twofold sense: It must be viewed either in its demands, whereby it reveals the perfect conditions of the covenant of works, or in its purpose, as having been given to the church as a rule of life and as the standard for true holiness. In its first sense the law is preached to convict man of sin (Rom. 3:20), thus bringing man to despair of being saved by his works. Here the function of the law ends. If, however, Christ is simultaneously preached by means of the gospel, man, being rejected by the law, is allured by the gospel. Thus, wherever Christ is preached, the law functions as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). The law, however, neither teaches about Christ nor calls to Him, and thus the moral law is not a functional element of the calling. This is different as far as the ceremonial law is concerned, which belongs to the gospel.

The true means whereby we are called, however, is the gospel. "Whereunto He called you by our gospel" (2 Th. 2:14). The word "gospel" means a good tiding , the content of which is as follows: "Poor man, you are subject to sin and to the wrath of God. You are traversing upon the way which will end in eternal perdition. God, however, has sent His Son Jesus Christ to be a Surety; in His suffering and death there is the perfect satisfaction of the justice of God, and thus acquittal from guilt and punishment. In His obedience to the law there is perfect holiness, so that He can completely save all who go unto God through Him. Christ offers you all His merits, and therefore eternal salvation." He calls and invites everyone: "Turn unto Me and be saved, receive Me, surrender to Me, enter into a covenant with Me and you will not perish but have everlasting life." This declaration is recorded in the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. The first gospel declaration is found in Genesis 3:15, where we read that the Seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent . Since then, God has frequently and in various ways caused

the gospel to be proclaimed (Heb. 1:1). “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them” (Heb. 4:2). Prior to the coming of Christ it was called the gospel of promises . “...separated unto the gospel of God, (which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures)” (Rom. 1:1–2). Subsequent to Christ’s coming it is called the gospel of fulfillment . “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled” (Mark 1:14–15).

The Distinction Between Law and Gospel

Law and gospel are frequently placed in contradistinction to each other. If in such a contradistinction the reference is to the ceremonial law, its purpose is to refer to Christ’s coming in the flesh, whose coming was typified by the ceremonies. The gospel of fulfillment, however, declares that Christ has come . In the matter itself there can be no contradistinction, since the gospel is comprehended in the ceremonies and proclaimed by them.

However, there is an essential difference between the moral law and the gospel . The law has first of all been given by God the Lord as the sovereign, majestic, and sole Lawgiver, and is pertinent to all mankind. The gospel, however, is the manifestation of God as being “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exo. 34:6), and does not pertain to all, but only to some. Secondly, the law can partially be known by nature (Rom. 2:15), but the gospel can only be known by revelation (Eph. 3:5). Thirdly, the law is a condition of the covenant of works which promised salvation upon the perfect keeping of the law and knows of no forgiveness (cf. Rom. 10:5; Matt. 19:17). The gospel, however, is a declaration of the covenant of grace, promising believers forgiveness and salvation by Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:8–9). Fourthly, the law begets the knowledge of sin in the sinner (Rom. 3:20), confronts him with wrath (Rom. 4:15), and thus brings forth fear and trembling (Isa. 33:14). The gospel, however, is the precious administration of the power of God

unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). This gospel is the means whereby God calls men unto salvation.

God could immediately and nonverbally reveal Christ to man, bring him to Christ, cause him to believe in Him, and thus lead him to salvation. It has pleased the Lord, however, in order that His manifold wisdom be revealed and His other attributes be glorified, to make man a partaker of this salvation by means of the word of the gospel, leading rational man in a rational way. The use of this means is referred to as calling, since all men are going astray on a way which is not good and which leads to destruction. God calls out to men who are going astray that the way upon which they are traversing will make them eternally miserable, and invites them to come to Christ as the only way unto salvation.

The Distinction Between External and Internal Call

Concerning this calling a distinction is made between an external and an internal call. They both proceed from God, occur by means of this Word, pertain to the same matters, and are presented equally to all. Both calls are addressed to human beings who by nature are the same. They are, however, distinguishable. The one functions externally only by means of the Word, to which also the Holy Spirit does join Himself in His common operation, resulting in common illumination and historical faith. The other, however, penetrates the very heart of man, powerfully illuminating it with wondrous light, revealing spiritual mysteries to man in their essential form, and powerfully inclines the will to embrace those mysteries in Christ, and to the obedience of faith.

There is an infinite difference between the corrupt intellect of man—that is, the Arminians and other proponents of free will—and the Holy Scriptures. The question is: Does the obtaining of salvation proceed from man? Is he the only and essential cause of his salvation, or is God the only essential cause and can man, being absolutely incapable, do nothing to obtain salvation? The Arminians

will readily admit that God has prepared and accomplished salvation and that God has given and revealed Christ the Mediator. However, they attribute this acceptance and entering in upon that way to the good will and power of man. This could be likened to what transpires on a race track. The government has put the prize on display and has prepared the track. The acquisition of the prize, however, is contingent upon the runners themselves.

In order to protect the idol of man's own ability and of his good will as being the cause of his own salvation, the Arminians would prefer to do away with the distinction between the external and internal call, between the noneffectual and the effectual call. They would view them as being the same, and thus recognize only one calling. The effect would then not be due to the efficacious operation of God working more in one person than in another. Instead, it would be related to the outcome; namely, that the one person obeys the call by his free will (which enables him either to respond or to reject this call) and thus be saved. Another person will despise and reject this call by the same neutral free will. Scripture, however, rebukes and refutes such foolish thoughts and demonstrates first of all that the calling is effectual unto salvation as a result of God's purpose, "...who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28); "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29).

The actual exercise of faith in those who are called proceeds from this purpose. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Scripture conveys in the second place that there is no distinction in man himself, but that this distinction originates with God. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4:7). Man, however, by attributing the cause of one having more faith than another to his goodness and power, would create such a distinction. There is thus a calling which is of an effectual nature and penetrates the inner man—his intellect, will, and inclinations, changing and sanctifying them. This is the internal call. There is a calling by

means of the Word of God which is not accompanied by God's effectual operation (which generates faith and love), but which comes to the external ear only. It leaves man in his natural state, who, in his wickedness, rejects this external call. He despises this call due to his free will which wills by way of necessary consequence. This is true of most who are called (Matt. 22:5, 14). We shall discuss both calls individually, considering the external call first.

The External Call: Not Extended to All Men

Concerning the external call the question arises, Is this call universal; that is, does God call all men upon the face of the earth to Christ, and through Him unto salvation? The Lutherans answer in the affirmative. We maintain that this call does not come to all men. Although it does come to entire areas, nations, peoples, and languages, it does not come to all. The entire Scripture and the experience of all ages contradict this. Cain was the first to be driven away from the countenance of God, whereas the gospel remained in the genealogy of Seth. Abraham and his seed were received into the church of God and to them the oracles of God were committed, whereas God left all the heathen to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16). "He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Psa. 147:19– 20).

After Christ's coming, this calling has also not been universal. The entire continent of America was unknown and remained unknown for at least a thousand years and was thus deprived of the gospel. The interior is still largely unknown. ¹³There have always been countries where the gospel has not been proclaimed. Also today, most nations upon the face of the earth are deprived of the gospel. This fact is so obvious that it cannot be refuted, and it thus remains a certainty that this calling is not universal.

Objection #1:

All men have been called in Adam and in Noah, as well as in other ancestors who have had the gospel and rejected it. For this reason God removed the candlestick from them, as is evident in Revelation 2 and 3.

Answer:

13 It must again be remembered that this statement was made in 1700. We deny that those descendants to whom the gospel has not been proclaimed can be said to have been called simply because their ancestors were called, for it is true what the prophet says, “The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father” (Ezek. 18:20). Thus, the rejection of the gospel by our ancestors cannot be imputed to their descendants. We deny that all men have been called in Adam, Noah and in other ancestors, for all who are comprehended in Adam and in Noah are not comprehended in the covenant of grace, nor are they the recipients of the offer of grace. In this respect everyone must be viewed individually, none being called by the gospel but those to whom the gospel is proclaimed.

Objection #2:

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4); “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11); “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). From these texts it can be concluded that the calling is universal, and that all men are individually called.

Answer:

The word “all” frequently means “various.” Experience confirms that such is the meaning in these texts. These texts pertain to the proclamation of the gospel over the entire world, in contrast to being previously limited to the seed of Abraham. It refers to all sorts of nations without distinction, but not to every nation without exception.

Objection #3:

Scripture indicates that there have been many believers who did not live where the church was situated, such as Job, Melchizedek, Baalam, Cornelius, etc. This proves that the calling extends beyond the limits of the visible church, and thus is universal.

Answer:

From the calling of some individuals, one cannot deduce the universal calling of all. Some of these individuals lived prior to the time when Abraham's seed was set apart. Such was true in the life of Shem and the patriarchs, when the knowledge of true religion had not been entirely removed from other generations. Others, even though they did not belong to Abraham's seed, have lived where the church was situated, and due to such circumstances became believers and proselytes.

Objection #4:

There have been many who, though living far from the church, lived godly lives and did good works. Their knowledge was consequently sufficient unto salvation. The calling is thus universal.

Answer:

The law of nature is innate in all men. From this proceeds natural religion and thus also natural virtues. In chapter one we demonstrated that this is not sufficient unto salvation. This natural knowledge, religion, and virtuousness differ in their essential nature from the true knowledge of God in Christ, and from true religion and virtuousness, so that the one does not necessarily follow the other. From all this it is certain that the calling is not universal.

The External Call of the Gospel in the Old Testament Dispensation

Others, such as the Socinians, hold to an entirely different extreme, and deny that there was a calling by the gospel prior to Christ . They will indeed admit that the gospel was known to the prophets themselves who had extraordinary revelations, unless they be so exceedingly foolish as to consider the prophets as being irrational, merely viewing them as organ pipes which unconsciously bring forth musical sounds. Even if they would admit that the prophets were acquainted with the gospel, they wish to deny that the people had any knowledge thereof. Whatever they did comprehend would then only point to future times; namely, that in the days of the Messiah the Gentiles would call out to Him. We maintain, however, that people in the Old Testament were certainly called to believe in the coming Messiah unto justification, sanctification, and salvation—as is now true in the New Testament—albeit with less light and with less efficacy.

This is evident first of all in some very clear texts. “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Gal. 3:8). Abraham received the gospel and was called prior to being circumcised. From this the apostle concludes that those who are believers, though uncircumcised, are Abraham’s children. This was not only true for Abraham, but for all his seed to whom He made this known. The Lord Himself testifies of this: “And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD” (Gen. 18:17–19). God knew, chose, and called Abraham for this purpose, and thus proclaimed the gospel to him in order that he would make this known to his children and his house after him. They therefore also had this gospel; it was also proclaimed to them.

Also consider Hebrews 4:2, “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not

being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” We in the New Testament have the gospel as did they of the Old Testament. This manner of speech gives expression to the fact that those of the Old Testament were somewhat superior, not as far as the clarity of the gospel is concerned, but in view of the fact that they had the gospel at an earlier time. They had the gospel, and the gospel was intended for them in those days. They heard it and were obligated to embrace it by faith, and it was their sin if they did not do so.

Secondly, this is evident in all the prophetic Scriptures. It is an irrefutable fact that these Scriptures contain many predictions and descriptions of the future Messiah, as well as many exhortations to believe in Him (cf. Psalms 2, 45, 72; Isa. 40; etc). The prophetic Scriptures are summaries of the sermons which the prophets preached to the people, so that the contents of these prophecies were made known to them. They were thus obligated to repent and by means of these sermons were stirred up to believe. The gospel was thus present in the Old Testament.

Thirdly, the entire ceremonial worship confirms this. All these ceremonies were not given to Israel in order that they would end in the external, and in the performance of rituals, but these were shadows of Christ who is the substance of them (cf. Col. 2; Heb. 10:1). By way of these shadows they were thus called to look forward to the coming Messiah and to believe in Him, something which the apostle demonstrates in the entire letter to the Hebrews. Therefore these shadows are an essential element of the gospel. Since they had the one, they also had the other.

Fourthly, the believers of the Old Testament were partakers of the benefits presented and promised in the gospel. They were partakers of the covenant of grace (cf. Gen. 17; Acts 3:25); they had the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 4:13); God was their Father and they His children (cf. Rom. 9:4; Psa. 103:13; Jer. 31:20). They had the forgiveness of sins (Psa. 32:5), and furthermore they had all the benefits of the covenant of grace; they expected and obtained salvation (Heb. 11:16).

Wherever all these graces are to be found, there the gospel must be as well. Since these existed in the Old Testament, the gospel was also present.

Objection #1:

The gospel was concealed prior to the time of Christ. At that time believers had only the promise, but not the matter itself. This is evident from the following texts.

(1) “These all died in faith, not having received the promises” (Heb. 11:13).

Answer:

This text says that they did not have Christ in the flesh whose coming was then promised. We do not read, however, that they had not the gospel, nor that they were not called to believe in the Christ who was to come. We read the contrary: They believed. They were thus called by the gospel, being of identical content (1 Pet. 1:20), for faith cometh by hearing.

(2) “...according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:25–26). Here the apostle states expressly that the gospel was kept secret since the world began and only has been revealed in the New Testament.

Answer:

The text itself refutes this sentiment, for the apostle speaks of a revelation to the Gentiles and not to the Jews. He says that it has been made known to the Gentiles by the prophetic Scriptures, as the gospel was contained and revealed in them. The Jews did have these Scriptures, however, and it was known to the Jews prior to this

time, but was unknown to the Gentiles. Other texts also speak of this mystery which was known to the Jews but hidden from the Gentiles. “Which in other ages was not

made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:5–6). This had previously not been revealed as clearly as it is revealed at this present time . It had not been revealed to the Gentiles at all, and no one had previously witnessed the fulfillment of the promises concerning the calling of the Gentiles. The apostles, however, witnessed that the Gentiles were converted by their preaching. The same meaning is expressed in the following texts: Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:26; 2 Timothy 1:10–11; Titus 1:2.

Objection #2:

Moses was the mediator of the Old Testament, and Christ in the New Testament. Christ was thus not proclaimed to them, and they were not partakers of Christ.

(1) Consider John 1:17, where we read, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

Answer:

(1) Moses testified of Christ and preached Christ to the people (Luke 24). The gospel was thus present during the time of Moses.

(2) The distinction here is not chronological, but pertains to the persons and their work. Moses was the means whereby God gave the law of the ten commandments as a rule of life for the partakers of the covenant and the ceremonial laws as typifying Christ. Neither Moses nor his laws were, however, the substance itself; this is true for Christ who is the same yesterday and today. Christ is the truth, the essence, and the embodiment of the matter which Moses typified.

Additional Objection:

Consider Galatians 3:19, “It (the law) was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” Moses was thus the mediator of the Old Testament and Christ the Mediator of the New Testament. “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Heb. 7:22); “And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament” (Heb. 9:15).

Answer:

Moses was a mediator of interposition, who transmitted words back and forth between God and the people. Christ, however, is Surety and Mediator by virtue of atonement. “And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). Moses could only be a mediator as long as he lived, and this was but for a short time, so that succeeding ages did not have Moses as a mediator; Christ, however, is the same yesterday and today. In the ceremonies He has also been slain from before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Moses being a mediator in the manner just stated made Christ known to the people on God’s behalf, and exhorted them to believe in

Christ (Luke 24:27). This was the reason why the ceremonial law was instituted. Thus, the gospel as well as the calling were a reality in the Old Testament.

Objection #3:

In the Old Testament people did not possess the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace. It thus follows that they also did not have the gospel. They were therefore also not called unto salvation.

(1) This is evident in Hebrews 7:19, “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we

draw nigh unto God.”

Answer:

It is true that the law in and of itself could not give man hope unto salvation; however, the ceremonies led them unto Christ, by which believers of the Old Testament had access to grace by faith. They believed in Christ, and were partakers of the benefits of the covenant as is also true for us in the New Testament (as stated above).

(2) In Hebrews 9:8 we read “that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” “The holiest” refers to heaven. It is a known fact that the way to heaven had not as yet been made manifest. Thus, believers of the Old Testament were not called unto salvation by the gospel.

Answer:

First of all, the apostle says in the following verse (vs. 9) that the holiest was “a figure for the time then present.” They therefore had a figure of heaven for themselves at that time. Secondly, the Holy of Holies was separated by a veil so that one could not look into it. This meant that all the ceremonies, considered by themselves, could not open heaven. It therefore meant that one could not enter heaven by means of this way, but rather that the antitype of those ceremonies, Christ, is the only way by which one can come to God (John 14:6). Thirdly, the apostle states that the way was not manifest as yet. He does not say that the holiest was not manifest, but that in the Old Testament they did not have Christ in the flesh, who is the way. Fourthly, he says that the way was not yet manifest, which neither implies that this way did not exist as yet, nor that this way was entirely unknown to them. It merely implies that this way was not as clearly known to them as was true after Christ’s coming, for they, by way of dark shadows, had to look upon Christ who was to come. Thus in 1 John 3:2 it is written about the children of God that “it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” although we nevertheless have some

knowledge of it. The text in question refers to the measure of knowledge and the various ways whereby one may get to God through Christ, which then was by way of ceremonies, and now is without them.

(3) “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). Behold, it was Christ who for the first time brought life to light; it was thus not known prior to this.

Answer:

First of all, it has been irrefutably demonstrated above that eternal life was known prior to the coming of Christ, that they sought it after this life, and that they endeavored to become partakers of that life (cf. Lev. 18:5; Matt. 19:17; John 5:39). This text, therefore, cannot refer to a total ignorance prior to this. Secondly, Christ brought life and immortality to light by making satisfaction for sin in very deed, by delivering His people from death, and by meriting eternal life for them. Thirdly, the prophecies and ceremonies conveyed that He had not come as yet, nor had in reality accomplished this, but that He would come to accomplish all this. The gospel states that Christ has come and has accomplished everything. Fourthly, in former times everything was typified less clearly by way of shadows, which could not be as clear as the substance or the matter itself. In Christ, however, all shadows have been fulfilled so that the matter itself in its true form can be clearly discerned. Fifthly, the apostle actually applies this to the Gentiles who had not been called as yet, but were in blindness. After the coming of Christ, however, they were also called by the gospel to the light of salvation and to eternal bliss, which is evident from the verse which follows: “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Tim. 1:11).

(4) “And these all...received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:39–40). From this it appears that in the Old Testament they did not partake of the heavenly benefits.

Answer:

First, they had the promise of the Messiah’s coming, but they did not receive the fulfillment: Christ’s coming in the flesh. Secondly, believers in the New Testament have some better thing than those in the Old Testament. This is not true as far as the matter itself is concerned, for the spiritual benefits of the one were also the portion of the other. Rather, some better thing refers to the manner in which they became partakers of it. They became partakers by way of shadows; we, by the matter and truth itself. They anticipated Christ’s coming in the promise, and we may have the fulfillment; they possessed these benefits in hope, and we may view and possess them; they possessed these benefits to a lesser degree, and we may have all things (that is, Spirit, light, and life) in a greater measure. It has pleased the Lord not to send Christ in the flesh immediately after the promise made to Adam and Eve—or to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then they would have already possessed it and there would have been no need for shadows. Since Christ tarried so long, however, causing His people to yearn for the time of fulfillment, and since Christ has come in our era, having accomplished everything, they were not the only partakers of true blessedness. We are partakers with them and they with us, albeit that we may be partakers of a better ministry.

(5) “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Heb. 7:22); “He is the Mediator of a better covenant” (Heb. 8:6). From this it is evident that Old Testament believers were partakers of temporal rather than spiritual benefits.

Answer:

We deny that the word “better” refers to the matter itself; we have shown the opposite to be true in the above. Instead, the word “better” refers to the manner in which the covenant was administered, which frequently is referred to by the name “covenant” (cf. chapter 16).

We have thus observed that since the fall God has called His people by way of the gospel. The External Call of the Gospel Comes to All who Hear the Gospel

Question:

Does God call all who are under the ministry of the gospel, but who as yet are not saved, or does God call the elect only?

Answer:

God calls all and everyone who live under the ministry of the gospel. This must be noted so that one may have liberty to receive Christ by faith, which one would not have if the gospel were not offered—and also in order that the justice of God would be acknowledged in punishing those who neglect so great a salvation and do not obey the gospel. The following must be noted in order that everyone may be convinced of this matter.

First, compare yourself with the wild Indians, who neither know Christ nor have knowledge of salvation. Do you not see that God deals differently with you than with them? Would you wish to trade places with them? Why not? Is it not because there is more hope for salvation where you are than where they are? Will not the condemnation of those who have lived under the ministrations of the gospel, but who do not repent, be greater than the condemnation of the wild heathen? Why would this be if salvation had not been offered to you? This therefore proves that all who hear the gospel are called.

Secondly, everyone who is under the ministry of the gospel hears the voice of the minister as he preaches, exhorts, and rebukes. It is thus addressed to him who hears it. The minister is a servant of Christ, a “steward of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1), and an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Therefore he who hears the minister hears Christ, and he who rejects the minister rejects Him (Luke 10:16). Consider also that the very words of God Himself are contained in Scripture. Since, therefore, everyone hears the voice of the minister and the very words of God resound in his ears, all that is said is addressed to him who hears it and he is called by the gospel.

Thirdly, Scripture states clearly that many who perish had been called. “...many be called, but few chosen” (Matt. 20:16); “...and (he) bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:16–18); “And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come” (Matt. 22:3). Had the guest without the wedding garment been invited? He most certainly was. It was not his crime that he did not come, but rather that he came in the wrong way, that is, without a wedding garment. It is thus evident that everyone who is under the ministry is called and invited to come to Christ.

Fourthly, there is a general and unconditional declaration to all, that is, to him who thirsts, who is without money, and who wills (Isa. 55:1–2; John 7:37; Rev. 22:17). He who neither wills nor is thirsty will refrain from coming. This is his own doing and he will be responsible, having been invited and having heard this general calling.

Fifthly, since many reject the gospel, it is necessarily offered to them, for whatever is not offered cannot be rejected. “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). Many are disobedient to the gospel (2 Th. 1:8), and are disobedient to the Son (John 3:36). It thus

follows that Christ was offered to them and they were commanded to believe in Christ.

Sixthly, the exhortations to repent and to believe are joined together. No one will be in doubt that the exhortation to repent pertains to everyone, and thus each will also have to acknowledge that the exhortation to believe pertains to everyone, for they are of equivalent importance. "...repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Seventhly, unbelief is a dreadful sin; yes, it is a sin whereby we esteem God to be a liar. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John 5:10); "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin...of sin, because they believe not on Me" (John 16:8–9). If Christ were not offered to him who remains in his unbelief, he would not be accountable and his unbelief would not be a sin. Since his unbelief is a sin, however, it is clearly evident that the gospel was offered to him.

Eighthly, since a dreadful judgment awaits unbelievers, the gospel has most certainly been offered to them, and they have most certainly been called. Observe this in the following texts: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Th. 1:8); "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin" (John 15:22). If everyone who is under the ministry of the gospel had not been called, and Christ had not been offered to them, how can they then be punished and how can their condemnation be the heavier? Since, however, they are punished for disobedience to the gospel, and are punished more severely than others, it follows that it was offered to them.

Since Christ is offered to all who are under the ministry, it not only follows that everyone may come and no one needs to remain behind for fear whether he is called or not; but it also follows that everyone is obligated to come to Christ and to receive Him in order to be justified, sanctified, preserved, and glorified. One must not interpret

this to mean that everyone is under obligation to believe that Christ has died for him and is his Savior. Far be it from us to suggest this, for this is not the essence of faith. Faith is not assurance; for assurance is a consequence of faith. Faith consists in the translation of a soul—perplexed about his wretched condition and desirous for reconciliation, peace, holiness, and glory—from self into Christ. Faith consists in receiving Him who offers Himself and who calls and invites every sinner to Himself, the promise being added that those who will come will not be cast out. It finally consists in a reliance of the soul upon Him as the almighty, true, and faithful Savior. If, however, someone is lively in the exercise of these acts and truly perceives this to

be so within himself, only then does the assurance follow that Jesus has died for him. He who lives under the ministry of the gospel is obligated to believe in Christ. However, he is not obligated to believe that Christ has died for him and to be assured of this. Far be it from us to suggest this, for then someone could believe a lie, since faith can have nothing else but truth as its object.

God's Objective in Calling Men

This begets another Question:

In calling the sinner to Christ, does God aim for the salvation of all? In calling all who are under the ministry of the gospel, is it God's objective that all would become partakers of salvation?

Answer:

No, for God cannot fail to achieve His objective. Then all who are called would, of necessity, have to be saved.

In order to understand this matter correctly, we should consider the following:

(1) The calling is first and foremost intended to gather in the elect. “And he gave some...pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11–12). God does not send the gospel to those geographical regions where there are no elect to be found. Furthermore, when the elect in a certain region are gathered in, God generally removes the gospel from that area. Since the elect are in the world, however, and are intermingled with others, the calling comes to all; that is, to all the elect and also to others. By means of the calling, that is, by means of the proclamation of the gospel, God grants repentance and faith to His elect—which He withholds from others.

(2) We must make a distinction between the objective of God—He who works— and the objective of His work : the gospel. The very nature of the gospel is suited to lead man unto salvation, as it sufficiently reveals to him the way unto salvation and stirs him to be persuaded to believe. The gospel is not to be blamed when all who hear it are not saved; rather, man himself is the guilty one. He is to be blamed if he does not desire to be taught and led.

Such is the objective of the gospel. God’s objective in causing the gospel to be proclaimed to the nonelect is to proclaim and acquaint man with the way of salvation, to command man to enter this way, and to display His goodness, presenting all the reasons to him for doing so and promising him salvation upon repentance and true faith in Christ. The Lord would indeed do this upon man fulfilling the condition for which He holds him accountable, and which the human nature, having been created holy in Adam had been capable of doing. If he does not accomplish this, it is not because God hinders him or deprives him of the ability to do so, but because man wills not; and thus man himself is to be blamed, for it is the goodness of God which should lead him to repentance. It is also God’s objective to convict man of his wickedness in his refusal to come upon such a friendly invitation, as well as of the righteousness of God in punishing such rejecters of this offered salvation (John15:20). Such is God’s purpose

and objective in allowing the gospel to be proclaimed to the unconverted. It is, however, neither God's purpose and objective to give to them His Holy Spirit nor to save them. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, it would be contradictory to the omniscience of God. God knows those who are His. He knows that the reprobate will not be saved, and it cannot be His purpose or objective to save them. Man knows that a dead person will not arise; it therefore cannot be his objective to make him alive by calling him. God also knows this concerning the unconverted and the spiritually dead; this therefore cannot be His objective.

Secondly, it would be contradictory to eternal election. God has eternally chosen certain individuals by name and has appointed them to be the recipients of eternal salvation. This is in contrast to others whom He has not chosen, but concerning whom He wills that they remain in their sins and be condemned for their sins. Since He has decreed to condemn them righteously for their sins, it could not have been His objective to save them in having the gospel proclaimed to them. He had different objectives, however, which we have stated in the foregoing.

Thirdly, God cannot be thwarted in the achievement of His objective. He must of necessity accomplish what He has purposed, since He is omniscient, all-wise, and omnipotent. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isa. 46:10); "For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" (Isa. 14:27). If God had purposed to save them, they of necessity would most certainly be saved. They are not saved, however, and God therefore also did not have their salvation in view.

Those who imagine that man, upon the proclamation of the gospel, has sufficient ability to repent and to believe in Christ (a matter which we shall discuss shortly), object to this. In their view nothing more is necessary than that the gospel be preached. They insist that

by allowing the gospel to be preached God has as His objective and intent to save all—and if sinners do not come and believe, this is contrary to God’s objective. God thus does not accomplish what He has purposed; this, however, we have just refuted. They support their proposition as follows:

Objection #1:

God would act deceitfully if He were to call someone to salvation, and yet were not sincere in doing so.

Answer:

God calls all who hear the gospel unto salvation, and it is His objective and intent to give salvation to all who truly believe. Faith and true repentance are, however, singular gifts of God’s grace, which He gives to all whom He wills to save. Others, however, God leaves to themselves who, being unwilling—and due to their wickedness, blindness, and unwillingness, are unable—do not fulfil this condition, and thus will not be saved. Since God has prior knowledge of this and has decreed not to give them the gifts of grace, and since He cannot be thwarted in the achievement of His purpose, He therefore also cannot have their salvation in view. God nevertheless does not deal deceitfully by making the way of salvation known to them, in obligating.

them by way of many arguments to enter upon this way, promising to save them upon repentance and faith in Christ. God sincerely and truly has all this in view. In all this He has in view that the unconverted be convinced of His goodness, their wickedness, and His justice—and to punish them in consequence of this. The fact that man is not able to repent and believe is not God’s fault, but man is to be blamed. God did purpose to provide them with all the means unto salvation, withhold additional grace from them, leave them over to themselves, and condemn them for their failure to repent and for their wickedness; however, He did not purpose to save them. One

matter may relate to various purposes, and thus by purposing or not purposing one thing, one cannot conclude the purposing or not purposing of something else. Here the objective relates to the means and not to the ultimate end of salvation. The gospel is an able and sufficient way unto salvation.

Objection #2:

God invites everyone to come to the wedding feast, that is, salvation (cf. Matt. 22:3– 4; Luke 14:16). It must thus have been His objective that they would come.

Answer:

His purpose is to invite them, obligate them to come, propose salvation upon condition of faith and repentance, and not hinder them. The invitation contained a condition to come with a wedding garment. The guest without a wedding garment could not be admitted to the wedding feast—not because he was not invited, but because by not having a wedding garment he did not meet the condition included in the invitation. It is God’s objective to provide them with all the means unto salvation and to be acknowledged and glorified in this. In calling to the wedding feast there is, however, not the objective to carry them to the wedding feast and to give them the wedding garment. It is absolutely necessary that the Lord do this for them, since they of themselves neither understand nor are willing, and thus also are not able to do so. Since, however, it is not His objective to do this for them, not being obligated to do so, it follows that it was not His objective to save them. The invitation therefore obligates them to come and to believe, and if they come in the way of repentance and faith, they will also obtain salvation. This does not imply, however, that it is God’s objective to unconditionally give them salvation or to grant them what is needed to meet the condition.

Objection #3:

If God does not purpose the salvation of all who are called by the Word, no one would be able to take it seriously, and no one would dare to come, since none would know whether he were addressed by God.

Answer:

God's Word, being the truth, is sufficient for everyone. One may freely rely upon it, and one will not be deceived. That Word promises salvation to all who believe and to all who receive Christ unto justification and sanctification. This declaration is directed to everyone, and everyone must believe it, apply it to himself, and say, "If I believe and truly repent, I shall be saved." God does have foreknowledge as to who will be unwilling to come. God leaves man over to himself, doing him no injustice by withholding renewing grace from him who once had the ability to obey God in all things. God permits man to exercise his own free will, whereby he voluntarily rejects Christ and all heavenly benefits. However, God grants to the elect, in addition to His Word, the Holy Spirit who bestows upon them faith and repentance. Since the required conditions are thus met in this way, they are saved.

From all this we observe that man from his side must respond to the Word of God and believe that he will be saved if he believes and repents. He thus need not torment himself with the question whether God addresses him personally. He must leave this matter in God's hands. This is as much as asking: "Is God willing or is He not willing to give faith and repentance to me?" A sinner has no prior knowledge of this, and the Lord will give it to those to whom He pleases. The sinner, however, must understand it to be his duty to respond to the Word of God, to believe in Christ who is offered to him, to repent, and to believe that he will be saved if he does so.

We have thus observed that God from His side has not purposed to give faith and repentance to all men, and it is therefore also not His

objective to save them all, but rather the elect only. He nevertheless does not deal deceitfully with men.

The Internal Call

Having dealt sufficiently with the external call, we shall now proceed to consider the internal call which in Scripture is called a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1), a calling according to God's purpose (Rom. 8:28), the opening of the heart (Acts 16:14), a resurrection from the dead and a quickening (Eph. 2:5–6), God's drawing (John 6:44), a deliverance from the power of darkness and a translation into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13), and a calling out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). All this phraseology gives expression to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit who, in conjunction with and by means of the Word of God, operates upon the inner man, that is, his intellect, its eyes being enlightened eyes (Eph. 1:18). Furthermore, He operates upon the will, inclining it toward love for the heavenly benefits to be found in Christ Jesus, and to the very act of receiving Christ (Phil. 2:13).

To facilitate clear comprehension concerning this matter and to deal with points of contention related to this, we shall preface our discussion with these remarks.

First, in the internal call God works in a manner which is consistent with man's nature. Man is a rational creature who, gifted with intellect, reasons about matters which he encounters, judging whether it is needful or beneficial to have, pursue, or do such matters. If he judges affirmatively, he will also exercise judgment concerning time, place, and means; that is, when, where, and in what manner. This is referred to as one's practical judgment, for it presents and limits the matter in such a fashion to the will that the will spontaneously embraces the proposition. The will is a blind faculty which can only will that which is comprehended with the intellect, presenting the matter here and now in its desirability, necessity, and profitability. The will is thus also free and cannot be

compelled to will something; it cannot be compelled to do something except (as has been stated) the matter be embraced by the intellect and is presented as being desirable. This freedom is not one of neutrality, as if it is immaterial to do or not to do something, or to either do the one thing or the contrary.

It is impossible to will and desire something the intellect perceives to be hateful and to be avoided and presents it to the will as such. This freedom, however, is one of necessary consequence, whereby the will, without external compulsion and thus due to its own inclination, wills to do one thing or the other. (For a more comprehensive treatment of this, see chapter 15.) In calling man, God works in harmony with his human nature. The Lord does not compel the will, but the Lord grants the intellect eyes to perceive the spiritual dimension of spiritual things, and by means of that light the Lord penetrates the will and inclines it to embrace the matters with which it is now acquainted and finds desirable. The Lord thus engages both the intellect and the will.

Secondly, when God calls someone internally, this rarely occurs suddenly as appears to have been the case in the conversions of Zacchaeus, the murderer on the cross, and others. Albeit that for some the act whereby a sinner is translated into the kingdom of heaven and made alive—that is, being dead one moment and alive the next moment (there being no intermediate state)—the Lord generally uses some internal and external preparations, such as poverty, tragic occurrences, loss of property or loved ones, earthquakes, war, pestilence, danger of death, illness, or other things. This causes the person to become unsettled; he begins to contemplate repentance, the Word of God takes hold, he is convinced of sin, and he begins to perceive what eternal condemnation is. He also becomes acquainted with the Lord Jesus and with the blessedness of believers, and he desires to be in such a condition. He reads the Word, prays, joins himself to the godly, escapes the gross pollutions of the world, etc. These matters are but common convictions which are experienced by the unconverted as well as the

elect. Many such individuals turn back and depart from the way upon which they first seemed to have entered. When the time arrives, however, the Lord will translate His elect into His kingdom by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. These preparatory circumstances mentioned do not proceed from man, but are God's common operations. They also are not a step toward regeneration, nor are they sufficient to transform man. Under such circumstances man is not capable by the exercise of His free will to transform himself, to believe, and to repent. The efficacious and almighty power of God must join itself to such circumstances in order for him to be converted. These preparatory circumstances are but means which God gives and uses to deal with man in a manner consistent with his humanity.

Thirdly, when God calls someone internally, he will acquire a disposition which is entirely and essentially different from that which could be produced by nature or preparatory circumstances. The illumination and virtuousness of which man becomes a partaker due to the internal call does not differ from the natural state in degree, but in essence. It is not to be compared to the difference between the sun's initial rise and subsequent progression, or the beginning of a child's life and his further growth. The distinction is not by way of increase, such as with a balance. Suppose there is weight in the one scale, but gradually so much sand is added to the other scale that the weight of the sand exceeds the weight on the other scale, causing the balance to go toward the side of the sand. This would suggest that man is born again when human virtue outweighs his flesh and corruption. Far be it from us to hold to such a view, for that would amount to overturning the entire nature of regeneration and to deem pagan knowledge and virtue as being regeneration. No, the light and virtue in regeneration are of an entirely different nature.

The Difference Between a Natural and Spiritual Disposition

Question:

Is the difference between spiritual light and virtue and natural light and virtue one of degree or one of essence?

Answer:

Socinians maintain that it is one of degree, whereas we maintain that there is an essential difference. We shall first demonstrate this to be true for light and then for virtue.

First, the light of nature proceeds from the impression that there is a God, and is only increased by the Word of God itself. Spiritual light, on the contrary, proceeds from illumination of the heart, by the Holy Spirit who shines in our hearts, “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). The Lord enlightens the eyes of our understanding (Eph. 1:18), and draws them out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). Thus, the very cause of this light is different. The most intelligent, brilliant philosophers and unconverted theologians are blind according to Scripture. “...and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:21–22); “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14); “And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:40–41).

Secondly, natural and spiritual light each focus upon a different object. The one focuses upon God as He has revealed Himself in nature and relative to the covenant of works (Rom. 2:14–15; 1:19–22), whereas the other focuses upon God as He has revealed Himself in the covenant of grace, that is, in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). The glory of God may be seen in Him as in a mirror (2 Cor.

3:18). They have the mind of Christ and understand the truth as it is in Christ.

Thirdly, natural light perceives spiritual things in a natural sense, and reduces spiritual things to the realm of the natural, for it is not capable of spiritual discernment (1 Cor. 2:14). “But what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves” (Jude 10). However, the spiritual man joins spiritual things to spiritual things, discerns them spiritually (1 Cor. 2:13–15), and even spiritualizes natural things.

Fourthly, natural light does not generate warmth, but leaves man cold, dead, and without faith. Spiritual light, however, generates the warmth of love and faith. “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32).

Fifthly, natural light does not sanctify. The external call will at best stir up man to escape the gross pollutions of the world (2 Pet. 2:20). Spiritual light, however, has a transforming effect. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32); “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

From all this it is evident that the light found within the regenerate is of an entirely different nature than the light within the unregenerate. It therefore necessarily follows that the virtuousness of the converted and unconverted is also of a distinctly different nature. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, these virtues proceed from different causes. Natural virtue is the result of natural light and relates to the law innate in nature (Rom. 2:14–15). Spiritual virtue, however, is the result of the recreating and regenerating power of the Holy Spirit by means of the Word, and thus the result of spiritual light, life, and a spiritual

conception of God (cf. John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17). “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10); “Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth” (James 1:18); “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). They are “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4); “Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). This life, which proceeds from being a partaker of the divine nature, flows out of union with Christ and is thus of an entirely different sort from that which proceeds from the natural man.

Secondly, spiritual virtues proceed from faith which receives Christ, the life of the soul, and unites the soul to Him as such. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6); “...faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6); “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15–16). This is also confirmed in John 15:4, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.” The virtuousness of the regenerate proceeds from union with Christ. This, however, cannot be said of the unconverted, for they are without Christ. There is thus a very essential difference between them.

Thirdly, the unconverted, however great all their virtues may be, are said to be “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1); believers, however, are spiritually alive (Eph. 2:5). All that stirs within a dead body is essentially different from that which proceeds from a living body. This is also true for the virtuousness of the converted and the unconverted.

Fourthly, the spiritual virtues proceeding from union with God in Christ, and thus from faith and spiritual life, are performed in love

for God, in the fear of God, and in obedience to God as their Father, and thus with the heart of a child. None but those who believe can truly love God, for “faith worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). Whatever does not proceed from love is of no value (1 Cor. 13:1–2). Love is the fountain of virtue, and the contents of the law (Matt. 22:37). Believers are the saints who fear the Lord (Psa. 34:10). “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death” (Prov. 14:27). They serve God as obedient children—and not as a God who is strange to them and from whom they are separated. They, in faith, serve Him as their God and Father in Christ, be this faith weak or strong. “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Pet. 1:14–15). Since the unconverted are not united to Christ, without whom no one can come to God, their activity also does not proceed from this union, and is thus not motivated by love for God, the fear of God, nor obedience to God. From all this it is as clear as the noonday sun that the virtuousness of the converted is of a mold entirely different from that of the unconverted, and they are thus entirely different in essence. Therefore, both light and virtuousness in the converted and unconverted do not merely differ in degree, but their essential nature is different.

The Internal Call: A Work of God’s Grace

Fifthly, we furthermore wish to state by way of preface that the effectual call is a work of God’s grace. The Arminians also use the word grace in order to create the illusion that they speak scripturally. They explain it in such a manner, however, that grace is no longer grace. They acknowledge grace to be nothing else but that which enables man to perform. They maintain, however, that the ability “to will and to do” originates in man himself. They reason as follows: I may thank God that I have been able to repent, but I thank myself for the fact that I was willing to repent. They make a distinction between sufficient grace and efficacious grace.

The Arminians understand sufficient grace to mean that God has given sufficient ability to all men—great and small, young and old, Jews, Turks, heathens, and Christians—to repent and to believe in Christ. They refer to this as quickening, prevenient, operative, instructional, and suggestive grace. This grace, however, by whatever name it is called, is entirely subject to the free will of man which determines whether or not it is to be accepted. They furthermore proceed to refer to grace as being helping, cooperative, and supportive . They understand this grace to be collateral in nature; that is, operating side by side, each functioning independently and the one assisting the other. Thus, each party operates independently—God from His side and man from his side. If therefore man receives the Word of God and begins to repent, God will assist him, stir him up, and will stimulate him all the more by various motives. This operation remains external, however, and man always remains free and in control to either submit to, or to reject the divine operations. Even after he has repented and becomes a believer, he is yet equally independent and is able to overturn the work of conversion again by the exercise of his free will, which does occasionally occur.

Moreover, the Arminians understand effectual grace to refer to the result . It is not effectual by the almighty power of God who would thus in actuality convert man, but only in reference to the result. If man repents and believes in Christ, his calling is effectual because of what man has done. Others call this grace effectual due to some degree of suitability (*congruitas*), when God makes use of opportunities—either a man’s character or his condition being at its weakest and most pliable—making use of a given moment, while simultaneously holding before him and impressing upon him suitable motives which persuade and convince him. All of this, however, culminates in one thing: Free will remains lord and master, having ultimate power to either accept or reject. God is merely a servant or a friend who advises and urges him to act, whereas man himself determines whether or not he will allow himself to be persuaded. All of this we reject.

Over against this we maintain the following:

(1) There must be a distinction between the gift of grace and given grace. The gift of grace is the goodness of God, the fountain from whom proceeds all the good which man receives. Given grace refers to the benefits which man receives, has, and possesses. Concerning the gift of grace we read, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29). Concerning given grace we read, “For this is thankworthy, ” 14 if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. (1 Pet. 2:19).

(2) Grace is either common or special . God bestows common grace upon all men by granting them temporal benefits. “Nevertheless He left not himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven” (Acts 14:17). To this grace also belongs all the good which God bestows upon all who are called, by giving them the Word—the means unto repentance and salvation. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). In addition to this, God generally gives illumination, historical faith, convictions, and inner persuasion to almost become a Christian (cf. Heb. 6:4–6).

Special grace is the effectual call whereby man is illuminated with wondrous spiritual light, effectually changing his will, and thus in very deed translating him out of darkness into light, out of death to life, and from the dominion of sin and the devil to Christ and His kingdom. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9); “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col. 1:13).

From these four prefatory propositions it is evident what the nature of the internal call is. We must now furthermore observe 1) how man is involved in his conversion, and 2) what God does in this respect.

A Refutation of the Arminian Error that Man Has a Natural Inclination to Repent and Believe

Question:

Does man have some internal disposition, propensity, ability, or power to believe in Christ and to truly repent upon the external presentation of the gospel, however powerfully this may be declared?

Answer:

The Arminians and others answer in the affirmative. We, however, answer negatively and prove this as follows:

First, man is totally blind as far as spiritual things are concerned. “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance

14 The Statenbijbel reads: “For this is grace.... that is in them” (Eph. 4:18); “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen....But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:9, 14). The apostle is here not referring to men as consisting of soul and body. This would be applicable to all men—this also being true for Adam, of whom it must be said that he comprehended spiritual matters. However, the apostle speaks in this chapter of the converted and the unconverted, stating that the converted do discern spiritual things (vss. 9–10). Concerning the unconverted he states (without making a distinction between them as being more or less evil) that they do not discern spiritual things. He refers to the natural man as $\Psi\upsilon\chi\iota\kappa\omicron\iota$ (psuchikoi); that is, as having a soul, and thus to men who have a natural intellect whereby they can reason, a natural will whereby they can love and hate, and natural passion whereby they can desire. He is thus in a natural state without the Spirit, of whom Jude writes, “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude 19). Of such the apostle says that they cannot discern spiritual things, which is not to

say that it is impossible for a person to imagine them without revelations, for he speaks of such natural men who lived under the ministry of the gospel (vs. 8). This is evident from what he adds, “for they are foolishness to him.” No one can ever speak of or consider to be foolish that which he has never heard. Man is so blind that the ability to see and understand must be given unto him. This is given to some and not to others. “It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matt. 13:11). Someone who is blind to such a degree can neither will, repent of himself, nor believe in Christ, even if he hears the gospel.

Secondly, man by nature is of such a wicked and evil disposition that he is not willing to repent, nor can he will to do so, for he cannot respond with his will to that which he does not know. Even if one judges a given matter to be desirable in its very essence, he will have no interest in this now, here, and for himself, since the things of this world appear to him as being much more desirable and beneficial now, here, and for himself. Since that which is spiritual and that which is sinful stand in direct opposition to each other, one can neither delight in nor be desirous for spiritual things if he finds delight in that which is sinful and of the world. The natural man, however, loves that which is sinful and of the world, and thus he neither can nor is willing to love that which is spiritual. “And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40); “...and ye would not!” (Matt. 23:37). If the natural man perceives but a few rays of spiritual light and life, he will hate it at once. “...men loved darkness rather than light...For every one that doeth evil hateth the light” (John 3:19–20); “...haters of God” (Rom. 1:30); “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me” (John 15:18). Wherever there is such a disposition, it is impossible to be willing and to repent.

Thirdly, since man is ignorant and unwilling, he also cannot repent. “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (John 6:44). The phrase “no man” is all-inclusive. Whoever a person may be, he is unable and does not come. An almighty power and drawing is necessary in order for anyone to

come. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

In verse 5 the apostle places the converted and unconverted in contradistinction to each other. Of the unconverted he says that they are after the flesh ; of such he says that their Φρόνημα (phronema) mind , will, thoughts, desires, contemplations, and wisdom are only focused upon that which is visible and sinful. They oppose God as an enemy—they neither subject themselves to His law, nor are they able to do so. Consider also 2 Corinthians 3:5, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” Paul here refers to both himself and the congregation, which is an “epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God” (2 Cor. 3:3). He defines what he considers himself and the congregation to be by nature. He thus states not what they are by the Spirit of God, but rather what they are capable of themselves; that is, by nature, stating that they are not sufficient to think of anything that has not been revealed. They can, however, only think of, comprehend, lovingly contemplate upon, and find delight in the spiritual things which the Spirit of God has written in the hearts of believers. He declares man to be entirely insufficient for this, and thus whatever they had and did was given of God who enabled them to do this. So much said about man’s inability.

Fourthly, as far as spiritual life is concerned, man is dead, “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). The apostle is not only referring to those who had never heard the gospel, but also to those who had heard it, for Paul includes himself. Among the Ephesians there were many Jews (Acts 19:8), and the expression used is general in nature. He is not referring to natural death, but to being spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. Spiritual death consists of the absence of union with God, for spiritual life consists of communion with God (Gal. 2:20). Those who are without such a union are ἄθεοι (atheoi), that is, atheists or without God (Eph. 2:12); those “having not the Spirit” (Jude 19). He does not speak of the punishment of sin, its wages being death, but of that death which is the very opposite of spiritual

life. Since spiritual life is the very opposite of spiritual death, he speaks of spiritual death. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Eph. 2:5). Since man is dead, he can therefore not make himself alive. Both nature and Scripture teach us that a dead person cannot do this, regardless of the manner in which he is dead.

Let us draw these four arguments together and arrive at one conclusion. One who is blind and ignorant is so evil that he is unwilling and instead hates; he is so impotent that he is absolutely unable; and he is dead, has no internal disposition, propensity, ability, or power to repent and to believe in Christ.

The absolute impotence of man is also evident from all the texts which demonstrate that the declaration of the Word, however powerfully this may be done, is not sufficient to the conversion of man. Rather, in addition to the Word of God there must also be the effectual work of God in the heart of man. In 2 Timothy 2:25 we read, “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” This refers to the Word of God and to the lively manner in which it is proclaimed. Is this sufficient however? Does this result in repentance after some time? No, but he adds, “If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” The Word of God must thus be joined by the converting power of God. “Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh,” etc.; “yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day” (Deut.. 29:2–4); “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matt. 13:11). The Jews heard Christ preach; they had the Scriptures, and yet why did they not believe? The Lord Jesus says that more

must happen to depraved man before he will believe; there must be a divine drawing. “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (John 6:44). In order for Lydia to be converted it was not sufficient for her to hear Paul preach; this had to

be accompanied by the immediate operation of God. “Lydia...whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). Man is thus unable to bring about his own conversion.

Sixthly, consider also that conversion is a work of God, being of such a nature that it occurs without the involvement of human activity. It is referred to as a creating (Psa. 51:11), a begetting (James 1:18), the removal of a stony heart and the giving of a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26), the enlightening of the eyes (Eph. 1:18), a working both to will and to do (Phil. 2:13), etc. Shortly we shall discuss this more extensively.

Objection #1:

“What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isa. 5:4). If from His side God has done everything toward man that is necessary unto his conversion, and if He furthermore expects repentance and holiness from man, it must be within man’s power to repent.

Answer:

(1) The reference is here to the church viewed in contrast to all other nations, with which He has not dealt in such a fashion (Psa. 147:20), having permitted them to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16). This text therefore does not prove that all men have such ability, which is what they had wished to prove.

(2) The reference here is to the external means which lead unto salvation, which can be deduced from the presentation of matters in verses 1–3, and thus not to the work of conversion itself. It is the parable of a farmer who does everything that is required to make the earth fruitful and who, beyond this, can do nothing more toward the bearing of fruit, except to expect this from God. God had likewise done everything to Israel in an external sense as far as the means

were concerned, and this obligated them to repent and to bear fruit, worthy of repentance. This is the objective of the parable, and we must not focus on all its particulars and look for analogies.

(3) The fact that God expected fruits neither implies that God could not enable them to bear fruit, nor that God did not know what the outcome would be. It is also not implied that such power is to be found in man who is nothing but barren soil bringing forth thorns and thistles, in spite of the fact that it receives rain and sunshine (Heb. 6:7). It rather states that Israel was obligated to bear fruit. If they did not do this, due to their wickedness, they were to be blamed and would be worthy of being eradicated.

Objection #2:

“Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). Since God commands man to repent and to believe, it follows that man is able to do this, for God cannot obligate man toward that which is absolutely impossible for him to do. This would be an unjust as well as futile effort.

Answer:

(1) God created man so perfectly in Adam that he was able to obey and perform God’s commandments. Even though it was not possible for Adam to believe in Christ, this was not due to inability to believe if God were to have made Him known to Adam. Rather, faith in a Surety for the satisfaction of sin could not be required from him in the state of rectitude. The human nature was therefore able to believe. Since man brought himself into the state of impotence, this does not remove God’s right to demand from, and obligate man to do that which He had enabled him to do. A creditor may demand payment from a debtor even if he is unable to pay due to having wasted his resources. Such exhortations therefore do not imply what man is able to do, but rather what he is obligated to do.

(2) Man must acknowledge and approve of the fact that he is obligated not to sin, but rather to obey God. Man is so evil that he is not willing to do that which he knows to be God's command as well as his obligation. Would God then not know what is man's duty, when man acquiesces in the fact that he is obligated to such obedience, even if he is so evil that he is not willing to obey?

(3) Such exhortations are not in vain in spite of the fact that man, being so evil, cannot oblige, for they convince man of his duty and of the justice of God were He to punish him for his sin. It is a means which God uses to bring His elect under conviction and to lead them to repentance and faith. Christ said to the dead Lazarus, "Come forth" (John 11:43). This command did not imply what Lazarus was able to do, and yet it was not issued in vain, for it was the means unto his resurrection. Likewise the command to repent as well as the Word of God are means unto conversion in the hand of God, but not in the hand of man.

Objection #3:

Even pagans, as well as many unconverted, do good works as well as the converted. It is thus evident that man has retained the natural ability to do good works.

Answer:

(1) Some pagans have so exceeded in the practice of virtue that they put many Christians to shame. If such virtues had been true virtues, why would there be any need for regeneration? Since regeneration is necessary, however, it is evident that their virtues did not have the nature of true virtues.

(2) There are four types of good works: natural, civil, externally religious, and spiritual good works. Unconverted persons perform the first three types of good works, but not the fourth. Their good works are good in materialiter, that is, in a substantial sense, but not as far as essence is concerned. They are not formaliter (that is, not

truly) good works. Spiritual light, life, and virtue are not distinguished from the natural in degree, but rather in essence, as we have demonstrated above. Therefore we cannot make such an inference.

Objection #4:

“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath” (Matt. 13:12). This means that those who have sufficient grace—which is true for all—and who use it well, will receive more grace. It thus follows that man possesses the grace and the ability to repent.

Answer:

(1) The word “for” shows sufficiently that the reference is to those who are converted; that is, to whom had been given what had not been given to others as stated in verse 11, “It is given unto you to know.”

(2) It is evident that the reference is not to what man possesses by nature, but rather to what he has received by means of the Word of God. This is confirmed by the fact that this was said to the disciples who had already been called and converted, and therefore had been given the ability to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, even though they were presented by way of parables. The reference is thus to the growth and increase of truly converted persons.

(3) Those who “have not” are the unconverted who have not received grace. They are of the opinion that they are not blind; they believe they are able to understand these mysteries as well as the most eminent Christian. “Are we blind also?” (John 9:40). Those who have heard the preaching of the gospel, but do not understand it, or do not perform what they have understood, would become more blind and more hardened; their darkened heart would become even darker,

and while pretending to be wise, they would become fools (Rom. 1:21–22). Thus, from them would be taken even that which they seemed to have (Luke 8:18). The abused gifts of nature and the common gifts by way of Scripture would be taken away as a righteous judgment.

The same answer must be given in response to Matthew 25:29, where the same words are recorded, and are applied to the good and evil use of the talents. The reference there is neither to gifts which all men have by nature, nor to the good or evil use of these gifts, but the reference is to the church, the kingdom of heaven (vss. 1, 14). Within the church the Lord Jesus gives various gifts, both saving and common. Everyone is obligated to use these gifts for the benefit of others, that is, to the conversion of others. He whom the Lord gifts with grace to be faithful, and to be instrumental unto the conversion of souls, will be graciously rewarded by the Lord with a special measure of glory. The unfaithful servant, however, who had also received gifts (not graces) was cast into hell. Thus, nothing remains of the argument that there is all-sufficient grace in the state of nature.

Objection #5:

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:20). Behold, here the act of opening or of not opening is attributed to man. He must therefore possess the ability to do so.

Answer:

(1) Here the church is addressed, and particularly the church of Laodicea. This therefore cannot be used to prove what ability all men possess by nature.

(2) This shows at best what man’s duty is, but not what he is able to do. This is actually a promise to those who open the door, however,

without there being any mention of whether they would open it in their own strength, or whether this would occur by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

(3) The reference is to the external call which is a means used to the conversion of the elect—a means whereby the ungodly are convinced of their wickedness and of God's justice. This call is therefore not issued forth in vain. We have, at the same time, answered the question as to why Christ calls and knocks if man is not able, and why He does knock and call if He Himself opens the door (Acts 16:14). He uses this as a means.

Man's Passivity at the Moment of Regeneration

Being as impotent as has been stated, it is clear and self-evident that man at the very first moment of his conversion is not independently active, nor does he cooperate with the prevenient and quickening grace of God, but is a passive object and solely the recipient of the illuminating and quickening power of God . We are not speaking here of a man who already has been regenerated, but rather of an unregenerate man being regenerated. Such a person is passive rather than active.

This is first of all evident from what has been stated before concerning the impotence of man who is blind and does not know how matters ought to be; who is evil, unwilling, and hates that which is spiritual; who is impotent, thus rendering him unable; who is dead, and therefore in the initial moment of regeneration and conversion is not able to cooperate, but is merely passive. Such is the state of man according to the foregoing proposition. It thus follows that he functions neither independently nor cooperatively.

Secondly, since the difference between natural and spiritual light, life, and virtue is not one of degree, but of very essence (as stated in the foregoing), man is not able to change from one state to the other, nor is he able to cooperate in the act of translation from one state to

the other. Rather, an almighty power is necessary for this. Who can change a stone into flesh, or an irrational animal into a man? Who then would also be able to change a dead person into a living person?

Thirdly, regeneration is a work that must be attributed solely to God and is an omnipotent work of God:

(1) It is a work of God: “It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture” (Psa. 100:3); “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13); “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col. 1:13); “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

(2) It is an omnipotent work, a work which has man as its only object. It is an act of creation, and by way of this creative work a new creature is formed. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17); “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10). We know that in the act of creation a creature is brought forth without any cooperation whatsoever. Regeneration is an act of resurrection from the dead and of making alive. “And you, being dead in your sins...hath He quickened together with Him” (Col. 2:13). It is an act of being begotten, of being reborn. “Of His own will begat He us” (James 1:18); “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). All these expressions refer to the work of the Creator, the Giver of Life, and the Generator, in which the creature who is resurrected and generated is entirely excluded from any cooperation. It is thus certain that man does not cooperate in the initial moment of regeneration, but is passive, and as the object, is the recipient of this operation. Even if, prior to this, he was human and thus functioned as a man, yet in reference to spiritual life he was dead and thus could no more cooperate in regeneration than a dead person could.

Fourthly, if man were to cooperate in the initial moment of conversion—if he were to act independently in the most significant and essential aspect of conversion; that is, to be willing of himself to come to Christ upon the invitation of the gospel due to ability which he has in common with all men and is inherent in his nature—a spiritually dead person would not only be able to be active, but would himself be the cause of his salvation and would distinguish himself from other men. This is contrary to the entire Scriptures which attribute this to God rather than to man. “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Cor. 4:7); “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Man, therefore, does not cooperate, but he is entirely passive in this matter.

Objection #1:

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities” (Rom. 8:26).

Answer:

The apostle does not refer to the unconverted to whom the point of contention pertains. Rather, he refers to the converted who have been saved in hope (vs. 24). The Holy Spirit teaches such persons how to pray when they know not what to pray for as they ought.

Objection #2:

“For we are labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9); “We then, as workers together with Him...” (2 Cor. 6:1).

Answer:

The reference is not to man’s work in his own conversion, which is the point in question, but to the work of the ministry, that is, the proclamation of the Word of God. In that capacity ministers are the instruments of God and thus work together with Him as means to the conversion of other men. No one will maintain, however, that

they are able to convert men in their own strength. They cooperate as an instrument cooperates.

Objection #3:

“But I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor. 15:10).

Answer:

Paul does not refer to his labors prior to and at his conversion, but to his labors after his conversion. This labor did not pertain to himself, rather to others. He states here that his work in the ministry had not been fruitless as far as the benefit of others was concerned, but that he had been extraordinarily abundant and fruitful. However, he did not exalt himself because of this, but instead acknowledged the grace of God as having been operative in him as the cause. Thus, this text, rather than supporting this objection, states the contrary.

Objection #4:

If man must be viewed solely as passive in his conversion, and is but merely the object and thus the recipient of divine operation, man can only be considered to be a stock and a block.

Answer:

Man cooperates no more than did the body of Adam in receiving the soul, and as Lazarus did in his resurrection. Man, however, is neither a block nor a stock which is incapable of being the recipient of God’s converting power, not being a suitable object for such operation. Instead, man is rational, has intellect, a will, and inclinations, and is thus a suitable object to be the recipient of God’s operations toward conversion. Thus, God enlightens the intellect, inclines the will, and makes man willing without violation of the will. In this manner God makes man alive. It is true, however, that man can cooperate no

more than that a stock or a block would be able to move from one place to another.

Objection #5:

Then man may as well let everything run its course and merely let God work when it pleases Him.

Answer:

Even though a blind and crippled person could not help himself, did this mean that he therefore did not have to avail himself of the waters at Bethesda or of a physician? Man's impotence ought to motivate him to use the means unto his conversion and attend church with the hope that it would please the Lord to deal with him. It is also his duty to repent and to believe in Christ. If he fails to do so, he sins and acts contrary to his duty and to his own judgment. It thus remains certain that man does not cooperate.

Having observed what man neither can nor will do toward his regeneration, we shall proceed to consider God's work in the internal call and regeneration, demonstrating that God works powerfully and irresistibly.

The Internal Call: The Immediate and Effectual Operation of God

Question:

Is the internal call, even though it occurs by means of the Word, an immediate and effectual operation of God which is exercised upon and changes the intellect, the will, and the inclinations, thereby in a spiritual sense making man alive from the dead?

Arminians answer negatively, whereas we answer affirmatively.

Even though man cannot comprehend God's supernatural operations wherewith by means of the Word the soul is immediately wrought upon, changed, illuminated, regenerated, and endowed with spiritual life, God's Word nevertheless teaches us that God does this. He who changed Saul's heart in one moment (1 Sam. 10:9) and forms the heart of all men (Psa. 33:15), also transforms the heart of man. Man does not accomplish this himself, but God is the origin and the only cause of this. God endows man with a supernatural propensity by which man, after the endowment of this propensity and regeneration—due to divine cooperation—performs spiritual deeds. God acts in harmony with the object, but the operation itself is supernatural. God indeed uses the Word as a means, but joined to this means is an immediate, omnipotent operation which touches the soul, thereby powerfully changing the soul as far as intellect, will, and disposition are concerned.

This is first of all evident when considering the evil disposition and impotence of man prior to his conversion, as we have comprehensively shown. In order for one who is totally blind, for whom the crucified Christ is an offense and foolishness, who is only evil, is unwilling and hates that which is spiritual, and one who cannot do anything and is dead, to be converted and changed, an almighty power must be exercised which will interact immediately with him and change him. However, men are indeed converted, and this necessarily requires the exercise of almighty power.

Secondly, Scripture states plainly that the Word alone can have no effect upon the heart of such a person, but that the Word of God must be accompanied by a powerful operation of God upon the soul. He must give eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand (Deut.. 29:4), and the enlightening of the eyes of the understanding (Eph. 1:18). With the revelation of Scripture, God must make the heart to burn within (Luke 24:32). His instruction must be accompanied by the gift of repentance (2 Tim. 2:25), and under the hearing of God's Word He must open the heart (Acts 16:14). This is also confirmed in 1 Corinthians 3:6–7: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave

the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” If man cannot accomplish this, and if the Word of God alone cannot exercise such power upon the heart of man, the Word of God must be accompanied by the immediate, almighty power of God to change the heart, which is indeed the case as these texts have shown.

Thirdly, the manner in which God’s work is denominated gives expression to such an immediate and efficacious work of God. From God’s side conversion is referred to as a creation (Eph. 2:10), as begetting (James 1:18), and as a making alive and a resurrecting from the dead (Eph. 2:5). For a more comprehensive treatment of this, please refer to the foregoing.

From the following and similar texts it is evident that God indeed promises to work in such an immediate and efficacious manner, and also that He indeed operates in this manner.

(1) God promises to do this: “I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jer. 31:33); “I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer. 32:40); “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26). Neither man, nor the Word of God would do it, but God Himself would conquer all opposition. God Himself would work so efficaciously upon the heart unto repentance.

(2) God does work efficaciously upon the heart unto repentance. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Paul writes to the believers (ch. 1:1), exhorting them (ch. 2:12) to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. He further exhorts them to be neither proud nor puffed up, to do all things without murmurings and disputings, and to walk upon the way of godliness with childlike reverence and carefulness. He stresses that their faith and activity did not proceed from them, but that they were active by the power of God, “for it is God which

worketh in you,” etc. They have to avail themselves of and act upon this prevenient grace and operation, and be engaged by means of this power. God, who created the will, also recreates the will in His elect. He does not need to deal with man as one man deals with another, who can only by way of a variety of motives seek to persuade someone to be willing in regard to a certain matter. Rather, God works as God, illuminating the intellect with a new light and giving to man a will so that he wills voluntarily and with desire. God causes this willingness to be followed by working.

The apostle demonstrates this very same truth in 2 Thessalonians 1:11, “...that our God would...fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power.” They had the Word of God and it was preached to them in a most lively manner. The apostle demonstrates this to be insufficient to bring forth believers, that faith is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8), and that the Word of God must be accompanied by an almighty power of God to thus cause man to believe. “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Eph. 1:19). The apostle says likewise, “ (God) make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight” (Heb. 13:21).

Consider all this together for a moment. Man is as blind, evil, impotent, and dead as has been stated above. God permits the gospel to be preached to many, but this has no effect upon most who hear it. However, others are converted because God joins His Holy Spirit to that Word, working in them what He does not work in others. He illuminates them with a marvelous light which He does not do unto others. He removes the heart of stone from them and gives them a heart of flesh, not doing so to others. He works in them to will and to do the work of faith with power, not doing so in others. It is thus an irrefutable fact that God interacts with the heart of man in an immediate sense and thus changes it.

Objection #1:

The Word of God is the seed of regeneration (1 Pet. 1:23), enlightens the eyes, converts souls (Psa. 19:8–9), is a two–edged sword, is lively and powerful, “to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit” (Heb. 4:12). The Word of God is therefore sufficient; nothing needs to be added to it, and it is not accompanied by an immediate, illuminating, and transforming power of God.

Answer:

(1) All these texts indicate nothing but that God works everything by means of His Word.

(2) If the Word of God had such inherent power, it would likewise have an effect upon all who hear it, that is, upon those who are in like circumstances; however, this is not the case.

(3) Scripture states clearly that the Word of God does not have such inherent power, but that the Word of God must be accompanied by the immediate, efficacious operation of God. “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6).

Objection #2:

If the Word of God needs to be accompanied by the immediate and efficacious operation of God, man lacks a sufficient means unto salvation.

Answer:

It is not the means which can be the moving cause to bring forth the effect. The Word of God is not a moving cause, but only a means in God’s hand. The immediate operation is not the means, but is rather the moving cause. God does not give this means, that is, the Word of God, to all men, and wherever God gives this means, He does not interact with all by way of this means, but only with those whom He pleases. If one maintains, however, that the Word of God must still be accompanied by divine operation, and that the Word of God is not

sufficient unto man's salvation, we indeed agree that man cannot convert himself by means of the Word of God.

Objection #3:

If the Word of God must be accompanied by a work of God, man is to be excused if he does not repent, for he is not able to.

Answer:

(1) By way of such reasoning a heathen could also be excused for not perfectly fulfilling the law of nature, for he is not able to do so. The apostle states, however, that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

(2) It is not so that man is able to progress to a point; that is, until he encounters the obstacle of his inability ; but he is already obstructed by his unwillingness . If, as some maintain, man has a neutral will enabling him to will or not to will, he has no reason to complain, for he is using his free will to avoid God and to live in sin.

Additional objection

It is maintained, however, that man cannot will to do so, and therefore he is to be excused.

Answer:

He is neither hindered nor restrained by either God, His Word, or by any creature. Instead, man is left to himself and he is so evil and hostile toward God, having such strong inclinations toward sin, that he is not able to will. He is thus to be blamed himself.

Objection #4:

By maintaining that there is such an efficacious and immediate operation of God upon the soul, the freedom of man's will is destroyed and removed.

Answer:

This we deny. God works in harmony with man's nature; however, He does not do so as one man would interact with another man. God causes man to will voluntarily, as was true when man was created. If God, who created the will in man, touches the will and the soul without removing the freedom of the will, why can this not be true in re-creation? In the first [creation], man and his will did not exist, but were created. In the second [recreation], man and his will are spiritually dead.

Additional Objection:

At regeneration the soul already possesses its capabilities and they are activated only in the realm of the spiritual. As the will is activated in the natural realm by natural motives, it is likewise activated in the spiritual realm by spiritual motives. It therefore cannot be maintained that there is an immediate operation of God upon the will without impinging upon the freedom of man's will.

Answer:

(2) In the natural realm man has some principles, enabling him to will by way of natural motives; however, in the spiritual realm man is entirely dead, entirely evil, and not able to be activated to will and to work spiritually by way of motivation. There is thus a need for an almighty, supernatural power in order to cause the faculties to be engaged in a spiritual sense.

Objection #5:

To hold to such an immediate interaction of God with the soul and its faculties is nothing but fanaticism.

Answer:

This is not so, for fanaticism adheres to revelations outside of and contrary to God's Word. It yields to passions and sudden motions which override the mind and the will, being but vain delusions and fantasies. Regeneration, however, occurs by means of the Word of God and is active according to the Word of God. If, however, one understands fanaticism to be "being driven by the spirit,"¹² that is, to be regenerated by the Spirit and thus to live and walk by the Spirit according to the rule of God's Word, we have no objection, and the proposed absurdity is no absurdity.

We have thus demonstrated that man by nature is entirely impotent and unable. In the initial moment of his conversion he neither acts nor cooperates, but is only passive. God, by a supernatural and almighty power, interacts with and changes the intellect and will in an immediate sense, changing man from being blind to receiving his sight, and from evil to good. That which has been said confirms the validity of the question.

The Irresistible Nature of the Internal Call

Question:

Does God work irresistibly in those who are converted, conquering all the opposition of their evil nature, and in very deed translate them from a state of spiritual death to spiritual life?

Answer:

The Arminians deny this, but we confirm this. Man by nature hates God and is opposed to God, His Word, and the gospel. Such is the state of all men. If, however, the one person is converted and not the other, this is not to be attributed to man—as if it were true that the one accepts this grace by his free will and the other rejects it; rather this is to be attributed to the effectual operation of God, who works one thing in the one and not in the other. He not only effectually illuminates the intellect—doing so irresistibly—and irresistibly activates man's inclinations, but He also irresistibly works upon the

unwilling will in such a manner that the will wills voluntarily. This 12
The difficulty here is that the word “geestdrijverij,” translated in the
dictionary as “fanaticism” or “zealotry,” can literally be interpreted as
“being driven by the spirit.” When à Brakel uses this word the second
time he undoubtedly interprets it in such a literal sense.

(1) Such reasoning presupposes that natural and spiritual virtue do
not differ in essence but in degree. In the above we have shown this
not to be so; this argument is therefore futile.

freedom is not one of neutrality (it being immaterial whether or not
to do something), but one of necessary consequence, a person being
willing by his own choice and inclination. This is evident from the
three propositions which we have proven in the preceding material.

First, if man is blind and ignorant as to how matters ought to be; if
man, who is evil and hostile towards God, hates and opposes
whatever he encounters of God in His Word and in the converted; if
he is entirely impotent and unable; if he is entirely dead as far as
spiritual life is concerned; if he is entirely as we have proven him to
be— when such a person is converted, he with all his opposition will
then not be able to resist the efficacious operation of God. He will not
be able to prevent himself from being changed, nor prevent the
translation of his heart and will into another state—as is true for a
dead person who, after having been restored to life, cannot resist
being alive. Thus, the converting, almighty power of God functions in
an irresistible manner.

Secondly, if man is only passive in his conversion, and is the
recipient of divine operations only as object, and therefore does not
cooperate at all (as has been proven)—if such a man is converted, he
is changed by an almighty, all-conquering, all-penetrating, and
irresistible operation of God. Any object which is the passive
recipient of action can neither oppose nor cooperate.

Thirdly, if God, in conversion, does not only illuminate the intellect by an almighty power and incline the inclinations, but also in an immediate sense interacts and changes the will, making it from unwilling to be willing—then God’s operation in the conversion of man is irresistible. It is an almighty working power, a creative act, a begetting, a resurrection from the dead, a change of heart, the removal of the heart of stone and the giving of a heart of flesh, etc., as has been shown prior to this. God’s operation in the conversion of men is thus irresistible, almighty, all-conquering, and all-penetrating.

Fourthly, the calling is according to God’s purpose; that is, He gives specific individuals eternal life. In the way of repentance and faith He makes all those partakers of this life, and those only, whom He has elected unto that end (cf. chapter 6: Election). “Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom. 8:30). Behold, there is thus an unbreakable chain: God leads His elect by way of the calling to eternal felicity. God saves them and calls them “with an holy calling...according to His own purpose and grace” (2 Tim. 1:9). If therefore they are called according to this purpose in order that they might be saved, the calling power of God cannot be resisted, for God will accomplish His purpose. He has purposed this in His decree “and who shall disannul it?” (Isa. 14:27). It is thus both clear and certain that the calling is irresistible. Let us now consider for a moment what objections are made against this.

Objection #1:

There are texts which state expressly that man resists this calling, such as, “I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people” (Isa. 65:2); “Thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house” (Ezek. 12:2); “How often would I have gathered thy children together...and ye would not!” (Matt.

23:37); “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51).

Answer:

All these texts do not refer to the internal call, nor to the moment of spiritual transformation, nor to regeneration. This is, however, the point in question; namely, whether the operation of the Holy Spirit can be resisted. Instead, these texts refer to the external call and to Christ being offered unto justification, sanctification, and glorification. We readily admit that the person who is not elected resists this call, for the carnal mind is enmity against God. The natural man hates both God and holiness, and can do nothing else but reject and resist this offer. It does not follow, however, that those who are regenerated would be able to resist the omnipotent operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby He makes a dead person alive, and from being unwilling, to be willing. This we deny, and these texts do not suggest this. Concerning the distinction between the external and internal call, we refer you to that which has been stated before.

Objection #2:

“For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matt. 11:21). It thus appears that man can convert himself, and if this is possible, it is his free and arbitrary choice whether or not he will repent. It therefore follows that conversion does not come about due to the irresistible power of God.

Answer:

(1) This text does not refer to the true change and regeneration, but rather to an external conversion in sackcloth and ashes, which results from historical faith or as a response to miracles.

(2) This is a hyperbole whereby the Jews were convinced of their irresponsible wickedness and unbelief, this being even greater than

that of the heathen. Observe this in Luke 19:40, “I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”

Objection #3:

“But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves” (Luke 7:30). If it is possible to reject the counsel of God, this counsel can be resisted.

Answer:

“The counsel of God” is not to be understood to refer to God’s purpose, but rather to the external offer of the gospel which gives counsel how we may flee from the wrath of God. We fully agree that this can be resisted and is indeed resisted by the unconverted, until an all-conquering and irresistible operation of God takes place. This irresistible, divine operation, however, is manifested toward none other than the elect. It is God’s will that they will be converted and there is no one who will be able to prevent this.

The objections which remain have already been dealt with previously.

The Holy Spirit’s Work in Bringing Sinners to Faith in Christ

by John Owen

“To say that we are able by our own efforts to think good thoughts or give God spiritual obedience before we are spiritually regenerate is to overthrow the gospel and the faith of the universal church in all ages.”

- John Owen

All men can be divided into two groups. They are either regenerate or unregenerate. All men are born unregenerate (John 3:3-8).

...Spiritual darkness is in all men and lies on all men until God, by an almighty work of the Spirit, shines into men's hearts, or creates light in them (Matt 4:16; John 1:5; Act 26:18; Eph 5:8; Col 1:13; 1 Pet 2:9).

...The nature of this spiritual darkness must be understood. When men have no light to see by, then they are in darkness (Exod. 10:23). Blind men are in darkness, either by birth or by illness or accident (Psa. 69:23; Gen 19:11; Acts 13:11). A spiritually blind man is in spiritual darkness and is ignorant of spiritual things.

There is an outward darkness on men and an inward darkness in men.

Outward darkness is when men do not have that light by which they are enabled to see. So outward spiritual darkness is upon men when there is nothing to enlighten them about God and spiritual things (Matt 4:16; Psa 119:105; Psa. 19:1-4,8; 2 Pet 1:19; Rom 10:15, 18). It is the work of the Holy Spirit to remove this darkness by sending the light of the gospel (Acts 13:2, 4; 16:6-10; Psa. 147:19,20).

Inward darkness, on the other hand, arises from the natural depravity and corruption of the minds of men concerning spiritual things. Man's mind is depraved and corrupted in things which are natural, civil, political, and moral, as well as in things which are spiritual, heavenly and evangelical. This depravity is often held back from having its full effects by the common grace of the Holy Spirit. So, man's mind being darkened, he is unable to see, receive,

understand or believe to the saving of his soul. Spiritual things, or the mysteries of the gospel, without the Holy Spirit first creating within the soul a new light by which they can see and receive those things, cannot bring salvation.

However brilliant the mind may be, and however brilliant the preaching and presentation of the gospel might be, yet without the Holy Spirit first creating this light in them, they cannot receive, understand and agree with the truths preached, and so will not be led to salvation (Eph 4:17, 18).

So the unregenerate 'walk in the futility of their mind' (Eph 4:17). The natural inclination of the unregenerate mind is to seek those things that cannot satisfy (Gen 6:5). It is an unstable mind (Prov. 7:11-12). The unregenerate understanding is darkened and cannot judge things properly (Jhn 1:5). The unregenerate heart is blind. In Scripture the heart includes the will also. Light is received by the mind, applied by the understanding and used by the heart. 'But if the light within is darkness,' said Jesus, 'how great is that darkness.'

...Even though the unconverted mind is highly educated and talented, yet it is utterly unable to receive and understand spiritually those things needful for its eternal salvation. It will not respond to the preaching of the gospel until renewed, enlightened and enabled to do so by the Holy Spirit: "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). The subject of this verse is the natural man. The natural man is quite opposite of the spiritual man (1 Cor 15:44; Jude 19).

Paul tells us that the first Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit (1 Cor 15:45). The natural man comes from the first Adam and the spiritual man comes from the last Adam. The natural man is one that has all that is or can be had from the first Adam. He has a rational soul and is well able to use it. The natural man trusts in his reasoning powers and sees no need for any

spiritual help. He does not see that God has given him a soul in order that it might learn and receive what he, God, has to give. Man is never made to live independently of God. Eyes are beautiful and useful, but if they try to see without light, their beauty and power will be of no use and the eyes might even be damaged. And if the unconverted mind tries to see spiritual things without the help of the Spirit of God, it will only end up destroying itself.

In verse fourteen [1 Cor 2] we see things put to the natural man. These things are 'the things of the Spirit of God'. Now what are these things of the Spirit of God which are put to the natural man? Here are some of them, all from 1 Cor chapter 2, 'Jesus and him crucified' (v.2). 'The hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory' (v. 7). "The things that are freely given to us by God' (v.12). 'The mind of Christ' (v. 16).

These are the things of the Spirit of God. These are things that cannot be received except by sovereign, supernatural illumination. These are the things that 'eye has not see, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him' (v.9). They are things from God's eternal counsel. These are the things which the mind of man at his first creation had no idea existed (Eph 3:8-11).

Two things can be said of the natural man and the things of the Spirit of God. Firstly, he does not receive them: secondly, he cannot know them.

In this double assertion we learn firstly that the power to receive spiritual things is denied the natural man (Rom 8:7). He cannot receive them because they are spiritually discerned. We learn secondly that the natural man willingly rejects them. This is implied in the words 'does not receive the things of the Spirit of God'. And he rejects them because they appear to him to be foolish.

The natural man cannot, will not and does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. He can know the literal sense of the doctrines presented to him. He can know that Jesus Christ was crucified. But there is a wide difference between receiving doctrines as mere statements presented to him and knowing the reality which those statements present.

The natural man can know the way of righteousness as a mere statement (2 Pet. 2:21). Other things he can know, merely as ideas presented to him (Titus 1:16; Rom 2:23, 24). But these truths have no transforming effect on his life. The spiritual man, on the other hand, knows them in reality and they have a transforming effect on his life (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:22-24).

Now before spiritual things can be received two things are necessary. It is necessary that we understand them, agree with them and receive them because they agree with wisdom, holiness and righteousness of God (1 Cor 1:23, 24). It is also necessary that we see how well adapted they are to glorifying God, the salvation of sinners and bringing the church to grace and glory. The natural man cannot do this. He can, however, receive exhortations, promises, commands and threatenings in the gospel (1 John 5:20). But to him the wisdom of God is foolishness. Paul says that the 'foolishness of God is wiser than men' (1 Cor 1:25). But to the natural man they are foolishness.... He cannot [receive them] because they are spiritually discerned. The natural man by the natural light of reason can discern natural things. The spiritual man by a spiritual light received from Jesus Christ discerns spiritual things.

Paul teaches us the Christ 'has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love' (Col 1:13).

[Due to the corruption of nature] ...the darkness fills the mind with enmity against God and all the things of God (Col 1:21; Rom 8:7). If God is great in goodness and beauty, why do men hate him? This

hatred arises from this darkness which is the corruption and depravity of our nature.

This darkness fills the mind with prejudices against all spiritual things, and the mind is utterly unable to free itself from the prejudices. The darkened mind sees first the things that it lusts after. Then, later, it recognizes those lusts in itself. But when men are called to seek God above all other desires, then this is considered to be foolish, because to the unconverted mind things that are spiritual things will never bring contentment, happiness and satisfaction. In particular, the unregenerate mind has a special bias against the gospel.

The gospel...shows that obedience can arise only from a regenerate heart that is no longer at enmity with God. It also shows that the whole purpose of obedience is to bring glory to God. It shows that we cannot obey until we have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. All these things put moral duties into a new framework, the framework of the gospel. Secondly, by giving us his Spirit, God strengthens and enables us to obey according to the gospel framework.

The eye is the natural light of the body. By means of the eyes, the body is led safely round dangerous obstacles, and so is kept from hurting itself. But if the eye is blind, or is surrounded by darkness and so cannot see, then the body has no idea where it is going and will inevitably bump into objects to trip over obstacles. What the eye is to the body, the mind is to the soul. If the mind sees the glory and beauty of Christ and his salvation presented in the gospel, it will excite the heart to desire them as truly good and the will to receive and embrace them.

If the mind is ignorant of the gospel, or is blinded by prejudice, then the heart will not be roused to desire Christ, nor the will be urged to embrace him. ...We see, therefore, how important are the words of Jesus when he said, 'You must be born again.'

...As the body cannot live without the soul, so the soul cannot live to God without spiritual life. Without the spiritual life the soul becomes morally corrupt (Rom 8:7,8; John 6:44; Matt 7:18; 12:33; Jer. 13:23).

As the body has only passive power to receive life, for it cannot give life to itself and raise itself from the dead, so the soul also has only a passive power to receive spiritual life, for it has no power to regenerate itself from spiritual death to spiritual life. Exhortations, promises and threatenings in Scripture do not tell us what we can do, but what we ought to do. They show us our state of spiritual death and our inability to do any spiritual good. God is pleased to make these exhortations and promises the means by which we can receive spiritual life (James 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23).

This inability to live to God is due to sin (Rom 5:12). Unregenerate persons are able to do something towards regeneration, but this they neglect to do, so they wilfully sin. Though they cannot live to God, they can and do resist God, because their depraved minds are alienated from the life of God. Unregenerate persons freely and wickedly choose to disobey God.

Jesus complained, 'You will not come to me that you might have life' (John 5:40). There is in this death a ceasing of all vital activities. Unregenerate persons cannot do any vital activity that could be called spiritual obedience. True spiritual obedience springs from the life of God (Eph 4:18).

...God is the origin of all life and specifically spiritual life (Psa. 36:9). So our life is 'hid with Christ in God' (Col 3:3).

Our spiritual life differs from every other kind of life. It does not come to us directly from God, but it is first deposited in all its fullness in Christ our mediator (Col. 1:19). So it is out of his fullness that we receive this life (John 1:16). So Christ is our life (Col 3:4). It is, therefore, not so much we who live but Christ who lives in us (Gal

2:20). We can do nothing of ourselves but only by Christ's power and virtue (1 Cor 15:10).

The origin of this life is in God. The fullness of this life is in Christ. And it is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. We experience it as a new power and ruling principle in us (Rom 8:11; Eph 4:15, 16). Christ is our life and without him we can do nothing (John 15:5) [including believe the gospel with our own natural resources]. This spiritual life imparted to us by the Holy Spirit is still also in Christ. So, by this life we are joined to Christ as a branch is joined to the tree, derives its life from the tree and can never live independently of the tree (John 15:4).

This spiritual life is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit in order that we might be enabled to obey the terms of God's holy covenant. By this new life, God writes his law in our hearts and then we are able to walk in obedience to his commandments. Without this ruling principle of spiritual life there can be not spiritual obedience. To say that we are able by our own efforts to think good thoughts or give God spiritual obedience before we are spiritually regenerate is to overthrow the gospel and the faith of the universal church in all ages. It does not matter how powerfully we are motivated and encouraged, without regeneration we can do no good works which are pleasing and acceptable to God. A religious, decent, moral life, derived from self and not 'born of God' is as sinful as the worst of sinful lives.

Preachers of the gospel and others have sufficient warrant to press on all men the duties of repentance, faith and obedience; although they know the unregenerate have no ability to do these things. They must show the unregenerate why they are unable and that it is their own fault they are unable to do these things. It is the will of God and the command of God that the unregenerate should be told his duties. We are not to consider what man can or will do, but what God says they should do. There are two good reasons why these duties should be pressed on the ungodly. The ungodly must be stopped from going

further into sin and being more and more hardened, and these duties are the means appointed by God for their conversion. ...by God's grace working in due time ...

...According to Pelagianism, the preaching of God's word [apart from the regenerating work of the Spirit] is quite sufficient as an outward means to bring a person to repentance and faith. The revelation made of God and his mind is quite sufficient to teach men all they need to believe and do, that they may be converted to God and begin to obey him. [in the Pelagian view] ...regeneration is the result of responding to the Word preached.

Yes the Word of God is powerfully persuasive in itself, but until born again, unregenerate men cannot and will not be persuaded by it. The unregenerate must be persuaded that these are not 'cunningly devised fables' (2 Pet 1:16). Things in Scripture are not just truths, but divine truths. These are things that 'the mouth of the Lord has spoken'. And only when a person is born again will he believe that.

The unregenerate must be persuaded that the things preached are good, lovely and excellent. They must be persuaded that only faith in God can bring them to the height of all happiness. They must be persuaded of the sinful depravity of their souls and their utter inability to do any good acceptable to God without first being born against by His Spirit. All these truths are divine truths, and therefore the person hearing them must be convinced that they have been revealed by one who has divine authority. Not only must the mind be persuaded but also the heart must be activated to desire and the will heartily to embrace these things for salvation.

If the preaching of God's Word is done with great eloquence and ability of speech, then men will be persuaded to repent and believe, say the Pelagians. But Paul utterly rejects this in his ministry. He says, "My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (1 Cor 2:4).

...The real effectiveness of preaching does not lie in the clever oratorical ability of men, nor in the ability to back up the preaching by doing miracles. It lies in the following two things. Firstly, the preaching must have been instituted by God. He has appointed the preaching of his Word to be the only outward means for the conversion of the souls of men (1 Cor 1:17-20 Mark 16:15, 16; Rom 1:16). Secondly, the power that makes preaching effective in the hearts of men for their salvation is in God's hands alone. To some, preaching is made effective for salvation, to others for damnation. God also gives his appointed preachers special spiritual gifts and abilities to preach his Word (Eph 4:11-13). So the power to persuade a person to repent and believe the gospel by preaching lies in the sovereign will of God.

The Pelagians and all who believe that sinners must first repent and believe before they are born again say that the only work the Holy Spirit does in preaching is to persuade by motives, arguments and reasons put to the natural unconverted mind, and that by these alone the sinner is convinced and persuaded to repent. The sinner therefore repents and believes of his own free will and choice.

But we have shown that the mind of man is so corrupt and depraved, that unless preaching is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration no sinner will be persuaded to repent and believe. The outward means of conversion then is the preaching of God's Word. The inward work necessary to persuade men to respond to the preaching is regeneration, which is a transforming, not merely a persuading work done on the souls of men by the Holy Spirit....

If the Holy Spirit does nothing more than present reasons, arguments and motives to conversion, the will of the unregenerate person will remain unmoved. If it is up to the unregenerate first to repent and believe before the Holy Spirit will do his work of regeneration, then this denies salvation to be of the sovereign grace of God. It is indeed true that the will of the unregenerate can resist and refuse the gospel and the grace that accompanies its

preaching. But it is false to say that God is unable to effect a work of grace in us that cannot be resisted and will infallibly lead to conversion. It is false to say that the only work of grace God can do in us is that which can be resisted and rejected. It is false to say that the will of the unregenerate can make use of that grace of God or not, as it chooses. It is false to say that the power of conversion lies alone with the sinner, and that God cannot regenerate the sinner and bring him to conversion without the sinner first giving his consent. This is Pelagianism.

These things are false because this gives all the glory of our regeneration and conversion to ourselves and not to the sovereign grace of God. It is false also because it leaves man to decide who will be in heaven and who will not. In spite of God's purpose to save, and in spite of Christ's incarnation and redemption, nobody could be saved and God would be frustrated and disappointed of his sovereign will and purpose.

These things are false because this teaching is contrary to Scripture, which tells us that conversion is from first to last dependent on God's grace (Phil 2:13). God works in us to will our conversion, and by his sovereign power brings it about.

If regeneration is nothing more than persuading a person to be good, then no new, real, supernatural strength has been conferred on the soul, though prejudices may have been removed from the mind. According to this teaching, man has no need to such supernatural power, because he has been able by his own power, the power of his own will, to overcome his depraved, sinful, corrupt nature, remove all errors and prejudices from his mind and bring himself to such holiness of life as to make himself wholly acceptable to God. This is the power of free will which some have believed and taught. Such people deny that man must first be born again before he can do anything pleasing and acceptable to God.

Some teach that grace enlightens the mind, and that all man has to do is to choose the good which God's grace has shown him, and then that grace will work along with his choosing and willing and so bring the soul to new birth. But all the grace of God is doing here is enlightening the mind, exciting the desires and helping the will, and this only by persuading the person to repent and believe. No real strength is imparted to the soul. The will is left perfectly free to cooperate with this grace or not, as it chooses. This also denies the whole grace of Christ and to make it of no use at all in salvation. It ascribes to man's free will the honor for his conversion. It makes a man give birth to himself which is nonsense. It destroys the analogy between the work of the Holy Spirit in forming the natural body of Christ in the womb and the work of the Holy Spirit in the forming of his mystical body in regeneration. It makes the act of living to God by faith and obedience to be a mere natural human act and not the result of Christ's mediation. It allows the Spirit of God no more power in regenerating us than is in a minister who preaches the Word or an orator who eloquently and feelingly persuades a person to turn from evil to doing good.

We do not pray to God for anything but for what he has promised to give us. Does anyone then pray that God would merely persuade him or others to believe and obey? Do people pray to be converted or to convert themselves? The church of God has always prayed that God would work these things in us. Those who are truly concerned for their souls pray that God will bring them to true repentance and faith, that he will graciously work these things in their hearts. They pray that he will give them faith for Christ's sake and increase it in them and that he will work in them by the exceeding greatness of his power both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

To think that by all these prayers, and with all those examples of prayer given in Scripture, we desire nothing more than that God would persuade, excite and stir us up to act by our own power and ability to bring about the answers to our prayers by our own efforts, is contrary to all Christian experience. For a man to pray with

importunity, earnestness and with fervent zeal for that which he is quite able to do by himself, and which cannot be done except he will it to be done by his own free choice, is ridiculous. They mock God who pray to him to do for them what they can do for themselves. Suppose a man has ability to believe and repent. Suppose that his ability to believe and repent lies only in his free will and that God cannot by his grace work in him, but only persuade him to repent and believe, and to give him good reasons why he should do so, what would be the purpose of praying to God. Why ask God to give him faith and repentance?

It is because many believe that they have it in their own power to repent and believe when they so choose, that they think Christian prayers are useless and foolish. But it is as easy to persuade a person to regenerate himself by persuading himself to repent and believe as it is to persuade a blind man to see, or a lame man to walk normally or a dead man to rise from the grave. Conclusion: The work of regeneration is not the Holy Spirit [merely] persuading sinners to repent and believe.

How Regeneration is Accomplished

In regeneration a person the Holy Spirit makes use of the law and the gospel. There is not only a moral but also a direct nature-changing work of the Spirit on the minds or souls of men in regeneration. This is what we must hold on to, or all the glory of God's grace is lost, and the grace which comes to us by Christ will be neglected. Paul tells us of this direct work of the Spirit: "That you may know ... what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the work of his mighty power which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead" (Eph 1:18:- 2). The power here mentioned has an exceeding greatness attributed to it, because by this power Christ was physically raised from the dead. Paul would have us know that the same mighty power which God worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead is the same mighty power which the Holy Spirit works when he raises us from spiritual death to spiritual life in

regeneration. By this same mighty power we are kept by God to the day of salvation. It is because of his mighty power continually working in Christians that they are kept from ever falling away so as to be eternally lost.

...Where any work of grace begun in a person does not result in regeneration and the salvation of that person, it is because God never intended to regenerate that person, and so did not work that work in him. There is an important doctrinal principle to learn here. When the Holy Spirit intends to regenerate a person, he removes all obstacles, overcomes all resistance and opposition, and infallibly produces the result he intended.

...how can this be done without forcing and compelling the will? ..the work of regeneration is an internal work, transforming our very nature. This work of regeneration is not preached to the will and so it not resisted by the will, but it works effectively on the will, wonderfully renewing it. The will, in the first act of conversion, does not will or choose to act first and then is regenerated. Rather it is first renewed by regeneration and then it wills or chooses. The will lies passive or inert until roused by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. There is an inward, almighty, secret act of power producing or working in us the will to be converted to God. This act of power so works on our wills [affections] that we freely and gladly will what God wants us to will and choose, which is to do his will.

God Works in Us What He has Promised to Do

Before the work of grace the heart is 'stony'. It can do no more than a stone to please God. A stony heart is obstinate and stubborn. But God says that he will take away this stony heart (Ezek 11:19). He does not say he will try and take it away, or give us some power so that we can take it away ourselves, but that he will take it away. When God says he will take it away, he means that he will infallibly take it away and that nothing can stop him taking it away. He promises to give us a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26).

There is an 'eye' in the understanding of man. This eye is the ability to see spiritual things. It is sometimes said to be blind, darkness, shut. By these descriptions we are taught that the natural mind cannot know God personally for salvation, and nor can it see, that is, discern spiritual things. It is the work of the Spirit of grace to open this eye (luke 4:18, Acts 26:18). He does this, firstly, by giving us the spirit of wisdom and revelation. Secondly, he gives us a heart to know him (Jer 24:7).

We are enabled to obey God firstly by an inward, spiritual, ruling principle of grace ... by virtue of the life and death of Jesus Christ according to the terms of the new covenant... by which God writes his laws in our hearts and enables us to obey them by the Holy Spirit.

Excerpt from The Holy Spirit by John Owen, Banner of Truth Trust

Regeneration

by J. C. Ryle

"Truly, truly, I say to you—Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

If the Bible is false, as some proud men have dared to say—then we are no better than the beasts which perish, and the best thing a man can do is to eat and drink and live as he pleases. If the Bible is only half true, as some unhappy people strive to make out, there is no certainty about our everlasting souls; Christianity is all doubt and dimness and guesswork, we can never know what we are to believe as necessary to salvation, we can never be sure that we have got hold of the words of eternal life. Give up your Bible, and you have not a

square inch of certainty and confidence to stand on: you may think, and you may imagine, and you may have your own opinion—but you cannot show me any satisfactory proof or authority that you are right; you are building merely on your own judgment; you have put out your own eyes, as it were, and, like one in the dark, you do not really know where you are going.

But if, beloved, the Bible be indeed the Word of God Himself and altogether true, and that it is so, can be proved by witnesses without number; if the Bible be indeed true and our only guide to heaven, and this I trust you are all ready to allow; it surely must be the duty of every wise and thinking man to lay to heart each doctrine which it contains, and while he adds nothing to it, to be careful that he takes nothing from it.

Now, I say that on the face of the Bible, when fairly read, there stands out this grand doctrine, that each one of us must, between the cradle and grave—go through a spiritual change, a change of heart—or in other words be born again. And in the text you have heard, the Lord Jesus declares positively, without regeneration no man shall see the kingdom of God.

Sinner, man or woman, mark that! no salvation without this new birth! Christ has done everything for you; He paid the price of our redemption, lived for us, died for us, rose again for us—but all shall avail us nothing, if there be not this work in us: *we must be born again!*

Now, beloved, I desire to speak to you freely and plainly about this new birth—as a thing absolutely necessary to salvation. I shall try to show you from my text two things: *first*, the reason why we must all be born again, and *secondly*, what the expression to be born again means; and the Lord grant that the subject to which I am going to call your attention, may not be listened to and soon forgotten, as a light and indifferent matter—but carried home and thought over, and blessed to the conversion of many souls!

I. Why, then, is this new birth so necessary? The answer is short and simple. Because of the natural sinfulness of every man's disposition. We are not born into the world with spotless, innocent minds—but corrupt and wicked, and with a will to do that which is evil as soon as we have the power. The Scriptural account is true to the letter—we are all conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity. I need not stop now to tell you how all this came to pass; I need only remind you that in the beginning it was not so. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created holy, harmless, undefiled, without spot or stain or blemish about them; and when God rested from His labor on the seventh day, He pronounced them, like all His other works, to be very good. But, alas for us! Adam, by transgression, fell into sin, and lost his first estate. He forfeited the likeness of God in which he had been made. And hence all we, who are his children, come into being with a defiled and sinful nature. We are fallen, and we must needs be raised; we have about us the marks of the old Adam—Adam the first, earthly and carnal—and we must needs be marked with the marks of the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus, which are heavenly and spiritual. Do any of you feel a doubt of this? Consider only what we are by nature.

By nature we do not see Christ's spiritual kingdom upon earth; it is all hidden from our eyes. Men may be sharp and knowing in worldly matters, they may be wise in the things of time—but when they come to spiritual religion, their understandings seem blind, there is a thick veil over their hearts, and they see nothing as they ought to see.

So long as they are in this natural state it is in vain they are told of God's holiness and God's unchangeable justice, His spiritual law and His judgment to come, their own enormous deficiencies, their own peril of destruction—it matters not; it all falls flat and dull upon their ears; they neither feel it nor care for it nor consider it, and in a few hours they are as though they had never heard it. It is to no purpose, while in this condition, that Christ crucified and His precious atonement are set before us; we can see no form nor beauty nor loveliness about Him; we cannot value what He has done, and, as far

as we are concerned, the wisdom and the excellence of the Cross, which Apostles gloried in, seems all thrown away.

And why is this? Our hearts need changing! "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." This is the true account of all that weariness and lifelessness and carelessness which we so often see in the worshipers of God's house; this is the secret of that awful indifference about spiritual things which prevails so widely both among rich and poor, and makes the Gospel appear a sealed book. It comes from the heart. Some always imagine they need learning, some they have no time, some they have very peculiar difficulties which no one else in the world has—but the truth lies far deeper. They all need new hearts! Once give them new natures, and you would hear no more about learning—or time—or difficulty. Every mountain would be levelled and every valley filled up, that the way of God might be prepared.

But again. By nature we do not love the laws of Christ's spiritual kingdom. We do not openly refuse to obey them, we would be angry with anyone who said we had thrown them aside—but we have no love to them and delight in them; it is not our food and drink to do our Father's will. Oh no! by nature we love our own way and our own inclinations—and that is our only law. We bring forth fruit unto ourselves—but not unto God. Our own pleasure and our own profit take up all our attention, and as for Him who made us and redeemed us, too many do not give Him the very scraps of their time. By nature we do not measure ourselves by God's standard: who ever takes the Sermon on the Mount as his rule of character? who ever admires the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the men who are persecuted for righteousness' sake? These are all people whom the world despises, they are as nothing by the side of the jovial and light-hearted, the men who love strong drink and are held to sing good songs; and yet these are the people whom Jesus calls blessed.

What natural man judges of sin as Jesus teaches us to judge? How few look on drunkenness and fornication as damnable sins—yet the Bible says they are! How few consider anger without cause, as bad as murder, and lustful looks as bad as adultery—yet Jesus says they are! Where are the men who strive to love their enemies, who bless those who hate them, and pray for those who spitefully use them?—yet this is the rule that Jesus has laid down. And why is all this? You see there must be something radically wrong. By nature we do not lay ourselves out to glorify God with our bodies and spirits—we take no pleasure in speaking to each other about Him. The concerns of this world have a hundred times more of our thoughts; and few indeed are the gatherings where the mention of Christ and heaven would not stop many mouths, and make nearly all look as if the subject was very uncomfortable.

And why is all this? Some talk of bad example having done them harm, and some say they have had a bad education—but the evil is far more deeply seated; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, it comes from the carnal unrenewed mind, and the remedy needed is change of nature. A corrupt tree can only bring forth corrupt fruit; the root of the mischief is the sinfulness of the natural heart.

Once more. By nature we are altogether unfit for Christ's kingdom in glory. The **lives** which we are in the habit of leading, and the **practices** we are fond of indulging, and the **tastes** we are always seeking to please, and the **opinions** we hold, are all such as prove we have no natural fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light. They do not follow after holiness in all their walk and conversation. Then what place can they occupy in that blessed abode where there shall enter in nothing that defiles, nor whatever works abomination? How shall they stand in His presence, who charges even His angels with folly, and in whose sight the very heavens are not pure! They do not take pleasure in the exercise of prayer and praise on earth; and how could they enjoy the employments of that glorious habitation, where they rest not day nor night worshiping and crying "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come!"

They do not count it a privilege to draw near to God through Jesus Christ, to walk with Him, to seek close acquaintance with Him; and where would be the comfort to them of dwelling forever in the presence of the Lord God and the Lamb? They do not strive to walk in the steps of holy men of old, they do not take example from the faith and patience of the saints; and with what face then would they join the society of just men made perfect? With what salutation, after a life spent in pleasing the devil and the world, would they greet Abraham and David and the Apostles and all that blessed company who have fought the good fight?

Alas! beloved, an unregenerate man in heaven would be a miserable creature, there would be something in the air he could not breathe, the joys, the affections, the employments would be all wearisome to him, he would find himself as unfitted for the company of the saints, as a beast is unfitted on earth for the company of man. He would be carnally minded, they would be spiritually minded, there would be nothing in common. I know there are vain dreamers who imagine death will work an alteration, that they may die sinners and rise again saints—but it is all a delusion, there is no work nor device nor knowledge in the grave; if we die spiritual we shall rise spiritual, if we die carnal we shall rise carnal, and if we are to be made fit for heaven our natural hearts must be changed now on earth.

In short, beloved, the plain truth is, that by nature men are all dead in trespasses and sins, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, prisoners in the hand of Satan, in a state of miserable condemnation, spiritually dark, blind, and dead; and, worst of all, they neither know nor feel it. The cold corpse in the grave does not feel the worms that crawl over it; the sleeping wretch who has drunk poison, does not know that he shall wake no more; and so also the unhappy man who is still unconverted cannot understand that he is in need of anything. But still, every natural man in the sight of God is dead while he lives; his body, soul, and mind are all turned aside from their proper use, which is to glorify God, and so he is looked upon as dead. And this either is the

state of every single soul among us at this minute—or else it used to be. There is no middle state; we cannot be half-way, neither dead nor alive; we were dead and have been brought to life—or we are now dead, and the work is yet to be done.

Nor yet is this doctrine for publicans and harlots only: it is for all without exception; it touches high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, old and young, gentle and simple; all are by nature sinful and corrupt, and because they are so, Jesus tells us solemnly not one shall enter into the heavenly rest without being born again.

Beloved, this sounds strong; it seems a hard saying, perhaps. That is not my concern. I am set to preach Christ's Gospel and not my own. Search the Scriptures, and you will see it is true.

II. The second thing for your consideration is **the exact meaning and force of that peculiar expression "to be born again."** It is a change by which we once more recover something of the divine nature, and are renewed after the image of God. It is a complete transforming and altering of all the inner man; and nothing can more fully show its completeness and importance than the strong figure under which Jesus describes it: He calls it a NEW BIRTH. We have all been born once as men—but we must see to it we are born again as true Christians. We have been born once of the seed of Adam—woe to us if we are not born the second time of the seed of God! We have been born of the flesh—we must also be born of the Spirit. We are born earthly—we must also be born heavenly. We are born corruptible—we must also be born incorruptible. Our natural birth is as necessary to the life of the body—as our spiritual birth is necessary to the life of the soul.

To be born again is, as it were, to enter upon a new existence, to have a new mind and a new heart, new views, new principles, new tastes, new affections, new likings and new dislikings, new fears, new joys, new sorrows, new love to things once hated, new hatred to things once loved, new thoughts of God and ourselves and the world and

the life to come, and the means whereby that life is attained. And it is indeed a true saying that he who has gone through it is a new man, a new creature, for old things are passed away—behold, he can say, all things are become new! It is not so much that our natural powers and faculties are taken away and destroyed; I would rather say that they receive an utterly new bias and direction. It is not that the old metal is cast aside—but it is melted down and refined and remolded, and has a new stamp impressed upon it, and thus, so to speak, becomes a new coin.

This is no external change, like that of Herod, who did many things and then stopped—or of Ahab, who humbled himself and went in sackcloth and walked softly; nor is it a change which can neither be seen nor felt. It is not merely a new name and a new notion—but the implanting of a new principle which will surely bear good fruit. It is opening the eyes of the blind and unstopping the ears of the deaf; it is loosing the tongue of the dumb, and giving hands and feet to the maimed and lame—for he who is born again no longer allows his members to be instruments and servants of unrighteousness—but he gives them unto God, and then only are they properly employed.

To be born again is to become a member of a new family by adoption, even the family of God; it is to feel that God is indeed our Father, and that we are made the very sons and daughters of the Almighty; it is to become the citizen of a new state, to cast aside the bondage of Satan and live as free men in the glorious liberty of Christ's kingdom, giving our King the tribute of our best affection, and believing that He will keep us from all evil. To be born again is a spiritual resurrection, a faint likeness indeed of the great change at last—but still a likeness; for the new birth of a man is a passage from death to life; it is a passage from ignorance of God to a full knowledge of Him, from slavish fear to childlike love, from sleepy carelessness about Him to fervent desire to please Him, from lazy indifference about salvation to burning, earnest zeal; it is a passage from strangeness towards God to heartfelt confidence, from a state of enmity to a state of peace, from worldliness to holiness, from an earthly, sensual,

man-pleasing state of mind to the single-eyed mind that is in Christ Jesus. And this it is to be born of the Spirit.

Beloved, time will not allow me to go further with this subject today. I have endeavored to show you generally why we must all be born again, and what the new birth means; and next Sunday, if the Lord wills, I purpose to show you the manner and means by which this new birth usually comes.

It only remains for me now to commend this matter most solemnly to your consciences. Were it a doctrine of only second-rate importance—were it a point a man might leave uncertain and yet be saved, like Church government or election—I would not press it on you so strongly—but it is one of the two great pillars of the gospel. On the one hand stands salvation by free grace for Christ's sake—but on the other stands renewal of the carnal heart by the Spirit. We must be changed as well as forgiven; we must be renewed as well as redeemed.

And I commend this to you all the more because of the times you live in. Men swallow down sermons about Christ's willingness and Christ's power to save, and yet continue in their sins. They seem to forget there must be the Spirit's work within us, as well as Christ's work for us—there must be something written on the table of our hearts. The strong man, Satan, must be cast out of our house, and Jesus must take possession; and we must begin to know the saints' character experimentally on earth—or we shall never be numbered with them in heaven. Christ is indeed a full and sufficient title to heaven—but we must have about us some fitness for that blessed abode.

I will not shrink from telling you that this doctrine cuts every congregation in two; it is the line of separation between the good fish and the bad, the wheat and the tares. There is a natural part in every congregation, and there is a spiritual part; and few indeed are the churches where we should not be constrained to cry, Lord, here are

many called—but very few chosen. The kingdom of God is no mere matter of lips and knees and outward service—it must be within a man, seated in the best place of heart; and I will not hesitate to tell you I fear there are many living members of churches who are exceedingly dead professors.

Examine yourselves, then, I pray you, whether you are born again. Have you good solid reasons for thinking that you have put off the old man which is corrupt, and put on the new man which is created after God in holiness? Are you renewed in the spirit of your minds? Are you bringing forth the fruits of the flesh or the fruits of the Spirit? Are you carnally minded or heavenly minded? Are your affections with the world or with God? Are you natural men or are you spiritual men? Oh! but it were no charity in me to keep back this weighty truth; and it will be no wisdom in you to put off and delay considering it.

Are you born again? Without it no salvation! It is not written that you may not—or yet that you will have some difficulty—but it is written that you cannot without it see the kingdom of God. Consider with yourselves how fearful it will be to be shut out; to see God's kingdom afar off, like the rich man in the parable, and a great gulf between; how terrible to go down to the pit from under the very pulpit, well satisfied with your own condition—but still not born again. There are truly many roads to perdition—but none so melancholy as that which is traveled on by professing Christians—by men and women who have light and knowledge and warning and means and opportunity and yet go smiling on as if sermons and holiness were not meant for them—or as if hell was a bed of roses—or as if God was a liar and could not keep His word.

Are you born again? I do not want to fill your heads—but to move your hearts; it is not a matter of course that all who go to church shall be saved; churches and ministers are meant to rouse you to self-inquiry, to awaken you to a sense of your condition; and next to

that grand question, "Have you taken Christ for your Savior?" there comes the second point, "Are you born again?"

Beloved, if you love life, search and see what is your condition. What though you find no tokens for good: better a thousand times to know it now and live, than to know it too late and die eternally!

Praised be God, it is a doctrine bound round with gracious promises: no heart so hard but the Holy Spirit can move it; many a one could set his seal to that, and tell you that he was darkness, darkness that could be felt—but is now light in the Lord. Many of the Corinthians were bad as the worst among you—but they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Many of the Ephesians were as completely dead in sins as any of you—but God quickened them, and raised them up, and created them anew unto good works. Examine yourselves and draw near to God with prayer, and He shall draw near to you—but if you ask not, you shall not have.

As for me, I make my supplication unto God, who can make all things new, that His Spirit may touch your hearts with a deep sense of this truth, for without it my preaching is vain; that there may be a mighty shaking and revival among the dry bones; that you may never rest until you are indeed new men and can say, Verily we *were* dead but we are now alive, we *were* lost but we are now found.

Without this new birth, no man or woman can be saved! You may remember I began to speak of it last Sunday morning, and I endeavored to establish in your minds two main points, which it may be well to recall to your recollection now. First, then, I showed you **the reason WHY this new birth is so absolutely necessary to salvation.** It is because of our sinful hearts, our inbred corruption. We are born from the very first with a disposition towards that which is bad; we have no natural readiness to serve God—it is all against the grain; we have no natural insight into the excellence of Christ's spiritual kingdom, no natural love towards His

holy laws or desire to obey them, no natural fitness for heaven; an unrenewed man would be miserable in the company of Jesus and the saints. In short, I said, it is not enough that we are born of the flesh once, natural men; we need to be born the second time of God and become spiritual men—or else we shall never taste eternal life.

I then reminded you of the awful carelessness and indifference and deadness and lukewarmness and coldness and slothfulness about religion which does so widely prevail; and I observed that people were always ingenious in framing reasons and making excuses for their own particular neglect of God, always supposing they had some special difficulty to contend with, which no one else had—business—or poverty, trouble—or family—or lack of time—or lack of learning, and the like—always imagining if these difficulties were taken out of the way, that they would be such good Christians; and I then told you that the root of all these difficulties is the natural old heart; and the thing needed is not leisure and ease and money and learning—but a new heart and a new principle within.

Secondly, I went on to set before you **the NATURE and character of this new birth**. I showed that it was a change not outward only—but inward; not in name only—but in spirit and in truth. It is a change so thorough, so searching, so radical, so complete, that he who has gone through it may be called born again, for he is to all intents and purposes a new man! He was darkness—but he is now light; he was blind—but he can now see; he was sleeping—but he is now awake; he was dead—but he now lives; he was earthly-minded—but he is now heavenly-minded; he was carnal—but he is now spiritual; he was worldly—but he is now godly; he once loved corruptible things best—but he now loves incorruptible things best; he did set his chief affections on that which is mortal—he now sets his heart on that which is immortal.

Lastly, I pressed upon you all **the immense, the surpassing importance of this doctrine**, and I do so now again. I urged you, everyone, to remember—and I repeat it now—it shall avail us nothing

that Christ Jesus has brought in righteousness for us, if there be not also the work of the Holy Spirit within us; that it shall profit us nothing to say we are redeemed, if there is not also good evidence that we have been indeed renewed.

I shall now go on, according to my promise, to set before you the first great cause of this new birth, and the means and the manner in which it comes; and I once more pray God that the subject may not be carelessly put aside—but thought over and made useful to all your souls.

I. The first great CAUSE of this new birth. This new birth, then, this great spiritual change—whence does it come—and how does it begin? Can any man give it to himself when he pleases? Can any change his own heart? No! the thing is impossible. We can no more quicken and impart life to our souls than we can to our bodies; we can no more rise and become new men in our own strength than wash away sins by our own performances. It is impossible! The natural man is as helpless as Lazarus was when he lay still and cold and motionless in the tomb. We may remove the stone, as it were, and expose the sad work of death—but we can do no more. There must be a power far mightier than any power of earth in exercise before the natural man can awake and arise and come forth as a new creature. And to do all this is the special office of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to send. It is He who quickens; it is He who gives life. The Spirit alone can make the seed we scatter bear fruit; the Spirit alone can lay the first foundation of that holy kingdom, which we want to see established in your hearts. It is the Spirit who must move over these waste and barren souls before they can become the garden of the Lord. It is the Spirit who must open the darkened windows of our conscience before the true light can shine in upon those chambers within us. And so, he who is born again is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God; for the Spirit is very God.

Beloved, this is a very humbling and solemn truth. The conversion of a sinner can never be that light, off-hand affair that some do seem to think about it. This great change which must come over us can never be a thing so entirely within our reach and grasp that we may put off the old Adam like a cloak, and put on the new man, just when and where we please. Oh—but it is a work that cannot possibly be done without the hand of God! The same Power which first created heaven and earth, and called the fair world around us into being—the same Power alone can create in us new hearts, and renew in us right minds—the same Power alone can convert the natural man into the spiritual.

Yes! you may dream of death-bed repentance, and say, By-and-by we will turn and become Christians—but you know not what you are saying: the softening of the hard heart, and the entrance upon new ways, and the taking up of new principles, is no such easy matter as you seem to imagine—it is work that can only be begun by divine power—and who shall say, that you may not put it off too long?

It is not the plainest and clearest preaching, however lovely it may sound, which can cause men to be born again. Paul may plant and Apollos may water—but the Spirit alone can give the increase! We may raise up congregations fair and formal, and sinews and flesh and skin may cover the dry bones, but they are no better than dead—until the Spirit breathes upon them. Not all the wisdom of Solomon, not all the faith of Abraham, not all the prophecies of Isaiah, not all the eloquence of Apostles, could avail to convert one single soul—without the operation of the Holy Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power—but by my Spirit, says the Lord almighty." And therefore I call this a solemn truth. I know the Spirit is promised to all who ask—but I tremble lest men should loiter and put off their souls' concerns so long, that the Spirit may be grieved—and leave them in their sins.

And still, beloved, solemn as this truth may be to sinners, it is full of consolation to believers; it is full of sweet and unspeakable comfort to all who feel in themselves the holy workings of a new and spiritual

nature. These can say with rejoicing, "It is not our right hand nor our arm which has brought us on the way towards Zion; the Lord Himself was on our side; it was He who raised us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and surely He will never let us go. Once we were sleeping and dead in trespasses—but the Spirit awakened us and opened our eyes. We caught a sight of the punishment prepared for the ungodly; we heard a voice saying, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest,' and we could sleep no longer. And surely we may hope that He, who graciously began the work of grace, will also carry it forward; He laid the foundation, and He will not let it decay; He began, and He will bring His handiwork to perfection."

So much for the great Cause and Giver of the New Birth—the Holy Spirit.

II. The MEANS through which the new birth is ordinarily conveyed, and comes, and the different ways and manners in which it generally shows itself and produces its wonderful effects.

Now, with respect to the means which the Holy Spirit does ordinarily use, I would not have you for one minute suppose that I wish to limit or set bounds to the Holy One of Israel. I do not for an instant deny that some have been born again without any outward visible machinery having been used—by a sort of secret impulse which cannot be well explained—but I do say that, generally speaking, the Holy Spirit, in giving to a man that blessed thing the new birth, is pleased to work upon his heart more or less by means which our eyes can see and which our minds can understand.

I would not, then, have you ignorant that a man is seldom born again of the Spirit, without *the preaching of the Gospel* having something to do in the change. This is a special instrument for turning men from darkness to light, and many a one can testify that it was through sermons he was first touched, and brought to the knowledge of the truth. It was Peter's preaching which first touched

the men of Jerusalem after our Lord's death, insomuch that they were pricked to the heart and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It was the command which Jesus gave to the apostles before his ascension, they were "to preach unto the people and to testify." It was a cause of joy to Paul, that Christ was preached at Rome: "I therein rejoice," he says, "and will rejoice." It was his own declaration about himself, "Christ Jesus sent me not to baptize—but to preach the Gospel." No means is so blessed in all the experience of Christ's Church as the plain preaching of the Gospel; no sign so sure of decay and rottenness in a Church as the neglect of preaching; for there is no ordinance in which the Holy Spirit is so particularly present, none by which sinners are so often converted and brought back to God. Faith comes by hearing; and how shall men believe—unless they hear? Therefore it is that we press upon you so continually to be diligent in hearing Christ preached; for none are so unlikely to be born again as those who will not listen to the truth.

And seldom too is a man born of the Spirit without the **Bible** having something to do in the process. The Bible was written by men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and he who reads it seriously and attentively—or hears it read, is seeking acquaintance with God in God's own way. You would find few indeed among the Lord's true people who would not tell you that the starting-point in their spiritual life was some saying or doctrine in Scripture; some part or portion, pressed home upon their consciences by an unseen, secret power, was among the first things which stirred them up to think and examine their ways; some plain declaration flashed across their minds and made them say, "If this be true I shall certainly be lost." Therefore it is we tell you over and over again, Search the Scriptures, search the Scriptures; they are the sword of the Spirit, they are the weapon by which the devil is often driven out; and he who leaves his Bible unread does plainly not wish to be born again.

Once more. Never are men born of the Spirit without **Prayer**. I believe there would not be found a single case of a person who had been quickened and made a new creature without God having been

entreated of and inquired of before. Either he has prayed for himself—or some one has prayed for him: so Stephen died praying for his murderers, and by-and-by Saul was converted. The Lord loves to be sought after by His guilty creatures; and they who will not ask for the Holy Spirit to come down upon them, have no right to expect in themselves any real change.

Such, then, beloved, are the means through which this new birth is *generally* given. I say generally, because it is not for me to set bounds to the operations of God; I know men may be startled by sicknesses and accidents and the like—but still I repeat that preaching, the Bible and prayer are the channels through which the Spirit *ordinarily* works. And I say further that in all my life and reading I never heard of a man who diligently, humbly, heartily and earnestly made use of these means, who did not sooner or later find within himself new habits and principles. I never heard of a man steadily persevering in their use, who did not sooner or later feel that sin and he must part company—who did not, in short, become a real child of God, a new creature.

III. So much for the means through which the Spirit generally conveys this new birth. There is yet one point to be considered this morning; and that is **the particular MANNER in which this mighty spiritual change does first touch a person and begin.**

Now, on this point I remark, there are great diversities of operations; there is a vast variety in the methods by which the Spirit works, and hence it is that we can never say He is tied down to show himself in one particular way; we must never condemn a person and tell him he is a graceless unconverted sinner because his experience may happen to differ widely from our own.

I would have you note, then, there is great diversity in the **time** and **age** at which this change begins. Some few have the grace of God in them when **very young**; they cannot so much as remember the time

when they were without a deep sense of their natural corruption and a lively faith in Christ, and an earnest desire and endeavor to live close to God: such were Isaac and Samuel and Josiah and Jeremiah, and John the Baptist and Timothy. Blessed and happy are these souls; their memories are not saddened by the recollection of years wasted in carelessness and sin; their imaginations are not defiled and stained with the remembrance of youthful wickedness.

But again. Many, perhaps the greater part of true Christians in our day, are never born of the Spirit until they come to age and have reached years of **maturity**. These were once walking after the course of this world, perhaps serving divers lusts and pleasures, perhaps decent outwardly and yet only regarding religion as a thing for Sundays, not as a concern of the hearts. But by some means or other God stops them in their career and turns their hearts back again, and they take up the cross. And bitter indeed is their repentance, and great is their wonder that they could have lived so long in such a fashion, and warm is the love they feel towards Him who has so graciously forgiven them all iniquity.

Once more. Some few, some very few, are first brought unto God and born again in the advance and in **old age**. Oh! but it is fearful to see how few. There are not many who ever arrive at what is called old age; and of these I believe a very insignificant part indeed are ever brought to a saving change. And little wonder if we consider how deeply rooted a thing is habit, how hard it is for those who are accustomed to do evil, to learn to do good. O brethren beloved, youth is the time to seek the Lord! I know that with God nothing is impossible; I know that He can touch the rock that has long been unmoved, if He pleases, and make the water flow—but still we very seldom hear of old men or women being converted: grey hairs are the time for burning the oil of grace and not for buying it, and therefore I say, pray you that your flight be not in the winter of life.

IV. The next thing I would have you note is **the great diversity in the ways by which the Spirit, so to speak, does strike the**

first blow in producing this new birth.

Some are awakened suddenly, **by mighty providences and interpositions of God**; they despise other warnings, and then the Lord comes in and violently shakes them out of sleep, and plucks them like brands from the burning. And this is often done by unexpected mercies—by extraordinary afflictions and troubles, by sicknesses, by accidents, by placing a man in some great danger and peril; and thousands, I am certain, will tell us in heaven, "It is good for us that we were tried and distressed; 'before I was afflicted I went astray—but now have I kept Your word.'" This was the case with Paul: he was struck to the earth blinded, while going to Damascus to persecute, and he rose up a humbled and a wiser man. This was the case with Jonah: when he fled from the Lord's command, he was awakened by a storm while sleeping on board the ship. This was the case with Manasseh, king of Judah: he was taken prisoner and laid in chains at Babylon, and in his affliction he sought the Lord. This was the case with the jailer at Philippi: he was roused by the earthquake, and came and fell down saying, "What shall I do to be saved?" This is the case spoken of by Elihu in the thirty-third chapter of Job. And here is the reason why we ought to feel so anxious about a man, when God has laid His hand upon him and afflicted him. I always feel about such a person, "There is one whom the Lord is trying to convert: will it or will it not be all in vain?"

Again. Some are awakened **suddenly, by very little and trifling things**. God often raises up Christ's kingdom in a man's heart by a seed so small and insignificant, that all who see it are obliged to confess, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." A single text of Scripture sometimes; a few lines in a book taken up by accident; a chance expression or word dropped in conversation, and never perhaps meant by him who spoke it to do so much: each of these seeming trifles has been known to pierce men's hearts like an arrow, after sermons and ordinances have been used without appearing to avail. I have heard of one who could trace up the beginning of his conversion to the saying of a perfect stranger: he

was profanely asking God to damn his soul, when the stranger stopped him and said it were better to pray that it might be blessed than damned; and that little word found its way to his heart. Oh, how careful should we be over our lips! Who knows what good might be done if we only strove more to speak a word in season?

Once more. Some are born of the Spirit **gradually and insensibly**. They hardly know at the period what is going on within them; they can hardly recollect any particular circumstances attending their conversion—or fix any particular time—but they do know this, that somehow or other they have gone through a great change, they do know that once they were careless about religion, and now they hold it chief in their affections: once they were blind and now they see. This seems to have been the case with Lydia at Philippi; the Lord gently opened her heart, so that she attended to the things spoken by Paul. This is what Elijah saw in the wilderness; there was the whirlwind and the earthquake and the fire, and after all there was something else—a still small voice. And here is one reason why we sometimes hope and trust that many among the hearers in our congregations may still prove children of God. We try to think that some of you feel more than you seem to do, and that the time is near when you will indeed come out and be separate, and not be ashamed to confess Christ before men.

There is one more diversity I would very shortly notice. Remember there is **diversity in the FEELINGS which the Spirit first excites**: each feeling is moved sooner or later—but they are not moved always in the same order. The new birth shows itself in some by causing exceeding **fear**—they are filled with a strong sense of God's holiness, and they tremble because they have broken His law continually. Others begin with **sorrow**—they can never mourn enough over their past wickedness and ingratitude. Others begin with **love**—they are full of affection towards Him who died for them, and no sacrifice seems too great to make for His sake. But all these works one and the same Spirit—in this man He touches one string, and in that another—but sooner or later all are blended in harmony

together, and when the new creation has fully taken place, fear and sorrow and love may all be found at once.

Beloved, time will not allow me to go further with this subject today. I have endeavored to show you this morning who is the Worker, the CAUSE of the new birth: it is not man—but God the Holy Spirit. What are the MEANS through which He generally conveys it: preaching, the Bible, and prayer. And lastly I have shown you there are many DIVERSITIES in His operations: with some He begins when very young, with some in full years, with some few in old age. On some He comes down suddenly and on some gradually, in some He first moves one sort of feelings and in some another—but whatever be His operation, without the Spirit none can be born again.

And now, in CONCLUSION, tell me not that you mean to wait lazily and idly, and if the Lord gives you this blessed change—that is well; and if not—that you cannot help it. God does not deal with you as if you were machines or stones; He deals with you as those who can read and hear and pray, and this is the way in which He would have you wait upon Him.

Never was doctrine so surrounded with **promises and encouragements** and invitations as this. Hear what Jeremiah says: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." Again: "They shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever." Then what Ezekiel says: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Then lastly what the Lord Jesus says: "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find: everyone that asks receives. Your Heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." And this is what we want you to do: until you pray for yourselves in earnest, we know there will be little

good done; and if any prayerless man shall say in the day of judgment "I could not come to Christ," the answer will be, "You did not try."

Then quench not the Spirit, grieve not the Spirit, resist not the Spirit; His grace has been purchased for you: strive and labor and pray that you may indeed receive it. And then God has covenanted and engaged that He shall come down like rain on the dry ground—like water to wash away your soul's defilement, like fire to burn away the dross and filth of sin, and the hardest heart among you shall become soft and willing as a weaned child.

We have reached the last point in our inquiry about the new Birth—I mean the **MARKS** and **EVIDENCES** by which it may be known—the marks by which a man may find out whether he has himself been born again or not. To set before you the character of those who are indeed new creatures—to warn you against certain common mistakes respecting this doctrine—to wind up the whole subject by appealing to your consciences—this is the work which I propose to take in hand this morning.

Now this point may be last in order—but it certainly is not least in importance. It is the touchstone of our condition; it decides whether we are natural men or spiritual men; whether we are yet dead in trespasses—or have been quickened and brought to see the kingdom of God.

Many there are who take it for granted they have been born again—they do not exactly know why—but it is a sort of thing they never doubted. Others there are who despise all such sifting inquiry—they are sure they are in the right way, they are confident they shall be saved, and as for marks, it is low and legal to talk about them, it is bringing men into bondage. But, beloved, whatever men may say, you may be certain Christ's people are a peculiar people, not only peculiar in their talk—but peculiar in their life and conduct, and they may be distinguished from the unconverted around them; you may

be certain there are stamps and marks and characters about God's handiwork by which it may always be known; and he who has got no evidences to show—well well suspect that he is not in the right way.

Now, about these marks I can of course only speak very shortly and very generally, for time will not allow me to do more—but I would first say one word by way of caution. Remember, then, I would not have you suppose that all children of God do feel alike—or that these marks should be equally strong and plain in every case. The work of grace on man's heart is gradual: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. It is like leaven: the whole lump is not leavened at once. It is as in the birth of an infant into the world: first it feels, then moves and cries, and sees and hears and knows, and thinks and loves, and walks and talks and acts for itself. Each of these things comes gradually, and in order—but we do not wait for all before we say this is a living soul. And just so is everyone that is born of the Spirit. He may not, at first, find in himself all the marks of God—but he has the seed of them all about him; and some he knows by experience, and all, in the course of time, shall be known distinctly.

But this at least you may be sure of: wherever there is no fruit of the Spirit, there is no work of the Spirit; and if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. O that this question might stir up everyone of you to search and try his ways! God is not a man that he should lie; He would not have given you the Bible if you could be saved without it; and here is a doctrine on which eternal life depends: "No salvation without the new birth."

I. First, then, and foremost, I would have you write down in your memories a mark which John mentions in his first epistle: "Whoever makes a **practice of sinning** is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. **No one born of God makes a practice of sinning**, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the

devil: whoever does not **practice righteousness** is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." (1 John 3:8-10)

Observe, I would not for one minute have you suppose that God's children are perfect, and without spot or stain or defilement in themselves. Do not go away and say I told you they were pure as angels and never made a slip or stumble. The same John in the same Epistle declares: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

But I do say that in the matter of breaking God's commandments, everyone that is born again is quite a new man. He no longer takes a light and cool and easy view of sin; he no longer judges of it with the world's judgment; he no longer thinks a little swearing—or a little Sabbath-breaking—or a little fornication—or a little drinking—or a little covetousness, small and trifling matters—but he looks on every sort of sin against God or man as exceeding abominable and damnable in the Lord's sight, and, as far as in him lies, he hates it and abhors it, and desires to be rid of it root and branch, with his whole heart and mind and soul and strength.

He who is born again has had the eyes of his understanding opened, and the Ten Commandments appear to him in an entirely new light. He feels amazed that he could have lived so long careless and indifferent about transgressions, and he looks back on the days gone by with shame and sorrow and grief. As for his daily conduct, he allows himself in no known sin; he makes no compromise with his old habits and his old principles; he gives them up unsparingly, though it cost him pain, though the world think him over-precise and a fool—but he is a new man, and will have nothing more to do with the accursed thing—sin. I do not say but that he comes short, and finds his old nature continually opposing him—and this, too, when no eye can see it but his own—but then he mourns and repents bitterly over his own weakness. And this at least he has about him:

he is at war, in reality, with the devil and all his works, and strives constantly to be free.

And do you call that no change? Look abroad on this world, this evil-doing world: mark how little men generally think about sin; how seldom they judge of it as the Bible does; how easy they suppose the way to heaven—and judge you whether this mark be not exceeding rare. But for all this God will not be mocked, and men may rest assured that until they are convinced of the awful guilt and the awful power and the awful consequences of sin, and, being convinced, flee from it and give it up, they are most certainly not born again.

II. The second mark I would have you note is "**faith in Christ**," and here again I speak in the words of John in his first epistle: "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." I do not mean by this a general vague sort of belief that Jesus Christ once lived on earth and died—a sort of faith which the very devils possess. I mean, rather, that feeling which comes over a man when he is really convinced of his own guilt and unworthiness, and sees that Christ alone can be his Savior; when he becomes convinced he is in a way to be lost, and must have some righteousness better than his own, and joyfully embraces that righteousness which Jesus holds out to all who will believe. He who has got this saving faith discovers a fitness and suitableness and comfort in the doctrine of Christ crucified for sinners which once he never knew; he is no longer ashamed to confess himself by nature poor and blind and naked, and to take Christ for his only hope of salvation.

Before a man is born of the Spirit there seems no particular loveliness about the Redeemer—but after that blessed change has taken place, He appears the very chief in ten thousand. There is no honor so great but Jesus is worthy of it. There is no love so strong but on Jesus it is well bestowed. There is no spiritual necessity so great but Jesus can relieve it. There is no sin so black but Jesus' blood can wash it away. Before the new birth a man can bow at Christ's name, and sometimes wonder at Christ's miracles—but that

is all. Once born again, a man sees a fullness and a completeness and a sufficiency in Christ of things necessary to salvation, so that he feels as if he could never think upon Him enough. To cast the burden of sin on Jesus, to glory in the cross on which He died, to keep continually in sight His blood, His righteousness, His intercession, His mediation; to go continually to Him for peace and forgiveness, to rest entirely on Him for full and free salvation; to make Jesus, in short, all in all in their hopes of heaven—this is the most notable mark of all true children of God—they live by faith in Christ, in Christ their happiness is bound up.

It is the spiritual law of God which brings them to this: time was when they were ready to think well of themselves; the law strips off their miserable garments of self-righteousness, exposes their exceeding guilt and rottenness, cuts down to the ground their fancied notions of justification by their own works, and so leads them to Christ as their only wisdom and redemption; and then, when they have laid hold on Christ and taken Him for their Savior, they begin to find that rest which before they had sought in vain.

Such are two first marks of the Spirit's work—a deep conviction of sin and forsaking of it. And a lively faith in Christ crucified as the only hope of forgiveness. These are marks which the world perhaps may not see—but marks without which no man or woman was ever yet made a new creature. These are the two foundations of the Christian's character, the pillars, as it were, of the kingdom of God; they are hidden roots which others can only judge of by the fruit—but they who have them do generally know it, and can feel the witness in themselves.

III. The third mark of the new birth is "**holiness.**" What says the apostle John again? "You know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him." (1 John 2:29) "And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure." (1 John 3:3)

The true children of God delight in making the law their rule of life; it dwells in their minds, and is written upon their hearts, and it is their food and drink to do their Father's will. They know nothing of that spirit of bondage which false Christians complain of; it is their pleasure to glorify God with their bodies and souls, which are His; they hunger and thirst after tempers and dispositions like their Lord's. They do not rest content with sleepy wishing and hoping—but they strive to be holy in their whole life—in thought, in word, and in deed; it is their daily heart's prayer, "Lord what will You have us to do?" and it is their daily grief and lamentation that they come so short and are such unprofitable servants. Beloved, remember where there is no holiness of life there cannot be much work of the Holy Spirit.

IV. The fourth mark of the new birth is **spiritual-mindedness**. We learn this from Paul's words to the Colossians: "If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3)

He who is born again thinks first about the things which are eternal; he no longer gives up the best of his heart to this perishable world's concerns. He looks on earth as a place of pilgrimage, he looks on heaven as his home. And even as a child remembers with delight its absent parents, and hopes to be one day with them, so does the Christian think of his God and long for that day when he shall stand in His presence and go no more out. He cares not for the pleasures and amusements of the world around him. He minds not the things of the flesh—but the things of the Spirit. He feels that he has a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, and he earnestly desires to be there. "Lord," he says, "whom have I in heaven but You? and there is nothing on earth that I desire beside You."

V. The fifth mark of the new birth is victory over the world. Hear what John says: "Whoever is born of God **overcomes the world:**

and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

What is the natural man? A wretched slave to the opinion of this world. What the world says is right he follows and approves; what the world says is wrong he renounces and condemns also. How shall I do what my neighbors do not do? What will men say of me if I become more strict than they? This is the natural man's argument. But from all this, he who is born again is free. He no longer is led by the praise or the blame, the laughter or the frown, of the world. He no longer thinks that the sort of religion which everybody about him professes must necessarily be right. He no longer considers "What will the world say?" but "What does God command?" Oh, it is a glorious change when a man thinks nothing of the difficulty of confessing Christ before men, in the hope that Christ will confess him and own him before the holy angels! The 'fear of the world' is a terrible snare; with many thousands it far outweighs the fear of God. There are men who would care more for the laughter of a company of friends than they would for the testimony of half the Bible. From all this the spiritual man is free. **He is no longer like a dead fish floating with the stream of earthly opinion;** he is ever pressing upwards, looking unto Jesus in spite of all opposition He has overcome the world.

VI. The sixth mark of the new birth is "**meekness.**" This is what David meant when he said, in Psalm 131: "My soul is even as a weaned child." This is what our Lord has in view when He tells us we "must be converted and become as little children."

Pride is the besetting sin of all natural men, and it comes out in a hundred different ways. It was pride by which the angels fell and became devils. It is pride which brings many a sinner to the pit—he knows he is in the wrong about religion—but he is too proud to bend his neck and act up to what he knows. It is pride which may always be seen about false professors: they are always saying—We are the men, and we are alone in the right, and ours is the sure way to heaven; and by-and-by they fall and go to their own place and are

heard no more of. But he who is born again is clothed with humility; he has a very child-like and contrite and broken spirit; he has a deep sense of his own weakness and sinfulness, and great fear of a fall. You never hear him professing confidence in himself and boasting of his own attainments—he is far more ready to doubt about his own salvation altogether and call himself "chief of sinners." He has no time to find fault with others—or be a busybody about his neighbors. It is enough for him to keep up the conflict with his own deceitful heart, the old Adam within. No enemy so bitter to him as his own inbred corruption.

Whenever I see a man passing his time in picking holes in other Churches, and talking about everyone's soul except his own, I always feel in my own mind, "There is no work of the Spirit there." And it is just this humility and sense of weakness which makes God's children men of prayer. They feel their own needs and their danger, and they are constrained to go continually with supplication to Him who has given them the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba Father, help us and deliver us from evil.

VII. The seventh mark of the new birth is a **great delight in all means of grace**. This is what Peter speaks of in his first Epistle: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow." This was the mind of David when he said, "A day in Your courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

And oh, what a difference there is between nature and grace in this matter! The natural man has often a form of godliness: he does not neglect the ordinances of religion—but somehow or other the weather—or his health—or the distance, contrives to be a great hindrance to him, and far too often it happens that the hours he spends in church or over his Bible are the dullest in his life.

But when a man is born again, he begins to find a reality about means which once he did not feel: the Sabbath no longer seems a

dull, wearisome day, in which he knows not how to spend his time decently; he now calls it a delight and a privilege, holy of the Lord and honorable. The difficulties which once kept him from God's house now seem to have vanished away: dinner and weather and the like never detain him at home, and he is no longer glad of an excuse not to go. Sermons appear a thousand times more interesting than they used to do; and he would no more be inattentive or willingly go to sleep under them, than a prisoner would upon his trial. And, above all, the Bible looks to him like a new book. Time was when it was very dry reading to his mind—perhaps it lay in a corner dusty and seldom read—but now it is searched and examined as the very bread of life; many are the texts and passages which seem just written for his own case; and many are the days that he feels disposed to say with David, "The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

VIII. The eighth and last mark of the new birth is "**love towards others.**" "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. He who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love." (1 John 4:7-8)

He who is born of the Spirit loves his neighbor as himself; he knows nothing of the selfishness and uncharitableness and ill-nature of this world. He loves his neighbor's **property** as his own; he would not injure it, nor stand by and see it injured. He loves his neighbor's **person** as his own, and he would count no trouble ill bestowed if he could help or assist him. He loves his neighbor's **character** as his own, and you will not hear him speak a word against it—or allow it to be blackened by falsehoods if he can defend it. He loves his neighbor's **soul** as his own, and he will not allow him to turn his back on God without endeavoring to stop him by saying, "Oh, do not so!" Oh what a happy place would earth be if there was more love! Oh that men would only believe that the gospel secures the greatest comfort in the life that now is, as well as in the life to come!

And such, beloved, are the marks by which the new birth in a man's soul may generally be discovered. I have been obliged to speak of them very concisely, although each one of them deserves a sermon. I commend to your especial attention the two first: conviction and forsaking of sin, and faith in Christ; they are marks on which each must be his own judge. "Have I ever truly repented? Have I really closed with Christ and taken Him for my only Savior and Lord?" Let these questions be uppermost in your mind if you would know whether you are born again or not. The six last marks: holiness, spiritual-mindedness, victory over the world, meekness, delight in means of grace, and love—have this peculiarity about them, that a man's family and neighbors do often see more clearly whether he has them than he does himself—but they all flow out of the two first, and therefore I once more urge the two first on your especial notice.

And now, brethren beloved, in concluding this course of sermons, I desire to speak one word to the consciences of all who have heard them: old or young, rich or poor, careless or thoughtful, you are all equally concerned.

For three Sunday mornings you have heard this new birth set before you—have you ever thought upon your own state and looked within? What of your own hearts? Are you living or dead, natural or spiritual, born again or not? Are your bodies temples of the Holy Spirit? Are your habits and characters the habits and characters of renewed creatures? Oh, search and see what there is within you: the language of the text is plain—no new birth, no kingdom of God!

I know there is nothing popular or agreeable about this doctrine; it strikes at the root of all compromising half-and-half religion, and still it is true. Many would like much to escape the punishment of sin, who will not strive to be free from its power; they wish to be justified but not to be sanctified; they desire much to have God's favor—but they care little for God's image and likeness; their talk is of pardon—but not of purity; they think much about God's willingness to forgive—but little about His warning that we be

renewed. But this is leaving out of sight, half the work which Christ died to perform: He died that we might become holy as well as happy, He purchased grace to sanctify as well as grace to redeem; and now forgiveness of sin and change of heart must never be separated. "What God has joined together, let no man presume to put asunder." The foundation of God stands firm: "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

Beloved, it is easy work to live unto ourselves and take no trouble about religion; the world approves it, and says we shall probably do well at last—but if ever we are to be saved there is another life, and that too on this side the grave, we must live unto God. It is easy to be natural men—we give no offence, and the devil comforts us by saying, as he did to Eve, "You shall not surely die!" But the devil was a liar from the beginning. So long as we are natural men, we are dead already, and we must rise to newness of life. And what know you of the movements of the Spirit? I ask not so much whether you can say which way He came into your hearts—but I do ask whether you can find any real footsteps or traces or tokens of His presence—for "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

Be not deceived and led away by false opinions. Head-knowledge is not the new birth: a man may know all mysteries like Balaam, and think his eyes are opened; or preach and work miracles and be an Apostle like Judas Iscariot, yet never be born again. Church-membership is not the new birth; many do sit in churches and chapels who shall have no seat in Christ's kingdom; they are not Israel who have the circumcision of the flesh outwardly, they are the true Israel who have the circumcision of the heart, which is inward. There were many Jews in the New Testament days who said, "We have Abraham for our father, and we have the temple among us and that is enough," but Jesus showed them that they only are Abraham's children who have the faith of Abraham and do Abraham's works.

And neither is water-baptism the new birth: it is the sign and seal, and when used with faith and prayer we have a right to look also for

the baptism of the Holy Spirit—but to say that every man who has been baptized has been born again is contrary to Scripture and plain fact. Was not Simon Magus baptized? Yes—but Peter told him after his baptism that he was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, his heart not right in the sight of God. "I would not have you ignorant," says Paul to the Corinthians, that all our Fathers were baptized, . . . but with many of them God was not well pleased. "Baptism," writes Peter, "does indeed save us"—but what baptism? "not the putting away of the filth of the body, not the washing of water—but the answer of a pure conscience," a conscience made pure by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, let no man lead you astray in this matter; let no man make you believe that a baptized drunkard or fornicator or blasphemer or worldling has been born of the Spirit; he has not the marks of the new birth, and he cannot have been born again; he is living in sin and carelessness, and John has given us his character, "he who practices sin is of the devil." Remember, the outward seal is nothing without the inward writing on the heart. No evidence can be depended on, except a new life and a new character and a new creature; and to say that men who lack biblical evidences are born again, is an unreasonable and unscriptural stretch of charity.

And now, in conclusion, if any one of you has reason to think that he still lacks this one thing needful, I entreat that man not to stifle his convictions or nip them in the bud. Do not go away like Cain and silence the voice of conscience by rushing into the vanities of the world; nor dream, like Felix, that you will have a more convenient season than the present. But remember I tell you this day there are two things which make a death-bed especially uncomfortable: first, purposes and promises not performed; and second, convictions slighted and not improved. And if any of you has satisfactory grounds for thinking that he has really tasted something of that saving and necessary change we have considered, I charge that man not to stand still, not to loiter, not to linger, not to look behind him; I warn him that none are in so dangerous a way as those who have

become cool and cold and indifferent after real and warm concern about salvation; I urge him to press forward more and more towards the knowledge of Christ, and to remember it is a special mark of God's children that as they grow in age they grow in grace, and feel their sins more deeply and love their Lord and Savior more sincerely.

A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration

by Stephen Charnock

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—John 1:13.

This evangelist so plainly describes the deity of Christ, and in so majestic a style, in the beginning of the chapter, that the accidental view of it in a book lying open by neglect, was instrumental for the conversion of Junius, that eminent light in the church, from his atheism.

We shall take our rise only from ver. 9, 'That was the true light, which lightens every man that comes into the world.' John Baptist, who, ver. 6, &c., was to bear witness of this light, was a light by our Saviour's assertion, 'a burning and a shining light,' John v. 35, but not that 'true light' which was promised, Isa. xlix. 6, to be 'a light to the Gentiles, and the salvation of God to the ends of the earth.' The sun is the true light in the heavens and of the world; not but that other stars are lights too, but they all receive their light from the sun. Christ is called the true light, by nature and essence, not by grace and participation: 1 John v. 20, 'We know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ,' the natural light and Son of God.

1. True, as opposed to types, which were shadows of this light.
2. True, as opposed to false. Philosophical lights, though esteemed so, are but darkness, and ignes fatui, in comparison of this.
3. True original light, *ratione officii*, illustrating the whole world with his light. Whatsoever is light in heaven or earth, borrows it from the

sun; whosoever is enlightened in the world, derives from him 'which lights every man that comes into the world.' Some join coming into the world, to lift, and read it thus, 'He is the light coming into the world, which lights every man.' The Greek is something ambiguous, and it may be referred to light, though not so commodiously. But the translation which we have has been followed in all ages of the church; and is contended for (the other is contended for? editor) only by those who deny the deity of our Saviour, or are somewhat affected to them that do.

How does Christ light every man that comes into the world?

1. Naturally. So Calvin; the world was made by him, and therefore that which is the beauty of the world, the reason of man, was made kindled by him. As all the light the world has had since the creation flows from the sun, so all the knowledge which sparkles in any man is communicated by Christ, even since the creation, as he is the wisdom of God, and as mediator, preserving those broken relics of the fall: Prov. xx. 27, 'The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord,' lighted and preserved by him. The light of nature, those common notions of fit and just in men's consciences, those honest and honourable principles in the hearts of any, those beams of wisdom in their understanding, though faint, and like sparkles raked up in ashes, are kept alive by his mediatory influence, as a necessary foundation for that, reparation which was intended in his first interposition.

2. Spiritually. So not only the Socinians, but some very sound, understand it; not that all are actually enlightened, but,

(1.) In regard of power and sufficiency, he has a power to enlighten every man; able to enlighten, not a few, but every man in the world, as the sun does not light every man, though it has a power to do so, and does actually light every man that shuts not his eyes against it.

(2.) Actually, taking it distributive, not collective; that whosoever is enlightened in the world, has it communicated from Christ; as Ps. cxlv. 14, 'The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that are bowed down;' as many as are upheld and raised, are upheld and raised by God' He does indeed 'shine in darkness,' his light breaks out upon men, but they are not the better for it, because 'the darkness comprehends it not'; as when there is but one schoolmaster in a town, we usually say, he teaches all the boys in the town; not that every individual boy comes to school, but as many as are taught, are taught by him. I embrace the former, because the evangelist seems to begin with his person, as God; his office, as mediator; and then descends to his incarnation; and it is a sense which puts no force upon the words. And I suppose that every man is added, to beat down the proud conceits of the Jews, who regarded the Gentiles with contempt, as not enjoying the privileges conferred upon themselves; but the evangelist declares, that what the Gentiles had in natural light, and what they were to have in spiritual light, did, and was to come from him, who would disperse his beams in all nations, ver. 10. And therefore 'he was in the world,' before his coming in the flesh, in regard of his virtue and efficacy, by the spreading his beams over the world, enlightening men in all ages and places with that common light of nature; he was near to every man; 'in him they lived, and moved, and had their being;' but the world by their natural wisdom knew him not, and glorified him not. 'The world was made by him, yet the world know him not.' Ingratitude has been the constant portion of the mediator, from the world; they knew him not in past ages, knew him not in the present age of his coming in the flesh; they did not acknowledge him with that affection, reverence, and subjection that was due to him.

He aggravates this contempt of Christ,

1. By the general right he had, 'he came to his own,' "Eis ta idia", ver. 11, meaning the world, it being put in the neuter gender. The whole world was his property and his goods, yet they knew not their owner. In this, worse than the ox or ass.

2. By the special privileges conferred on those to whom he first came, and from whom he should have the most welcome reception; implied in these words, 'and his own,' "hoi idioi", in the masculine gender, his own people, that had been his treasure, to whom he had given his law, entrusted with the covenants and oracles of God, these 'received him not.' His own, some say, as being peculiarly committed to him, the angel of the covenant; whereas other nations were committed to angels to receive laws from them. His own flesh and blood, who expected a Messiah, to whom he was particularly sent, as being the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Christ is most rejected where proffers most kindness. Those of Tyre and Sidon, those of Sodom and Gomorrah, would not have used him so ill as Capernaum and Jerusalem, his own people. He descends to show the loss of them that rejected him, the benefit of those that received him: ver. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.'

Where is,

1. The subject: these that received him.
2. The benefit: the dignity of sonship.
3. The manner of conferring this benefit: 'gave them power.'
4. The instrumental cause: 'believe on his name.' Though his own rejected him, they lost a dignity which was conferred upon those that received him: he lost not his pains, for he gathered sons to God out of all parts of the world. 'To as many as received him.' It was not now peculiar to the Jews, who boasted of being Abraham's seed, and to have the covenant entailed upon them to be the people of God. It was now conferred upon those who were before Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah, Hos. ii. 23. It was nothing but faith on his name that gave men the privilege of being the sons of God, and this was communicated to Gentiles as well as Jews. Power: not a power, but a dignity, as the word properly signifies. Not a power if they would, but

a will, for they were born of the will of God. Faith brings men into a special relation to God; which faith is more than an assent and giving credit to God; for to believe on God, to believe on his name, is a phrase peculiar to Scripture. 'To become the sons of God;' some understand this of sonship by adoption, but the following verse gives us light to understand it of a sonship by regeneration. St Paul uses the word adoption, but St John, both in his gospel and epistles, speaks more of the new birth, and sonship by it, than any of the other apostles; 'who were born not of blood,' or 'of bloods.' He removes all other causes of this, which men might imagine, and ascribes it wholly to God. This place is variously interpreted. 'Not of blood.' Not by natural instinct, says one; not by an illustrious stock. The Jews imagined themselves holy by their carnal generation from Abraham in a long train of ancestors. Grace runs not in a blood. It is not often a flower growing upon every ability; 'not many wise, not many mighty.' Not hereditary by a mixture of blood. Natural generation makes men no more regenerate than the rich man in hell was regenerate by Abraham, his natural ancestor, whom he calls 'father Abraham.' Religious parents propagate corruption, not regeneration; carnal generation is by nature, not by grace; by descent from Adam, not by implantation in Christ. Abraham had an Ishmael, and Isaac an Esau: man begets only a mortal body, but grace is the fruit of an incorruptible seed. 'Nor of the will of the flesh.' Not by human election, as Eve judged of Cain that he should be the Messiah, or Isaac of Esau that he should be heir of the promise, as the Jews say. Not by a choice of those things which are necessary, profitable, or delightful to the flesh; not by a will affected to the flesh, or things of the flesh. Not by any sensual appetite, whereby men used to adopt one to bear up their names when they scanted posterity of their own. I would rather conceive it to be meant of the strength of nature, which is called flesh in Scripture; not by legal observances, the ceremonies of the law being called carnal or fleshly ordinances, Heb. ix. 10. It is not a fruit of nature or profession. 'Nor of the will of man.' Calvin takes the will of the flesh and the will of man for one and the same thing, the apostle using two expressions only to fix it more upon the mind. I rather fudge it to be meant thus: not by natural

principles, or moral endowments, which are the flower and perfection of man as man. It is not arbitrary, of the will of man, or the result naturally of the most religious education. All the power of regenerate men in the world joined together cannot renew another; all the industry of man, without the influence of the heavens in the sun and rain, cannot produce fruit in the earth, no, nor the moral industry of men grace in the soul; 'but of God,' or the will of God; his own will: James i. 18, 'Of his own will begot he us,' exclusive of all other wills mentioned before. It is the sole efficiency of God; he has the sole hand in it; therefore we are said to be both begotten and born of him, 1 John v. 18. It is so purely God's work, that as to the principle he is the sole agent; and as to the manifestation of it, he is the principal agent. Not of the will of the flesh, that is only corruption; nor of the will of man, that at best is but moral nature. But whatsoever the meaning of those particular expressions is, the evangelist removes all pretences nature may make to the efficiency of this regeneration, and ascribes it wholly to God.

1. There is a removal of false causes.

2. A position of the true cause.

(1.) The efficient, God.

(2.) The manner, by an act of his will.

Showing thereby,

[1.] To necessity in him to renew us, no motive but from himself.

[2.] No merit on our parts. Man cannot merit, say the papists, before grace, no child can merit his own birth, no man grace.

Doct. 1. Man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself.

It is subjectively in the creature, not efficiently by the creature, neither ourselves nor any other creature, angels, men, ordinances.

Doct. 2. God alone is the prime efficient cause of regeneration.

Doct. 1. For the first. Man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself. This is not the birth of a darkened wisdom and an enslaved will. We affect a kind of divinity, and would centre ourselves in our own strength; therefore it is good to be sensible of our own impotency, that God may have the glory of his own grace, and we the comfort of it in a higher principle and higher power than our own. It is not the bare proposal of grace, and the leaving the will to an indifferent posture, balanced between good and evil, undetermined to the one or the other, to incline and determine itself which way seems best to it. Not one will, in the whole rank of believers, left to themselves. The evangelist excepts not one man among them; for as many as received Christ, as many as believed, were the sons of God, who were born; which believers, every one that had this faith as the means, and this sonship as the privilege, were born not of the will of the flesh nor the will of man.

For the proof of this in general,

1. God challenges this work as his own, excluding the creature from any share as a cause: Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, I will cleanse you, I will give you a new heart, I will put a new spirit into you, I will take away the heart of stone, I will give you a heart of flesh, I will put my Spirit into you.' Here I will no less than seven times. Nothing is allowed to man in the production of this work in the least; all that is done by him is the walking in God's statutes by virtue of this principle. The sanctifying principle, the actual sanctification, the reception of it by the creature, the removal of all the obstructions of it, the principle maintaining it, are not in the least here attributed to the will of man. God appropriates all to himself. He does not say he would be man's assistant, as many men

do, who tell us only of the assistance of the gospel, as if God in the gospel expected the first motions of the will of man to give him a rise for the acting of his grace. You see here he gives not an inch to the creature. To ascribe the first work, in any part, to the will of man, is to deprive God of half his due, to make him but a partner with his creature. The least of it cannot be transferred to man but the right of God will be diminished, and the creature go shares with his Creator. Are we not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing? and are we sufficient to part stakes with God in this divine work? What partner was the creature with God in creation? It is the Father's traction alone, without the hand of free-will. 'None can come, except the Father, which has sent me, draw them,' John vi. 44. The mission of the Mediator, and the traction of the creature, are by the same hand. Our Saviour could not have come unless the Father had sent him, nor can man come to Christ unless the Father draw him. What is that which is drawn? The will. The will, then, is not the agent; it does not draw itself.

2. The titles given to regeneration evidence it. It is a creation. What creature can give itself a being? It is a putting in a law and a new heart. What matter can infuse a soul into itself? It is a new birth. What man did ever beget himself? It is an opening the heart. What man can do this, who neither has the key, nor is acquainted with the wards? Not a man knows the heart; it is deceitful above all things, who can know it?

3. The conveyance of original corruption does in part evidence it. We have no more interest of our wills in regeneration, than we had in corruption. This was first received by the will of Adam, our first head, thence transmitted to us without any actual consent of our wills in the first transmission; that is conveyed to us from the second Adam, without any actual consent of our wills in the first infusion. Yet though the wills of Adam's posterity are mere passive in the first conveyance of the corrupt habit from him by generation, yet afterwards they are active in the approbations of it, and production of the fruits of it. So the will is merely passive in the first conveyance

of the grace of regeneration, though afterwards it is pleased with it, and brings forth fruit meet for it.

4. Scripture represents man exceeding weak, and unable to do any thing spiritually good. 'So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God,' Rom. viii. 8. He concludes it by his so then, as an infallible consequence, from what he had discoursed before. If, as being in the flesh, they cannot please God, therefore not in that which is the highest pleasure to God, a framing themselves to a likeness to him. The very desire and endeavour of the creature after this, is some pleasure to God, to see a creature struggling after holiness; but they that are in the flesh cannot please him. 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' was said of our Saviour. So may we better say, Can any good thing come out of the flesh, the enslaved, possessed will of man? If it be free since it was captivated by sin, who set it free? Nothing can, but 'the law of the Spirit of life,' Rom. viii. 2. To be 'sinners,' and to be 'without strength,' is one and the same thing in the apostle's judgment: Rom. v. 6, 8, 'While we were yet without strength;' afterwards, 'while we were yet sinners;' he does not say, We are without great strength, but without strength, such an impotence as is in a dead man. Not like a man in a swoon, but a man in a grave. God only is almighty, and man all impotency; God only is all-sufficient, and man all-indigent. It is impossible we can have a strength of our own, since our first father was feeble, and conveyed his weakness to us; by the same reason that it is impossible we can have a righteousness of our own, since our first father sinned: Isa. xliii. 26, 27, 'Declare, that thou may be justified. Thy first father has sinned.'

5. This weakness is universal. Sin has made its sickly impressions in every faculty. The mind is dark, Eph. iv. 18, he cannot know, 1 Cor. ii. 14, there is a stoniness in the heart, he cannot bend, Zech. vii. 12; there is enmity in the will, he cannot be subject, Rom. viii. 7. As to faith, he cannot believe, John xii. 89. As to the Spirit, the worker of faith, he cannot receive; that is, of himself, John xiv. 17; acknowledge Christ he cannot, 1 Cor. xii. 3. As to practice, he cannot bring forth

fruit, John xv. 4. The unrighteousness introduced by Adam poured a poison into every faculty, and dispossessed it of its strength, as well as of its beauty: what else could be expected from any deadly wound but weakness as well as defilement? The understanding conceives only such thoughts as are pleasing to the law of sin; the memory is employed in preserving the dictates and decrees of it; the imagination full of fancies imprinted by it; the will wholly submitting to its authority; conscience standing with fingers in its mouth, for the most part not to speak against it; the whole man yielding itself and every member to the commands of it, and undertaking nothing but by its motions, Rom. vi. 19.

6. To evince it, there is not one regenerate man but in his first conversion is chiefly sensible of his own insufficiency; and universal consent is a great argument of the truth of a proposition; it is a ground of the belief of a deity, it being the sentiment of all nations. I do not speak of disputes about it from the pride of reason, but of the inward experience of it in any heart. What more frequent in the mouths of those that have some preparations to it by conviction, than I cannot repent, I cannot believe, I find my heart rotten, and base, and unable to any thing that is good! There have been instances of those that would elevate the power of man, and freedom of will in spiritual things, who have been confuted in their reasonings, and acknowledged themselves so, when God has come to work savingly upon them. Indeed, this poverty of spirit, or sense of our own emptiness, insufficiency, and indigence, is the first gospel grace wrought in the soul, and stands in the head of all those noble qualifications in our Saviours sermon, as fitting men for the kingdom of God: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' Mat. v. 3. And God in the whole progress of this work keeps believers in a sensibleness of their own weakness, thereby to preserve them in a continual dependence on him; and therefore sometimes withdraws his Spirit from them, and lets them fall, that they may adhere more closely to him, and less confide in themselves.

2. What kind of impotency or insufficiency is there in the soul to be the cause of this work?

Ans. 1. It is not a physical weakness for want of faculties. Understanding we have, but not a spiritual light in it to direct us; will we have, but no freedom to choose that which is spiritually good. Though since the fall we have such a free will left, which pertains to the essential nature of man, yet we have lost that liberty which belongs to the perfection of human nature, which was to exercise acts spiritually good and acceptable to God! Had the faculties been lost, Adam had not been capable of a promise or command, and consequently of ever sinning after. In Adam, by creation we were possessed of it. In Adam, by his corruption, we were stripped of it; we have not lost the physical but the moral nature of these faculties; not the faculties themselves, but the moral goodness of them. As the elementary heat is left in a carcass, which yet is unfit to exercise any animal action for want of a soul to enliven it; so, though the faculties remain after this spiritual death, we are unfit to exert any spiritual action for want of grace to quicken them. If man wanted faculties, this want would excuse him in his most extravagant actions: no creature is bound to that which is simply impossible; nay, without those faculties, he could not act as a rational creature, and so were utterly incapable of sinning. Sin has untuned the strings, but did not unstring the soul; the faculties were still left, but in such a disorder, that the wit and will of man can no more tune them, than the strings of an untuned lute can dispose themselves for harmony without a musician's hand.

2. Neither is it a weakness arising from the greatness of the object above the faculty. As when an object is unmeet for a man, because he has no power in him to comply with it; as to understand the essence of God; this the highest creature in its own nature cannot do, because God dwells in inaccessible light; and it is utterly impossible for any thing but God to comprehend God. If man were required to become an angel, or to rise up and kiss the sun in the firmament; these were impossible things, because man wanted a faculty in his primitive

nature for such acts: so if God had commanded Adam to fly without giving him wings, or to speak without giving him a tongue, he had not been guilty of sin in not doing it, because it was not disobedience, for disobedience is only in what a man has a faculty to do; but to love God, praise him, depend upon him, was in the power of man's original nature, for they were not above those faculties God endued him with, but very correspondent and suitable to him. The objects proposed are in themselves intelligible, credible, capable to be comprehended.

3. Neither is it a weakness arising from the insufficiency of external revelation. The means of regeneration are clearly revealed in the gospel, the sound is gone into all the earth, Rom. x. 18, and the word of the Lord is an apprehensible object; it is 'near us, even in our mouths,' Rom. x. 8; 'the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,' Ps. xix. 8. If the object were hid, the weakness lay not on the part of man, but on the insufficiency of revelation; as if any thing were revealed to man in an unknown tongue, there were an insufficiency in the means of revelation.

But, 4, it is a moral weakness. The disability lies chiefly in the will, John v. 40; what is there, 'You will not come to me,' is, ver. 44, 'How can you believe?' You cannot, because you will not. Carnal lusts prepossess the heart, and make their party in the will against the things of God; so that inward propensities to embrace sin, are as great as the outward temptations to allure to it, whereby the soul is carried down the stream with a wilful violence. In this respect he is called dead, though the death be not of the same nature with a natural death; for such a one has not the natural faculty to raise himself, but this is an impotency arising from a voluntary obstinacy; yet the iniquity of a man binds him no less powerfully under this spiritual captivity, than a natural death and insensibility keeps men in the grave; and those fetters of perversity they can no more knock off, than a dead man can raise himself from the grave. By reason of those bands they are called prisoners, Isa. xiii. 7, and cannot be delivered without the powerful voice of Christ commanding and

enabling them to go forth: Isa. xlix. 9, 'That thou must say to the prisoner, Go forth.' The apostle lays the whole fault of men's not receiving the truth upon their wills: 2 Thess. ii. 10, 'They received not the love of the truth;' they heard it, they knew it, but they loved not that which courted them. It is not seated in any defect of the will, as it is a power of the soul; for then God, who created it, would be charged with it, and might as well charge beasts to become men, as men to become gracious. Man, as a creature, had a power to believe and love God; to resist temptations, avoid sin, and live according to nature; but man, as corrupted by a habit derived to him from his first parents, and increased by a custom in sin, cannot believe, cannot love God, cannot bring himself into a good frame; as a musician cannot play a lesson when he has the gout in his fingers. When the eyes are full of adultery, when the heart is full of evil habits, it 'cannot cease to sin,' it cannot be gracious, 2 Pet. ii. 14.

Now, these habits are either innate, or contracted and increased.

(1.) Innate. By nature we have a habit of corruption, fundamental of all other that grow up in us. Man made a covenant with sin, contracted a marriage with it; by virtue of this covenant sin had a full power over him. What the apostle speaks of the marriage between man and the law, Rom. vii. 1-4, is applicable to this case. Sin as a husband, by way of covenant, has a powerful dominion over the will, and binds it as long as sin lives; and the will has no power to free itself, unless a higher power make a divorce, or by the death of the husband. This is the cause of man's obstinacy against any return to God, the will is held in the cords of sin, Prov. v. 22. The habit has obtained an absolute sovereignty over it: Hosea v. 4, 'They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God.' Why? 'For the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them,' that is, in their hearts. This adulterous or idolatrous habit holds their wills in chains, and acts them as a man possessed by the devil is acted according to the pleasure of the devil. The devil speaks in them, moves in them, and does what he pleases by them. And which binds the will faster, this habit is not in a natural man by way of a tyranny, but a voluntary

sovereignty on the part of the will, the will is pleased and tickled with it. As a woman (to use the similitude of the Holy Ghost in that place) is so overruled by her affections to other lovers that she cannot think of returning to her former husband, but her unlawful love plays all its pranks, and rises with that force against all arguments from honesty and credit, that it keeps her still in the chains of an unlawful lust, so this is not a habit which does oppress nature, or force it against its will, but by its incorporation, and becoming one with our nature, has quite altered it from that original rectitude and simplicity wherein God at first framed it. It is a law of sin, which having razed out the purity of the law of nature, commands in a greater measure in the stead of it. Hence it is as natural to man, in his lapsed state, to have perverse dispositions against God, as it is essential to him to be rational. And the chariot of that weak remaining reason left us, is overturned by our distempered passions; and the nobler part of man is subject to the rule of these, which bear down the authority both of reason and God too. That one sin of the angels, howsoever complicated we know not, taking place as a habit in them, has bound them for ever from rising to do any good, or disentangling themselves from it, and may perhaps be meant by those 'chains of darkness' wherein they are reserved and held to the judgment of the great day, having no will to shake them off, though they have light enough to see the torment appointed for them.

(2.) New contracted and increased habits upon this foundation. Custom turns sin more into another nature, and completes the first natural disorder. An unrenewed man daily contracts a greater impotency, by adding strength to this habit, and putting power into the hands of sin to exercise its tyranny, and increasing our headstrong natures in their unruliness. It is as impossible of ourselves to shake off the fetters of custom, as to suppress the unruliness of nature: Jer. xiii. 23, 'Can an Ethiopian change his skin? or a leopard his spots? then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' The prophet speaks not here of what they were by nature, but what they were by custom; contracting thereby such a habit of evil, that, like a chronic disease could not be cured by

any ordinary means. But may he not accustom himself to do good? No, it is as impossible as for an Ethiopian to change his skin. Those habits draw a man to delight, and therefore to a necessity, of sinning. The pleasure of the heart, joined with the sovereignty of sin, are two such strong cords as cannot be untwisted or cut by the soul itself, no, not without an overruling grace. It was a simple wound in Adam, but such as all nature could not cure, much less when we have added a world of putrefaction to it. The stronger the habit, the greater the impotency. If we could not raze out the stamp of mere nature upon our wills, how can we raze out the deeper impressions made by the addition of custom? If Adam, who committed but one sin, and that in a moment, did not seek to regain his lost integrity, how can any other man, who by a multitude of sinful acts has made his habit of a giant-like stature, completed many parts of wickedness, and scoffed at the rebukes of conscience?

Let us now see wherein this weakness of our wills to renew ourselves does appear.

1. In a total moral unfitness for this work. Grace being said to make us meet for our Master's use, it implies an utter unfitness for God's use of ourselves before grace. There is a passive capability, a stump left in nature, but no fitness for any activity in nature, no fitness in nature for receiving grace, before grace; there is nothing in us naturally which does suit or correspond with that which is good in the sight of God. That which is natural is found more or less in all men; but the gospel, which is the instrument of regeneration, finds nothing in the nature of man to comply with the main design of it. There is indeed some compliance of moral nature with the moral precepts in the gospel, upon which account it has been commended by some heathens; but nothing to answer the main intendment of it, which is faith, the top grace in regeneration. This has nothing to commend itself to mere nature, nor finds an internal principle in man that is pleased with it, as other graces do, as love, meekness, patience, &c. For faith strips a man of all his own glory, brings himself from himself to live dependently upon another, and makes

him act for another, not for himself; and therefore meets not with any one principle in man to show it countenance: 'No good thing dwells in the flesh,' Rom. vii. 18. There may be some motions lighting there, as a fly upon a man's face; but they have no settled abode, and spring not up from nature. If the apostle, who was renewed, found an unfitness in himself to do that which was good, how great is that unfitness in a mere natural will, which is wholly under the power of the flesh, and has no principle in it correspondent to spiritual truth, to renew itself! If this regeneration had any foundation in nature, it would be then in most men that hear the gospel, because there is not a general contradiction in men to those things which are natural; but since there is no good thing dwells in any flesh, how can it be fit of itself to be raised into a conformity to God, which is the highest pitch of the creature's excellency? The Scripture represents us not as earth, which is fit to suck in showers from heaven; but as stones, which are only moistened in the superficies by the rain, but answers not the intendment of it. Adamants are unfit to receive impressions; and the best natural heart is no better, like a stone, cold and hard. The soul with its faculties is like a bird with its wings, but clogged with lime and clay, unfit to fly. A barren wilderness is absolutely unfit to make a pleasant and fruitful garden. There is a contractedness of the heart till God enlarge and open it, and that in the best nature. Acts xvi. 14, Lydia, it is said, worshipped God; there was religion in her, yet the Lord opened her heart for the gospel. Can anything be more indisposed than a fountain that is always bubbling up poison? So is the heart of man, Gen. vi. 5. The least imagination rising up in the heart is evil, and can be no better, since the heart itself is a mass of venom. If the renewed natures find so much indisposition in the progress of sanctification, though their sails be filled with grace, how great must it be where corrupt nature only sits at the stern! As when Satan came to tempt our Saviour he found nothing in him, no touchwood in his nature to take fire by a temptation, so when the Spirit comes, he finds no tinder in man to receive readily any spark of grace. This unfitness is in the best mere nature, that seems to have but a drop of corruption: a drop of water is as unfit to ascend as a greater quantity.

2. There is not only an unfitness, but an unwillingness. A senseless sluggishness and drowsiness of soul, loath to be moved. No man does readily hold out his arms to embrace the tenders of the gospel. What folding of the arms! yet a little more slumber, a little more sin. Man is a mere darkness before his effectual calling: 'Who has called us out of darkness,' 1 Peter ii. 9. His understanding is darkened; the will cannot embrace a thing offered, unless it have powerful arguments to persuade it of the goodness of that thing which is offered; which arguments are modelled in the understanding, but that being darkened, has wrong notions of divine things, therefore cannot represent them to the will to be pursued and followed. Adam's running away from God to hide himself, after the loss of his original righteousness, discovers how unwilling man is to implore God's favour. How deplored is the condition of man by sin! since we find not one prayer put up by Adam, nor can we suppose any till the promise of recovery was made, though he was sensible of his nakedness, and haunted by his conscience: 'I was afraid, because I was naked: and I hid myself,' Gen. iii. 10. He had no mind, no heart, to turn suppliant unto God; he runs from God, and when God finds him out, instead of begging pardon by humble prayer, he stands upon his justification, accuses God to be the cause by giving him the woman, by whose persuasion he was induced to sin. What glass will better discover the good will of nature to God than the first motions after the fall!

3. There is not only an unfitness and unwillingness, but an affection to something contrary to the gospel. The nature of outward objects is such, that they attract the sensitive appetite, corrupted by sin, to prefer them before that which is more excellent; the heart is forestalled by an inordinate love of the world, and a pleasure in unrighteousness: 2 Thess. ii. 12, they 'believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness' ("Eudochesantes"), a singular pleasure. Where the heart and the devil agree so well, what liking can there be to God or his will? Where the amity between sin and the soul is so great, that sin is self, and self is sin, how can so delightful a friend be discarded, to receive one he thinks his enemy! This weakness arises

from a love to something different or contrary to what is proposed. When a man is so tied to that object which he loves that he minds not that contrary object which is revealed by a fit light, as a man that has his eyes or his heart fixed upon a fair picture, cannot observe many things that occur about him; or if he does consider it, he is taken so much with the things he loves, that he seems to hate the other; that though he does count it good, yet compared with what he loved before, he apprehends it as evil, and judges it evil, merely by the error of his mind,—a practical, affected, and voluntary ignorance. So though a man may sometimes judge that there is a goodness in the gospel and the things proposed, yet his affection to other pleasures, which he prefers before the gospel, causes him to shake off any thoughts of compliance with it. Now, all natural men in the irons of sin are not weary but in love with their fetters, and prize their slavery as if it were the most glorious liberty.

4. There is not only unfitness, and unwillingness, and a contrary affection to the gospel, but according to the degrees of this affection to other things, there is a strong aversion and enmity to the tenders of the gospel. This enmity is more or less in the heart of every unrenewed man; though in some it is more restrained and kept down by education, yet it will appear more or less upon the approaches of grace, which is contrary to nature. As a spark as well as a flame will burn, though one has less heat than the other, there is the same nature, the same seminal principles in all. The carnal mind, let it be never so well flourished by education, is enmity to God; and therefore 'unable,' because unwilling, 'to be subject to the law,' Rom. viii. 7. By nature he is of the devil's party, and has no mind the castle of his heart should ever come into the hands of the right owner. It is in every faculty. Not one part of the soul will make a mutiny within against sin, or take part with God when he comes to lay siege to it; when he 'stretches out his hands,' he meets with a 'rebellious and gainsaying people,' Rom. x. 21. It can converse with anything but God, look with delight upon anything but that which is the only true object of delight. It can have no desire to have that law written in his heart whose characters he hates. All the expressions in the Scripture

denoting the work of grace, import man's distaste of it; it is to deny self, crucify the flesh. What man has not an aversion to deny what is dearest to him, his self; to crucify what is incorporated with him, his Isaac, his flesh? The bent of a natural heart, and the design of the gospel, which is to lay man as low as the dust, can never agree. A corrupt heart, and the propositions of grace, meet together as fire and water, with hissing. The language of man, at the proposals of the gospel, is much like that of the devils, 'What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to destroy us?' Luke iv. 34.

5. This aversion proceeds on to a resistance. No rebels were ever stouter against their prince than an unrenewed soul against the Spirit of God: not a moment without arms in his hand; he acts in defence of sin, and resistance of grace, and combats with the Spirit as his deadly enemy: 'You always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do you,' Acts vii. 51. The animosity runs in the whole blood of nature; neither the breathings of love, nor the thunderings of threatenings, are listened unto. All natural men are hewed out of one quarry of stone. The highest rock and the hardest adamant may be dissolved with less pains than the heart of man; they all, like a stone, resist the force of the hammer, and fly back upon it. All the faculties are full of this resistance: the mind, with stout reasoning, gives a repulse to grace; the imagination harbours foolish conceits of it; in the heart, hardness and refusing to hear; in the affections, disgust and displeasure with God's vans, disaffection to his interest; the heart is locked, and will not of itself shoot one bolt to let the King of glory enter. What party is like to be made for God, by bare nature thus possessed? Nature indeed does what it can, though it cannot do what it would; for though it resist the outward means and inward motions, yet it cannot efficaciously resist the determining grace of God, any more than the matter of the creation could resist the all-powerful voice of God commanding it to receive this or that form, or Lazarus resist the receiving that life Christ conveyed to him by his mighty word. God finds a contradiction in our wills, and we are not regenerate because our will has consented to the persuasions of grace; for that it does not do of itself; but the grace of God disarms

our will of all that is capable to make resistance, and determines it to accept and rejoice in what is offered. Nature of itself is of an unyielding temper, and removes not one scale from the eye, nor any splinter from the stone in the heart; for how can we be the authors of that which we most resist and labour to destroy?

6. Add to all this, the power of Satan in every natural man, whose interest lies in enfeebling the creature. The devil, since his first impression upon Adam, has had the universal possession of nature, unless any natural man free himself from the rank of the children of disobedience: Eph. ii. 2, 'The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience;' where the same word "enengein" is used for the acting of Satan, and likewise for the acting of sin, in Rom. vii. 5. as it is for the acting of the Spirit, Philip. ii. 13. In whom he works as a spirit as powerfully according to his created strength, as the Holy Ghost works in the children of obedience. As the Spirit fills the soul with gracious habits to move freely in God's ways, so Satan fills the soul (as much as in him lies) with sinful habits, as so many chains to keep it under his own dominion. He cannot indeed work immediately upon the will, but he uses all the skill and power that he has to keep men captive for the performance of his own pleasure: 2 Tim. ii. 26, 'Who are taken captive by him at his will,' or for his will, "Eis to ekeinou thelema". It is in that place a dreadful judgment which God gives some men up to for opposing the gospel, taking away his restraints, both from the devil and their own hearts, but more or less he works in every one that opposes the gospel, which every unrenewed man under the preaching of the gospel does, he is the strong man that keeps the palace, Luke xi. 21. Can the will of man make a surrender of it, at God's demand, in spite of his governor? What power have we to throw off these shackles he loads us with? We are as weak in his hand as birds in a fowler's. What will have we, since we are his willing slaves? The darkness of nature is never like by its own free motion to disagree with the prince of darkness, without an overpowering grace, able to contest with the lord as well as the slave; for by the fall he is become prince of the lower creation, and holds it in chains too strong for weakness to break. How great,

then, is man's inability! How unreasonable is it to think that the will of man possessed with such unfitness, unwillingness, affection to other things, aversion to the gospel, resistance of it, and in the devil's net, can of itself do anything towards its recovery, from that it counts no disease; or to turn to that which it accounts its burden? If unspotted and sound nature did not preserve Adam in innocence, how can filthy and craze nature recover us from corruption? If it did not keep him alive when he was living, how can it convey life to us when we have not a spark of spiritual life in us? Man was planted a 'noble vine,' but turned himself into 'a degenerate plant;' nothing that has decayed can by its own strength recover itself, because it has lost that strength whereby it could only preserve itself.

1. Man cannot prepare himself for grace.
2. He cannot produce it.
3. He cannot co-operate with God in the first work.
4. He cannot preserve it.
5. He cannot actuate it.

1. Man cannot prepare himself for the new birth.

I shall premise a few things for the better understanding of this,

(1.) Man has a subjective capacity for grace above any other creature in the inferior world; and this is a kind of natural preparation which other creatures have not. A capacity in regard of the powers of the soul, though not in respect of the present disposition of them. A stone or a beast are not capable of habits of grace, no more than of habits of sin, because they want rational natures, which are the proper seats of both. Our Saviour did not raise trees or stones to life, though he had the same power to do that as he had to raise stones to be children to Abraham; but he raised them that had bodies prepared, in part, for a receptacle of a soul. As there is a more

immediate subjective capacity in a man newly dead for the reception of life upon a new infusion of the soul, because he has all the members already formed, which is not in one whose body is mouldered into dust, and has not one member organised fit for the acting of a rational soul. These faculties have a spring of natural motion in them, therefore are capable of divine grace to make that motion regular; as the wheels of a clock out of order retain their substance and their motion if their weights be wound up, but a false motion unless the disorder of the spring be mended. Man has an understanding to know, and, when it is enlightened, to know God's law; a will to move and run, and, when enlarged by grace, to run the ways of God's commandments; so that he stands in an immediate capacity to receive the life of grace upon the breath and touch of God, which a stone does not, not the most sparkling jewel any more than the meanest pebble; for in this it is necessary rational faculties should be put as a foundation of spiritual motion. Though the soul be thus capable as a subject to receive the grace of God, yet it is not therefore capable, as an agent, to prepare itself for it or produce it; as a piece of marble is potentially capable of being the king's statue, but not to prepare itself by hewing off its superfluous parts, or to raise itself into such a figure. If there were not a rational nature, there were nothing immediately to be wrought upon. If there be not a wise agent and an omnipotent hand, there were nothing to work upon it.

(2.) Besides this passive capacity, there are more immediate preparations. The soul, as rational, is capable to receive the truths of God; but as the heart is stony, it is incapable to receive the impressions of those truths. A stone, as it is a corporeal substance, is capable to receive the drops of rain in its cavities; but because of its hardness is incapable to suck it in, and be moistened inwardly thereby, unless it be softened. Wax has a capacity to receive the impression of the seal, but it must be made pliable by some external agent to that purpose. The soul must be beaten down by conviction before it be raised up by regeneration; there must be some apprehensions of the necessity of it. Yet sometimes the work of regeneration follows so close upon the heels of these precious

preparations, that both must be acknowledged to be the work of one and the same hand. Paul on the sudden was struck down. and in a moment there is both an acknowledgement of the authority of Christ, and a submission to his will, when he said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Acts ix. 6. The preparation of the subject is necessary, but this preparation may be at the same time with the conveyance of the divine nature: as a warm seal may both prepare the hard wax, and convey the image to it, by one and the same touch.

(3.) Though some things which man may do by common grace may be said in some sort to be preparations, yet they are not formally so, as that there is an absolute causal connection between such preparations and regeneration They are not *causae dispositivae* of grace, not disposing causes of grace. Grace is all in a way of reception by the soul, not of action from the soul. The highest morality in the world is not necessary to the first infusion of the divine nature. Mary Magdalene was far from the one, yet received the other. If there were anything in the subject that was the cause of it, the most tender and softest dispositions would be wrought upon, and the most intelligent men would soonest receive the gospel. Though we see them sometimes renewed, yet many times the roughest tempers are seized upon by grace; and the most unlikely soils for fructifying God plants his grace in, wherein there could be no preparations before. It is not with grace as it is with fire, which gives as much heat to a stone as to a piece of wood; but the wood is sooner heated than the stone, because it is naturally disposed, by the softness and porousness of its parts, to receive the heat. Moral nature seems to be a preparation for grace; if it be so, it is not a cause howsoever of grace, for then the most moral person would be soonest gracious, and more eminently gracious after his renewal, and none of the rubbish and dregs of the world would ever be made fit for the heavenly building. There seems to be a fitness in morality for the receiving special grace, because the violence and tumultuousness of sin is in some measure appeased, the flame and sparks of it allayed, and the body of death lies more quiet in them, and the principles cherished by them bear some testimony to the holiness of the precepts. But though it seems to set men at a

greater nearness to the kingdom of God, yet with all its own strength it cannot bring the kingdom of God into the heart, unless the Spirit opens the lock. Yea, sometimes it sets a man further from the kingdom of God, as being a great enemy to the righteousness of the gospel, both imputed and inherent, which is the crown of the gospel: to imputed, as standing upon a righteousness of their own, and conceiving no need of any other; to inherent, as acting their seeming holiness neither upon gospel principles, nor for gospel ends, but in self-reflections and self-applauses. What may seem preparations to us in matters of moral life, may in the root be much distant and vastly asunder from grace; as a divine of our own illustrates it, two mountains whose tops seem near together may in the bottom be many miles asunder. The foundation of that which looks like a preparation may be laid in the very gall of bitterness; as Simon Magus desiring the gift of the Holy Ghost, but from the covetousness of his heart. Other operations upon the soul which seem to be nearer preparations, as convictions, do not infer grace; for the heart, as a field, may be ploughed by terrors, and yet not sown by any good seed. Planting and watering are preparations, but not the cause of fruit; the increase depends upon God.

(4.) There is no meritorious connection between any preparation in the creature and regeneration. The Pelagian opinion was, that by a generous love of virtue we might deserve the grace of God, and the farther assistance of the Spirit, we first (say they) put our hearts into the hands of God, that God may incline them which way he please; and by thus making our wills depend on God, we merit help from God, and make ourselves worthy of him. Whether this be the opinion of any now, I know not. This is to assert, that man gives first to God, and then God to man in way of requital. What son can merit to be born? What desert before being? Nothing can be pre-existent in the son which merits generation by the father. The fair hand of moral nature more induce God to confer on man the state of grace, than the deed of conveyance of a manor, fairly drawn, can dispose the lord to pass it away. In what part of Scripture has God indulged mere nature with any promise of adding grace upon the improvements of natural

abilities? Whatsoever conditional promise there is, supposes some grace superior to nature in the subject as the condition of it. We do not find that God has made himself a debtor to any preparation of the creature.

But there is no obligation on God by anything that may look like a preparation in man. For,

[1.] If man can lay any obligation on God, it must be by some act in all parts his own, for which he is not in the least obliged to God. Thinking is the lowest step in the ladder of preparation. It is the first act of the creature in any rational production, yet this the apostle does remove from man, as in every part of it his own act: 2 Cor. iii. 5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.' The word signifies reasoning. No rational act can be done without reasoning; this is not purely our own. We have no sufficiency of ourselves, as of ourselves, originally and radically of ourselves, as if we were the author of that sufficiency, either naturally or meritoriously. And Calvin observes that the word is not "autarkeia" but "hikanotes", not a self-ability, but an aptitude or fitness to any gracious thought. How can we oblige him by any act, since, in every part of it, it is from him, not from ourselves? For as thinking is the first requisite, so it is perpetually requisite to the progress of any rational act, so that every thought in any act, and the whole progress, wherein there must be a whole flood of thoughts, is from the sufficiency of God. We cannot oblige God after grace, much less before, for when grace is given there must be constant effluxes of grace from God to maintain it; and the acts of grace in us are but a second grace of God. How can we then oblige him by that which is not ours, either in the original or improvement? If when a man has given to another a rich gift he must also give him power to preserve it, and wisdom to improve it, the person cannot be said by his improvement of it to oblige the first donor. What has any man that he has not received? 1 Cor. iv. 7. The apostle excludes everything in us from the name of a donation to God. If there be no one thing but is received from God, then no preparation to grace but

is received from him. The obligation then lies upon the receiver, not upon the donor. But may we not oblige God by the improvement of such a gift? The apostle includes everything, challenges him to name any one thing which was not received, which will contain improvements as well as preparations. If we have power to improve it, wisdom to improve it, hearts and opportunities to improve it, all these are by way of reception from God.

[2.] If man can lay any obligation upon God, it must be by some pure, spotless act. This cannot be; no pure act can spring from man. God has taken an exact survey of the whole world in its dark and fallen state, and could not, among those multitudes of acts which spring from the will of man find one piece of beauty, one particle of the divine image, for he has pronounced this sentence upon them, with repetition, too, as his infallible judgment: 'There is none righteous no, not one: they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one,' Rom. iii. 10-12. The most refined nature derived from Adam was never found without fault, a pure virtue is a terra incognita. The productions of nature are always evil. If not one action be fully good in the nature of man, what meritoriousness can there be in any preparation of nature for the grace of God? Can the clearest virtue that ever was since Adam oblige God to pardon its own defects, that is, the defects of that very act of virtue? Much less can it challenge a higher degree of grace to be transmitted to it.

[3.] If any preparation were our own, and were pure, yet being natural, how could it oblige God to give a supernatural grace? If there be anything of meritoriousness, it is only something of the same kind with the work in a greater degree, but there is no proportion between natural acts and supernatural grace. There is no one scripture, or one example, declaring grace to be given as a reward to mere nature, or any act of nature. God indeed, out of his infinite righteousness, and equity, and goodness, has rewarded some moral acts with some worldly advantages, or the withdrawing some judgments threatened, as Ahab's reprieve from judgment upon his humiliation, 1 Kings xxi.

27, 29; and the temporary pardon to Nineveh, upon their submission to the prophet's threatenings, Jonah iii. 8-10. But what obligation lies upon God to reward men doing thus with super-additions of grace? for there is no proportion between such a moral act and so excellent a reward. Are may as well say that a coal by glowing and sparkling may merit to become a star; or that the orderly laying the wood and sacrifice upon the altar might merit the descent of fire from heaven to kindle it.

[4.] If there was any obligation on God, by any preparations of nature, then such acts would be always followed with renewing grace. There would be an obligation on God's righteousness to bestow it. And if it should be denied, the creature might accuse God of a failure in justice, because he gave not what was due. God sure would observe that rule of justice which he prescribes to man, not to detain the wages of a hireling, no, not for a night. Were grace a debt upon the works of nature, God were then obliged not only to pay it, but pay it speedily, it being exact righteousness so to do. But we see the contrary. Publicans and harlots are raised and beautified, while pharisees lie buried in the ruins of nature. These preparations are many times without perfection. The pangs of conviction resolve sometimes into a return to the old vomit, and make no progress in a state of life and grace. The apostle's rule will hold true in the whole compass of the work, Rom. vi. 11, 'If it be of works, then it is no more grace.' So much as is ascribed to any work or preparation by the creature, so much is taken from the glory of grace, and would make God not the author, but assistant, and that too by obligation, not by grace.

[5.] From this it follows, that man does not prepare himself by any act of his will, without the grace of God. What preparation can he make, who is so powerfully possessed by corrupted habits, which have got so great an empire over him, struck their roots to the very bottom of his soul, entrenched themselves in the works of custom, that if he goes about to pull up one, his arm shakes and his heart faints? How strongly do these rooted habits resist the power of grace!

How much more easily do they resist the weakness of nature in confederacy with them! What is said of the remnant of Jacob as a 'dew from the Lord,' as 'the showers upon the grass,' that it 'tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men,' Micah v. 7, may be said of the grace of God, it waits not for the preparations and dispositions of the creature, but prevents them. It is a pure gift; though we are active with it, yet we are wholly indisposed for it. We can no more prepare ourselves to shine as stars in the world, than a dunghill can to shine as a sun in heaven. What preparations does God wait for in the heart of an infarct when he sanctifies it? If 'without Christ we can do nothing,' John xv. 5, then no preparations without Christ; for they are something, and very considerable too. There is no foundation to think there should be any preparation in the creature, as of the creature.

First, The first promise of redemption and regeneration intimates no such thing in man to either of them: Gen. iii. 15, 'I will put enmity,' &c. The putting enmity into man against Satan is promised by God as his own work. There was a friendship struck up, a confederacy made, the devil entertained as a counsellor; God would now break this league, he only puts enmity into the heart against Satan: 'It shall bruise thy head,' &c. The bruising the serpent's head is wholly the act of Christ. It, not the man or the woman, but the promised seed. As there were no preparations in the creature to that which Christ acted in the flesh, so there are no preparations in that creature for what Christ is to do in his Spirit. He bruised Satan in his flesh upon the cross without any preparations in the creature; and so he bruises Satan in the heart, by his Spirit, without any preparations on the creature's part. For anything I see, had man in the state of innocence been sensible that his dependency, as to any good, and motion to good, ought to be upon God, and he to have waited upon God for his change and confirmation, he might have stood; but when he would practically assert the liberty of his own will in a way of indifference to good and evil, he fell. And by the way, those that assert the freedom of their own will naturally, without the grace of God, either common

or special, seem to me to justify Adam's first affected independence of God.

Secondly, God is as much in the new creation as he was in the old. Not only the creation of the matter, but the preparation of it to receive the form, was from God; neither the matter, nor any part of it, prepared itself. If nothing prepared itself to be a creature, how can anything prepare itself to be a gracious creature, since to be a new creature is more than to be a creature; and every preparation to be a new creature is more than any preparation to be a creature? The new creation differs, I must confess, from the old creation; but it is such a difference which makes it rather harder than easier.

First, The object of the old creation was nothing, the object of the new is something; but a thing that has no more active disposition to receive a new form, than nothing had.

Secondly, The object of the first creation was a simple and pure privation; the object of the second is a contrary form, which resists the work of God: there was only an action of creation in the first, there is an action of destruction in the second, the destruction of the old form and the creation of a new. Is it likely that any nature would voluntarily prepare itself for its own destruction? God in the first creation found no disposition in the subject to entertain a form, here he finds a contrary disposition to resist the form.

Thirdly, What preparation had any of those we read of in Scripture from themselves? What disposition had Paul, when he was struck down with a heart fuller of actual enmity than he had at his birth? Did the apostles expect any call from their nets, or set themselves in a readiness before they heard that call? A voice from Christ was attended with a divine touch or power upon their hearts; both the preparation and the motion itself took birth together. And what preparations are there in Scripture, but are attributed unto God? If a conviction be thorough and full, and consequently a preparation, it must refer to that Spirit which our Saviour asserts to be the principal

cause of it, John xvi. 8, 9, 'When he is come,' that is, the Comforter, 'he will reprove the world of sin.' It is laid wholly upon this, as the end of the almighty Spirit's coming, whereby it is not likely men would be convinced without him. Is there any desire or prayer for it? Even this, if true, is from the Holy Ghost; 'no man can call Christ Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,' 1 Cor. xii. 3. Did any of those our Saviour cured of bodily infirmities, prepare themselves for that cure? Neither can any man prepare himself for his spiritual cure.

Fourthly, What thing in all the records of nature ever prepared itself for a change? All preparations in matter for receiving any form arise not from the matter itself, but from some other active principle, or the new form in part introduced, which by degrees expels the old; as in water, when heat comes in the place of cold, the preparation is not from the water, but from the new quality introducing itself. The grace of God is to the soul as form is to matter. The body is formed in the womb, for the reception of the soul, but not by the embryo, but by the formative virtue of the parent, fashioning the parts of the body to make it a fit lodging for the soul; or, as some think, the soul itself, as the bee, fashions its own cell; but howsoever it is not from itself. The preparations of Lazarus to rise were from the voice of Christ, not from the stinking body of Lazarus. The nature of all is alike. That one lute is better prepared for an harmonious touch, is from the musician's skill, not any art of its own. If one man of the same nature with another be endued with rich morals, it is from the common grace of God exciting natural light, and the common notions of fit and just; as the reason one vine of the same kind brings forth more generous fruit than another, is from the stronger influence of the sun. All nature assents to this truth, that nothing does prepare itself for a change.

Fifthly, If man did prepare himself for grace, it would be a disparagement to God, it would violate the sovereignty of God. It would be derogatory to the majesty of God to have his grace depend upon the conditions and previous preparations in the creature; it would lay the foundations of grace in a man's self, and impose a

necessity in God to come in with further grace, and make his actions dependent upon the actings of the creature. The beginning of faith would be from us, and the supplement from God; the work of grace would be of him that 'wills and runs,' and not 'of God that shows mercy,' Rom. ix. 16. It would change the whole tenor of the Scripture, and make conversion not God's drawing of us, but our traction of God; for he that does dispose himself to grace, is in some sort the cause of that grace, as he that does dispose the subject for such a form is in a sort the cause of that form. If the preparations were from the will of man, man would begin the noblest work that ever was wrought, and God would be made no more than an attendant upon the creature's motion; whereas the very beginning in the will, as well as the perfection, is ascribed to God: Philip. ii. 13, 'God works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' God's good pleasure is the original cause of this work upon the will, not the will's good pleasure. The work then depending on God's good pleasure, excludes any dependency on the will of man; it is therefore called a creation, to show God's independence upon anything as to this work.

Sixthly, Where should this preparation begin? in what part of the soul? Shall it begin in the understanding? That has lost the reins whereby it governed the lower parts of the soul. Nothing is more discomposed in its acts than that faculty. It is well compared to a charioteer or coachman fallen from his box, and his feet entangled in the reins of the horses, which hurry him about. The sensitive appetite, like a wild horse, has got the bit between his teeth, runs about, and draws the understanding after it. Indeed a charioteer that has lost the government of his horses endeavours to remedy that violence; he cries out, makes all resistance, has a will to help himself; but the understanding is so far from resisting, that it takes pleasure in the disorder of the passions; it prompts the will to follow them, and this is properly to be a servant to sin. Shall it begin in the appetite? How can that incline to range itself to the order of reason? It has no reason itself; it submits not to the laws of reason; it has got the mastery of it, and has prescription for its dominion, of a long standing, ever since the fall. The dominion of sin is in the

understanding, will, appetite, whence all of them are called flesh, so that all the motions of the soul depending upon them, the slavery must needs be voluntary. Therefore neither the understanding conceives, nor the will wills, nor the appetite desires, anything against themselves; how, then, should the will, which is captivated by a corrupt understanding and disorderly affections, recover itself, when it must necessarily be under the guidance of one of these jailers? Suppose the understanding were illuminated, are those evil habits in the will corrected barely by the illumination of the understanding? If they are corrected, why does not the will always follow the dictate of the understanding? But, alas! those evil habits determine the will to evil, as good habits determine it to good; for it is the nature of habits to incline the faculties to those things which are suitable to the nature of those habits; therefore as long as it remains under the command of those evil inclinations, it is impossible it should pass from evil to good. But that the will has evil inclinations, appears by the Scripture calling the whole man flesh; else corruption would not be universally seated in the soul, but only accidental in the will, from the darkness of the understanding. But certainly, as Adam in innocence had an habitual holy disposition in his will, so man, in his fall, has a corrupt inclination in his will, an habitual quality, whereby he drinks iniquity like water, Job xv. 16. What power of the will can take those cords off, which hold it prisoner, whereby it must be prepared for a free motion?

To evidence this further, we shall consider,

1. That man does not naturally, neither can, understand the new birth.

2. He cannot desire it. Understanding and desire are necessary preparations to any rational change a creature can make in itself.

1. Man cannot understand it. This is necessary to a change. Whatsoever is done by the will, must be done by the impulse of some other faculty. Sensitive appetite cannot instruct the will to this work.

Sense is not capable of reason, much less of religion, though it be the portal to both. The will can never be moved to any good thing, unless the mind propound it as good and amiable. The act of thinking must precede the act of believing, for we cannot believe without thinking of what we believe. It is less to think than understand. If we cannot, then, do that which is less in the preparation, we cannot do that which is greater, especially when it is impossible to will without thinking; and thinking is a necessary means to willing. He that cannot prepare himself for a good thought, how can he prepare himself for a gracious habit? What ability have we to the act of faith, when we have no ability to any thought of faith? We cannot by the strength of nature understand it, if we consider,

(1.) The first blot caused by sin was upon the understanding. Man was first deceived by the sophistical reasonings of the serpent. The first effect of sin was to spread a thick darkness upon Adam's understanding. Though the whole house, and every beam of it, fell together, yet this faculty was first unfastened, and brought all the rest to ruin. As soon as ever he ceased from glorifying God as God, a darkness was brought upon his foolish heart: Rom. i. 21, 'When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,' where the apostle describes the state of man in corrupt nature after his fall. Folly first in the heart to desire the forbidden fruit, and then darkness came upon the understanding. Their "dialogismoi", their reasonings, became empty and contradictory; their primitive light departed, and darkness, as a privation, took place. What true motion can there be in the will, when there was so thick an obscurity in the understanding? Where there is but a false knowledge in the mind, there can be no true motion in the will. There must then be a restoration of this light, before there can be any preparation to a good act of the will. Adam recovered not this light by his own strength, no, nor by the outward declaration of the gospel in the promise; for no outward object proposed to the understanding confers any power upon the faculty. How can it then be recovered by

our strength, since we have rather added to the scales than diminished them? For,

(2.) There is a darkness transmitted from him to the understanding of every man by nature. The light is darkened in the heaven of the soul, the more spiritual part of the mind, Isa. v. 30, as the prophet speaks in another case. Our understandings are so closed up with the thick slime of sin, that we cannot see the beauty of gospel truths; 'darkness comprehends not the light,' John i. 5. Though the light of the sun did shine a thousand times brighter than it does, and strike upon the face and eyelids of a man with the greatest glory, yet if there be a spot upon the apple of his eye, if he scants a seeing faculty, he can apprehend nothing of it. Hence the apostle prays for the illumination of the understanding of the Ephesians, chap. i. 17, 18, and that they might have 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.' And our Saviour tells them that they 'must be taught of God,' John vi. 45, by an internal teaching of the Spirit, as well as by himself in an oral instruction. What a thick cloud was upon Nicodemus his mind, when he discoursed with him about regeneration, who was the ablest teacher to illustrate it to his fancy and understanding! It is not such a darkness as if he might understand the mysteries of heaven, if he would exert the strength of his own reason. This would be only as a man shutting his eyes who had a visive faculty; but it is such a darkness as cannot be expelled by flesh and blood, or anything arising from it: 'Flesh and blood,' says our Saviour to Peter, 'has not revealed it unto thee, but my, Father which is in heaven,' Mat. xvi. 17. Flesh and blood includes everything in opposition to God. Our Saviour had externally owned himself, in the face of the Jews, to be the Messiah, the Son of God; but besides this, there was an inward illumination granted to Peter, for the apprehending and embracing so great a truth. There is not only a darkness upon the minds of those who have no outward revelation of the will of God in Christ, but upon those who are in the midst of the sunbeams: Deut. xxix., 'Yet the Lord has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.' They wanted not the beams. No people in the world had the ordinances of

God besides them; but they wanted an organ fitted to receive and use them, which was not in their power, but is mentioned as the gift of God. God promises to make his people to know his ways. What needs that, if they could know them without him? We have indeed the light of the gospel, we have also a faculty, but without an eye disposed for the light, Ye enjoy no benefit by it. Now who ever heard that darkness could prepare itself for its own expulsion? It cannot comprehend the light, much less prepare for the reception of it. Now who ever heard of one born blind, in a capacity to prepare himself for sight? We are blind in naturals, much more in spirituals. The most polished reasons among the heathens, both for knowledge in naturals and prudence in civil affairs, coated, and with all their wisdom knew not God.

(3.) There is an unsuitableness and a contrariety in the mind of man to the gospel, which is the instrument of regeneration. There is a mighty distance between the spiritual object and the natural faculty. The understanding, though never so well furnished with natural stuff, is but natural, and flesh; the object is supernatural and spiritual; therefore the richest mere nature can no more attain to the knowledge of spiritual things, than the clearest sense can attain to the knowledge of rational. Though every man 'by nature has the things contained in the law,' Rom. ii. 14, 15, yet no man has by nature the things contained in the gospel. The gospel has not the same advantage in the hearts of men as the law has, for it finds nothing of kin to it. Though a natural heart has some broken pieces of the law of God deposited in it, yet there is not the least syllable of Christ or regeneration written in the mind by the hand of nature. The understanding therefore naturally cannot prepare itself for the reception of the gospel, because it has not any principle in it which suits the doctrine of it. It seems a ridiculous thing to the wisest carnalist, who receives not the things of God, because, out of the pride of natural wisdom, he counts them foolishness, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Hence not many wise are renewed in their minds. Had the gospel truth been as agreeable to reason as the other common notions imprinted in man, it would have been preserved in the world longer

than it was, since, without question, Adam did communicate to his posterity the notion of a redeemer, which did soon die among them, because not consonant to that reason they had derived by nature from Adam. It was a knowledge given to Adam by revelation, not imprinted in his nature by creation. Besides, there is a contrariety in the mind to the truth of the gospel. As we say of liberty, so of enmity. Though it be formally in the will, yet it is radically in the understanding. The mind is the seat of those hostile principles which act the will against God, Rom. viii. 7. The mind of man regards the things of God as unpleasant, and an intolerable yoke and hard bridle. Let light, the most excellent thing in the world, glare upon a man that has sore eyes, he will turn away from it, or shut his eyes against it; for though he understands the worth of it, yet it has a quality offensive to him. So is the gospel to those notions settled in the distempered mind. Men give not credit to the declarations of the gospel; 'Who has believed our report?' has been the voice of God's messengers in all ages, Isa. liii. 1. No man, unless known by all never to speak truth, but is more believed than the God of infallible and unerring truth! What principles, then, are there in the understanding to prepare it for the reception of that which is so contrary to its ancient inmates?

(4.) Besides this, the natural levity of the understanding does incapacitate it to prepare itself. It is with the understanding as with a line, the farther it is stretched out the weaker and more wavering it is. So is the understanding, being at a distance from God. How do vain thoughts intrude into the mind! No man can keep a door locked against them. We feel them rushing upon us while we endeavour to avoid them. We are confounded and overwhelmed by them, and drawn to things against our own resolutions. Man has not the command of his own heart, so much as to think steadily of a divine object. How can he then prepare his own heart, when he cannot without grace fix in any holy meditation which is necessary for the renewal of it, since nothing is more discomposed in its acts than the mind of man, which is always dancing about, like cork in the water, or feathers in the air? Whence should come any preparation to good orders but by some supernatural ballast, to establish it from

fluctuating? This disease every man is sensible of, and whatsoever disease is inherent in nature cannot be cured by any preparations by that nature which is wholly overgrown with it.

(5.) Hence it follows that a natural mind has no right notion of grace. To the right notion of a thing is required suitableness, pleasure, and a fixedness of the mind upon it. A natural mind wants all these. How can it then prepare itself for that which it has no knowledge of? And without knowledge it cannot commend it to the will. The apostle asserts a plain cannot in this business: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'He cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Being destitute of the Spirit, they cannot discern the things of the Spirit. Sense can discern things sensibly, not rationally. Reason can discern things rationally, but not spiritually. The light whereby a natural man judges of the things of the gospel is a star-light or a moonlight, which gives not a distinct view of the object. The evil disposition must be removed from the mind, before the object be entertained according to its worth. As if any natural object have such excellent qualities in it, that if it be embraced it will draw the will and affections after it; yet if the mind be ill-disposed, and does not judge of the object according to the merit of it, it will refuse it. Offer a man gold who understands not the worth of gold, it will not allure him. Man with his eyes is spiritually blind, and with his ears is spiritually deaf. So God calls the Gentiles, which were to be brought to Christ for a restitution of their eyes: Isa. xliii. 8, 'Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.' Such can no more judge of the excellency of spiritual things than a blind man can have regular conceptions of colours, or a deaf man of the excellency of music. If 'no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,' 1 Cor. xii. 8; if no man can have a magnificent conception and speech of Christ, but by the Spirit giving him both that conception and utterance, he cannot have a notion of the formation of Christ in the heart without the gift and impression of the same hand. What preparations, then, can arise from nature, when the mind can have no conception of Christ but by the Spirit of God?

Well, then, to conclude this. What preparations can there be in nature, since we cannot understand the things of God, when yet we have more clearness in our understanding to see them than we have force in our wills to love them and embrace them? It is in the understanding that the common notions, which are the grounds of knowledge, are deposited. There is less of ignorance in our understanding than of enmity in our will. The eye can see further than the arm can reach. If therefore we cannot think or understand, by all that help of common notions, without the grace of God, how can we then prepare our wills for it, to comply with it, and renew that faculty which is chiefly possessed with a contrariety to it?

2. As we cannot understand it, so we cannot naturally desire it. What is not spiritually discerned cannot spiritually be desired. Not but that according to those unformed conceptions which men have of it by common grace, there may be some weak velleities, but they are wishings without a will, not desires according to the value of the thing. Mercy first breathed on our first parents, before they breathed after that. The first motion came from God. So soon were they turned obstinate enemies against their Creator, without any thoughts of turning supplicants, though they had not lost the conceptions of their late integrity. which if they had, they had been wholly insensible, without any trouble of conscience. What desires can we naturally, then, have for it, who have far weaker conceptions of that happiness than they had immediately after they lost it? We cannot desire what we do not apprehend. A beast cannot desire to be a man, because he has no conceptions of the excellency of the human nature above his own. No nature can ever affect that which is contrary to it. Do flesh can ever desire its own crucifixion. If we seek, we shall find; if we ask, we shall receive, but who first touches the heart to seek or to ask? If we cannot think a good thought of ourselves, how can we think so good a thought as a desire of regeneration? To say, then, we can desire the new creation of ourselves, without some kind of grace, is to assert another doctrine than what the apostle Paul asserted to those already regenerate. The first will, which is the necessary spring of all actions, is wrought by God, Philip. ii. 13. The frame of man's

will and desire stands to another point: John viii. 44, 'The lusts of your father you will do.' The best renewed man 'knows not what to pray for as he ought,' without the instruction of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 26. We cannot give our hearts a lift to heaven, or breathe out an unutterable groan, without the help of an infinite Spirit. The root of man's affections groves downward, not upward. What breathings can be expected in a soul choked up with sin? There was no motion of the church till 'the hand of her beloved was put in by the hole of the door,' and made a motion in her bowels, Cant. v. 4. The church owed no obligation to her free will and her own predispositions. There is not a smoke in the heart to heaven without a spark first from heaven; not a step till God enlarges the heart. Velleities are from common grace, under the preaching, of the word, fervent and saving desires are from special grace, by the hand of the Spirit. So that there are no preparations from nature to this, since both our apprehensions of it and desires of it spring not out of that stock.

The second main thing is this, As man cannot prepare himself for it, so he does not produce and work it in himself. This is evident from the former. If he cannot make any preparation, which is the less, he cannot cause any actual production of it, which is the greater.

But to evidence it more, let us spend some time in this.

As it does not depend upon the will of man in the preparation, so neither in the production.

I shall evidence it, first, by arguments drawn from the consideration of God.

If this work depended upon the will of man, as the first cause in the production, it would deprive God,

1. Of his sovereign independence. If man's will were the first cause of regeneration, God would not be the supreme independent cause in the noblest of his works. This work is nobler than creation in respect

of the price paid for it. The world was made without the death of anything to purchase the creation of it. But the divine image is not restored without the death of the Son of God, every line in this new image being drawn with his blood. Is there anything happens in the world but by the conduct and efficacy of his providence? Do all the motions of the heavens, the productions of creatures, the universal events of nature, depend upon the will, power, and wisdom of God? And shall the soul, the most excellent of the lover creatures, bearing the characters of God's wisdom and goodness upon it (the acts of the soul in the way of religion, being the noblest acts it can produce), be left wholly to itself in the production and management of these? Shall God, the supreme cause in everything else, be an inferior and secondary cause in this affair? It is 'not he that plants, nor he that waters, but God that gives the increase,' 1 Cor. iii. 7. God is the first cause, upon whom man depends in all kind of actions, much more in supernatural actions, chiefly in the understanding and will, upon which faculties no creature can have any intrinsic influence to cause them to exercise their vital acts. If the will of man were the first cause, God would be an attendant to the creature in the noblest works. God would not then be the first mover, but man. The will willing would then be the cause of God's working, not God's working the cause of the will's willing and choice. God's working would be consequent upon the will, and so the effect of the will's free motion. Man would then be the dispositiva causa in relation to God. It would make God the second cause, and represent him expecting the beck, and the preparations of man, before he did exert any act. It would make God to will that which man wills, and make God to will that which man may reject. It would follow that God concurs not to regeneration by way of sovereignty, but by way of concomitance. It would not be a victorious but a precarious grace, which is against the whole tenor of the Scripture, which represents God as holding in his hands the first links of all second causes: Rom. xi. 36, 'For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.' He is the first governor of all the wills and powers of the creatures, the first cause of all motions. He orders all, without being ordered by any. Now this is below the majesty of God, to be conducted in his motion by the will

of the creature, to have the purposes of his goodness brought into act by an uncertain and slippery cause. How can it be conceived that God should put his hand to the more ignoble works of nature, and turn over the noblest work of the new creation to the airy will of the creature.

To conclude; God must either be precedent in his operation to the act of the will, or follow it. If precedent, we have what we would, if subsequent, then God is a mere attendant upon the motions of the creature, and a servant to wait upon man. This is to advance free will to the throne of God and depress God to the footstool of will; this is to deify the creature, by placing the crown of the sovereign independence of God on the head of free will.

2. It puts a blot upon the wisdom of God. If God expects the determination of the will of man, whether he shall act or no, then God is disposed by the will of man to the intention of his end. But it is very inconsistent with that unfathomable and unerring wisdom, to have the attainment of his end depend upon an agent wherein nothing is wrapped up but folly and madness, Eccles. ix. 3. This is to make his power depend upon weakness, and his gracious ends towards his creature hang upon the extravagancies of one distracted, which no wise man would be guilty of. Is God in all things else a God of power and wisdom, working all things in number, weight, and measure, springing up every motion in the lower world, by an unblameable counsel? And shall he leave the forming of the image of his Son, wherein his wisdom is most seen, to the slight irregular will of man, which has neither weight nor measure in itself? This would make the immutable counsel of God depend upon the mutability of the creature; which would be inconsistent with the wisdom of man, who chooses the firmest means he can for the conduct of his designs; for if man wills this day, then God wills, if man reject it the next day, then he rejects that which God wills. So God's will most be at uncertainty, according to the will of man. How shall his counsel stand upon so tottering a bottom? How shall he do all his pleasure if it were a mere dependent upon the pleasure of the creature, contrary

to what he is pleased positively to assert: Isa. xlvi. 10, 'My counsel shall stand, I will do all my pleasure.' The apostle does couch these into arguments together: Eph. i. 11, 'Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will;' he argues (1) from the power of God, 'who works all things', whereby our own works, and power, are excluded, and God asserted to be the supreme cause of everything, in an efficacious and energetical manner, as the word "energein" signifies. (2.) From his wisdom, 'according to the counsel of his own will,' wisely and justly, and therefore not according to ours, wherein there is nothing but folly and evil. This excludes all our own wills in the first work. Now, to assert that this beautiful image were brought forth upon the stage of the heart by the will of man, as the first cause, would destroy God's prerogative, and represent his operations under the conduct of our own counsel and will, not of his own. Certainly if there be a secret and wise Spirit of providence, running through the whole world to preserve his honour in his works, as certainly there is, the most honourable declaration of them in the heart cannot be thought to be left to the conduct of wild and hare-brained nature.

3. If the will of man were the prime cause of regeneration, it would deprive God of his foreknowledge and prescience; it would make that foreknowledge, which is certain and infallible, merely contingent. For if the will of man were wholly left to its own determination, the motions of the will were doubtful and uncertain, till the will does determine itself; and so God's knowledge of them would be uncertain, for it is clear, that from a thing wholly uncertain, there cannot arise a certain knowledge. Therefore, God could not be said certainly to foreknow the conversion of man, if the efficacy of grace depended upon so contingent a cause as the liberty of man's will; for then it might not be, as well as be; the will might not embrace it, and so the knowledge of God be but merely conjectural,—a knowledge unworthy of a deity, which must be supposed to be omniscient; a knowledge depending upon a peradventure, or at best, it is but a very likely it will be so. This would be a debasing the deity to an opinionative knowledge, which could not be certain, because depending upon so undetermined and wavering a cause. God cannot

know this or that man's regeneration from eternity but he must see it infallibly in himself willing it, or in the causes of it, irresistibly producing it. But if the efficacy of grace depends upon the will, then God does not certainly determine the regeneration of man. And for God to foreknow that which he himself has not determined, and when nothing in the creature, nor anything in the circumstances, does determine it, is to make God see that (as one says) which neither in the creature nor in himself is to be seen.

Obj. Some may object, How does God come to foreknow sin, for that depends upon the liberty of the will?

Ans. It would be too long to inquire into this, I shall only at present say this, it is certain God does foresee every sin, otherwise the evil acts of men could not be predicted. Our Saviour could not then have foreknown what the scribes and priests would do to him, as he does foretell: Mat. xvi. 21, 'Christ began to tell them how many things he was to suffer of the chief priests and scribes.' And since God cannot fail in his predictions, but they will certainly come to pass, the hearts of the Jews could do no other thing, supposing the prediction, than what Christ does here foretell, for their wicked wills would certainly determine themselves that way. And God, by a concurrence of causes which he had linked together in his hand, orders things so, that meeting with the corruption in their wills, their wills determine themselves to such actions there foretold; yet is not God therefore the author of sin. For sin being no positive thing, cannot have an efficient, but a deficient cause; and God determines the withdrawing of his common grace, and the ordering of such and such circumstances, and so did foresee how a free creature, with that corruption in his heart, would determine himself in such occasions, when involved in such circumstances. But now in the work of regeneration, outward circumstances cannot cause any determination of the will, because those outward circumstances of grace meet with nothing in the heart full of corruption, to take part with them, which outward circumstances of sin do. Therefore since there can be no foresight of God in this case, depending upon the

concurrence of outward circumstances, unless there were something in the heart which did suit them, the determination of the will cannot proceed from them, but from God himself, willing and determining the will by a positive influx of his grace. The determination of the will to sin comes from within, from its natural corruption concurring with such occasions, which, joining together, determine the will to it. Therefore God foresees what a free creature will do; but there being no principle in the will by nature to correspond with any gracious external circumstances, it cannot determine itself to grace, because it wants a principle of determination within itself, the corrupt habits determining it quite otherwise. Sin proceeds not so much from the liberty as the captivity of the will; and God knowing the corrupt frame, can foresee what man in such a frame will do upon occasion; as we may easily resolve that an habitual drunkard will be drunk when he has sensual objects placed before him.

4. Another consideration is this: to make the will of man the efficient of his regeneration, is to make the truth of God a great uncertainty.

(1.) First, In the covenant he made with Christ. If his having a seed depended upon the will of man, the promise of God to give him a seed might be null and void; for at least it must be granted possible, that not one man under heaven would have accepted of his terms; and then his coming to save had been in vain, because there was a possibility that not one man would have embraced the salvation offered. Since the number of rejecters of him is greater than the number of receivers, it is likely the less number, if left to their own wills, would have followed the greater, since the prevalence of evil examples above good ones is every day evident. It had not been, then, 'the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand,' Isa. liii. 10, 11, but the pleasure of man shall prosper in the hand of the will of man. The great resolve of God, the priesthood of Christ, the design of drawing a generation of persons out of the world to praise him, had hung upon a mere haphazard and a maybe, if it had depended only on man's will; and God should have waited the leisure of free will, to see whether the most glorious design that ever was laid should

prosper, and whether he should have been a God of truth, or a liar to his Son. Though our Saviour had laid the foundation of our redemption in his own most precious blood, yet he must have depended on our will for the fruits of his purchase; it had been a great uncertainty whether he had seen one grain of fruit for all his expense. He might have been a king without one subject, or the destruction of one potent enemy he came to conquer, not one sin subdued, not one devil cast out of any son. This might have been; for though by God he was made a king, yet according to the other assertion, it depended on the will of man whether he should have one subject to own his authority; and, if so, God had been very unwise to enter into covenant with him, and Christ very unwise to come upon such grand uncertainties at the best, when it was a question whether any one person should have enjoyed the fruits of his death. How can it enter into any man's heart, that so great a contrivance as the sending of Christ to be the means of salvation, with such great promises to see the fruits of his death in a seed to serve him, should depend in the main fruits and effects of it on any thing undetermined by the will of God; that so great a weight should hang upon so thin a thread as the will of man?

(2.) In the promises he makes to men. How could God promise that so absolutely as he does, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'A new heart will I give you,' if this work did depend upon the will of man, which might frustrate the truth of God in his promise? And when God knew there was no principle in their hearts that could rise higher than to shame and confusion, not to so excellent a work as regeneration, as is intimated, ver. 32, 'Not for your sakes do I do this: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel,' what reason was there for God to depress them to confusion, if they had had power to renew themselves? If this promise of God depended not upon any thing in them in the first making, it could not depend upon any thing in them in the full performance of it. We must either make God a liar, or unwise, or remove any efficiency in the will of man as the first cause. What blasphemy would it be to say, that God was so unwise as to promise that which depended upon the power of another, whether it

should be wrought or no; that God could not be certainly true to his word, unless freewill assisted him!

5. It despoils God of his worship, in those two great parts of it, prayer and praise.

(1.) Prayer. With what face can any solicit God for that grace, which he conceives to be in his own power to have when he will? It is a mocking of him to desire that strength of him, which he has given us already, inherent in our nature. If it were the work of our wills, it would require only the excitation of them, not any application to God. Who begs for what he has? Who desires an alms that has thousands in his purse? As prayer would be a vain thing in any man that should deny a providence overruling the affairs of the world, so it would be as vain a thing to call upon God for grace, if the whole affair of regeneration were left to the conduct of man's will. The end of God's making promises of a new hearts and a new spirit, is to be inquired after to do it for us, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 37. The natural consequent, then, of asserting the power of our own wills, is not to call upon God, but direct our desires to another cause, to solicit our own wills, not God. It would not be, then, according to the language of the church, 'Turn thou us, O Lord, and we shall be turned;' 'Draw me, and I will run after thee,' Lam. v. 21, Cant. i. 4, but, I will turn to thee, and then shalt thou be turned to me; I will run after thee, and draw thee to myself. The royal authority, and power of God, and his glory in granting, is the foundation of prayer; therefore the Lord's prayer is concluded with this, as an argument to move God to grant what is asked, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory;' that is, thou art rich and powerful, and hast all sorts of blessings to bestow. With what face can any one go to God with these words in his mouth, when he ascribes the kingdom, power, and glory, in so great a work, to his own will? We can never pray in confidence to God for it, for all confidence is wrought by a consideration of the will of him we pray to, to accomplish what we desire, and of his power to effect it. What confidence, then, can we have in his will particularly to work it for us, if we conceive he has left it to our hands, as the

proper work of our own wills? This was the ground of our Saviour's supplications, with strong cryings and tears, that 'God was able to save him,' Heb. v. 7: able naturally, in respect of his power, able morally, in respect of his truth to his promise. If God were careless in this concern, and had cast off all from his own hands, on the hand of free will, God might well say to and man, as he did to Moses, 'Why criest thou unto me? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward,' Exod. xiv. 15. Why cry you to me? You may do it yourselves. Go forward with your own wills. The natural language of man to God would not be, Lord, let thy kingdom come, thy will be done, give me a new heart; but, I will have thy kingdom come, I will have thy will be done, I will procure myself a new heart, I will change my heart of stone into a heart of flesh.

(2.) Praise. It does deprive God of this part of his worship also, praise even for his greatest blessings. If our own wills did produce this work, the greatest cause of glorying would be, not in God, but in ourselves. We have as little ground to praise God, if it be our own work, as we have to pray to him for it. All that can be said is, that we have ground to praise him for the means of regeneration; and this is no more ground than they have that are not regenerate under the enjoyment of the same means. If a man could give himself a natural being without God, he could be his own creator, his own foundation; so if he could give himself a spiritual being without the grace of God, he would be a god to himself; for in this case he would really do more to his conversion than God. If God offer grace equally to all, and the pliability of one man's will to receive it above another were from himself, he would then owe an obligation to himself, but no more to God than the other that rejected it owes. The apostle, by asking the question, 'Who Has made thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou did not receive?' 1 Cor. iv. 7 (though it be meant of a difference of gifts, yet it is argumentum a minori), clearly implies, that what difference there was between them and others, was not of their own planting, nor grew up from the stock of nature. But if regeneration be wrought by a man's own will, it is not God that makes the difference, therefore the glory does not belong to him. He is the author of a

general call, therefore the glory of that pertains to him, it is true; but yet as much from the damned that have lived under the gospel, as from the glorified saints in heaven, because the special entertainment of this call was not from the efficacy of God's grace, but the liberty of man's will; for, according to this assertion, the love of God would be equal both to the damned and saved, and would not shine with a fairer lustre in heaven than it does in hell. The apostle wishes the Philippians to 'work out their salvation with fear and trembling,' and encourages them by this argument, because God is the author of all that good which they do. If the determination of the will, then, is from itself, is it not a brave ground to glory in ourselves? How shall any man give God the glory of his salvation? If it be said, God did enlighten their understandings by the preaching of the gospel, this is an illumination common to all; and the reason some believe and others not, is not from the gift of God, but from themselves; how can we give God a peculiar praise for that wherein there is no difference between the best and the worst of men? But the apostle says, God gives us to will, that is, the operation of our will, and not only the illumination of the understanding; therefore, that our wills do terminate in that which is good, we hold of God; the apostle does not say, God has given us power to will, but produced the will in us, and that of his good pleasure. If, therefore, God work no more in one than in another, there is no place for God's good pleasure, because there is no difference. Let us see with what kind of language the praise of God would be clothed, according to the doctrine of free will. A renewed man may say thus: Lord, I give thee thanks, that thou hast conferred upon me a supernatural grace; but thou did also give as much grace to my neighbour, but I added something to that which thou did supernaturally give me; and though I received no more than he did receive from thee, yet I did more than he, since he remains in his sin, and I am regenerate; therefore I have no more obligation to thee and the grace, than he that believes not; for, Lord, thou did not make me differ from the other, because he had equal gifts with me; but I made myself to differ, because I superadded my own velle to thy divine assistance. How much of the glory of God would be pared off by such a half-

witted praise as this! How low would be the acclamations of glorified saints in heaven! What foundation of pride in the creature, contrary to the intendment of the gospel, which is chiefly to humble man, if man were the cause of the most excellent work in himself! It would write vanity in a great measure upon that excellent exhortation of the apostle, 'Let him that glories, glory in the Lord,' 1 Cor. i. 31, since there would be a bottom for flesh to glory in his presence, contrary to the design of God in his works, ver. 29, which is, 'that no flesh should glory in his presence.'

Arg. 2. The second sort of arguments is drawn from the nature and state of man.

1. In creation. Man did not create himself; to be a new creature is more than to be a creature. As man contributed nothing to nature, so neither can he contribute anything to grace, any more than a passive capacity in respect of faculties, which yet are the gift of God to him, nothing of his own acquisition. The soul, though framed with all its faculties, is as little able to engrave the image of God upon itself, as the body of Adam, formed with all its parts and members, was able to infuse a living soul into itself; there is no reason therefore to attribute our creation to God, and regeneration, the glory and excellency of a creature, to ourselves. I know such similitudes ought not to be strained too high; yet when this doctrine agrees with other parts of Scripture, we may form an argument from this metaphor of creation whereby regeneration is expressed in Scripture. It is confessed by most, if not all, that no creature, not an angel, can be an instrument in the very act of creation of another thing, much less the chief efficient of its own creation, for creation is an act of omnipotence, and an incommunicable property of the Deity, not to be delegated to any creature. The creation of man, in a state of such perfection as to be endued with the image of God, was a greater work than simply the creation of his body or the essential faculties of his soul, yea, greater than the creation of the whole world, because the attributes of God did more lively appear in him, and particularly his holiness. The restoration then of this righteousness to man, after it is

lost, is a greater work than the first creation of his body and soul, it being the same thing with the conferring at first his original rectitude upon him. If man therefore could create this in his own soul after it is lost, he would do a greater work than simply the creation of a world. Surely there is as much power and wisdom required to the new creating righteousness in the heart, after it is perished, as there was in the placing it there at first; and then it will follow that none can new create it but an infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. If man therefore can create it in itself, he must have a wisdom, power, and holiness equal to that of God his first creator, for what could not be done by any creature at the first conferring it, but it was necessary that it should be a work of infinite power, cannot be done by a less power non, because the work is every whit as great; and no less power is requisite to a second creation of a thing after it is perished, than was necessary to the first creation of it, since this power of creation cannot be derived to any creature. As when life is gone from a fly, and the body of it dried and shrivelled up, all will grant that the restoring life to this fly must be done by an omnipotent power. The case is the same with us by nature, spiritual life, upon the fall, was wholly fled, no good thing dwells in our flesh, Rom. vii. 18, not one thing spiritually good, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, wholly flesh in every part of it. If the making a living fly or worm is above the power of nature, much more the creating of so glorious a fabric as grace in the soul. Man might as well have implanted the divine image in his soul at first, as restore it after it was lost. To ascribe such a power to man to raise himself is a greater power than Adam had by creation, because to restore a man's self from death to life is greater than to preserve the vital principle he has already, and act naturally from it.

2. In the state of innocence. Let us consider man in that, and it will appear he is unable to renew himself. If man did not keep himself up, with so great a stock of natural rectitude in paradise, how can he recover himself and that stock after it is lost? 'Man in his best estate is vanity; all Adam is all vanity.' In the estate of pure nature, he is vanity in respect of his mutability, much more vanity then in his

fallen state, from the experience of which Adam rightly called his second son Abel, vanity, Hebel, the word used here. How soon did the breath of the serpent melt the impression upon him! And if he did not by his innocent will preserve that purity which he had received, how can he by his corrupt will recover that purity which he has lost? If Adam had had a will to preserve, he might have stood, but in losing his will he lost his power; if he did not maintain his will in his rectitude, nor (as some say) could not without the grace of God, how can he, by the mere force of his own will, restore that lost rectitude to himself? If an universal integrity stood in need of grace to preserve it, an universal depravation stands in need of a more vigorous force than that of our will to eject it. If Adam, who had no disorders in nature to rectify, did not stand by his own will, it is not likely that we, who have strong habits to conquer, can be restored by the strength of our own wills. What nature did not do when it was sound, it is not likely to do a greater thing when it is wounded. We cannot now have more power than Adam had in innocence; but he was not then endued with a power to regenerate himself if he should fall, but death was pronounced, both spiritual and eternal. If temptations corrupted him, and if he, being in a good condition, did not maintain himself in it, but pass from a good condition to a bad, how can we, by the only liberty of our will, pass into a good one? Are temptations less powerful now than before? Is the devil less vigilant to take all occasions to subvert us? Suppose our wills were not so evil as they are, would it not be more easy for the enemy to draw the will to himself, when it is unresolved between two parts, when the guide of it is so easy clouded, than it was to draw Adam's will to evil from that good to which he might readily have determined himself? Adam had the greatest advantages human nature, in a natural way, was capable of; he was created with a fullness of reason. But how long do we converse with sense, which fastens upon temptations, before we come to a use of reason! After we are come to some smatterings of reason, and a growth in it, as we think, what whisperings and impulses to sin do we feel! What an easiness to embrace incentives, a deafness to contrary admonitions! What languishing, velleities, and palsy desires at best, for that which is good; a mighty mist and

darkness upon our understandings, irresolution in our wills? How can we with all these fetters be able of ourselves to put ourselves into a better state, and act against nature, which is impossible any creature can do but by a superior power!

8. Consider man also in the state of corruption.

(1.) If the will of man by nature were the cause of regeneration, it would follow that corruption were a cause of regeneration. 'The imagination of the heart of man is only evil, and that continually,' Gen. vi. 6. That which is evil, therefore, cannot be the cause of that which is man's greatest happiness. All actions are according to those innate qualities and habits which the agent has; all corrupted things act no otherwise than corruptly, because every act has no more in it than what the principle, which is the spring of the action, conveys to it. If the heart, then, be wicked, it cannot do anything but what is wicked, and a wicked act can never be the foundation of regeneration. If a corrupt man, as corrupt, can be the cause of regeneration, then he can act graciously, not only without a gracious habit, but by and from a corrupt habit. If the acts are corrupt, the product of them must be corrupt, for man, in renewing himself, must act either as corrupt or good. If as good, then he was renewed before he set about the renewing himself. The question will then be the same, How came he by that restoration to goodness? If as corrupt, then corruption is the spring of the noblest happiness of the creature. It would then follow that a man can perform acts of life before he lives; that vital acts may be exerted by dead principles; that sanctification can grow up from an unsanctified root; and that the will, with its old corruption, can be the cause of its elevation to another state, and that the old creature can perform a new creature's act before it be a new creature. Then a carnal mind, while it is carnal, may be subject to the law of God, which the Scriptures say it cannot be, Rom. viii. 7. Then those that are in the flesh may please God in an high manner, by the renewing themselves. This would be more strange than if we should see a crab-tree bring forth pomegranates; a corrupt tree would then bring forth good fruit, and that the highest

fruit, contrary to our Saviour's assertion, Mat. vii. 18. It would follow that the stony heart would be the cause of the fleshly, and so an effect would rise from a cause quite contrary to it, and the complying principle in man be wrought by the resisting principle. It is as much as if the fire should cool, and the water burn, by their own innate qualities. If the will of man corrupted be the cause of principles of grace, then the old creature brings forth the new. The image of the devil is the cause of producing the divine nature, and hell the cause of an heavenly principle. It would follow that an act of one kind can be produced by an habit of a contrary nature, and that a man can act graciously before he be gracious. Before grace, no action is essentially good, because there wants a gracious principle, whence it must receive its denomination as good. One act, then, of corrupted man, or a multitude of acts, cannot be the cause of grace, because they all centre in that denomination of evil. How the acts of the will, whereof not one can be called good till the will has a good principle, can produce so noble a work and habit as grace is, is not easily intelligible. Our being engrafted into the good olive tree is contrary to nature, Rom. xi. 24. Nature cannot naturally contribute to that which is opposite to it. We are wild by nature, our new implantation is contrary to nature. A good nature, therefore, cannot be the natural effect of a wild nature.

(2.) Since corruption, the power of man is mighty weak in naturals and morals, much more certainly in spirituals.

[1.] In naturals. No natural body that lies under a grievous disease can repair itself by its own power without some external assistance. A wounded member must be beholding to oils and plants for a cure. No man can cast out a disease when he will. He may be sick when he will, by eating that which is contrary to nature; but the cure does not depend upon his will, but upon physic. Outward medicines must recover that which he lost by his own wilfulness. The will indeed is *conditio sine qua non*; there must be a will to use the means, or a man must be forced to use them, as we deal with madmen and children which are unwilling to take physic. But who ever heard of a

man that could cure himself by his own will without the application of medicines? How can the soul then be restored to its vital integrity, by its own force? How can it change its own temper without some superior power operating upon nature? 'Man is like a wild ass's colt,' Job xi. 12. What wild creature ever tamed itself? If any say that the will of man, by the use of outward ordinances, can cure itself, it is answered, Those ordinances are operative, not in a physical but moral way, and therefore such an efficiency as is in plants and drugs cannot be expected from them. There must be an operation of our own wills to make them efficacious. But what shall cure the will where the disease principally lies, and the love of the disease is seated? Who shall remove the beloved inclination from the will? Can nature cast out nature, or Satan cast out Satan? What can make us willing? When we are made willing, the cure is half wrought, as, when a madman is willing to be cured of his infirmity, you can hardly count him any longer mad. The evil principles in the will will never aim at their own destruction. If this work of regeneration were only the curing of a man that were sick or wounded, it could not be done by the power of man's will, but by the application of some external medicine, though nature did concur with it. But it is not a sickness but a death, therefore cannot come under the influence of the will of man in the first work. Shall a man have more power to cure his soul of mortal sins, than to cure his body of mortal wounds?

[2.] In morals. Whence comes that intemperance, incontinence, luxury, which overflows mankind, who are carried to those things which impair health, even in meats and drinks, against the reluctance of reason, whose will is led not by reason but appetite, and choose not like men but beasts, under the notion of pleasant and lustful? Is not this from the will conducted by appetite? The temperance and continence opposite to this is not in Scripture counted part of the extraction of nature, but the gift of God: 1 Cor. vii. 7, 'But every man has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that,' speaking of continence. That which is God's gift is not merely the fruit of human will; for in the apostle's language they seem to be opposed, viz., to be from God, and from

ourselves; to be God's gift, and yet our own. In Eph. ii. 8 there is a plain antithesis, 'Not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' It is the same expression of that moral virtue of continence as it is of the divine grace of faith; 'it is the gift of God.' We are nothing in morals without God, no more than a beam is when the sun is clouded or withdraws its light. Shall we, then, allow a greater power to man in spiritual things than the Scripture does in morals? Shall the one be the gift of God, and the greater the acquisition of nature? Cannot the clay form itself into a vessel of moral honour? Shall it, then, be able to form itself into a vessel of grace? If we are not intrinsically sufficient of ourselves to exercise a moral act, since our natures are so overgrown with corruption, we are less sufficient of ourselves to exercise a supernatural act without a divine motion. Can anything assume an higher nature than what it originally has? Man has assumed a lower nature than that wherein he was created, which no creature besides him in this lower world has. Since he has brutified himself, and cannot moralise himself without common grace, how can he advance himself into a participation of the divine nature without special grace? How can man, so habitually evil, ascend up to an higher nature?

[3.] In this corrupt state of man, any one sin beloved will hold a man down from coming to God. It is impossible for a man, wedded in his heart to his riches, and bemired in earthly confidences, to enter into a renewed gospel state. 'How hard is it,' says our Saviour, 'for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God!' Mark x. 24, 25. This one corruption commanding in the heart, will hinder any resurrection by the power of nature, for on man's part Christ pronounces it impossible for such an one to enter into the kingdom of God, ver. 27, that is, into a gospel-state; and that upon the score of this single sin, which only appeared at this time in that young man. The like he pronounces of another sin, that of ambition: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?' That one fancy of the Jews, of a temporal conquering Messiah, did so possess their brains, that it barred the door against all the power of our Saviour's miracles; and the bare objective proposal of him, though

unanswerable by reason, could not remove this rooted fancy. One sin in the will, has more power than any imagination in the fancy. When Adam disfigured his nature by one sin, he had no strength to recover himself, though his righteousness was but very lately fled from him. We need not question his recovery of it, had it been in the power of his will to will it, and the power of his nature to regain it. If one sin, then, in the will, is a bar against the power of nature, what are all those lusts which swarm in the heart of man, and swell up this lake of natural venom in the soul? If one fetter stakes down a man to an impotency and impossibility, how great is man's weakness under all those fetters which every day he loads himself with! One string about a bird's leg will keep it from flying away, much more many.

Arg. 3. Another sort of considerations, is from the state of man under the gospel.

1. If regeneration depended on the will of man, what is the reason more do not receive the gospel than are seen by us to receive it? If the faculty of believing were given to all, then all would believe upon the promulgation of the gospel, because the gospel is 'the power of God to salvation,' Rom. i. 16. If it be the power of God in the outward preaching of it, then all would believe. If all do not believe, then some other secret power attends it, which makes it efficacious in one, not in another; it is 'to them that are saved' only, 'the power of God,' 1 Cor. i. 18; to others, though of great reason, foolishness. If the strength of arguments be the cause in one, what is the reason those arguments have not force upon another? What is that which makes the difference? All men have reason; and what is common reason does conduct all men more or less. If men could open the eyes of their mind to understand the excellency of gospel proposals, what is the reason that among those great multitudes to whom it is preached, so few in all ages have embraced it, though the things proposed are in themselves desirable, and suit so well, in respect of the blessedness promised, to the natural desire of man for happiness! When it was preached by the apostles! it was edged with miracles, attended with a remarkable holiness, yet they complained

that few received their report. When in that age, and succeeding ages, men have been so far from receiving it, that they have scoffed at it, persecuted with all their fury the professors of it. It has been thus despised, not only by the meanest and blindest sort of people, but by men of the most elevated understanding among the heathen philosophers, that could pierce into the depths of nature; and by the Jews too, who had the Messiah promised to them, expected him about that time, had so many prophecies deciphering him, which all met with their accomplishment in his person; who were also amazed at the miracles he wrought in his life, and those which accompanied his death. Does not all this show the natural blindness of man, that there is need of some higher power to open his eyes, besides the objective proposal, that he may acknowledge the excellency of those things which are presented to him? Do we not find men ready to acknowledge reason upon other accounts, to be wrought into warm affections by pathetical speeches? Why are they not as ready in this, if it were in the power of their own understandings and wills? Do we not find the wills of men averse from it, though in their consciences they approve of the doctrines of it? What is the reason a man is renewed at one time, and not before, when he has heard the same arguments inculcated many a time? Many drops would not work it before, and one drop works it not in an instant. Is it from the power of reason in man? What reason is there, then, that he should be mastered by one reason now, who was not mastered by the same reason, and many more as strong, formerly? Whence comes that light into the mind? What is the reason such a man was not regenerate before, when he has in some fits meditated upon former arguments, and afterwards one effects it, by a secret insinuation, without any previous meditation, and a sudden turn of the will is wrought? Can this be supposed to be from the will principally? Rather from some divine spirit spreading itself over the soul, and opening the passages of it which were before shut. That place, Mat. xi. 21, where our Saviour speaks of the Tyrians and Sidonians, if the gospel had been preached to them, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, does not prove the power of man to renew himself, but that they would have testified some outward

humiliation, as Ahab did at the threatening of Elijah; or rather, Christ exaggerates the hardness of the Jews' hearts in comparing them with the Tyrians in a hyperbolic manner of expression; as we do when we reproach a man for unmercifulness, we say, Had I entreated a Turk or barbarian as much, I should have bent him; not that we commend the humanity of the Turks, but aggravate the cruelty of those we have to do with. The proposal of an object is not sufficient without the inspiration of a will, whereby that concupiscence which masters that faculty may be overpowered.

2. If regeneration were the fruit of man's will, what is the reason that men convinced by the preaching of the gospel, and under great terrors too, find themselves unable to turn to God? What is the reason they are not presently renewed? Would they be torn with such horrors, and bear about them such racks in their consciences? Would they fill heaven and earth with complaints, were it in their own power to make themselves such as God commands them to be? If this were found in the more ignorant sort of people, the reason then might be charged upon their want of knowledge; but men of great wits and insight are filled with those complaints when God begins to rebuke them. And such as have a great deal of grace, as David, when God charges sin upon him: Ps. li. 10, 'Create in me a clean heart; renew in me a right spirit;' why should they solicit God for renewing grace, were it in the power of their own hand? Would any that fear God, as David did, mock him at such a rate, as to desire that of him which they are able to do without him? Were there a natural power in man to turn himself, why did not Judas, after his conscience lashed him, go to his Master's knees to desire pardon, rather than to the gibbet? He had long experience of the merciful disposition of his Master; had not grace given him to incline his will to such an act; yet Peter was turned after his denial of his Master, was there anything more by nature in him than in Judas? Or did Peter do that by the strength of his own will, which Judas did not do? No, the Scripture assures us, it was from the prevalence of Christ's prayer, a secret influence from Christ's look, stirring up that grace that was already in his heart; he might else have gone out cursing his Master as long

as he had lived: 'No man can come to me, except the Father draw him,' says our Saviour; though he be convinced, there must be the Father's traction as well as conviction to complete the work. All drawing implies a resistance, or at least a heaviness and indisposition in the thing so drawn, to come of itself. There is much difference between the proposal of the object, and the cause of our entertaining it. The object is the final cause which puts us upon motion; the object moves the will as an end, but it gives no power to move. If a man hear of an alms to be distributed at such a place, and he knows he stands in need of it, and has a desire to go to receive it, this knowledge of the necessity of it will not give him legs to go, if he be lame and unable to go; and he that does go to receive the alms, the desire to receive the alms puts him upon motion; but the intention of receiving the alms was not the efficient cause of that motion. If he had not had strength in him from some other cause than the alms, he could never have gone. Our motion to God must proceed from some higher cause than barely the proposal of the object, and a conviction by it.

4. Argument is drawn from the condition of the regenerate themselves. They are not able to rid themselves of the remainders of sin, much less can natural men of the body of sin. From the impotency after grace, we may rationally conclude a greater weakness in a natural man that has not one spark of grace within, to be blown up from any breathing of grace from without. The flesh lusts against the spirit in a regenerate man; how peaceably does it enjoy its dominion in a natural man, where there is no spirit to control it, and lust against it? Regenerate men 'cannot do the good they would,' and they 'do the evil which they hate,' Rom. vii. 16, 19, though they have a law of grace in their mind, set up in contradiction to the law of sin in their members. How can a natural man then, do so good a thing as the renewal of himself, and the destruction of his sin, who has no will to the one nor hatred of the other, who has the law of sin flourishing in him, and delights to read the characters of it and perform the wills of the flesh! If there be such an inability in a renewed man, who has a relish of God and the goodness of the law,

who has sin in part mortified, and cast out of the mind, to the members and suburbs, how much greater must the inability and resistance be when there is nothing but opposing flesh! What need the apostle issue out such heavy complaints: 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. vii. 24, if he had power in his own hands to free himself from this oppressing sin? If Paul, a living tree in God's garden, having both the root and sap of grace, be so wretched, so weak and unable to free himself from those suckers, how wretched then is a dead rotten stake, which has no spiritual root! How can he free himself from a total spiritual death, when this great apostle could not free himself from a partial spiritual death by all that stock of grace already received? If a good man finds it so laborious a task to engage against the relics of nature, and manage an open hostility against the wounded force of his sensual appetite, much more is it a difficult task for a natural man to row against the stream of unbroken nature, when the natural resistance is in its full strength, and the bent of nature standing point-blank against God. If a well-built and well-rigged ship, with her sails spread, can only lie floating upon the waves, and make no way till a fresh wind fills the sails, surely the rough timber that lies upon the ground can never fit and frame itself into a stately vessel.

5. It is against the whole order which God has set in the world, for any thing to be the cause of itself, or of a higher rank of being than what it has by nature. No effect is nobler than its cause; grace is more noble than nature. A seal cannot convey another image than what is stamped upon itself, and no further than its own dimensions; neither can nature stamp anything of grace upon the soul, because it has no such image engraver on it by God. Nature, though never so perfect in its own kind, can never produce a thing of higher perfection than itself; a plant can never produce a beast, nor a beast a man, nor a man an angel. No natural quality can be changed in any subject by itself, but by the introduction of some other quality superior to it. The fire can never freeze while it is fire; water cannot part with its coldness without some superior acting upon it; and can those that are naturally bad ever become spiritually good but by an

almighty power? No nature can exceed its own bounds, because nothing can exceed itself in acting. Whatsoever a natural man does is but natural, and can never amount to grace, without a change of nature and addition of a divine virtue. If any thing could rise above its own sphere, it would be stronger than itself. Nothing can never make itself something; the best apostle counts himself no better,—2 Cor. xii. 11, 'I am nothing,'—and entitles grace the sole benefactor of all his spiritual good, 2 Cor. xv. 10. What thing ever gave itself its own shape? Every piece of art is brought into figure by the workman, not by itself. Conformity to Christ is a fruit of the election of God, not first of the choice of our own wills. Rom. viii. 29, 'Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' The first link of the chain in the providential and in the gracious administration is in the hands of God. Hence in Scripture the gracious works in the soul run in the passive for the most part: 'Ye are justified, ye are sanctified;' not you justify or sanctify yourselves; though sanctification and purging and working out salvation is ascribed to them that have received grace and life, as acting afterwards for such ends, and producing such effects by the strength of grace received from God, and grace accompanying that first grace in its acts.

As we have proved that man by his own strength cannot renew himself, let us see whether he can do it by his additional capacities.

1. Man, by the help of instituted privileges, does not produce this work of regeneration in himself, without a supernatural grace attending them. Ordinances cannot renew a man, but the arm of God, which does manage them, edges them into efficacy, as the arm that wields the sword gives the blow. Means are the showers of heaven, but they can no more make the heart fruitful till some gracious principles be put in, than the beams of the sun, the dews of heaven, and the water pots of the clouds, can make a barren ground bring forth flowers, without a change of the nature of the soil, and new roots planted in it. All the spectacles in the world cannot cure a man's eyes, he must have a visible faculty to make use of them. Our

faculty must be cured before we can exercise it about objects or use means proper to that faculty. All persuasions will not prevail with a dead man; the fairest discourses, the most undeniable arguments, the most moving rhetoric will not stir or affect him, till God take away the stone from the grave and raise him to life. The report of the prophets will do no good without the revelation of God's arm, Isa. liii. 1, because all those things do not work in a physical way, as drugs and plasters, which attain their end without any active concurrence of the patient, but in a moral way; the will therefore and nature must first be charged before those can do any good. You can never by all your teachings teach a sheep to provide for winter, as an ant does, because it has no such instinct in its nature. If any thing were like to work upon a man, the most stupendous miracles were most likely to produce such an effect upon the reasons of men; yet those supernatural demonstrations without a man only cannot make him believe a truth. Miracles are a demonstration to the eye as well as preaching to the ear; though they be confessed to be above the strength of nature, yet all the spectators of them are not believers: John xii. 37, 'But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not.' Many of those that saw our Saviour's works did not believe his doctrine; nay, they irrationally ascribed them to the devil, when they could find no reason in the nature of them to charge them upon such a score. The raising Lazarus from the dead was as high a miracle as ever was wrought yet, though many of them believed, yet others did not, but accused him to the pharisees, who thereupon more vigorously took counsel to put him to death, John xi. 45, 46, 47, 53, though they acknowledged that he did many miracles. They had reason as well as others; the miracles were undeniable, as being acted before many witnesses; the natural force of them upon all reasons was equal, the considerations arising from them unanswerable. There were evil habits in the will, not removed by grace, which resisted the unanswerable reason of the miracles. What made the difference between them and those that believed? Why did not the wills of the enemies follow the undeniable reason, as well as the wills of others? Miracles may astonish men, but cannot convert them without a divine touch upon the heart. 1 Kings xviii. 39, the

people were astonished by that wonderful miracle of fire falling from heaven and consuming the sacrifice, and licking up the water in the trench; and some reverential resolutions were produced in them: they fell upon their faces and said, 'The Lord he is God;' they showed their zeal in taking Baal's prophets, and helping, or at least suffering, Elijah to slay them; yet those people revolted to idolatry, and continued so till their captivity. The easiness of faith upon the apparition and instruction of one risen from the dead was the opinion of one of the damned: Luke xvi. 80, 'If one went to them from the dead, they will repent;' but this opinion was contradicted by Abraham, ver. 31, who positively asserts, 'If they did not hear Moses and the prophets, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' If their wills were obstinate against the means God had appointed for their conversion, the same wills so corrupted would be as obstinate against the highest sort of miracles. If that, then, which is above the hand of nature to act, and bears the character of omnipotence upon the breasts of it, does not work upon men's hearts and wills of themselves, surely nature itself cannot turn the heart to God.

The two great dispensations of God are law and gospel; neither of these can of themselves work this.

(1.) The law. The law will instruct, not heal. It acquaints us with our duty, not our remedy; it irritates sin, not allays it; it exasperates our venom, but does not tame it; though it shows man his miserable condition, yet a man by it does not gain one drop of repentance. It tells us what we should do, but corrects not the enmity of our nature whereby we may do it. The apostle takes notice of the enmity of man to the law: Rom. v. 6, 7, 'Yet enemies', 'yet sinners.' That yet may refer to what he had spoken of the law in the chapter before. Though men had had so much time from the fall to recover themselves, and had so many advantages by the law and the ceremonies of it, yet all those years spent from the foundation of the world had produced no other effect than the weakening of them; as creatures that are wounded, by their strugglings waste their own strength. Yet sinners,

till this time sinners, whereby the load of sin which lay upon the world was made more heavy by the continual addition made to those heaps. The offence did rather abound by the law than was diminished: Rom. v. 20, 'The law was given that sin might abound.' Though it made a clear discovery of the will of God, yet it rather aggravated sin; it added no power to perform that will. The motions of sin were exasperated by it, *ex accidenti*, and brought forth fruit unto death; all the means by the law for the repressing of sin did rather inflame it. Sin could not be overcome by it, because the law was 'weak through the flesh;' that is, had not so much power as sin had; it was like a little water put upon fire, which did rather enrage than quell it: Rom. vii. 8, 9, 'Sin revived' when the law came, it had a new life, and the apostle found himself utterly unable to overpower it. There were, ver. 5, 'motions of sin,' "*pathemata*", not only a power in sin, but an enraged power, which adds to the strength of a person, 'sin slew him: taking occasion by the commandment,' ver. 10, and a dead man is wholly at the disposing of his conquerors. The law was 'holy,' it had an impression of God's holiness upon it, Rom. vii. 12-14, there was also equity and convenience in it, it was 'just and good,' and though these were considerations enough to spur men on to rid themselves of this tyrant sin, yet they could not, they had not strength enough to do it; though it was holy, just, and good, yet it was not strong enough to rescue them; and the reason of it, the apostle lays upon the difference in the nature of both: ver. 14, 'We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin;' there was an enmity in his nature to it, and therefore he must lie under the power of it till a mighty deliverer stepped in to conquer it. Do we find any better effect of the ceremonial law, which was the gospel in a mask, and which was the instrument of all the regenerations among the Jews? How few do we find renewed among them under that means which they enjoyed solely, and no other nation in the world partners with them in it! How frequent were their revolts, and rebellions, and idolatries, inconsistent with regeneration, we may read in Joshua and Judges. The inefficaciousness of means appears evidently in that nation which had greater advantages than any in the world besides; the covenants, sacrifices, oracles of God, warnings by

prophets, yet so frequently overgrown with idolatry from the time of their coming out of Egypt to the Babylonish captivity; and ten tribes wholly cashiered for it.

(2.) The gospel. Though the veil of ceremonies be taken off from it, and it appears open faced, yet till the veil be taken off the understandings of men, it will produce little fruit among them, 2 Cor. iii. 14. The gospel is plain, but only to him that understands, Prov. viii. 9, as the sun is clear, but only to him that has an eye to see it. The gospel itself cannot remove the blindness from the mind. The proposal of the object works no alteration in the faculty, without some acting on the faculty itself. The beams of the sun shining upon a blind man make no alteration in him. The Jews, to whom the gospel was preached by our Saviour himself, could not believe, because God blinded their eyes, &c., John xii. 39, 40. There must be a supernatural power, besides the proposal of the object, to take away this blindness and hardness which is the obstruction to the work of the gospel. Though the Son of God is come, and the gospel be preached, yet the understanding whereby we know is given us by him: 1 John v. 20, 'And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true;' the light of the gospel shines upon all, but all have not an eye given them to see it, and a will given them to embrace it. The mere doctrine of it does not regenerate any man; some have tasted of the heavenly gift, that is, have had some understanding of Christ, who is the heavenly gift, the Son given to us, Isa. ix. 6, and are partakers of some common illumination of the Holy Ghost, yet are not regenerate. Was not the gospel preached to the Jews, even by the mouth of our Saviour whom they crucified? And was it not preached to the Gentiles by the mouths of those apostles whom they persecuted? Were there not proposals that suited the natural desires of men for happiness, yet did not many that seemed to receive it, receive it not in the love of it? If God himself should appear to us in the likeness of a man, and preach to us as he did to Adam, if he did not overpower our hearts with an inward grace, he would do us no good at all by his declarations. We do not read of any work

immediately upon Adam at the promulgation of the gospel by God himself, though it appears that afterwards there was, by his instructing his sons to sacrifice, and his expectations of a Messiah. But we certainly know that our Saviour, God manifested in the flesh, declared the gospel in his own person, and found no success but where he touched the heart inwardly by the grace of his Spirit. All mere outward declarations are but suasions, and mere suasion cannot change and cure a disease or habit in nature. You may exhort an Ethiopian to turn himself white, or a lame man to go; but the most patheticall exhortations cannot procure such an effect without a greater power than that of the tongue to cure nature; you may as well think to raise a dead man by blowing in his mouth with a pair of bellows. Judas had enjoyed the best means that ever were, yet went out of the world unrenewed; and the thief upon the cross, who never perhaps was in any good company in his life till he came to the cross, nor ever heard Christ speak before, was renewed by the grace of God in the last hour.

2. Neither can a man renew himself by all his moral works, before faith. Our calling is not according to our works, but 'according to God's own purpose and grace,' 2 Tim. i. 9. Paul, before his conversion, was 'blameless as to the righteousness of the law,' Philip. iii. 6, yet this was loss; a bar rather to regeneration, than a means to further it. For all this legal comeliness he ranks himself, before his conversion, in the number of the dead: Eph. ii. 5, 'When we were dead in sins;' not you, but we, putting himself into the register of the dead. Whatsoever works a man can morally do before faith, cannot be the cause of spiritual life; they are not vital operations; if they were, they were then the effects of life, not the cause; the Scripture makes them the effects of grace: 'created to good works,' Eph. ii. 10. What is an effect cannot be the cause. The best works before grace are but a refined sensuality, they arise from self-love, centre in self-satisfaction, are therefore works of a different strain from those of grace, which are referred to a higher end, and to God's well-pleasing. In all works before grace there is no resignation of the soul to God in obedience; no self-denial of what stands in opposition to God in the

heart; no clear view of the evil of sin; no sound humiliation under the corruption of nature; no inward purification of the heart, but only a diligence in an external polishing. All those acts cannot produce an habit of a different kind from them. Let a man be stilted up with the highest natural excellency; let him be taller by the head and shoulders than all his neighbours in morality, those no more confer life upon him than the setting a statue upon an high pinnacle, near the beams of the sun, inspires it with a principle of motion. The increasing the perfection of one species can never mount the thing so increased to the perfection of another species. If you could vastly increase the heat of fire, you could never make it ascend to the perfection of a star. If you could increase mere moral works to the highest pitch they are capable of, they can never make you gracious, because grace is another species, and the nature of them must be changed to make them of another kind. All the moral actions in the world will never make our hearts, of themselves, of another kind than moral. Works make not the heart good, but a good heart makes the works good. It is not our walking in God's statutes materially, which procures us a new heart, but a new heart is in order before walking in God's statutes, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Our regeneration is no more wrought by works of our own than our justification. The rule of the apostle will hold good in this, as well as in the other: Rom. xi. 6, 'If it be of grace, it is not of works; otherwise grace is no more grace;' and faith is 'the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast,' Eph. ii. 9. And the apostle, Titus iii. 5, opposes the 'renewing of the Holy Ghost' to 'works of righteousness.' He excludes works from being the cause of salvation; and would they not be the cause of salvation, if they were the cause of the necessary condition of salvation?

Prop. 3. As man cannot prepare himself to this work, nor produce it, so he cannot co-operate with God in the first production of it.

We are no more co-workers with God in the first regeneration, than we were joint purchasers with Christ in redemption. The conversion

of the will to God is a voluntary act; but the regeneration of the will, or the planting new habits in the will, whereby it is enabled to turn to God, is without any concurrence of the will. Therefore, say some, we are active in *primo actu*, but not in *primo actus*; or we are active in *actu exercito*, but not in *actu signato*. Some say, the habit of faith is never created separate from an act, as the trees at the creation of the world were created with ripe fruit on them; but the tree, with the power of bearing fruit, and the fruit itself, were created at one and the same time by God. Yet though the habit be not separate at first from the act, yet there is no co-operation of the creature to the infusion of that habit, but there is to the act immediately flowing from that habit; for either that act of grace is voluntary or involuntary. If involuntary, it is not a gracious act; if voluntary, it must needs be; since the tone of the will is changed, then the creature concurs in that act; for the act of believing and repenting is the act of the creature. It is not God that repents and believes in us; but we repent and believe by virtue of that power which God has given us. In the first act, therefore, there is a concurrence of the creature; otherwise the creature could not be said to repent and believe, but something in the creature, without or against the will of the creature. But in the first power of believing and repenting, God is the sole agent. Jesus Christ is the sun that heals our natures, Mal. iv. 2; the rain that moistens our hearts: Ps. lxxii. 6, 'He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass.' What co-operation is there in the earth with the sun to the production of flowers, but by the softness it has received from the rain? It would else be parched up, and its fruits wither. The Holy Ghost does by his own power make us good trees; but we afterwards, by virtue of that power, work together with him, in bringing forth good fruit. Yet this is also a subordinate, not a co-ordinate working; rather a sub-operation than a co-operation.

1. The state wherein man is at his first renewal excludes any co-working with God. The description the apostle gives of a state of nature excludes all co-operation of the creature in the first renewal: Titus iii. 3, 'For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and

envy, hateful, and hating one another.' And Eph. ii. 2, 3, 'Among whom we all had our conversations in time past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' Every man is naturally taken up in the fulfilling the desires of the flesh; not only the Gentiles, to whom Paul writes, but himself; for he puts himself and the rest of the Jews in the number. In the second verse it was 'ye walked;' in ver. 3, it is 'we all;' and in Titus iii. 3, 'we ourselves.' We who had the oracles of God, that had greater privileges than others, were carried out with as strong an impetus naturally, till grace stopped the tide, and after stopping, turned it against nature. When the mind was thus prepossessed, and the will made the lusts of the flesh its work and trade, there was no likelihood of any co-operation with God in fulfilling his desires, till the bent of the heart was changed from the flesh and its principles. The heart is stone before grace. No stone can co-operate with any that would turn it into flesh, since it has no seed, causes, or principles of any fleshly nature in it. Since we are overwhelmed by the rubbish of our corrupted estate, we can no more co-operate to the removal of it, than a man buried under the ruins of a fallen house can contribute to the removal of that great weight that lies upon him. Neither would a man in that state help such a work, because his lusts are pleasures; he serves his lusts, which are pleasures as well as lusts, and therefore served with delight. There is naturally in man a greater resistance against the work of grace, than there is in the natural coldness of water against the heat of the fire, which yet penetrates into all parts of the water.

2. Regeneration is a new principle. What operation can there be before a principle of action? All co-operation supposes some principle of working; as *actus secundus* supposes *actum primum*. But a man, before his first regeneration, is blind in his mind, perverse in his will, rebellious in his affections, unable to know the truth, unable to do good, dead in sin. If he does co-operate with God before the habit be settled, then we can act before we have a power to act. We can please God in taking his part, and joining issue with him, before we have a gracious principle; which is contrary to the Scripture, which tells us we are first begotten of God before we can keep

ourselves, or exert one act for the bettering ourselves: 1 John v. 18, 'He that is begotten of God keeps himself.' The preservation of ourselves, and every act tending thereto, follows the infusion of the first principle. And the apostle Paul implies, that God works in us to will before we work: Philip. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God works in you both to will and to do,' &c. The apostle supposes not any operation in them before, because he supposes not their working without God's giving them a will, the act of volition. The working of the creature supposes some divine work first upon the will. Did the dust of the ground, whereof Adam's body was formed, co-work with God in figuring it into a body? or does the body contribute any more than a passive receptivity to the infusion of the rational soul? Lazarus did not concur with Christ till his powerful voice infused life and strength into him. His rising and walking was from a power conveyed, wherein Christ did work; but there was no co-working in him in the conveyance of that power. We do not say that a man co-works with the sun in enlightening a room, because he opens the shuts which barred out the light; the opening whereof is no cause of the sun's shining, but a *conditio sine qua non*. But do we so much in the first renewal? It is God alone who darts his beams, and opens our hearts too, to admit it: Acts xvi. 14, it is said, 'the Lord opened Lydia's heart.' The will cannot concur in the actual infusion of a gracious principle, because it has no spark in itself by nature, suitable to that principle which is bringing it into the soul itself. The shining of God into the soul is compared to the chasing away that darkness which at the first creation was over the face of the deep: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.' What co-working was there in that darkness to remove itself, but a necessity upon it to obey the command of God who had the sovereign power over his own works? If the creature did co-work with God at first, it could no more be said to be dead than a man asleep may be said to be dead; and grace were only an awakening, not an enlivening.

3. If there were any co-working of the will with God in the first infusion of grace, God would not be so much the author of grace as he is of nature in any other creature. The creature would share with him in the first principle of its action, which no creature in the world can be said to do. It would rather be a concourse of God than a creation; but all the terms whereby God sets forth himself in the work of regeneration import more than a bare concourse or a co-operation with the creature: 'I will take away the heart of stone; I will write my law in their hearts; I will put my Spirit into them,' are loftier expressions than are used to signify a co-working only. He appropriates the whole work to himself, without interesting the creature in any active concurrence, any more than at his creation.

4. If the will of man did co-work with God in regeneration, it would then share part of the glory of God. The whole glory would not belong to God, which he challenges to himself in Scripture. He were then but an half Saviour, an half new creator. We should be in joint commission with him, by the power of our own wills, in the first motion. If creation and resurrection are acts of an almighty power, man co-operating with him in the very act of creation and resurrection would partake with God's almightiness, and in some sort be co-equal with him, and a joint partner with God in a work which required almightiness for the effecting it. Surely since the same power which raised Christ from the dead works first in every believer for his spiritual resurrection, he contributes no more to it than the body of Christ in the grave did to its resurrection, which was a work not of his humanity, but divinity. Plucking out of the power of Satan is an effect of the power of grace, and God's gift, 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. God first 'gives repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.' A slave, whose hands and feet are laden with fetters, can contribute nothing to his deliverance but a will and desire to be delivered; nor that, if he be in love with his fetters, which is the case of every one of us by nature, who are as fond to be in the devil's custody as he is to have us. What co-operation can there be in this ease? Whatsoever is an act of mercy, and an act of truth in God, he is to have the sole praise of; it does not in any sort belong to the

creature. The psalmist emphatically excludes man from it: Ps. cxv. 1, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not to us, but unto the name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.' Not unto us, twice repeated, but to thy name give glory. Do believers beg of God the giving glory to himself, and not unto them; and will they contradict their prayers, by sharing the praise with God? This is expressed for deliverances. Much less does any praise and glory belong to the creature for the most excellent deliverance of all, from the power of sin, Satan, and death.

5. How can men co-work with God in the first regeneration, when they must needs acknowledge that in the progress of it they are oftener hinderers than furtherers of it? If God did not work more strongly in us than the best of us do in ourselves, and breathe a willingness into our wills, after regeneration, we should come short of salvation for all the first stock. How often do the best complain of their disability! Is it not frequent in the mouths of Christians in all ages as well as of Paul: Rom. vii. 18, 'To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not'? How easily are our purposes shaken, and our strength staggers! Can we then co-operate with God, when we have no purpose, no strength? Let every man's experience speak for himself, how apt he is to check the motions of the Spirit; to let our Saviour stand and knock, and not open. What strugglings of the body of death! What indispositions in an holy course! Is there not often a kind of rustiness of soul, cold damps in spiritual duties? What faint hands in any holy work! What ebbs and floods, ups and downs in his heart! What feeble knees in his walk! What hung-down heads in laying hold of Christ in repeated acts of faith! What frequent returns of spiritual lethargies! And all this after habitual grace. If our co-operations with God after grace received, are but a remove from non-acting, next neighbours to no working at all, we must conclude it to be worse with man before grace was settled in the soul, and that there was no active concurrence with it in any manner of acting; otherwise there would be as much co-operation before the implantation of habitual grace as after, which is

hard to be imagined, that a man should be no stronger with grace received than under the want of it.

Prop. 4. Man by his own strength cannot actuate grace after it is received.

To what purpose did the saints of old pray to quicken them, if they stood not in as much need of exciting grace from God as of renewing grace: Ps lxxx. 18, 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name;' Ps. cxix. 25, 27 and many places in that psalm. The new creature is little better than an infant in the best, and cannot go unless God bear it in his arms, as he speaks of Ephraim, Hosea xi. 1, 3. They cannot move unless led by the Spirit. The child has a principle of motion in it, but cannot go without the assistance of the nurse; nor the soul, without the assistance of God, actuate that principle of grace. Habitual grace is the instrument, not the principal agent. A sword, though it has an edge, cuts nothing till it be moved by some strong arm. The first principle of the motion of grace resides in God. Purification in its progress is attributed to faith as an instrument, but to God as a principal agent. It is said, Acts xv. 8, 9, 'God gave them the Holy Ghost, as he did to us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.' Yet the will of man concurs in this actuating of faith, as a subordinate cause: 1 John iii. 3, a man is said to 'purify himself by hope.' A well-rigged soul, with its habit of grace spread, as well as a ship with its sails, must wait the leisure of the wind before it move. Paul acknowledges his acting for the service of God to be not from himself principally: 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' It was the grace of God used me as an instrument; the glory must not stick to my fingers; it was the grace of God with me, affording strength and help to that grace which was in me. If this concurrence of God be necessary in all natural actions, it is much more in the spiritual frame of the soul to keep it up, and to keep it acting. It is not we that work to will and to do, but God works to will and to do. It is to be considered that the apostle writes to them that are in a state of grace, exhorting them to a progress in salvation depending upon God, who works the after will

and the alter doing, as well as the first will and compliance with the grace of God. Do we not find renewed men not able, with all the grace they have, to quicken themselves sometimes in duty? What is the reason they lie spiritless before God, often with breathings, sighs, and groans for quickening, and it is far from them? They stir themselves up, meditate, summon up all the powerful considerations they can, yet find themselves empty of a spiritual vigour. Surely there is some principal power wanting to spirit their grace, and make them leap in duty; some invisible strength has withdrawn itself, which did before conduct and breathe upon them, and fill their souls with a divine fire. They find it not in the power of the hand of their own will to actuate and quicken the grace they have, much less is it in the power of any man's hand to renew himself. The work of grace is not only a traction at the first, but a continual traction, as conservation is a continual creation: 'Draw me, and we will run after thee,' Cant. i. 4. The church there speaks it as regenerate, desiring a continual traction from God, as the first ground of her race after Christ. Life she had, for she promises to run; yet this race she could not begin nor continue, without traction from God.

Prop. 5. Man cannot by the power of his own will preserve grace in himself.

Our Saviour's prayer to his Father, John xvii. 11, 15, to 'keep them,' imports, that they were too weak to keep themselves: 'Unless the Lord keep the city, in vain does the watchman wake,' Ps. cxxvii. 1. Unless God preserve the soul, all the watchfulness of habitual grace will be to little purpose. All creatures, if God hide his face, are troubled, Ps. civ. 29, much more the new creature, whose strength does more necessarily depend upon God, because of its powerful opposites. Were it not for the assisting grace of God, the unruly lusts in our hearts would soon bear down habitual grace in the best. How many temptations are prevented which we cannot foresee! How many corruptions are restrained, which the best grace cannot fully conquer! How is the tide and torrent of these waters beaten back, which otherwise would go over our heads! The poor will of Adam

preserved him not against a temptation, when he had no indwelling corruption to betray him; nor did the will of the angels, who had no temptation, keep them from forsaking their habitation. How can any renewed man, alive with all his grace, merely by the strength of his own will, keep himself from sinking down in the lake of his old corruption? He that would ask the fallen angels in the midst of their torments, what was the reason of their fall, would receive no other answer but that their strength was unsuccessful, because it depended upon their own will. The knowledge of the gospel and evangelical impressions are never like to keep up without the Holy Ghost: 2 Tim. i. 14, 'That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep, by the Holy Ghost,' not by thine own strength. It we cannot keep a form of sound words, which, as it is knowledge, is more agreeable to the natural appetite of man, without the Holy Ghost, much less can we preserve grace in us, which is more stomached by corrupt nature. Neither are good frames like to be preserved in us without God's keeping: 1 Chron. xxix. 18, 'keep this in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people.' Our hearts will not let any good motion sink into them, unless God give a pondus to his own motion. If, then, regenerate men are unable of themselves to actuate and preserve grace received, much more inability is there in a natural man to gain that which he has not a spark of in his own nature, but an enmity to.

Quest. But, do you divest man of all power, all freedom of will? Is he able to do nothing in order to regeneration?

Ans. We do not divest man of all power; therefore, before we consider what power belongs to man, we may consider,

(1.) Man simply in his fall. So man lost all his natural ability by his first sin, and was the meritorious cause of his losing supernatural grace, which God by a judicial act removed from him, and in this state man had no ability unto anything morally good. Nothing was due to Adam but the state of the devils, who have no affection to anything morally good, but always do that which is in its own nature

evil, and always sin with evil intentions. Adam would have been thus, had the threatening, according to the tenor of it, been executed; there had been no common affections, no more light in his understanding than what might have served for his torment, as wicked men, after death, are deprived in a judicial way of that light in their minds, those velleities and good motions which sometime hovered in them, those affections which were here exercised now and then towards God. The sentence given against Adam is then pronounced against them, and they laid under the final execution of it, which was to die the death: Gen. ii. 17, 'Thou shalt surely die,' a death of all morality, all affections to anything that has the resemblance of goodness. It might be a prediction of what would be in course, as well as what would be inflicted in way of judicial recompense. None of these things can be looked for in Adam, or any of his posterity, as fallen; not a grain of life, or anything tending that way, was due to him, but only death.

(2.) Man is to be considered as respited from the present suffering this sentence by the intervention of Christ; whereby he is put into another way of probation. So those common notions in our understandings, and common motions in our wills and affections, so far as they have anything of moral goodness, are a new gift to our natures by virtue of the mediation of Christ. In which sense he may be said to 'taste death for every man,' Heb. ii. 9, and be 'a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.' By virtue of which promised death, some sparks of moral goodness are preserved in man. Thus his 'life was the light of men;' and he is 'The light that lightens every man that comes into the world,' which sets the candle of the Lord in the spirit of man a-burning and sparkling, John i. 9, and upholds all things by his mediatory as well as divine power, Heb. i. 3, which else would have sunk into the abyss. By virtue of this mediation, some power is given back to man, as a new donation, yet not so much as that he is able by it to regenerate himself; and whatsoever power man has, is originally from this cause, and grows not up from the stock of nature, but from common grace.

Which common grace is either,

[1.] More general, to all men. Whereby those divine sparks in their understandings, and whatsoever is morally praiseworthy in them, is kept up by the grace of God, which was the cause that Christ tasted death for every man: Heb. ii. 9, 'That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man;' whereby the apostle seems to intimate, that by this grace, and this death of Christ, any remainders of that honour and glory wherewith God crowned man at first are kept upon his head; as will appear, if you consider the eighth Psalm, whence the apostle cites the words which are the ground of his discourse of the death of Christ.

[2.] More particular common grace, to men under the preaching of the gospel. Which grace men 'turn into wantonness' or lasciviousness, Jude 4. Grace they had, or the gospel of grace, but the wantonness of their nature prevailed against the intimations of grace to them. Besides this common grace, there is a more special grace to the regenerate, the more peculiar fruit of Christ's mediation and death for them. All this, and whatsoever else you can conceive that has but a face of comeliness in man, is not the birth of fallen nature abstracted from this mediation. Therefore when the Gentiles are said to 'do by nature the things contained in the law,' it is not to be understood of nature merely as fallen, for that could do no such thing; but of nature in this new state of probation, by the interposition of Christ the mediator, whose powerful word upheld all things, and kept up those broken fragments of the two tables of law, though dark and obscure. And considering God's design of setting forth the gospel to the world, there was a necessity of those relics, both in the understanding, and affections, and desire for happiness, to render men capable of receiving the gospel, and those inexcusable that would reject it. So that by this mediation of Christ, the state of mankind is different since the fall from that of the evil angels or devils. For man has, just, a power of doing that which is in its own nature good; secondly, a power of doing good with a good intention; not indeed supremely for the glory of God, but for the good of his

country, the good of his neighbours, the good of the world, which was necessary for the soldering together human societies, so that sometimes even in sins man has good intentions. Whereas the devil does always that which in its own nature is evil, and always sins with evil intentions. Without this mediation, every man had been as very a slave to sin as the devil; though he be naturally a slave to sin, yet not in that full measure the devil is, unless left in a judicial manner by God upon high provocations.

There is then a liberty of will in man; and some power there is left in man.

And here I shall show,

1. What kind of liberty this is.
2. That there is some liberty in man.
3. How far the power of man by common grace does extend.

Quest. First, what kind of liberty this is.

Ans. 1. The essential liberty of the will remains. Liberty is of the essence of the will, and cannot be taken away without extinction of the nature of man; it is free from compulsion, otherwise it were a not-will, which liberty does not consist in a choice of good or evil. For even under this depravation it cannot choose evil qua malum, as such. It can choose nothing but what appears to it under the notion of good; though it many times embraces that which is materially evil, yet the formal consideration upon which it embraces it is as good, either in reality or in appearance; as the sight in every colour sees light. And when it is carried out to that which is really evil, and only apparently good, it is by force of those habits in the understanding, which make it give a false judgment; or, by the power of the sensitive appetite, which hurries it on to the object proposed, but always it respects in its motion everything as good, either an honest, pleasant, or profitable good.

Ans. 2. Though the essential liberty of the will remains, yet the rectitude whereby it might have been free only to that which was really good is lost. Man by creation had a freedom of will to choose that which was really good, yet had a mutability, and could choose evil; and by choosing evil rather than good, sank his posterity into this depraved liberty which now remains. Though since the fall man is preserved in his natural freedom, and cannot be forced, yet he has not a power to will well, because that righteous principle whereby he did will well is departed from him; yet because the essential freedom due to his nature remains, whatsoever he wills he wills freely, so that though something the will wills may be materially good, yet it wills that good in an ill manner, for being overcome naturally by sin man can do nothing but according to that law which sin, as a master that has conquered him, imposes upon him: 2 Peter ii. 19, 'They themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.' And of all men in a state of nature, though under common grace, the apostle pronounces, Rom. iii. 11, that 'there is none that seeks after God;' that is, in any thing they do, though never so good, they seek not God but themselves. 'There is no fear of God,' no respect to God 'before their eyes,' ver. 18, whence it comes to pass, that by reason of this dominion of sin nothing can be done well. Hence man is said to be dead; not that the life which does constitute the nature of the soul is taken away, but that which renders it fit for performing actions pleasing to God; for such a life does consist, not in the nature of the soul or will, but in that habitual integrity which was in man by creation. As the body when it is dead does not cease to be a body, but ceases to be animated, by the separation of the soul from it, so the soul may be truly said to be dead, though the power of the soul be not taken away. If the spiritual rectitude in that power which did constitute it spiritually living be departed, by the removal of this righteousness, the will is not free to spiritual things, though it be to natural. It is 'free among the dead,' as the psalmist speaks of himself; Ps. lxxxviii. 5; free to dead works, not to living; to this or that dead work, to any work within the verge of sinning, as a bird in a large

cage may skip this way and that way by its natural spontaneous motion, but still within the cage.

Ans. 3. Therefore, though man has lost this liberty to good, he retains a freedom to the commission of sin, under the necessity of sinning. This freedom is a power of choice and election of a thing, which differs from that spontaneity which is in beasts, who act by instinct, without any reasoning in the case, because they want a reasoning power. Though man be under a necessity of sinning, yet it is not a necessity of constraint, but a necessity of immutability, which is consistent with liberty, though the other be not. A creature may be unchangeably carried to good or evil, and yet be free in both: to good, as the angels and glorified saints cannot will to sin, because their wills are immutably determined to good. They cannot but praise and love God, yet they freely do both, and our Saviour did freely do that good which he could not but do by reason of his hypostatical union, otherwise he could not have merited, for all merit requires the concurrence of the will. To evil; the devils cannot will to do good, because their wills are unchangeably determined to evil, yet they sin as freely as if there were no immutable necessity upon them. So man cannot but naturally sin in all that he does yet he is not constrained to sin, but sins as freely and voluntarily as if there were no necessity upon his nature to corruption,—as freely as if God had not foreseen that he would do so. Man sins with as great a pleasure as if he were wholly independent upon the providence of God, and the more a man is delighted with sin, the greater freedom there is in it. Hence the Scripture lays sin upon the choice of man: Isa. lxvi. 3, 4, 'They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations.' They have their own ways, that is, ways proper to corrupt man; but they chose them and delighted in them. Man is voluntary under his depravation, free in his aversion from God, a free necessity, a delightful immutability. The will cannot be compelled to will that which it would not, or not to will that which it would. Then sin arises from a settled habit, the freer is a man in his sin; and though he cannot act otherwise than according to that habit, yet his actions are most voluntary, because he is the cause of that habit

which he acquired by evil acts, and by succeeding acts testifies his approbation of it.

2. That there is some liberty in man, some power in man. Not indeed such a power as the Jews thought man had naturally, of exercising himself about anything that God should reveal, without the infusion of a new power, to enable him to act that which God required by supernatural revelation. Some power and liberty must be allowed,

(1.) To clear the justice of God. No just man will punish another for not doing that which was simply and physically impossible; and 'shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' It is a good speech of Austin, If there were not the grace of God, how could the world be saved? If there were not free will, how could the world be judged? If man were divested of all kind of liberty, he might have some excuse for himself; but since the Scripture pronounces men without excuse, Rom. i. 20, some power must be granted to clear the equity of God's justice. No man sins in that which he is under an inevitable constraint to do, and so would be unjustly punished. It does not appear that God does condemn any man simply for not being regenerate, but for not using the means appointed to such an end, for not avoiding those sins which hindered his regeneration, and which might have been avoided by him if he would, though indeed every unregenerate man will be condemned. The pouring out the wrath of God upon man is principally for those sins which they might have refrained, and had sufficient reason against: Eph. v. 6, for 'because of these things,' that is, for those gross sins which they might have avoided, mentioned ver. 5, 'comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience,' "apeithias"; men that would not be persuaded, which obstinacy was in their will. As these are the causes of God's wrath, so these will be alleged as the principal reasons of the last sentence. And our Saviour in his last judgment does not charge men with their unregeneracy, but with their omissions of what they might have done, and that easily; and commissions which they might have avoided, Mat. xxv. 41-43, with their not feeding his members when they were hungry, &c., which were things as much in their

power as anything in the world. And the reason Christ renders of the sentence passed upon men, to depart from him, was their working of iniquity: Mat. vii. 23, 'Depart from me, you that work iniquity,' that work it voluntarily, and work that you might have forborne. Though unregeneracy does exclude a man from heaven, as a condition without which a man cannot come there, yet nothing of this is mentioned in the last sentence. If man had a firm will to turn to God, and had not then a power conferred upon him to turn, I know not what to say; but man has no will to turn, yea, he has no will to do those things which he might do. Supposing man has a power to avoid such and such sins, he is justly punished for not making use of that power. Nay, supposing he had no power to avoid them, yet if his will be set to that sin he is justly condemned, not for want of power, but for the delight his will took in it. From which delight in it, it may be gathered that if he had had a power to have shunned it, he would not have shunned it. If a man be assaulted by murderers that will cut his throat, if he will not use his power against them, but take a pleasure in having his throat cut, is not this man a self-murderer, both in the judgment of God and man? Let me use another illustration, since the end of all our preaching should be to humble man and clear God. If a man be cast out of an high tower, and be pleased with his fall, would he not be justly worthy of it, and to be neglected by men, not because he did not help himself in his fall, for that was not in his own power, but because he was mightily pleased and contented with his fall, and with such a pleasure, that if he had been able to have helped himself he would not? So though man be fallen in Adam, yet when he comes to discern between good and evil, he commits the evil with pleasure. So that supposing he had no power to avoid sins, yet he is worthy of punishment because he does it delightfully. Whence it may be concluded, if he had had power to avoid it, he would not, because his will is so malignant.

(2.) Without some liberty in the will, free from necessity of compulsion, man would not be capable of sin, nor of moral goodness. No human law does impute that for a vice, or a virtue, to which a man is carried by constraint, without any power to avoid. Where

anything is done without a will, it is not an human action. Beasts therefore are not capable of sin, because they want reason and will. If man had not liberty of will, he would be as a beast, which has only a spontaneous power of motion without reason. Sin could not be charged upon man, as God does all along: Ps. xcv. 10, 'It is a people that do err in their hearts;' and Ps. cxix. 21, 'Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.' It had been no error in them, if they had not done it voluntarily. The erring from God's commandments arises from pride of heart, they had not else deserved a rebuke. Who would chide a clock for going wrong, which has no voluntary motion? Man without a liberty of will could not be the author of his own actions, and sin could no more be imputed to him, than the irregular motion of a watch can be imputed to the watch itself, but rather to the workman or governor of it. Without a voluntary power, man would be as all engine, moved only with springs, and human laws, which punish any crime, would be as ridiculous as Xerxes' whipping the sea, because it would not stop its tide. Neither were any praise due to man for any moral virtue, no more than praise is due to a lifeless picture for being so beautiful, or to the limner's pencil for making it so: the praise is due to the artist, not to the instrument.

(3.) Without some liberty and power of motion in the will, all the reason of man, and those notions in the understanding, left by the virtue of Christ's mediatory interposition, would be to no purpose. The reason why men do err is because they do not take right ways of judging according to those means they have: 'Ye err,' says our Saviour, 'not knowing the Scripture, nor the power of God,' Mat. xxii. 29. They have a faculty of judgment, and means whereby to judge, which would prevent errors. There is therefore some suitable power in man to follow the judgment of reason, if he will. He would be in vain endowed with that power of reasoning, if there were not a power of motion in some measure suitable to that reason. The authority of judging in the understanding would be wholly insignificant; all debates about any object proposed would be to no end, if the will had not a liberty to follow that judgment. How can God make appeals to

men as he does, if they had not a power of judging that they ought to have done otherwise, and might have done otherwise than they did? Though man has not a sufficient light left in his nature for salvation, yet he has such a light of reason in him to which he might be more faithful in his motions than he is, otherwise the apostle could not have argued from that light the heathens had to their conviction, as he does, Rom. i. 19-21, &c., and manifests their unfaithfulness to that truth which God had manifested to them, and manifested in them in their nature. Most sins do arise from the neglect of being guided by that light which is in men.

(4.) The glory of God's wisdom in the government of the world would not have been so conspicuous, if some liberty had not been allowed to the will. It is no great matter to keep in order an inanimate thing, as a clock that must obey a necessity; God would have been but like a good clock-keeper only, as ones says. But how much does it make for the wisdom of God, to make the free motions of his creature, the various humours in the will of man, centre at last in his own glory, contrary to the will and design of the creature, that they have their natural motions, their voluntary motions, and God superintends over them, and moves them according to his own will regularly, according to their nature, without crossing them? 'The determinate counsel of God,' in the death of our Saviour, and the free will of Pilate and the Jews, meet in the same point: God acting wisely, graciously, justly; their wills acting freely and naturally, reduced, without injury to their nature, to the due point of God's will.

Quest. 3. The third question, How far does the power of man by common grace extend?

Ans. As in a body deprived of the soul there is some power of growth left in the hair and nails, so some power is left in the soul, though it be spiritually dead. As a regenerate man by special grace has a power of doing that which is spiritually good, so a natural man by common grace has a power of doing things morally good, if he will. God keeps the key of regenerating grace in his own hands, and unlocks what

hearts he pleases, and brings in a vital spirit into whom he pleases; but there is by common grace an ability in men to do more than they do, but that they harbour, cherish, and increase those vicious inclinations in their own souls. But let it be remembered that this power is not to be abstracted from God's common grace, as the power of a renewed man after grace is not to be abstracted from special grace, nor the natural powers of motion to the actual motion, not to be abstracted from God's general providential concurrence.

(1.) Man has a power by common grace to avoid many sins: I say, a power by common grace; for sometime, upon the neglecting the conduct of natural light, God pulls up the sluice of his restraining grace, lets out the torrent of their natural corruption upon them, which forcibly hurries them to all kind of wickedness; as it is said, Rom. vii. 24, 26, 'Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts; for this cause God gave them up to vile affections.' Therefore, and for this cause, that is, for going contrary to that natural light they had, God let the lusts of their own hearts, which he had restrained, have their full swing against them. In this case sin can no more be avoided, than a man can stop a torrent.

Again; though a man, as he is in a state of nature, cannot but do evil, yet he is not necessitated to this or that kind of sin, but he may avoid this or that pro hic and nunc in particular, though he cannot in general; as a man who has the liberty of walking where he pleases in a prison, he may choose whether he will come into this or that walk within the liberty of the prison; but let him move which way he will, he is a prisoner still.

Quest. If it be said, if a man has power to avoid this or that sin, why may he not avoid all?

Ans. I answer, If he had power to avoid all, he would be restored to the state of Adam. But the reason is this, the power to avoid this or that particular sin arises from a particular cause, the natural

subjection of appetite to reason, the lightness of temptation; or if the temptation be more vehement, the stirring up reason and pressing considerations against it; but the power to shun all sin depends upon the subordination of the faculties one to another, in the due order of their creation, and an universal subjection of them to God. Though a man, by a careful watch, may withstand a particular temptation, yet as long as he is alienated from God, and has corrupt habits in him, which are prone to sinful acts, he will one time or other, by some sudden temptation, be carried out according to his natural inclination, before he is able to premeditate, and set reason on work. And sometimes the motions to sin come in such troops, that he cannot stir up his force against all, so that while he is combating against one, another comes behind and surprises him. As another Romanist illustrates it, a vessel has three holes to leak at; a man with two hands may stop two of them, which he will, but the third will remain open of necessity. None will say that the devil can avoid all sin in general, and become holy for the future, because his will is determined to sin, but this or that individual act of sin he may; for he may choose whether he will assault this man or that with such a temptation, or whether at this time or another. As if two commands were given to the good angels, and it be left to their wills whether they will do that or the other, though they cannot but do good, because their wills are so determined, yet they have a liberty to choose which command they will at present follow. And the reason of this is this: there is no physical necessity upon a man to this or that sin, as there is that the fire should burn. Lusts only offer themselves; they have no force upon a man, but be his own will; they have no authority from God to compel him; then God should be the author of sin. Satan can give no commission to them to break open our hearts; and though he be a strong adversary, he cannot break them open. If the door be open, it is our own act. Is there any necessity upon a man to run into this or that infectious company, or drink brimful cups, till he has drowned both his reason and sentiments of morality? Has he not power to quell many incentives to sin? Show me that man in the world that, upon serious consideration, would say, it is utterly impossible for him to avoid this or that particular sin when he is

tempted to it. What men do in this case, they do willingly, though a strong temptation may be the first motive of it. It is said, Hos. v. 11, 'Ephraim willingly walked after the commandment,' though the first motive to it was the command of their prince Jeroboam.

To evidence this, let me do it by some queries, which may both satisfy that we divest not man of all power, and prevent the ill use men may make of this doctrine, to encourage sluggishness.

1. Cannot you avoid this or that foreseen occasion of sin? Cannot he that knows how prone he is to overthrow his reason when the wine sparkles in the glass, avoid coming within the sight of it? What force is there upon his legs to go, or his hands to take the cup? Can we not starve those affections we have to this or that particular sin, by neglecting the means to feed them? If a man stood by with a drawn sword to stab you if you went into such a place, could you not forbear going in? What is the reason? Fear. And why might not a natural fear of God, heightened by consideration, be of as much force with you as the fear of man, unless atheism has swallowed up all sentiments of a Deity? Do you not rather wish for opportunities, and court a temptation? put you heads out of the window, with Sisera's mother; why is the chariot of the devil so long a coming? It is said, Prov. xxi. 10, 'The soul of the wicked desires evil.'

2. Have you not a power to avoid gross sins? Is there any force upon men, to open, sensual sins? Have they not a power to abstain from fleshly lusts? Has not the will a commanding power over the members? What hinders it from exercising that power? The members are not forced, but they are 'yielded up' by consent of the will to sin, Rom. vi. 19. Had not Achan as much natural power to forbear taking the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment, as the rest of that vast number of the Israelites? Not one of their hands touched any of the spoil. Had he not as much power as any of them to have restrained his hands, though he could not quench his covetousness? The law of nature tells us, we ought not to do that to another which we would not have done to ourselves. Have we not as

much power to observe this as the Gentiles, who did by nature the things contained in the law? Why may not a man's will command his tongue to speak that which is true, as well as that which is false? Is there not power to control it from speaking blasphemy, and belching out cursed oaths? Cannot you command the hand to forbear striking another wrongfully? Has not a murderer power to keep his sword in his scabbard, as well as to sheath it in his neighbour's bowels? Can any man say, that there was one gross sin in the whole course of his life, but he had a power to avoid it if he would? Forbearance of gross sin consists in a naked omission and a not acting, which is far more easy than a positive acting, and every man has a power to suspend his own act.

3. Did you never resist a temptation to a particular sin? Why may you not then resist it afterward if you will, since the same common grace attends you? If the will be disengaged one moment from a sin under a great temptation, why not another moment from sin, under a less temptation? No temptation can overpower your strength, unless the will freely shake hands with it: Acts v. 3, 'Why has Satan filled thy heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost?' His meaning is not, why Satan has done it, for Ananias could not render a reason of that; but why did thou suffer Satan to fill thy heart? If you have given a cheek to Satan before, is it not as easy to say again, 'Get thee behind me, Satan'?

4. Have you not power to shun many inward sins? Man, where he has least power, yet he has some, viz. over his thoughts. We cannot, indeed, hinder the first risings and motions of them, which will steam up from the corrupt fumes and lake whether he will or no; but cannot we hinder the progress of them? Is there not a power to check the delight in them if we will, or divert our thoughts another way, not listen to their suggestions, and hold no inward converse with them? Though you cannot hinder their intrusion, may you not hinder their lodging? 'How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?' Jer. iv. 14. Sure we have a power by common grace to forbear any conference with the motions of flesh and blood.

5. When you do sin, had you not many assistances against it, which if you had hearkened to, you might have avoided it? Were there not previous dissuasions from that inward monitor, conscience? When sin has been enticing you on one hand, and conscience warning you on the other, have you not more willingly listened unto the pleasant reasoning of sin, than the wholesome admonitions of conscience? Can you not as well listen to what conscience as to what sin does propose? But have you not wilfully scorned its judgment? Have you not raged against it with a confidence in sin (which is the case of the foolish sinner, Prov. xiv. 16, 'The fool rages, and is confident'), and would 'not consider any of the ways of God' it minded you of, Job xxxiv. 27, and gave no more regard to its sober dictates, or its louder pressings, than you have to the barking of little curs in the street? Why could you not, with those assistances, have avoided that particular act of sin? The fault was clearly in your wills. Can you not rather choose a cup of wine, than a cup of poison? clear streams, than muddy waters? Besides those assistances, you might have had more, if under the batteries of temptation you had sought to heaven for them. Might you not, then, have avoided this or that sin, when you had such assistances, and might have had more?

6. Have you not avoided sin upon less accounts and considerations? The heathen philosopher could observe, that men may live better than they do. The wrestlers and champions in the Olympic games lived most temperately and continently during that time, to be more fit for the gaining the prize. May not rational considerations do as much, if excited in your minds, as an ambitious desire of honour and affection to victory did in them? Had not Saul a power to withdraw his hand from the unrighteous persecution of David before, as well as when he was sensible of David's kindness in sparing his life when he might have killed him? A drunkard under the disease and pain caused by his sin, can forbear his cups; does his disease confer any power upon him more than he had before? No; why could he not then have forborne his drunken revellings? Can men be restrained from some sins by the eye of a man, the presence of a child? What power do their eyes confer upon them? They only excite that which

they had before. Cannot men forbear a sinful act for a sum of money if it were proffered them or in the presence of a king, who is said to 'scatter away evil with his eyes,' Prov. xx. 8, or in a visible and imminent danger? If a gibbet or a stake were set before men, that they should be immediately executed if they did not forbear such a sinful action, or if they did not go to hear a sermon; can any be so foolish, to think that the glister of gold, the penalty of the law, the sight of a gibbet, should confer a power upon you which you were not before possessed with? It is not then the want of power to avoid sin, but the want of will.

7. Why does conscience check any man after the commission of sin, if it were not in his power to avoid it? All those actions which fall under the cognisance and check of conscience, are actions in our own power, and within the verge of our wills. For the pain of conscience is of another kind than that pain or grief which is raised by those accidents we could not avoid. It arises from the liberty of the will, and galls the soul when it considers, that that which it has done was in its power to be done otherwise. This is the common language of men upon the regrets of conscience: I might have done otherwise, I was warned by my friends; I slighted their warnings, I had resolutions to the contrary, but I stifled them. All men have laid the fault upon themselves, and what is universal consent has a truth in it; the consciences of all men would not gall them for that which they had no power to decline. Indeed, if men were necessitated to sin, they could not be tormented in hell, for the torment there is conscience acting rationally, and reflecting upon them for their wilfulness in the world. If man had not a power to refuse sin, conscience would have no ground for any such reflections to rack and torment them. And it is observable, that natural men, somewhat awakened upon a deathbed, are not so racked by their consciences simply for not being regenerate, as for not avoiding those sins which were hindrances, and not using those means which were appointments of God for such an end, because those were in their power; but they wilfully embraced the one, and as wilfully refused the other.

Prop. 2. Man has a power, by common grace, to do many more good actions (actions materially good) than he does. Evangelical works we cannot do without union to Christ, so himself says, 'Without me you can do nothing,' John xv. 5; nothing according to the order of the gospel, nothing spiritually, nothing acceptably, because no such fruits can arise, where faith, the root of such works, is wanting. Though man be much crippled in regard of morals, yet he is not wholly dead to them, as he is to spirituals. A man may 'break off his sins by (moral) righteousness, and his iniquity by showing mercy to the poor;' by taking off the yoke of oppression, and restoring of what he has rifled, which counsel Daniel gives to Nebuchadnezzar, chap. iv. 27. Though a sick man cannot do all the acts of a sound man till he be perfectly cured, yet he has some power of acting some things like a sound man, remaining with his disease. The young man in the Gospel (yet out of Christ) morally kept the law; so may men under the gospel keep the outward and material part of the precept. There are not only some common notions left since the fall, but also some seeds of moral righteousness in the nature of man. The Gentiles did not only, by nature, in part restored, know the things written in the law, but they did by nature do them, Rom. id. 14; upon this stock they bore many excellent fruits. What patience, chastity, contempt of the pleasures of the world! What affections to their country, and bowels of compassion to men in misery! And what devotion in the external worship of their gods, according to their light, were exemplary in them, though only under the conduct of nature! And these works, though they were not according to the exactness of the law, and failed also in the manner of them, and could not please God for want of faith, yet so far as they were agreeable to the law of nature, and in regard of the materiality of them, were not offensive to God. This moral righteousness of theirs was only external, and rather an image of righteousness than a true one. Abimelech had a natural integrity, which God acknowledges to be in him, and did arise from his moral nature, though he also appropriates to himself the restraint of Abimelech, and his concurrence with an approbation of that moral integrity: Gen. xx. 6, 'I know that thou did this in the integrity of thy heart: for I also withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore

suffered I thee not to touch her;' "lo netaticha", I gave thee not up to touch her. If men did nourish a moral integrity, which they might do, God would concur with them to preserve them from many crimes. If those which were only under the guidance of natural light had so much power to do many moral acts by a common grace, is man's power less under the gospel, whereby they have an addition of a greater light to this natural? If man was able to do so much by the light of nature, there can be no inability brought upon him under the light of the gospel, unless men, by their sluggishness and obstinacy, provoke God judicially to deprive them of that power, and withdraw his hand from them, and so give them up to all kind of wickedness, as it is the dreadful case of many in these days. Man may keep the law of nature better than he does, and for not keeping that he is condemned.

Prop. 3. Men have a power to attend upon the outward means God has appointed for regeneration. Though man cannot renew himself, yet he has a natural power to attend upon the means God has afforded. Though a man has not power to cure his own disease or heal his wound, yet he has power to advise with others, and use the best medicines for his recovery. There is not an outward duty a renewed man does, but a natural man has power externally to do it; though what is essentially good in all parts, cannot be done without special grace, yet what is externally good may be done by the assistance of common grace. Have you not passions, fear, love, desire, grief? Why cannot you exercise them about other objects than ordinarily they are employed about? Why can you not make hell the object of your fears, and heaven the object of your desire? Why might not Esau have wept for his sins, as well as for the loss of the blessing? Might he not have changed the object if he would? Why may we not exercise our inward affections more in our attendance on God? Is not a little excuse sufficient to put off from duty, a great excuse not sufficient to keep you from committing sin? Great business must be laid aside for sin, not the least laid aside for God. Every little thing is a lion in the way then. Do you not many times rack your minds to invent pleas for neglect of duty? Why can you not set them on work

to consider reasons to move you to service? Have we not power to be more serious in the use of means than we are? We can be so when some affliction presses us, or conscience gnaws us. Neither of these furnishes us with a new power. Conscience is like the law, acquaints us with our duty, but gives us no strength. The charge God brings against Ephraim was, that he 'would not frame his doings to turn towards God,' Hosea v. 4; he would entertain no thoughts, not one action that had the least prospect towards repentance, he would use no means for that end, or have a look that way. If a man will not do what is in his power, it is a sign he will not be renewed. Can he pretend to a desire to live, who will not eat, and endeavour to prevent foreseen dangers? Or can he pretend to a desire to build, that will not use materials when he may?

There are two great means: hearing the word, and prayer.

(1.) Hearing the word. Have not men power to go to hear the word, to hear a sermon, as well as to see a play? Have they any shackles upon their feet, that they cannot carry them to a place of worship as well as to a place of vanity and sin? Can you not as well read the Scripture as a romance? Has not the will a despotic power over the members of the body? How came Herod to have more natural power to hear the word, and to hear it 'with pleasure,' Mark vi. 20, than other men have? May you not strive against diversions, resist carnal affection, rouse up your souls from their laziness, and endeavour to close with the word? How smilingly would God look upon such endeavours? If men do not, it is out of a natural sluggishness and enmity of will, not for want of power if they would. Men do not what they might. Certainly he does no more desire regeneration who neglects and despises the great instrument of it, than he can be said to desire his own preservation, who neglects medicines proper for the cure of his disease.

(2.) Prayer. I do not mean a spiritual prayer, which is by the special assistance and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, but of a natural prayer by common instinct; such a one as the apostle puts Simon Magus

upon, who he knew was destitute of any air of the Spirit to breathe out, as being 'in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity,' Acts viii. 22, 23, yet supposes him to have a power in some manner to express his desires to God; or such a power that was common in heathens, upon any distress to run to their altars, and fill their temples with cries to their gods. You cannot pray in the Holy Ghost, but you may send up natural and rational cries to God. Did not Jonah's mariners cry every man to his god? Have you not as much power to cry to the true God as the heathens to false ones? There is the natural prayer of those mariners, as well as the natural integrity of Abimelech, which was not a new-covenant integrity. Can you not be as devout as the publican, and cry, with more seriousness of affection than generally men do, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner'? When men are upon a death-bed, ready to take their leave of the world, they can then cry. It is not their death-bed inspires them with power, more than they had before, but they have more mind, and see a greater necessity of crying to God. They have more power in the time of their health, by how much the habit of sin wanted that strength which has been acquired by a continuance of acts till the time of their sickness; for the fewer sins have been committed, the less is the power impaired. Though God has kept other things in his hand, yet he has given us a power of begging, we will use it as a means to obtain them. Can you not kneel down before God, and implore his assistance? Can you not acknowledge before him that it is impossible for you to change yourself, but that your eyes are upon his grace; that you cannot attain by your own strength a spiritual heart; that you will seek nowhere else for it but from his hand; and that you will not be at rest till he has put in his hand and dropped upon your hearts? Can you not thus cry out, Oh that I were a renewed person! as well as cry out, Oh that I were rich and honourable in the world! Had Paul a new tongue when he cried out, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Was it not the same member wherein he had breathed out threatenings against the disciples?

Prop. 4. Man has a power to exercise consideration. He has seminals of jus and aequum, and a power of judging according to them: Luke

xii. 57 'Yea, why even of yourselves judge you not what is right?' Our Saviour checks them for not making use of their natural power; in the searching their own consciences, and judging their own acts, as well as they did in discerning the face of the sky, and what weather would follow. There is a power of consideration in a rebellious heart; for God acknowledges it in a rebellious nation: Ezek. xii. 3, 'It may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.'

1. Can you not reflect upon yourselves? Every man has a reflexive faculty; otherwise he is not a man. Reflection is the peculiar privilege of a rational creature, without which he is not rational. The Pharisees could reflect upon themselves, and say, 'Are we blind also?' John ix. 40. Can you not then take a survey of your past lives; cast up the accounts of your souls, as well as your books? Can you not view your particular crimes, with the aggravations attending them? Yea, you can, if you would. Can you not look back upon the means you have neglected, the love you have slighted, and the light you have shut your eyes against? As long as a man has reason, he may use his reason in these things as well as in others. Why may he not reflect upon himself in spiritual concerns, as well as civil affairs in the world? Cannot he, by comparing the face of his soul with the glass of the word, understand his own state, and by self-reflection come to an understanding of his own lost condition and weakness?

2. Can you not consider the word? Cannot your reasons be employed about the objects the word offers, as well as the objects the world offers? Though you cannot act spiritually in the duties of religion, can you not act rationally in them, as men? Are you endued with a rational soul, to consider the proposals of worldly affairs and concerns, and can you not exercise the same power in considering the proposal made to you by the gospel? The gospel is not only spiritual, but rational. As long as you have a thinking faculty, can you not consider what the reasonable meaning of it is? Though you have not a spiritual taste, you have a rational understanding; why may it not be busied about one object as well as another? The natural repentance of the Ninevites at Jonah's preaching, implied the

consideration of his threatening sermon. Why is there not a power in you to think of what is proposed to you out of the word, as well as you can think of what you read of a mathematical or philosophical book, or some history? The power is the same in both, the faculty the same. As the object proposed adds no power to the faculty, so it takes away no power the faculty already has. Surely man is not such a block or stone, but he may turn these things over and over, press them upon his own soul, which may make way for the sensibleness of his state, and putting the will out of its sinful indifference. What any natural man has done, that may all under the same means do, if they will. Why may not the veriest wretch among us humble himself at the hearing of the word, as well as wicked Ahab? 1 Kings xxi. 27, 29, 'When Ahab heard these words, he rent his clothes. Seest thou how Ahab humbles himself?' He discovered an external humiliation, after the consideration of the threatening denounced by the prophet.

3. Can you not cherish, by consideration, those motions which are put into you? There is not a man but the Spirit strives with, one time or other, Gen vi. 3. Has not man a power to approve any good counsel given him, if he will? Have you not had some supernatural motions lifting you up towards God, and pressing obligations upon you, to walk more circumspectly? Why might you not have cherished them, as well as smothered them? Why could you not have considered the tendency of them, as well as have considered how to divert and drown them, by engaging in some sensual dust? Was the power of consideration lost? No; you could not then have cast about in your minds, by what means you should be rid of them, or how you should resist them. Have you not wilfully rejected them, even when consideration has been revived at a sermon? And yet you did industriously let that good motion die for want of blowing up the spark, by following on the consideration which was raised upon its feet. When you have 'begun well, who did hinder you' from a further obedience? 'This persuasion comes not of him that calls you,' Gal. v. 7, 8. There was no necessity upon you, to fortify yourselves in your corrupted habits against the attempts of the Spirit. Could you not as well have fallen down before the throne of grace, to have begged

grace to second them, as kicked at them, and spurned them away? Was it want of power to do otherwise? or was it not rather your own obstinate wilfulness? Since I appeal to you, whether your own consciences have not tugged at you, and spurred you on at such seasons, why could you not then beg of God, that such a good motion might not have departed out of your coasts? Because a man cannot renew himself, therefore to lie down in sluggishness is not the design of this doctrine.

4. Can you not consider those notions you have be natural light? Man has a conscience which minds him of moral good, and pulls him from evil. No man can deprive himself of these. It will check in those things wherein others commend us, and commend us in those things wherein others accuse us. May we not observe the motions of conscience within us? May we not consider the charge it brings against us for any act committed, so as to avoid the like for the future; and the excusations of conscience, in commending us, so as to do the like acts for the future? As we have a law without us, which we may consider, so we have a conscience within us, which witnesses to the equity of the law, accusing us for what we do contrary to it, and excusing us for what we do in observance of it, Rom. ii. 15; and this in man's corrupt state. Cannot man then observe the dictates of conscience? Can he not find out the sense of this law in his mind, though it be much blurred? Cannot he act like a man, in following the dictates of this rational principle, as well as like a beast follow the allurements of sense? No rational principle in man puts him upon evil, but upon moral good; whatsoever draws him from good, or puts him upon evil, are principles common to him with one brute or other, profit, pleasure, honour, all which are found in some beast or other. Why may not a man then consider the rational reports of his own conscience, as well as the brutish whisperings of sense? But does not man endeavour to shuffle off his conscience, and is mighty jolly when it keeps silence, or when he can stop its mouth with an excuse? Do not men wilfully choke the sentiments of it, and keep the truth deposited in their souls, in unrighteousness, Rom. i. 18; and like the scorner, 'hear not its rebukes,' Prov. xiii. 1? Whatsoever man

has by the relics of natural light, he may think of. He knows by nature there is a God; he knows something of his attributes, and of his law; may not those be his morning thoughts? Is he not stirred up sometimes to contemplate on them? May he not do it at other times, since this common grace is always with him, and leaves him not till he leaves valuing and embracing its divine assistances? Let it be remembered, that in all this which man may do, the power is to be ascribed to common grace through a mediator, keeping up by his interposition the pillars of the earth, and preserving some relics of natural light, and the seeds of moral righteousness in man, not in the least to be ascribed to bare nature; and that man's corrupt will, stuffed with sinful habits, is the cause he makes no use of this power.

Quest. 2. If we have not an ability to renew ourselves, why does God command us to do so? And why does God make promises to men if they will turn? Is not this a cruelty? as if a man should command another to run a race, and promise to reward him if he did, and yet bind him with fetters that he cannot run? Both the command would be unjust and the promise ridiculous.

Ans. In general. God may command, and his command does not signify a present ability in man.

(1.) He may command, because we have faculties suited to the command in respect of their substance. For the death of a sinner was not a physical death, but a moral. Man lost not his faculties, but the rectitude of them; he lost the purity of his sight, the integrity of his will, but not the understanding and will itself.

(2.) God's command does not signify a present moral ability to perform it. God's command, which acquaints us with our present duty, is no argument of a present power; for if a command signified more than the duty man owes, it signified more than a command in its own nature could signify. Gods command to us to renew ourselves implies no more an ability inherent in the creature to do so than Christ's voice to putrefying Lazarus, 'Lazarus arise, come forth,' John

xi. 43, implied a power in Lazarus to raise himself, or his speech to the palsied cripple, 'Arise, take up thy bed,' implied a power in himself to do it himself before a supernatural conveyance of it. Do not men exhort every day to sobriety those that have contracted a profound habit of drunkenness and lust, that philosophy does acknowledge it is not possible for them to abstain from; yet no man accuses those that exhort them of impertinence, nor those that chastise them of injustice. God's commands are not the measures of our strength, but the rule of our duty, and do not teach us what we are, but what we should be.

But to clear this more particularly:

God may command, though man has not a present moral ability to renew himself. For

[1.] First, Man once had a power to do whatsoever God would command him; he had a power to cleave to God. He had not else, in justice, been capable of any such injunction; there had been ground of a complaint and charge against God, if man had been created defective in any of those abilities necessary for his obedience to this command. The command is just; God would not else have imposed it, because of his righteousness, and every man's conscience testifies that it is highly just he should honour God, love God, and cleave to God. If it were just, then man was capable to perform this command, for man, as a rational creature, is capable of a law, and cannot be governed otherwise; and no law could be given so proper for him as to stand right to his Creator. Since, therefore, the law was just in itself, and since God did justly impose it, man was certainly created by God in a capacity to observe it. No question but God, who furnished other creatures with an ability to attain their several ends, and perform the orders God had set them in at the creation, was no less indulgent to man. He that was not deficient to the lower creatures would not be deficient to the noblest of his sublunary works. He would have been worse in his rank, without a sufficient stock, than other creatures were in theirs. There would not have been

a physical goodness and perfection suitable to his station in the world, and his excellency above other creatures. How could God then have pronounced him good, among the rest of his works, if there had been in his creation a natural inability to answer the end of his creation? If God had created man in such a state that he could not do righteously, and yet commanded him to do righteously, and, because he did not, punish him, he would have been unjust; as if a man should command another to reach a thing too high for him, and that when his hands were tied behind him, and because he did not, beat him. This would have been the case had not man had power at first to do righteously. Had man preserved himself in that created state, no just command of God (and it was impossible any unjust command should have proceeded from infinite righteousness) would have been too hard and too high for him.

[2.] God did not deprive man of this ability. Man was not stripped of his original righteousness by God, for man had lost it before ever God spake to him, or passed any sentence upon him after his fall: Gen. iii. 10, 'I was naked.' If God had taken it away without any offence of Adam, he might have expostulated the case. It had been alike unjust, as if God had never given him power at first to observe the command he enjoined him. It would have been unreasonable to require that of man which God himself had made impossible. But God did not take away man's original righteousness. If God had taken it away before man's fall, then man was unrighteous before he fell, and God, taking it away from him while he was perfect, had made him, of an holy and righteous man, unholy and profane; as he that deprives a malefactor of his sight, for his demerit, makes him of seeing blind. If God took it away after he spake to Adam in the garden, it would then follow that Adam was righteous after his fall till God deprived him of it, and so was innocent while he was sinful, and strong while he was weak. God did not take it away from him before, but had told him that the loss of it would be the natural consequent of his eating the forbidden fruit, Gen. ii. 17, nor after for after we find only temporal punishments threatened. God indeed did judicially deny him the restoration of it, which, as a governor and a judge, he

might justly do, resolving to govern him in another manner than before. So that it would be an unjust imputation on God to say, God cut off man's legs, and then commanded him to run, and come to him. What if God did foresee that man would fall; was God therefore the cause of his fall? God's prescience, though it is infallible, is not the cause of a thing, no more than our foreknowledge that the sun will rise to-morrow morning is a cause of rising of it.

[3.] Therefore, since God did not deprive man of it, it follows that man lost it himself, and not barely lost it, but cast it away. He did voluntarily by an inordinate intention of will, cast away this original perfection, and fell a-hunting after his own 'inventions', Eccles. vii. 29. He did not stick to that command God had given him, nor implore God's assistance of him, as by

His natural ability he might have done. He consulted not with his command upon the temptation, but was very willing to cast off that righteousness wherewith God had endowed him, for an affected godhead. Man readily swallowed the bait; he did not debate the business with Eve, 'She gave to her husband with her, and he did eat,' Gen. iii. 6. So that the fault

was wholly in himself, and his present state voluntarily contracted, for though the devil tempted him, yet he had no power to force him. He was easily overcome by him, for it was not a repeated temptation, but a surrender at the first parley.

[4.] Therefore God's right of commanding, and man's obligation of returning and cleaving to God, remains firm. God's right still remains. God gave him a portion to manage, though man prodigally spent it. God may challenge his own. Cannot a master justly challenge that commodity he sent his servant with money to buy, though he spent it in drunkenness and gaming? God gave Adam a sufficient stock; he trifled it away. Must God's right suffer for his folly, and man's crime deprive God of his power to command? The obligation to God is natural, therefore indelible; the corruption of the

creature cannot render this first obligation void. Righteousness is a debt the creature, as a rational creature, owes to God, and cannot refuse the payment of it without a crime. Who deprived him of the power of paying? Himself. Should this voluntary embezzlement prejudice God's right of exacting that which the creature cannot be excused from? A debtor, who cannot pay, remains under the obligation of paying. The receipt of a sum of money brings him into the relation of a debtor, and not his ability to pay what he has received. Such a doctrine would free all men who were unable to pay from being debtors, though the sums they owed were never so vast. That judge would be unjust that would excuse a prodigal debtor, because he could not pay when sued by his creditor. No doubt but the devils are bound to serve God, and love him, though by their revolt they have lost the will to obey him. If, because we have no present power, our obligation to turn to God and obey him ceased, there would be no sin in the world, and consequently no judgments. Who will say, that if a prince had such rebellious subjects that there were little hopes to reclaim them, he should be therefore bound not to command them to return to their duty and obedience? If it be reasonable in a prince, whose rights are limited, shall it not be reasonable in God to exact it, who has an unbounded right over his creature? Either God must keep up his law or abrogate it, or, which is all one, let it lie in the dust. His holiness obliges him to keep up his law; to abrogate it, therefore, would be against his holiness. To declare a willingness that his creature should not love him, should not obey him, would be to declare that which is unjust, because love is a just debt to an amiable object and the chief good, and obedience to a sovereign Lord. Must God change his holiness because man has changed his estate? The obligation of man remaining perpetual, the right of God to demand remains perpetual too, notwithstanding the creature's casting himself into an insolvent condition. If man still owes this duty to God, why may not God exact his right of man? Much more may God call for a right use of those means and gifts he has, as a benefactor, bestowed upon man since his fall. No man will deny this right to God upon serious thoughts. These new gifts and means were given him not only for himself, but for his Lord, to

improve for his glory. God may justly require the right use of those moral principles and evangelical means for the ends for which he appointed them.

[5.] It will appear more reasonable, because God demands no more, nay not so much as he required of Adam in innocence. It is but *obedientia redintegrata*, a return in part to that perfect boldness which was inherent in man, and to that obedience in part which was in a great measure due to God. As when a prince demands the return of rebels, he demands a restoration of that subjection which they paid him before. God required a perfect obedience in the first covenant, he requires not so much in the second, so that for want of it a creature shall be cast off; but a sincere obedience is required, though not in degree perfect. Adam had a fundamental power in him to perform that obedience which is required, in faith and repentance, the two great parts of regeneration. Faith is nothing but an embracing and accepting of Christ the mediator. Adam had a power of believing and accepting Christ for his head, had he been proposed to him in paradise, as the mediator of consistency and confirmation, and the vinculum of holding him for ever close to God. Had not Adam a power to accept him under this notion, as well as the good angels have accepted him for their head, and worship him as mediator; that is, pay him an obedience as mediator when he comes into the world, Heb. i. 6. Had he not a fundamental power to grieve, though since sin was extraneous to a state of innocence, he could not have exercised that grief for himself, repentance being extraneous to obedience, and unmeet for him in a sinless state? Suppose God had commanded him to grieve for the sins of the fallen angels, Adam having this passion in his nature, might have done it. He might have known what sin was in them, and might have grieved for the dishonour of God by them; even as our Saviour did grieve for the sins of others, Mark iii. 5, who knew no sin himself. And in grieving for his own sin, there was only a change of the object.

[6.] It is yet more reasonable if we consider, that every natural man thinks he has a power to renew himself, and turn to God when he will

practically, though not all of them notionally. What reason then has man to quarrel with God, and accuse him of demanding that which he thinks he can give to God, and will not at present, but take his own time to do it, when he sees it fit? This practical opinion runs in the reins of every natural man under the gospel, as well as in the heathens, which appears by the general wilful delays of men about their eternal concerns, by their vows and resolutions upon the blows of conscience of reforming their lives, and becoming new men without having recourse to the grace of God, or taking any notice of him in their resolves. This I think is a clear case. 'Yet a little more sleep,' says a man, that thinks he can rise time enough when he will, and despatch his business in a moment, Prov. vi. 10. With what face can man accuse God of not giving him power, when he thinks he has power enough himself? or be angry with God for demanding his debt, when he thinks himself in a solvent condition? No man will blame another for requiring that of his servant, which his servant boasts he has power in himself to do. The Israelites thought so when they said, Exod. xxiv. 3, 'All the words which the Lord has said we will do,' without any applications to the grace of God to enable them. All men are like Israel in this; only the regenerate are most sensible of their own impotence, and scarce any man else.

[7.] From all this it follows, that God is not bound to give grace to any; and where he does bestow it, it is an act of his sovereign pleasure. If God has given man power, and never took it away, but it was cast away by man, therefore God's right is not prejudiced, but he may justly demand of man what once he gave him power to do, especially since it is less than what man at first owed him; and when man thinks he has power to pay him, it will evidently follow, that God is not bound to give any new power. If God were bound to give a new power to accept of the gospel, he were then unjust not to confer it; if he be not bound, it is of mere grace that he bestows it. God proposes pardon to all upon such conditions, but he is not bound to give the condition to any; he commands all to renew their obedience to him, but he is not bound to renew any one person. He gives the command to turn, as a lawgiver and governor; he gives the grace to

some to turn, as a benefactor. It is grace therefore, not debt. When God confers it, it is an act of his compassionate mercy; when he denies it, it is an act of his just sovereignty. He may, if he please, 'suffer all nations to walk in their own ways,' Acts xiv. 16. Yet if he please to propose the means of grace to any, the very knowledge of those mysteries of heaven is a peculiar gift, as well as the outward proposal: Matt. xiii. 11, 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.' If we improve reason to the highest, God is not obliged to give us grace, no more than if a beast improved sense to the highest, he were bound to give him reason. Though if there could be a man found in any age of the world, who did improve reason to the utmost of his power, I would not doubt God's giving him the addition of supernatural grace, out of the largeness of his bounty, though still there is no obligation upon God, because man does no more than his duty.

And that God does not give grace to all to whom the means are offered, and yet does command them to turn, and promise to receive them;—

(1.) It does not entrench upon his sincerity in his proposals. His proposals are serious, though he knows man will not receive them without an over-powering grace; and though he be resolved not to give the assistance of his grace to every one under those means, but leave them to the liberty of their own wills. The gospel is to be considered as a command ordering men to believe, or as a promise alluring men to be renewed, by representing to them the happiness of such a state. Consider it as a command, God is serious in it, though he resolve not to give grace to all to whom the precept comes, for under this consideration of a command it is a declaration of man's duty, and a demonstration of God's sovereign authority. Does God's resolution of not giving grace weaken the obligation of man to his duty, or diminish God's authority, or give ground to man to charge him with insincerity? Consider it as a promise, does it hinder God's seriousness in it if he resolves not to give the condition of it to all? It is sufficient to show God's seriousness in it, to declare, that if

men will be regenerate, it will be very pleasing to him; that he will make good to them what he has promised, that if they be renewed, he will make good every tittle of the promise to them; and if they will seek, and ask, and knock, he will not be wanting to them to assist them.

(2.) It does not disparage his wisdom to command that to man which he knows man will not do without his grace, and so make promises to man upon the doing it. If man indeed had not a faculty naturally fitted for the object, it might entrench upon God's wisdom to make commands and promises to such a creature as it would be to command a beast to speak. But man has a faculty to understand and will, which makes him a man; and there is a disposition in the understanding and will which consists in an inclination determined to good or evil, which makes us not to be men, but good or bad men, whereby we are distinguished from one another, as by reason and will we are from plants and beasts. Now the commands and exhortations are suitable to our nature, and respect not our reason as good or bad, but simply as reason. These commands presuppose in us a faculty of understanding and will, and a suitableness between the command and the faculty of a reasonable creature. This is the reason why God has given to us his law and gospel, his commands, not because we are good or bad men, but because we are men endued with reason, which other creatures want, and therefore are not capable of government by a command. Our blessed Lord and Saviour did not exhort infants, though he blessed them, because they were not arrived to the use of reason, yet he exhorted the Jews, many of whose wills he knew were not determined to good, and whom he told that they would die in their sins. And though God had told them, Jer. xiii., that they could no more change themselves than an Ethiopian could his skin, yet he expostulates with them why they 'would not be made clean;' verse 27 'O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?' Because, though they had an ill disposition in their judgment, yet their judgment remained, whereby to discern of exhortations if they would. To present a concert of music to a deaf man that cannot hear the greatest sound were absurd, because

sounds are the object of hearing; but commands and exhortations are the object, not of this or that good constitution of reason, but of reason itself.

(3.) Neither does it disagree with his justice. It is so far from being unjust for God to demand what men are obliged to do, though he knows that they will not do it, that God would be unjust to himself if he did not demand it, if he let men trample upon his rights without demanding restitution of them. If a prince sets forth edicts to rebels to return, and promise them pardon upon their returning, though he knows they are rebelliously bent, that they will not entertain a thought of coming again under his sceptre, but will still be in arms, and draw down his wrath upon them, will not all interpret this to be an act of clemency and goodness in the prince? Neither is God an acceptor of persons, because he does not give grace unto all; for may he not do with his own what he please without injustice? Those to whom we give alms have reason to thank us; those to whom we give not an alms have no reason to complain; we have gratified the one, but we have done no wrong to the other. We are all by nature criminals, deserving death; should God leave us in that deplorable estate wherein he found us, can we accuse him of injustice? Those that by grace are snatched out of the pit, have reason to acknowledge it an admirable favour, as indeed it is; those that are destitute of grace, and by their own wilful rejection left to sink to the bottom, cannot impute their unhappiness to him; for he left them not without witness; he presented them the word, exhorted them to hearken to him; but, instead of paying their duty, they fiercely rejected him, abhorred his exhortations, and gave themselves over to sin and vice. If a man proclaim by a crier that such that can bring such a mark shall receive such an alms, he sends this private mark to some, they come and receive an alms. Had he not power to do what he pleased with his own, to send his distinguishing token to whom he pleased? What injustice is done to the other, to whom he sends not this mark?

We have shown that God may command. Let us see why God does command, when he knows man has no power to renew himself?

1. The first reason is,

To make us sensible of our impotency. The design of God is not to signify our power to perform it, but sensibly to affect us with our inability, that we may be the better prepared for a remedy; as the moral law was given with such terrifying marks, to make men despair in themselves, and the ceremonial law annexed to it, to give some glimpse of a Mediator in whom they might have strength. And therefore when the Israelites were so affected, Deut. xviii. 16-18, as to desire not to hear the voice of the Lord in that manner, nor to see that great fire any more which attended the law, that they might not die, he commends them for it: verse 17, 'They have well spoken that which they have spoken.' God is highly pleased with this sense of their own inability to answer the terms of the first covenant, since it makes them fly for help and supply to the prophet of the second covenant. The cabalists therefore say, that the law was given to take away the venom of the serpent; that is, not that we should fulfil the law, but that we might learn how far we were swerved from the duty we owed to God, and how unable to gain the happiness we had lost. A conceit of self-sufficiency secretly lurks in every one of us; we should think ourselves gods to ourselves if we saw not the picture of our own weakness in the spirituality of the command. Therefore, though we cannot ourselves perform this command of regeneration, it is necessary it should be directed to us, to make us abject in our eyes, and strip us of all confidence in the flesh, which is the first step toward a being endued with the Spirit; to make us hang down our proud plumes, and sink into that despair in ourselves, which is necessary to the superstructure of a saving faith. It is necessary the law should be commanded, to make sin appear exceeding sinful, to give us a true prospect of ourselves in the glass of the command: the rectitude of it shows us our crookedness; the holiness of it, our impurity; the justice of it, our unrighteousness; the goodness of it, our wickedness; and the spirituality of it, our carnality and fleshliness. God does not command us (though we have no power) to upbraid and triumph over us, but to lay us low, and humble us.

2. To make us sensible of the grace of God, and urge us to have recourse to it. It is necessary that man should understand the perfection of divine righteousness, and what the condition of man was before the fall, that thereby he may understand the necessity of the remedy, and be more willing to come under God's wing than Adam has to keep under it; but without a sense of his own weakness man would never come to God. God commands us, not that he expects we should renew ourselves, for he knows we cannot; but that being acquainted with our feeble frame, we should implore his grace to turn us, and have recourse to him, who delights to be sought unto and depended upon by his creature. That this command of renewing ourselves, and returning to our due obedience, is given to this end, is evident by the promise of the gospel, which did accompany the command, both to encourage and direct men where to find assistance for the performance of what the first covenant exacts, and the second accepts. Therefore, with the commands of the law, there is the promise of a great prophet to teach them, an ordaining typical sacrifices to relieve them, and the gospel, under the mask of the ceremonial law, attended the fiery and impossible commands of the moral. God might have exacted his right without making any promise, it had been summum just; but God exacts not his right now, but with a promise; where there is jus in one, and remissio juris in the other. And very frequently in the Scripture, where the command is given to show us our duty, yet a promise is joined to it, to show that though obedience be our duty, yet sanctification is God's work, as Lev. xx. 8, 'Ye shall keep my statutes and do them;' whereupon it immediately follows, 'I am the Lord which sanctify you.' The precept is to acquaint us with our duty; the promise, to acquaint us with the sight of a gracious ability; the precept minds us of our debt, the promise minds us of the means to pay it: what is required in the precept is encouraged in the promise. Every precept, being a part of the law, is to 'shut us up' to faith, and to 'bring us to Christ,' Gal. iii. 23, 24. God makes us amends; that as he requires of us what we lost by another's fault, he has provided us a remedy by another's righteousness, which we never performed; and by his own Spirit, which we never purchased, if we will but seek it. If God did work it in

us without commanding us to work it ourselves, we could not have a foundation to make such sensible acknowledgements of his grace and omnipotent kindness. It is our work as a due debt; it is God's work as a fruit of his grace; Isa. xxvi. 12, 'Thou hast wrought all our works in us.' The promise, therefore, of a new heart and a new spirit, is made indefinitely; none are aimed in it, nor any excluded, that will but seek it. And supposing they are predictions rather than promises, yet they run in the nature of a promise: they are to be pleaded, for God 'will be inquired after concerning them;' and the fulfilling of them to the soul is as pleadable as the fulfilling other prophecies to the church; the grounds of the plea are the same in both, the truth of God: Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 'Thus says the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;' which may reasonably be concluded to respect the whole antecedent promising discourse of God.

3. These commands and exhortations are of use to clear the justice of God upon obstinate sinners. God is a judge, and judges by law; commands therefore are necessary, because a rational creature is only governable by law. If God were not a lawgiver, he could not be a judge; his judicial proceedings depend upon his legislative power. Men being to be judged by their works, must have some law as the rule of those works; and his law is no more than the first law in innocence, that is, to return to obedience and righteousness. These commands and exhortations are the whips and scourges of perverse consciences, whereby they are galled while they obey not the motions of them, and render them inexcusable and unworthy of mercy in despising the conditions God requires of them, and make the case of Sodom 'more tolerable in the day of judgment' than the condition of such men, Mat. xi. 24. We are apt to bring an unreasonable charge against God of cruelty and injustice, as though his punishments did not consist with righteousness. God therefore shows us our duty, and demands it of us, and it is confessed by us to be our duty; man is therefore deservedly punished, because he does wilfully cherish the old nature in him, the fountain of all sin; he has the truth, and he holds it in possession, but in unrighteousness, therefore the wrath of

God is justly revealed from heaven against that unrighteousness of his, Rom. i. 18. God calls sinners, though he knows they will not renew themselves, as men send servants to demand the possession of a piece of ground, though they know it will not be delivered to them; but they do it that they may more conveniently bring their action against such a person that will not surrender. So upon God's command to men to be renewed, his justice is more apparent upon their refusal; as he sent Moses to Pharaoh, though he knew before that Pharaoh would not hearken to him. This punishment is only accidental to the gospel, it becomes the savour of death per accidens, because of the unbelief of those that reject it; the gospel is designed for the salvation of men, not for their condemnation. If the corruption of man produces condemnation to himself, must God abstain from doing good to the world? There is not a man but abuses the light of the sun which shines upon him, and the mercies God gives him, and thereby brings wrath upon himself, and God knows they will do so; would we have God, therefore, to put out the light of the sun, and divest the earth of its fruitfulness? Shall God lay aside his right of commanding, and take away the preaching of the gospel, and so excellent a thing as the happy revelation of his gracious promises and exhortations, because many men by their wilfulness bring the just wrath of God upon them for their refusal? Will any man accuse our blessed Lord and Saviour, when he comes to judgment, that he did them wrong to come and die for mankind, and cause the news and ends of his death to be published, and exhort sinners thereupon to believe in him? Surely men's consciences shall be full of convictions of their own wilfulness, and the equity of God's justice thereupon.

4. The commands and exhortations are of use to bring men to God, according to the nature of rational creatures, and also to keep them with God. Man not having lost his reason, though he has lost his rectitude, cannot be drawn to God in a rational way but by cords proper to man; for he is a creature governable only by laws, and therefore must have laws suited to his nature; and commands and exhortations are so, for the weakness brought upon men to answer

them is by their own defection. God does not bring men to him by instinct, as he brought the beasts to Adam, or the creatures into Noah's ark; such a conversion would not be reasonable, nor spiritual, nor agreeable to God, no more than the obedience of the beasts to Noah. God therefore draws men by commands, and promises, and exhortations thereupon convenient to the nature of man, accommodated to the rational capacity of the creature; for man being created after the image of God, ought to be conducted and governed after another manner than other creatures. The grace of God therefore working suitably to the nature of man, cannot be conceived by us in any other way than in this of commands and exhortations. And when men are renewed, the commands for perfect regeneration are still incumbent upon them (though they cannot attain it in this life), to stir up their hearts to an exercise of that gracious ability they have to walk in the ways of holiness, and to that end to a reliance on the grace of God. The promises are given to them to inflame them to a love of holiness, and to show them where their chief strength lies; this appears plainly to be the intent of the Spirit of God in that command and promise, Philip. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your own salvation; for it is God that works in you to will and to do.' He writes to those already regenerate, Work out your salvation, use your gracious power, and be encouraged by the assistance God gives you. Use your own power as if there were no grace to help you in the performance; depend upon the grace of God which works in you both to will and to do, as if you had no power at all of any motion in yourselves.

So that to sum up the whole of this later discourse, the impotence of man does not excuse him.

1. Because the commands of the gospel are not difficult in themselves to be believed and obeyed. If we were commanded things that were impossible in their own nature, as to shoot an arrow as high as the sun, or leap up to the top of the highest mountain at one start, the very command carries its excuse with it in the impossibility of the thing enjoined. But the precept of regeneration and restoring to

righteousness is easy to be comprehended, it is backed with clear and manifest reason, and proposed with a promise of happiness which is very suitable to the natural appetite of our souls. To command a thing simply impossible is not congruous to the wisdom, holiness, and righteousness of God; it would not be justice, but cruelty. No wise man will invite another man by any promises to do that which is simply impossible; no just judge will punish a man for not observing such a precept; no righteous and merciful person would impose such a command. But these commands of the gospel are not impossible in their own nature, but in regard of our perversity and contumacy. The command of righteousness was possible when first given, and impossible since by our own folly; impossible in our voluntary corrupted nature, and by reason of our voluntarily cherished corruption. The change is not in the nature of the law, but in the nature of the creature; and what is impossible to nature is possible to grace, and grace may be sought for the performance of them.

2. Because we have a foundation in our natures for such commands, therefore man's weakness does not excuse him. It had been unjust for God to have commanded Adam in innocence to fly, and give him no wings; this had been above Adam's natural power, he could not have done it, though he would fain have obeyed God, because his nature was destitute of all force for such a command. It would be strange if God should invite the trees or beasts to repent, because they have no foundation in their nature to entertain commands and invitations to obedience and repentance; for trees have no sense, and beasts have no reason to discern the difference between good and evil. If God did command a man that never had eyes to contemplate the sun, man might wonder, since such a man never had organs for such an action. But God addresses himself to men that have senses open to objects, and understandings to know, and wills to move, affections to embrace objects. These understandings are open to anything but that which God does command, their wills can will anything but that which God does propose. The command is proportioned to the natural faculty, and the natural faculty proportioned to the excellency of the command. We have affections,

as love and desire. In the command of loving God and loving our neighbour, there is only a change of the object of our affections required; the faculties are not weak by nature, but by the viciousness of nature, which is of our own introduction. It is strange, therefore, that we should excuse ourselves, and pretend we are not to be blamed, because God's command is impossible to be observed, when the defect lies not in the want of a natural foundation, but in our own giving up ourselves to the flesh and the love of it, and in a wilful refusal of applying our faculties to their proper objects, when we can employ those faculties with all vehemence about those things which have no commerce with the gospel.

3. Because the means God gives are not simply insufficient in themselves. God does afford men beams of light, he makes clear discoveries, as it is, Rom. i. 19, 'He has showed it to them, "efanero", 'it is manifest in them. He displays in their hearts some motions of his Spirit, produces some velleities. The standing of the world under the cries of so many hideous sins, is a daily sermon of God's kindness and patience in bearing up the pillars of it, and is a standing exhortation to repentance; as Rom. ii. 4, 'The forbearance, long-suffering, and goodness of God leads to repentance.' The object is intelligible: 'The word is near us, in our mouths, in our hearts;' it is apprehensible in itself, Rom. x. 6, 7. The revelation is as plain as the surface of the heavens, Ps. xix. 1-3, applied to the preaching of the gospel. Rom. x. 18. That men are not renewed, and turned to God, is not for want of a sufficient external revelation, but from the hardness of the heart; not from any insufficiency of the means, but the depravity and wickedness of the soul to whom those means are offered. The commands and means of the gospel are no more weak in themselves than the law was, but weak through the flesh, by reason of the inherent corruption man has fastened in himself, Rom. viii. 3. Would not the hundredth part of any revelation of some worldly object, connatural to man's corrupt heart, be sufficient in itself to put him upon motion to it, and embraces of it? The insufficiency does both not lie in the external means, for the gospel is an act of mercy and grace; the call is an act of kindness. It is clear to man that God

offers; it is clear that God will accept, if man will embrace his counsel; and shall this be said to be insufficient, because man will reject it?

4. Because this impotence in man is rather a wilfulness than a simple weakness, therefore man's pretended weakness does not excuse him from the command. It is not a weakness arising from a necessity of nature, but an enmity of will, whereby some other apparent good is beloved above God, and some creature preferred before him. There is a double impotence, *merae infirmitatis*, which is a want of power in the hand, when there is a readiness in the will to perform, or *malignitatis*, which is seated in the will and affections, whereby though a man has a power to perform, yet he cannot because he will not: he will abhor any return to God, and will not be whetted by his promise to any endeavour. A simple impotency deserves pity, for it is a rational excuse, but an obstinate perversity is so far from an excuse that it is an aggravation. The deeper the habit of obstinacy, the more inexcusable the person. What a ridiculous excuse would this be, to say to God, (1.) that I ought not to be obliged to restore myself to righteousness, and obey the command of the gospel, because I am of so perverse a disposition that I will not obey, and will not be restored; or (2.) that God is bound to restore to him that will to obey and renew himself, otherwise he is guilty of no crime. The first would be ridiculous, and both impious. What hinders any man from being regenerate under the call of the gospel, but a moral weakness, which consists in an imperious inclination to evil, and a rooted indisposition in corrupt reason and will to believe and repent? And here the Scripture lays it upon the hardness of the heart, Rom. ii. 5, and a rebellious walking after our own thoughts: Isa. lxxv. 2, 'I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walk in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.' We are impotent and cannot, because we are rebellious and will not. For since man has an understanding capable to weigh arguments on both sides, and see the advantage of the good proposed, and the disadvantage of the evil tempting, if he does the evil, and refuses the good, is not the fault clearly in his will? And when by a custom in sin

we ripen the power of our evil habits, we contract an impossibility of doing the good required, and casting out the evil forbidden. This does in no sort excuse us, because it is an inability contracted by ourselves. God himself threatens punishment to the Israelites, when he confesses that they could not attain to innocence: Hosea viii. 5, 'My anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocence?' "lo yuchlu"; how long can they not? Purity or innocence. They had raised such a habit in them, by casting off voluntarily the thing that is good, ver. 3, that they could not divest themselves of it, which was so far from excusing them that it sharpened the anger of God against them.

5. This weakness does not excuse from obedience to this command, because God denies no man strength to perform what he commands, if he seek it at his hands. No man can plead that he would have been regenerate, and turned to God, and could not, for though we have not power to renew ourselves, yet God is ready to confer power upon us if we seek it. Where did God ever deny any man sufficient strength, that did wait upon him in serious and humble supplications, and conscientiously used the means to procure it. A man cannot indeed merit grace, or dispose himself for it, so that it must by a natural necessity come into his soul, as a form does into matter upon dispositions to it. But if a man will do what he can do, if he will put no obstacle to grace, by a course of sin, would not God, out of his infinite bounty to his creatures, and out of that general love whereby he would have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, give him special grace? Has not our Saviour made a promise in his first sermon to the multitude, that God 'will give good things to them that ask him,' with a much more than men give good gifts to their children, Mat. vii. 11. They were not only his disciples that he preached that sermon to, but the multitude, comparing it with Mat. v. 1, and Mat. vii. 28. Has not God declared, that he 'delights not in the death of a sinner,' Ezek. xxxiii. 11, and does he not out of his infinite goodness condescend to beseech us to be reconciled to him? Will not the same infinite goodness bow itself down to form a new image in them that use the means to be reconciled and conformed to

him, as much as they can? Has not our blessed Saviour already given a testimony of his affection to such endeavours, in loving the young man for his outward observation of the law, Mark x. 21, who wanted but one thing only to pass him into a gracious state, the refusal whereof barred him of it? And shall not he have a choicer affection to those that strive to observe the rules he has left in his gospel? Will he not be pleased with such motions in his creatures towards their own happiness? Will he not further that wherein he delights? Think not therefore to justify yourselves at the bar of God for your sloth, because you are too weak to renew yourselves. It will not help you then. The question will then be asked, Did you ever seriously beg it, as for your lives? Did God ever desert you when you would fight against sin, when you set yourselves seriously and dependently on him for grace? God gives us talents, but by our sloth we embezzle them. It is upon that score Christ lays it, Mat. xxv. 26, 'Thou wicked and slothful servant.' God has not promised to furnish you with more talents, when you improve not the talents you have already; non-improvement of them cuts oft all pleas men may make against God upon the account of their impotence. As there never was a renewed man, but acknowledged his regeneration as a fruit of God's grace, so there was never any man that can say, he did use his greatest industry in trading with the talents God entrusted him with, and God refused him the supply of his special grace. If you have not a new heart and a heart of flesh, ask your own hearts whether ever you did seriously inquire of God to do it for you. God never fails them that diligently seek him.

For the use of this:

1. For information.

(1.) See the strange misery of man by his fall. We cannot be the authors of strength to our own souls, since we are despoiled of that vital principle which constituted us spiritually living in the first creation. How are we sunk many degrees below other creatures, who always have, and still do answer the ends of their creation, when we,

wretched we, have lost both the will and power to answer the end of ours? We can understand, will, move, but not as man in innocence could. In ourselves we are nothing, we have nothing, can bring forth nothing spiritually good and acceptable to God; a mere composition of enmity to good and propensity to evil, of weakness and wickedness, of hell and death; a fardel of impotence and conceitedness, perversity and inability, every way miserable unless infinite compassion relieve us. We have no more freedom than a chained galley slave till Christ redeem us; no more strength than a putrefied carcass till Christ raise us, an unlamented hardness, an unregarded obstinacy, an insensible palsy spread over every part, a dreadful cannot and will not triumphing in the whole soul. The heart turned into pleasure with its own wounds and chains is an amazing misery both to good men and angels, because it is so great, and yet unbewailed to see a man endued with a soul so rare, even with its crack, that the heathens thought it to be a particle of God; an understanding that can peer into heaven, fathom the earth by contemplative inquisitions, yet cannot strike up a spark of enlightened reason about everlasting happiness; that that reason, which understands a worldly interest, should be so blind, so weak, about a heavenly bliss! A short-sighted mind, that cannot cast a look so high as to spiritual things, nor rise up in one holy thought without the grace of God; a perverse will, that cannot commission one spiritual desire; a weak arm, that cannot strengthen itself to grasp and hold one spiritual gift; a dry wilderness, that cannot issue out a tear till God open the fountain of the great deep of grace to flow in upon it; a hard heart, that relents not under afflictions on earth, nor could under the flames of hell without grace! What a woeful thing is it to be miserable, and have no strength to be happy! to look into a law, and behold it wholly spiritual, and to reflect upon our souls, and behold them wholly carnal! Rom. vii. 14, to find a command of regeneration in the judgment of our own consciences, just for God to impose, good for us to receive, and an utter inability to square ourselves according to it!

(2.) See the vast power of sin. It is this that has cast its infectious roots so deep in our souls, that it is impossible for us to pluck up this degenerate plant. The first defection from God was of that nature, that it did per se, of itself, produce an inability in us, as sickness does in a body, or disjuncting a member does weakness in a man; otherwise man, after he had sinned, had been found in strength, and had had a power to do good, till God by punishment had taken away that power, and inflicted a contrary weakness, which would be very absurd to affirm. Adam threw off the royal robe of righteousness; and in all those ages which are run out since, man could not find by all the inquiries of nature how to put it on again without a supernatural strength. This sin that has taken hold of us, keeps us down, that we cannot lift up our heads to divine knowledge, or reach out our hands to perform any divine precept, it is this has emptied us of our treasure, stripped us of our strength, made us as poor as Job upon the dunghill, and as feeble as the cripple at the pool; and which is worse than this, has not only deprived us of our health and strength to cure ourselves, but of our will to be healed by another; and possessed us with such a frenzy that we are friends to our madness, and enemies to those that would deliver us from it; we are all possessed with a legion of devils, that makes us cry out against Christ before we be turned to him, Mark v. 7. It is this first poison diffusing itself in the heart of Adam has made us all by nature a generation of vipers, and infected our very tongues, that we cannot, being evil, speak that which is good, that is, perfectly and spiritually good, as it is Mat. xii. 34, 'O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things?' and poisoned our souls at the very root, that not one grape of grace can grow upon the thorn of nature. All the coin of our actions bears the impression of the evil treasure in our hearts, Luke vi. 43-45.

(3.) We may from hence see the groundlessness of any conceits rising in us, of the power and freedom of our own wills to anything spiritually good. This conceit reigns in most men's hearts naturally; it is a legacy left to our natures by the will of Adam. The not submitting our wills to the will of God, in a way of humble waiting upon him, is

the source of the misery of mankind; such imaginations will creep up in our hearts, that our understandings can aspire to all knowledge, our wills spring up in grace, as naturally as a clear fountain in pure waters. The cause of such conceits is the ignorance both of the depth and largeness of the wound original sin has made in all our faculties. Paul, while a pharisee, without question was of this mind, and cried up the liberty of the will as much as he cried down the truth of the Christian religion; he was 'alive without the law once,' Rom. vii. 9. But when he takes out the lesson of the sinfulness of natural concupiscence, Rom. vii. 7, the experience of his slavery, and being sold under sin, grew up with the notion of the extent of original corruption, and he found himself a mere dead man, as may be observed in several passages in Rom. vii. Every man is born with this conceit, since we find the only peculiar nation God had in the world asserting it in the whole body of them, in the face of God, Exod. xxiv. 8. When Moses told them all the words and judgments of the Lord, all the people answered with one voice, 'All the words which the Lord has said will we do;' and ver. 7, 'All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient.' Not one man among them duly sensible of natural slavery, nor making any application to God for grace to keep them; but as confident of the strength of their mutable wills as if they had as much power as the first man in innocence. This vain confidence has its bitter root in the imagination of all Israel; and that it may not appear to be a sudden and rash passion, they assert it again more solemnly upon second thoughts: ver. 7, 'All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient.'

[1.] It is a high piece of pride. To boast of a great estate, when a man has not a farthing in his purse, is very ridiculous, or for a slave to brag of liberty, with his chains upon his hands and feet. What a vain self-reflection is it when we are bound naturally in our sins, as a slave in his shackles, with Satan's padlock upon us, till the Son make us free indeed! John viii. 36. It is the very moth of pride which ate out the beauty of Adam's garment who, whilst he would stand upon his own bottom, laid the scene of his own ruin; he affected to be his own conductor, and proved his own cut-throat; and aspiring to an

independence on God, fell down into the dungeon of slavery to, and dependency upon, Satan. It is a pride like that of Adam, an invasion of God's property, an affecting to be that by ourselves which we can only be by Christ; it is an arrogance like that of the Babel builders, to think by this slime of nature to raise up a spiritual building as high as heaven. We sin over again more formally the sin of Adam, by affecting an equality with God.

[2.] It is a disparagement to God. It is an unquestionable idolatry, and never yet practised, to set up any creature as the author of the temporal good of the whole world. Is it not more to set up many thousands of free wills as the authors of the spiritual good of the creature, to make every man's will an idol? Is the robbing God of the glory of his grace less criminal than the divesting him of the glory of his outward work? Or are the works of grace in the soul more inconsiderable than those of nature? It disparages Gods grace; it makes his grace subsequent, not preventing; it makes the highest spiritual work to be the seed of man, not the seed of God. If this conceit takes place in your hearts, God is like to be without much praise from his creature. Peter will be no more beholden to God than Judas, Paul no more than Simon Magus; both had the outward revelation, and so both owe a praise to God; but what further debt of praise did Paul owe to God, if his regeneration sprang forth into being by the power of his own will, without any further contribution from God than an objective proposal? It takes off the crown of glory from the head of Christ; for though it will be acknowledged that he bruised the head of the common serpent by the power of his death, yet the destruction of the works of the serpent in our hearts, which is our immediate happiness, was wrought by the seed of free will. It would be strange that the apostle Paul should be so over-seen, to give such praise to the grace of God manifested to him, if he had not been particularly beholden to that for the turning of his heart. By this God is beholden much to the creature's will, in being a great cause of keeping up the interest of God in the world, which had no footing, notwithstanding his revelation, without the compliance of man's will, untouched by any supernatural grace. Such a conceit of man's power

seems to envy God the glory of his whole grace. And such a bitter root of this, I doubt, may be one secret cause that we are so heart-tied and tongue-tied in the praises of God for his grace.

[3.] It takes away a great part of the glory of the Spirit's work in the world. Was his convincing the world of sin and righteousness only external by the objective proposals of the word, and fitting the apostles for the propagation of that convictive revelation? Was he to stand only as a spectator to behold which way the motion of free will would cast the balance? Is he to preserve grace in the heart? and is there not more need of his creating it there, than preserving it after? Is there more danger of the devil's quenching the flame kindled in the soul, than there was of its first touch upon the heart? Is he a Spirit of grace only to propose it, not to work it? The Spirit makes no verbal proposal of it, that is by man; if an inward proposal barely by applying it to the understanding, has not man as much power to do that, as to work it in his will? How can it be a well of water springing up to eternal life, if it works nothing efficaciously upon the heart? This secret pride and conceit in the heart may be a cause we make so few applications to the Spirit of God, taking little notice of him in our attempts.

[4.] It puts a bar to all evangelical duties. It makes us cleave to ourselves rather than to God, and presume upon our own strength rather than rely upon his. The heathens (as Seneca) asserted, that it was a silly thing for a man to desire that of heaven which he had power to do without it. Why should we go to him for renewing grace, when it is in our own power to renew ourselves? May it not be said to us, as it was in another case, 'Why trouble you the master?' As long as we think we can spin a righteousness out of our own bowels, we will never go to Christ for a robe of his weaving, though never so rich. And while we think we can rear a stately spiritual building by our own skill, we shall never desire the art of another workman. Our Saviour would have nothing to do with his fullness, if He stood in no need of it; and what need had we of it, if we could despatch this great business of grace ourselves? This secret imagination in the heart is

one cause of the neglect of duties, especially prayer, or of a slightness and coldness in it.

[5.] This conceit endangers a man's destruction, by encouraging a delay of using the means necessary to this work in God's ordinary course. What sensualist would not delay using means for repentance, who conceits he can repent when he will, and that to will is in his own power? This makes men think they have a key to unlock heaven at their pleasure, and have the command of the treasuries of grace; and therefore are afraid to attend upon evangelical means, for fear they should be put upon serious reflections too soon. The common sentiments of men are a sad evidence of this; you shall hear many acknowledge their weakness in other things, but not in this; they cannot leave such a course of sin, they cannot pray with so much affection, yet their hearts are right, they can repent and believe when they will, that is in their own power; which makes them sluggish and careless at the calls of God. But what a folly this is, let Solomon witness, who sets the fool's cap upon such confidence; 'He that trusts in his own heart is a fool,' Prov. xxviii. 26; it is to trust in a weathercock that is mutable with every wind of temptation. To depend upon our wills, is to depend upon the oldest and the most certain bankrupt in the world, that broke as soon as it was set up, many ages since, and never recovered itself. Who told you, therefore, that you can melt the stone within you at your pleasure? that you can cast the strong man out of your wills without a stronger than he? But suppose the grounds were rational, and that you had a power to cure yourselves; the consequent is very irrational, for that cause to delay it; for what man in his wits would endure a wound or deformity many years, because he can heal or beautify himself at his pleasure in a moment? Take heed therefore of such fancies of your own power to regenerate yourselves, and upon that account to neglect that which you have power to do; but imitate Ephraim with all speed, notwithstanding your cheating imagination, and cry out, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned,' Jer. xxxi. 18.

(4.) It informs us, that regeneration is not wrought merely by moral suasion, or only by exhortations; then it would principally be the work of the will of man. Our Saviour had a will to preach to all in Jerusalem, but he had not a will to quicken all: John v. 21, 'the Son quickens whom he will;' so that it depended upon his inward operation, not only upon his outward exhortations. It is true there is a suasion in the ear by the word, but the persuasion is in the heart by grace; the suasion in the word may cause some rational reflections as a moral cause, but no spiritual motion towards God as a physical cause. Men are not disputed or exhorted, but created into grace; the proposal of a good by the understanding is not always embraced by the will, unless it be a good suitable and connatural to those habits in the will. Where, therefore, there is no suitable habit planted in the will, rational reflections in the mind and conscience are not like to prevail much.

[1.] If it were only by suasion and exhortation, the most eloquent preaching were like to do most good. Whereas it never was God's method to found conversion upon the 'words of man's wisdom,' though 'enticing' in themselves, but upon the 'demonstration and power of the Spirit,' 1 Cor. ii. 4. The most eloquent preaching would then most fill the gospel nets. And the reports of that rhetorical prophet Isaiah would have been soon believed, which were not so, because 'the arm of the Lord was not (always) revealed with them,' Isa. liii. 1. If any words, as words, were like to have an edge to cut deep into the soul, they must be the words of our Saviour; since 'never man' (even in the judgment of some of his enemies) 'spoke as he spake.' But though 'his lips were full of grace,' Ps. xiv. 2, most of his hearers' hearts were empty of it under his ministry; not the eloquence and pressing reasons of Christ, nor the wrath of God revealed from heaven, can reclaim the heart of man, without the power of grace. The Pharisees were prouder under Christ's melting bowels, and the Jews harder under God's wrathful blows, Isa. i. 5; neither hearing nor feeling will prevail upon hardened souls.

[2.] What bare exhortations can work upon a dead man? Can a well composed oration, setting out all the advantages of life and health raise a dead man, or cure a diseased body? You may as well exhort a blind man to behold the sun, and prevail as much. No man ever yet imagined, that the strewing a dead body with flowers would raise it to life; no more can the urging a man, spiritually dead, with eloquent motives, ever make him to open his eyes and stand upon his feet. Did our Saviour come out of his grave, or could he ever have done it, by mere suasion, without the power of God to raise him? Eph. i. 19, 20. The working of mighty power is a title too high for the capacity of mere moral exhortations. A mere suasion does not confer a strength, but suppose it in a man, for he is only persuaded to use the power which he has already.

[3.] Does not daily experience testify the contrary? Have you never discoursed with some profane, loose fellow, so pressingly, that he seemed to be planet-struck at every reasoning, shaken out of his excuses for his sinful course, yet not shaken out of his sin; that you might as soon have persuaded the tide at full sea to retreat, or a lion to change his nature, as have overcome him by all your arguments. Have you not seen many at a stand in sin, by the force of some convincing reasons, return again to their vomit? Have not many tears at command in anything that concerns themselves, the loss of some estate, or some dear friend, but in the things of God, in his dishonours, as dry as the parched earth? That you may almost as soon extract water out of a rock, as repentance for sin out of their stony hearts. So that it is not the faint breath of man, or the rational considerations of the mind are able to do this work, without the mighty pleadings and powerful operations of that great Paraclete or Advocate, the Spirit, to alter the temper of the soul.

[4.] There is no likelihood that any man in the world would be renewed, if it were only by moral suasion. Satan's logic would be stronger than God's; his arguments would more suit our imagined interest, and our real enmity against God; his persuasions would find more kindred in the principles of our minds and habits of our wills to

take fire by him, than the suatory allurements of God, which will meet with nothing in our hearts but contrariety to them. The deceitfulness of sin within us, and the subtilty of Satan without us, both being active as well as persuading adversaries, would fix us in our rebellion, without a contrary power, as well active as exhortative, and God would do no more towards our restoration than Satan does towards our destruction, since the devil can only propose to us, not by any physical touch incline our wills. We are wholly inclined to him in our own natures, in love with the knife that cuts our throats, and too fond of our shackles ever to knock them off. The will is so enamoured with its corrupt habit, that were this work left barely to self will, and no other power employed in it than exhortative, not one person were every likely to come unto God.

[5.] If it were wrought by suasion, the will would have the whole praise of the work. For suasion or exhortation is nothing else but the proposing arguments to the understanding, but the motion, according to those arguments, is wholly from the will, which has a power to receive them or refuse them. God, indeed, would be the first speaker, but not the first agent; God would be only the assisting cause, as all moral causes are, he would only assist the motion of the will, not cause it. The motion of the will is a physical act; if, then, the physical act be from the will, and God only the moral cause, the will will be the greater sharer in the work, for moral causes are in vain without a physical effect in those things they work morally upon: as all the reasoning of one man with another will be to little purpose, if there be not a physical motion of the will of that person to comply with the other's reasonings. If, therefore, the reasoning part be only from God, and physical motion from man, the most debauched wretch, under the preaching of the gospel, is as much beholden to God as the highest believer, who had both the same suasions and exhortations; for though the suasion was from God, the persuasion was from their own wills. God only made the revelation, and was afterwards a spectator, not an actor.

(5.) Information. We may draw a conclusion hence whereby to judge of the truth of doctrines. Man cannot renew himself. Whatsoever doctrine does depress and humble man and advance the glory of God, is true, it answers the main design of the gospel, which all centres in this, that man is to be laid low, and God to be exalted as the chief cause. It pulls man from his own bottom, and transfers all the glory man would challenge into the hands of God; it lays man in the dust at God's footstool. That doctrine which crosses the main design of the gospel, and encourages pride in man, is not a spark from heaven: 'No flesh must glory in God's presence,' 1 Cor. i. 29. The doctrine of justification by works is thrown down by the apostle with this very argument as a thunderbolt: Rom. iii. 27, 'Where is boasting then? it is excluded by faith;' that is, by the doctrine of the gospel, boasting would be introduced by ascribing regeneration to nature as much as it is excluded by denying justification by works; the doctrine of the gospel would contradict itself, to usher in boasting with one hand whilst it thrust it out with the other. Our Saviour gave this rule long ago, that the glorifying God is the evidence of truth in persons: 'He that seeks his glory that sent him, the same is true,' John vii. 18. By the same reason also in things and doctrines, and indeed, Christ speaks it in relation to his doctrine, as appears, verse 16, 17. All truth gives God the pre-eminence in all gracious works; the first creation, the progress and top-stone, are the works of this great Bezaliel, this mighty artificer, both the first draught and the last line. To confound nature and grace together, is to join the creature in communion with God, and make them co-heirs in the glory which is only due to the only wise and almighty Creator.

Use 2 is for exhortation. 1. To the regenerate. If this doctrine be true,

1. Then ascribe nothing to flesh. (1.) Not to yourselves. No more praise is due to us than to gold for being melted by the fire and wrought by the workman into a vessel of honour; it is due to the skill of the artificer, not to the vessel itself. When the reparation of human nature was to be wrought by the gospel, when the crooked should be made straight, and the rough places plain, then should flesh be as

grass, when the Spirit of the Lord should blow upon it; yea, the people, those that are God's peculiar ones, by reason of privileges, are grass, Isa. xl. 4, 6, 7, they should be nothing in themselves, that God might be all in all: the Spirit of God blows upon all their self-confidences. If God be the God of all grace, what share have our wills in it then? He calls, he opens the heart, he strengthens, he perfects; all the grace we have is his 'treasure,' 1 Peter v. 10. He first delivers from Egypt; preserves in the desert; conducts to a footing in Canaan. Grace triumphs in the whole work, from Dan to Beersheba, from the beginning of the work to the end. What glory can belong to us? We will, it is true, but God gives that will; we work, but God bestows and stands by that power to work; what have we then to do with the praise? It is 'in his light we see light,' Ps. xxxvi. 9. The rays whereby we have a glimpse of him are not darted from us to him, but from him to us. The light in the air springs not from itself, but from some other body enlightening it; how can any good be ascribed to us, where there is nothing but insufficiency and defect? It is to belie the Lord, to entitle a work of omnipotence to so infirm a cause, it is worse than the pharisee, who, in the midst of his boasts of his own moral righteousness, thought a tribute of praise due to God: 'Lord, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are,' Luke xviii. 11. Shall we entitle God the author of our beings, and ourselves the creators of our spiritual beings? Is it less to have an elevation of our faculties, and an animation of them by a new virtue, than to have simply the faculties themselves? If the creature be unable of itself to move without a dependence on God in way of common providence, much more unable is it to move without dependence on God in a way of supernatural vitality. The glory of the act is as little due to man as the glory of the first habit.

Now, 1, review yourselves, consider what you were before regeneration, what after it; and then, how can you ascribe anything to yourselves?

(1.) What you were before regeneration. Was not sin as deeply rooted in you as any other, which made you as incapable to raise yourselves

as the most wicked man in the world? Were you not prisoners in chains, captives under locks and bolts, when grace first set up its standard for your recovery? How thick was the darkness of your minds? how stout the perversity of your wills? how impetuous the violence of your sinful affections? Did they not all conspire together to make as stout a resistance against the work of the gospel as any others? Can you then say, that because God saw you more inclinable to grace than another, that he drew you? You were created; did you bring clay enough to compose the least particle of flesh about you? You are new created; what part of the new man was formed by your direction? Did you bring grace enough of yourselves to form one holy thought, or send out one holy desire? Did your own will single you out of that multitude of degenerate men of better natures than yours, left still in their own nothingness? Was it nothing but your own will that planted you in the nursery of the invisible church, that made you capable of a divine union? Were not other men's reasons as strong as yours? the means they enjoyed greater? their moral disposition sweeter? What was the reason their wills did not bend themselves as well as yours? What is the reason they did not hold out their hands to catch this all-necessary grace? Did this noble birth cost none any pains but yourselves? Was this goodly fabric reared by your own wills? Look on it; methinks it is a piece too comely and noble for human skill.

(2.) What are you since your regeneration? What, do you find no rebellion of the law in your members against the law of the mind? Are there not powerful allurements of the flesh? Are your thoughts always flying up to God, and hovering about him? Are you always nimble in your praise of him? or not rather lifeless many times under the breathings of the Spirit? Why are you thus? Did you first by your own force begin this noble conquest of sin? And can you not by the same power make a better progress? Did you breathe a life into yourselves when you had not a spark, and can you not blow up this spark into a greater liveliness? Surely then this work was not at first the birth of your own wills. Do you not yet find some scale and thick matter upon your understandings that you cannot pick off? some

darkness in your minds, as there is some in the air after it is enlightened? Are there not obstructions in your wills? no shackles upon the executive power? Can you not remove that darkness with that great light you have? nor unlock those fetters by the strength of your habitual grace? Can then the first powerful entrance of it, the fall of the first scale from the understanding, be judged to be the work of your own hands? or the first teeming of your wills with grace to be the effect of your power? View yourselves well in both states, and you will find no ground whereon to build so much injustice towards God, and pride in yourselves, but must needs acknowledge that God and not yourselves have wrought all your works in you, Isa. xxvi. 12, not only your temporal advantages, which the church there means, but your spiritual, and much more spiritual than temporal.

To stave off any ascribing to yourselves, consider,

[2.] He that ascribes it to his own will has great reason to question whether he be regenerate or no. He may well doubt whether he understands or feels what it is, since those in Scripture who have been most experimented in it, and therefore are the most competent judges, have most highly magnified the grace of God, and most deeply vilified themselves; they have given the glory of it so entirely to God that they have not let a grain of it stick to their own fingers. Thus David often, 'Thou hast quickened me.' The apostle Paul owns his effectual call to be owing to the 'grace of God,' Gal. i. 15, and to an abundant 'grace in Christ,' 1 Tim. i. 14; he was a persecutor, but his faith and love was from the abundance of the grace of God, and that in Christ too, not from any thing in nature. Peter is not behind him in the admiration of it: 1 Peter i. 8, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again.' And it is that the church in the times of the gospel prophesied of: Ps. c. 8, 'It is he that has made us, not we ourselves;' made us his people, as it follows, 'We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture,' 'not we ourselves.' Whenever the naughtiness of their hearts has been ready to launch out to self-praise, they have turned the tide quickly to the grace of God. When Paul had owned grace as

the cause of his spiritual being, 1 Cor. xv. 10, and began to speak of his labouring more abundantly than they, he flies back in haste, as one that had gone beyond his line, 'Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me;' another, 'Yet not I;' Gal. ii. 20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.' There is no mention of any in Scripture that ever in this case did sacrifice to their own net.

[3.] If a man be regenerate, such a boasting of himself is very dangerous. Though it may not rifle you of the new nature, yet by the just judgment of God, it may cloud the comfort of it. If such a man be renewed, this pride is but a prologue of some dark veil to be drawn between him and the light of God's countenance, between him and the sight of his own grace. A swelling up in pride presages a sinking down in desertion. If God be not owned by you to be the God of all grace in you, he will not own himself to be the God of all comfort to you. Grace follows humility, and some shrewd shock attends spiritual pride, it is such an idolatrous robbing God of his glory (whereof he is most jealous), and giving it to another, that he will not let it pass without a remark. The clouding of your grace will be the fruit of the smothering of his glory. For since the main intendment of the gospel is to humble, God will humble you if any grace be in you. If the Spirit of grace has breathed upon your souls to renew you, he will blow upon your grass to consume it, Isa. xl. 7, he will pull down those proud thoughts and strong holds, and cause your vain confidences to wither and come to nothing. Ascribe it not therefore to yourselves; be not so presumptuous, as, while you allow God to be the author of the being and motion of a little fly, to cry up your own wills as the chief cause of grace, a work more excellent than the material world.

2. Ascribe nothing to instruments, either men or means. It is not of the will of man, not another's will. Without the efficacious working of the Spirit, the gospel itself is but as a dead letter, the Spirit only quickens it. It is not outward teaching and blowing which of itself will kindle these sparks; an instrument cannot act without the strength of an agent to manage it; the chisel forms the stone into a statue, but according to the skill and strength of the artifices moving

it. It is not the breath of man, and a few words out of his mouth, can produce so great a work as the new creation; this might be a reason why God chose so weak an instrument as man to preach the gospel, to evidence that the great work was not from the weakness of man but the power of God.

Exhortation 2. Let us be humbled under our own natural impotence and inability, and keep up this humiliation. There is danger of the pharisee's pride climbing up into the heart, even after regeneration. Renewed men have instructions to humility above other men; their sin may strike them low, because it is the growth of their own nature; their grace may keep them low, because it is no plant of their own setting; sin, because it is originally theirs; grace, because it is originally none of theirs; it is no beam of their own understanding, no stream from the fountain of their own will. If we think believingly and fruitfully of Christ at any time, we cannot but think of our own weakness, nothing in him but minds us of it; our weakness to obey the law was the cause of his coming; our weakness to satisfy God was the cause of his dying; our inability to repair and support ourselves was the cause of his fullness. His death minds us of our impotence to redeem ourselves, his grace minds us of our impotence to renew ourselves. The more we grow up in the new birth, the more deeply sensible shall we be of our impotence. Oh, let this text be written in our hearts, 'Not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.'

3. Resolve nothing in your own strength. The power to believe and be renewed is a power 'given,' not inbred, Philip. i. 29; our strength is deposited, not in the cracked cabinet of our own wills, but in the treasures of Christ. Our purposes are weak without grace to strengthen them, our resolutions vanishing without grace to establish them. If we should be left to the sails of our own faculties, without the breath of the Spirit to fill them, we should lie wind-bound. The will can never in this life be so firm but the allurements of the great tempter will make inroads upon us and overset us, without the special grace of God to establish and strengthen us. As we are not to do anything for our own glory, so we are not to do

anything in our own strength. As we must not be our own end, so we must not be our own principle; the power the best have is but derived, the stream must know it is but a stream still. The actual exercise of Paul's ability grew from strength in another hand, 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me,' Philip. in. 14; all things by him, nothing by himself. When the Israelites went out with God, no sons of Anak, no walls of Jericho, nor chariots of iron could stand before them. When they trusted in themselves, nothing could be resisted by them. The devil was certainly none of the lowest rank of angels; he had a great clearness of gifts, yet he falls for cleaving to his own will and strength, not to the grace of God. And Adam, in depending upon himself, lost himself and his posterity. For us to undertake the government of ourselves is like a ship without a pilot, to be dashed soon against a rock. To lean on our own wisdom and will, is to lean on broken reeds, deceitful supports; self-confidence is the worm of grace, conceit of a spiritual fullness in ourselves is the way to an emptiness of spiritual comfort. Self-will and self-wisdom are the great idols of the soul, and some little images of them are in the hearts of the best men, which they are ready sometimes to fall down before and worship; they would oppose temptations themselves, do duties themselves by the strength of habitual grace, without regard to the strength of God, the great support of it.

4. Therefore live dependently upon God. Do you not find how apt you are to stagger at every temptation; how weak your wills are to good; how easily your purposes are broken, the thoughts of God few and distracted, your motions heavy in divine ways? Is there not, then, need of a constant looking unto God, as they did upon the brazen serpent, for the healing of our natures, while the wound remains imperfectly cured? All bodies on the earth, though they have a principle of motion in themselves, yet dependently upon the heavenly bodies. If the motions of the heavens should cease, that all motions in the earth would cease too is the opinion of philosophers. Without dependence on the grace of God and fullness of Christ, we sink into weakness and impotency, as a beam expires into duskiness upon the clouding of the sun. It is God only can be a 'dew to Israel,'

Hosea xiv. 5. Think not of bringing forth the after-fruits of grace without his influence, no more than you could plant in yourselves the first root of grace without his power: the same breath of the Spirit must blow the fire up as well as kindle it. As by our own wills we should never turn to God, so without the continuance of efficacious grace we should quickly start from God. 'As you have received Christ, so walk in him,' Col. ii. 6. You received him by faith, walk in him by faith. This is the reason of the different thrivings of one Christian above another, under the same means. One endeavours to act upon his own bottom; the other clings to the vine. Christ knew the things of God by lying in the bosom of the Father; we come to know and do the things of God by lying in the bosom of the Son. All natural effects, if taken off from the influence of their own cause, by which they live and increase, lose their power and die. The soul separate from God, by non-exercise of faith, loses its strength, become stiff and inactive. How often do we return to our wonted coldness, bring forth lazy fruits, creep like snails in the ways of God, without the spur of quickening grace! And we want it because we do not seek it; for though we be armed with the whole armour of God, helmet, shield, breastplate, yet prayer and supplication must be added as a mark of our necessary dependence: Eph. vi. 18, 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication.' Then will the Spirit endue us with a fresh vigour, confirm our languishing wills, restrain the flames of natural corruption, and excite the fear and faith of God in the heart.

2. The second branch of the-exhortation, to those yet in a natural condition.

1. Endeavour to be sensible of your natural impotence. Be deeply humbled at the feet of God, strip yourselves (as much as in you lies) of the conceitedness of reason and pride of will. Every man is born with high conceits of himself and his own power; it being a natural evil, should cost us the deeper humiliations. Consider yourselves by nature under the dominion of sin, the demerit of wrath, the curse of the law, the hatred of God, and a feebleness to help yourselves in this wretched condition. View yourselves often in the glass of the law,

bring the spiritual word and the carnal heart together, and behold the beauty of the one and deformity of the other; let all the nasty corners of the heart come under the examination of that purity, and then let the carnal mind hang down at the thoughts of your inability to frame yourselves according to a spiritual law. The view of our natural condition cannot work regeneration in us, but it is some kind of preparation towards it. 'The law is a schoolmaster to drive to Christ,' Gal. iii. 24. It works not this grace, but it fires a man out of himself, shows him how much he differs from the holiness of God, and is an occasion for casting about and looking after some remedy, whereby he may be made like to God, and of earnest crying for the showers of grace. Be sensible also of your contrariety to the grace of God, our wilfulness against it is worse than our emptiness of it. God 'will teach the humble his ways,' Ps. xxv. 9. those that are sensible of their own insufficiency to guide themselves.

2. Make use of the power you have. Man (as has been sheen) has some power by those restored relics of nature. There is no plea therefore to lie snorting upon a bed of sluggishness. We must not expect a divine assistance will fly to us from heaven while we play the sluggards. Though God does rouse up some on the sudden, before and previous act of their wills, yet we must not expect God will use the same methods to all. Our own power must be stirred up and exerted as much as may be. To be faithful in a little is the way to be made ruler over much. Though the top of nature cannot merit grace, yet if nature struggles to come to the top it may find an invisible hand helping it up step by step. The damnation of most men will not be for the fault of their first parents, but for the abuse of their own power, the perverseness of their wills, and neglect of what they might have done towards the seeking of God. Though Moses had a promise of victory over Amalek, yet Joshua must fight, and the Israelites stand to their arms. God saves not men in ways encouraging their laziness. 'The sluggard desires and has nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat,' Prov. viii. 4. The sluggard has nothing but lazy wishes, not active endeavours. If it be not worth the having, why

do you desire it? If it be worth the desiring, why not worth the seeking?

(1.) Avoid those sins you have power to avoid. Every sin, though never so little, does increase our weakness, as every wound does the distemper of the body. It makes us weigh down towards the centre of sin. Every grain cast into the scale makes it the more unable to rise. As a virtue which is risen to that height that it cannot degenerate into vice is most worthy of praise, so the vice that possesses the soul so deeply as to incapacitate it to the doing good, being contracted by ourselves, is the more worthy of wrath.

(2.) Use the means appointed by God. Though we are torches which cannot light ourselves, yet we may bring ourselves to the word, which may both melt and kindle us. Though the giving rain and the increasing the fruits of the earth be from God, yet no man ever held ploughing, and sowing, and pruning unnecessary. The work of grace is the work of the Spirit, who is a 'wind which blows where it lists,' John iii. 8. But may we not wait for those gales? May we not spread our sails and watch for the successful breathings? How do you know but whilst you are waiting upon God in an humble posture, God may unlock your hearts, and pour in the treasures of his grace? Acts x. 44, 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.' It you will not harden your hearts today, God may soften your hearts today: Heb. iii. 16, 'Today, if you will hear his voice.' These are the times wherein God parleys with the soul, and inclines it to the happy surrender. Though the power is God's, as the water is the fountain's, yet he has appointed the channels of his ordinances through which to convey it: 'Ministers by whom you believed,' 1 Cor. iii. 5. The gospel begets instrumentally, God principally 1 Cor. iv. 15. God calls by the gospel, 2 Thess. ii. 14. As God is the governor of the world, yet it is by instruments and second causes, which he clasps together to bring about his own designs. He that does not use these means may fear that God will never work savingly upon him, for it is an utter refusing any acceptance of this grace, or anything tending to it. This is to be peremptory, never to do

ourselves any good, or receive any from God. In despising the means, you despise the goodness of God. As God gave up the heathens to themselves, because they were 'unthankful,' Rom. i. 21, for that light of nature and means which they had, so if we use the means of the gospel with thankfulness to God, God may give himself up to us. But by neglect of them we take the larger strides to destruction, and the same dreadful sentence may be pronounced against us as against them in Ezek. xxiv. 13, 'Because I have purged thee,' that is, offered thee means whereby thou might have been purged, 'and thou was not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more; but in thy filthiness thou shalt die.' The using the means afforded by God has a common illumination, and a 'taste of the heavenly gift' attending it, Heb. vi. 4.

[1.] Use the means fervently, with as much ardour as you set upon anything of worldly concern; do it with all your might, since the eternal blessedness of your soul depends upon it: Eccles. ix. 10, 'Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might.' Stir up your souls to hear and meditate, as David does to bless: Ps. ciii. 1, 2, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.' Employ all your faculties in this useful work; bring your hearts as near to the word as you can, screw up your affections to what you meditate upon, check your hearts when they begin to rove. Consider your own particular case in anything you hear; and let the word be as a delightful picture in the view of your minds continually; let every evangelical object excite your inbred affections.

[2.] Use the means dependently. Objective proposals are not useless, because God has ordained them; though they are not always successful, unless God does influence them. The means do not work naturally, as a plaster cures a wound, or a hatchet cleaves wood; nor necessarily, as fire burns; for then they should produce the same effects in all, as fire does in combustible matter; but as God pleases to accompany them with his grace, and edge them with efficacy, they must be used with an eye to God, building with one hand, and wrestling with God with the other. Men speed best in ordinances as

they strive in prayer. There are promises to plead before you come to hear: Exod. xx. 24, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and bless thee.' The promise was made to the whole nation of Israel, the visible church, therefore pleadable by every one of them; and fix it upon your hearts, that as the death of Christ only takes away the guilt of sin, so the grace of Christ only takes away the life of sin, and the death of nature.

[3.] Pray earnestly. Entreat God to send his grace; beg of him to issue out a divine force, and a quickening power, to enlighten your minds, incline your wills. Lie at his feet, groan, wait till this work be wrought in your soul. How do you know, but while you are looking up to God, God may come down to you? Can a man be wounded, and not cry for plasters? Can he be shipwrecked and not cry out for some vessel to relieve him? Let such a voice frequently issue from you, 'What shall I do to be saved?' Is there no balm for a wounded soul, no hope for a distressed sinner, no city of refuge for one pursued by wrath and vengeance? Do you pray for daily bread? Why do you not for special grace? Are there no rational pleas you can urge? Is there not a fullness of arguments in the word? Why do you not then use those arguments God has put into your hands? Why do you not spread his own word before him? Put him in mind how his thoughts were busy about the work of redemption, and that the regeneration you desire of him was the great end of that, and a thing pleasing to him? Why do you not reason with God, to what purpose he sent his Spirit into the world, but to do this work in the hearts of men which you are now soliciting him for; and that you come not to beg any alms of him, but what he freely offers himself? You may daily read such arguments in the word, where a revelation is made of them; you may daily plead them: if you do not, it is not your cannot, but your will not. Cry out of the blind eyes you cannot upscale, the iron sinew you cannot bend, the false heart that will not go right, and the fallen nature which cannot reach so high as a holy thought. Surely God will not be deaf to the natural prayers of his rational creatures put up to him with a natural integrity, no more than he is to the cries of animals, to the voice of the lion seeking for his prey, into whose

mouth he puts, by his providence, what may satisfy it. God gives the Spirit to them that ask him; not to the idle, lazy, and peevish resister of him and his grace. If you have power to regenerate yourselves, why do you not do it? If you have not, why do you not seek it? Is the way of heaven shut to you; or rather, do you not shut your own hearts against it? Have you sought it earnestly, and can you say God denies it you? No man can say so; there is a promise for it: James iv. 8, 'Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you;' he speaks it to sinners, as it follows, 'Cleanse your hands, you sinners.' You can pray for other mercies, why not principally for this particular determination of your wills to God, above all other things? Lord, give me to will and to do. Never leave off praying till God has crowned your petitions with success; and be encouraged to seek to him, whose great business in the world was to destroy the works of the devil, whose principal work was the spiritual death of man. If you have such earnest desires in your souls, that you would rather have it than the whole world, and esteem it above all worldly wealth or honours, be of good comfort, some of the rubbish of nature is removed; the steams of such desires shall be welcome to God, and the Spirit's commission shall be renewed to breathe further upon your souls. Desire as vehement as hunger and thirst shall be satisfied, if our blessed Saviour's promise be true, who never deceived any, or broke his word: Mat. v. 6, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' A fullness attends a sense of emptiness, accompanied with hungering desires. But I am afraid few people put up their petitions to God for it; that I may say, as Daniel of his nation, 'all this evil' of unrighteousness and sin is 'come upon us' by our depraved natures; 'yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth,' Dan. ix. 13.

[4.] Nourish every motion and desire you find in your hearts towards it. Have you not sometimes motions to go to the throne of grace, and beg renewing grace of God? Do you not find such tugs and pulls in your consciences? Is there not something within you spurs you on? Kick not against it, nor resist it, no, nor smother any spark of an

honest desire in your hearts; be constant observers of lessons, your natural consciences, or whatever any other principle set you. Natural notions are not so blotted, but they remain legible; would men be more inward with themselves, than abroad with the objects of sense, which draw their minds from pondering that decalogue written in their souls. There is not the most wicked man under the gospel, but has sometimes more bright irradiations in his conscience than at other times, but they are damped by a noisome sensuality; he has some velleities and heavings, some strugglings against the solicitations of unrighteousness, some assents upon the presenting of virtue; for as grace is not always so powerful in a good man as to stifle temptation, so neither is corruption so powerful in a wicked man as always to beat back those motions to good which rise up in his soul, whether he will or no. As the law of the mind is not always so sovereign in a gracious man, but that it is affronted by the law of the members, so neither is the law of the members so absolute in a wicked man, but that it is somewhat checked by the law of nature in the mind. Are there not upon hearing the word, or reflecting upon yourselves, some wishings, some inward velleities which partake of reason, and the nature of that faculty which represents the necessity of it to you? As there is some kind of weak knowledge left in us since the fall, there is also something of a weak desire. Cannot these desires be improved and represented to God? Why is not the grace of God fulfilled in you? Because you persevere not in these desires, you quench the sparks of the Spirit, and willingly give admission to Satan to chase them out. Shut not your eyes then against any light, either without or within you, which may provoke God to withdraw this grace from you. How do you know but, upon using the means, praying earnestly, observing inward motions, God may give you an actual regeneration? The neglect of these is a just reason for God to refuse you any further gift; and may take off all things which you may think to bring against him in your own defence. The use of them has been beneficial to many, and no example can ever be brought, that God has condemned any that conscientiously used the means of salvation. Therefore I say again, if any man use the means, pray earnestly for this grace, observe the motions of the Spirit in him, he

will not want a superadded grace from an infinitely good, tender, and merciful God.

Two doctrines were raised from these words.

1. That man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself.

This I have despatched, and now proceed to the

2nd Doct. God alone is the prime efficient cause of regeneration.

It is subjectively in the creature, efficiently from God. Ezekiel's dry bones met not together of their own accord, Ezek. xxxvii. 5, 6, or by chance, but were gathered by God, and inspired with life; and not only the last act of life, but the whole formation of them in every part, he does particularly own as the act of his own power. And doing every part of it by degrees, they should know, by that admirable work upon them, that he was God: 'I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring flesh upon you, and cover you with skin; and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.' This work does as much discover the glory of his deity, and speaks him God in a more illustrious manner than the creation of the world. We know him to be the Lord Jehovah by his creation of the world; but a clearer knowledge of him in his power is added by his regeneration of the soul. The sinews, flesh, skin, all the preparations to grace, are from God, as all the preparations of that mass of clay for the breath of life in Adam were from the power of God, as well as the living soul itself. Most do understand it of the recovery of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon; but certainly it has a higher import, and respects the time of the gospel, and the renewing of life in the soul of all the Israel of God. (1.) Because the prophecy extends further than the two tribes captivated in Babylon; for, verse 11, the bones are said to be 'the whole house of Israel,' who despaired of ever seeing and good,

complaining that their bones were dried: ver. 11, 'Our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts.' Which could not be rationally the complaint of the Jews, who had a promise that, after seventy years' captivity, they should return, and therefore their case was not so desperate. (2.) Because, verse 14, he speaks of 'putting his Spirit into them;' meaning thereby that work he had spoken of in the former chapter, Ezek. xxxvi. 7, which certainly, being a covenant of grace, respected the times of the gospel. If it be said that it is meant of forming the church, it must also be meant of forming every member of it, since the least member of Adam was formed by God, as well as the whole body. Certainly, if renewed men, after some great falls, having still the root of habitual grace in them, cry to God, out of a sense of their own insufficiency, for the creating a clean heart, as David does, Ps. li. 10, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;' if he then, who had this root remaining, and had some sparks which presently were blown up upon Nathan's speech to him, cries out for a new creation, what need has he then of an almighty breath who has not any warm ashes of grace or any one string of a spiritual root in his soul! Whatsoever, therefore, is holy, good, and spiritual in us, we owe to the new-creating grace of God. All graces are his "charismata", his free donatives, over and above his common largeness to nature, a present from his infinite liberality.

I shall show,

I. That God is the efficient.

II. That it is necessary he should be so.

III. From what principles in God it flows.

IV. How God does it.

V. The use of it.

I. That God is the efficient.

(1.) In the first promise, Gen. iii. 15, 'I will put enmity,' &c. In which promise is included the whole work of redemption, and new creating man under another head, with another nature, which should not comply with the designs of Satan, or gratify the great enemy of God and mankind by unravelling the work of God, and subjecting himself to misery. It was necessary to our happiness that the league between Satan and us should be broken, that we should turn to God, hate the works of the devil, and join with the interest which Satan endeavoured to overthrow. And God promises that he would do it; he challenges it as his own work: 'I will put enmity;' he leaves it not to men or angels to begin hostility. Every one, therefore, that is at a true variance with Satan is 'God's workmanship, created in Christ,' by a second creation, as well as he was created to a natural life in Adam by the first creation, and 'created to good works, that he may walk in them', Eph. ii. 10. That is, is fashioned by God to walk in ways contrary to those of Satan, which is the greatest enmity we can express to the devil, who envied God a service from the holiness of Adam's nature. And Satan having made that conquest, and gained man to be his friend, it is not easy to conceive how any lower power could unfasten this knot, and set them at variance, since the devil had both wit enough to humour man and strength enough to keep him.

(2.) In the times of the gospel. No less than seven times I will he does affix to his promise of the covenant, as has been observed before, Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27. What seed was left to keep up the name of God among the Jews was of his begetting: Rom. ix. 29, 'Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed,' cited out of Isa. i. 9. Their standing was not their act, but God's: and 1 Kings xix. 18, 'I have left me seven thousand, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal.' Others were left to themselves; these were signally wrought upon by his grace. Others are but instruments; God is the principal agent in all the seed of the church scattered in the whole earth: Hosea ii. 23, 'I will sow her to me in the earth,' alluding to the name Jezreel, which signifies the seed of God. If ever the sons of Japheth 'dwell in the tents of Shem,' it must be by God's 'persuasion,' Gen. ix. 27. The word rendered

enlarge signifies to allure. The Spirit of grace is of God's effusion, Zech. xii. 10; it is God's pouring out a Spirit of grace on them before their looking up to God. (Where, by the way, observe a signal testimony of the deity of Christ; 'They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;' he that pours upon them the Spirit of grace is he whom they pierced, which was the Lord Jehovah, verse 8; for where in your Bibles Lord is written in great letters, the Hebrew word there is Jehovah; the highest name of God is here attributed to Christ.) And even in the last times he will still be the only agent in it. When God speaks of the Jews' dispersion, under which they are at this day, he owns this work upon their hearts at last to be an act of his own power and of covenant mercy: Deut. xxx. 6, 'The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart,' &c., which some of the Jews understand of the time of the Messiah. God will challenge this work as his own right to the end of the world.

2. Christ appropriates it to God, and acknowledges it to depend only upon his will. Had any other cause been in conjunction with God, our Saviour would not have deprived it of its due praise, nor with so much thankfulness and amazement admired the gracious pleasure of his Father as he did,—Mat. xi. 25, 'At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,'—at that time, after he had been discoursing of the judgments upon them for their refusal of the gospel, worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. It was God's pleasure not to reveal it to them, and God's justice to punish them for refusal, because they wilfully refused it. The outward teaching was to all in the ministry of Christ, the inward revelation only to few according to the good pleasure of God. Christ was the outward teacher, but God the inward inspirer. That others are not renewed by him is not because he cannot, for he is Lord of heaven and earth, but because he will renew some and not others. Our Saviour refers it here only to the good pleasure of God; he had erred much in ascribing it to God, if he had had the assistance of any other cause. Why this part of the clay he had created was formed into

the body of Adam and not another, had no other cause but his pleasure; why this part of corrupted Adam is formed into a temple, a divine image, and not another, can be ascribed to no other but the same cause. He that formed Adam in the earthly paradise, forms every believer in the church, the spiritual paradise, and neither has a co-worker nor motive without himself.

3. The Scripture everywhere appropriates it to God. They are therefore called his saints, Ps. xxxiv. 9, as being sanctified by him as well as belonging to him, 'his people,' 'the branch of his planting,' 'the work of his hands,' peculiarly his, as being created for his glory, 'that I may be glorified,' Isa. lx. 21. Their fitness by grace for glory is the work of his hands. The vessels of wrath are fitted for destruction, not by God, but by themselves, Rom. ix. 22. But the vessels of mercy are prepared by him, ver. 23, 'He had before prepared unto glory.' Adam lost himself, but whosoever of his posterity are recovered are 'wrought by God for glory,' 1 Cor. v. 5. It is observable that the apostle ascribes this in the whole frame of it to God: 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness,' &c., because he would remove all cause of boasting in the creature. He did not only set forth Christ at first as a principle of righteousness, and redemption, and sanctification, but engrafted in him, whosoever is in him, for the enjoyment of those privileges, and made him not only in general to the world, but to us, in the particular application, a principle of sanctification as well as righteousness. Union with Christ, engrafting in him, new creation, putting into another state, are all purely the work of God. He has no sharer in it. As Christ trod the winepress alone in the work of redemption, so God engrafts men alone into this vine. As Christ was the sole worker of redemption, so is God the sole worker of regeneration. In him we are created, but solely by God's skill; Christ the vine, and believers the branches, the one planted and the other engrafted by the same husbandman, John xv. 1, 2; he only planted and dressed Christ for us, he only plants and dresses us in Christ. It is 'by his own will,' not any other, that 'he begot us,' James i. 18. 'Of his own will,' his own good pleasure was the motive, his own strength the efficient. Hence

he is called 'the Father of spirits,' Heb. xii. 9, not so much (as some interpret it, and that most probably) as he is the Father of souls by creation, as by regeneration, which adds a greater strength to the apostle's argument for submission to him and patience under his strokes. He keeps in his own hand the keys of the heart, no less than the key of the womb, which was always acknowledged to be in the hands of God. It is with this prerogative of God that Jacob silences Rachel, when she so impatiently cried out for children, as if she had a resolution to kill herself if she had them not, with this, 'Am I in God's stead?' Gen. xxx. 1, 2. He only opens the womb of the soul as well as that of the body, impregnates it with grace, and brings forth the fruit of holy actions, as Philo in his allegory descants upon the place. The Jews perhaps meant no less in that saying in their Cabala, Abraham had not had Isaac if a letter of the name of God had not been added to his name; the power of God, a letter of his name, must go to regeneration. It is appropriated to none but God in Scripture: to the whole Trinity, without the conjunction of any creature, to the Father as the author, therefore called 'Our Father;' to Christ, as the pattern; to the Spirit, as the inspirer of that grace whereby we are made the sons of God. The very heathen have acknowledged this, some philosophers have affirmed, that the great virtue, wherein they placed the happiness of man, could not be had but by the favour of God, and all thought their heroes to be born of their gods.

And the Scripture affirms that,

(1.) All preparations to this work, as well as the work itself, are of God. The removing indispositions, and the putting in good inclinations, is the work of the same hand; the taking away the heart of stone, as well as the giving a heart of flesh. He removes the rubbish as well as rears the building; razes out the old stamp and imprints a new; destroys sin, which is called the old man, and restores the new by the quickening of the Spirit. The preparations of the dust of the ground to become a human body, had the same author as the divine soul wherewith he was inspired.

(2.) All the parts of the new creature are of God. Faith, which is the principal part of it, is 'the faith of the operation of God,' Col. ii. 12; not but that love and other graces are wrought by God, but in this grace, which is a constitutive part of the new creature, God comes in with a greater irradiation upon the soul, because it has not one fragment or point in nature to stand upon, carnal reason and mere moral righteousness being enemies to it, whereas all other graces are but the rectifying the passions, and setting them upon right objects. Yet all these, too, own him as the author. Our knowledge of God is a light growing from his knowledge of us; 'we know God' because we 'are known of him.' Gal. iv. 9. The elective act of our wills is but a fruit of his choice of us: John xv. 16, 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;' our willing of him is a birth of his willing us, our love a spark kindled by his love to us. God first calls us my people, before any of us call him my God, Hosea ii. 23. The moon shines not upon the sun till it be first illuminated by it. God first shines upon us before we can reflect upon him; he calls us before we can speak to him in his own dialect; our coming is an effect of his drawing, and our power of coming an effect of his quickening. Every member in Adam was a fruit of his power, as well as the whole body; every line drawn in the new creature is done by his pencil as well as the whole frame.

(3.) The acts of the new creature. God does not only give us the habit of faith, but the act of faith: Philip. i. 29, 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake.' By believing is meant the act of believing, as by suffering is meant not only the power of suffering, but actual suffering; as the fruits upon the trees at the first creation were created as well as the tree which had a power to bear. The very attention of Lydia to the gospel preached by Paul was wrought by God, as well as the opening of her heart, Acts xvi. 14. Our walking in his statutes is a fruit of his grace, as well as the putting in his Spirit to enable us thereunto. The very act of motion is made by the head and heart, if there be a failing of spirits there, if any obstruction that they cannot reach the indigent part, the motion ceases. David acknowledged God his continual

strength in his holy pursuits, 'My soul follows hard after thee,' Ps. lxiii. 8. But what was the cause? 'Thy right hand upholds me.' His life and power issued out from the right hand of God. The graces of God's people stand in need of the irradiations of God, like the Urim and Thummim, before any counsel could be given by them.

(4.) The continuance both of the power and acts are from God. Habitual grace is called the 'fear of the Lord' put into the soul; the continuance of it is by his constant sustentation, it is that we may not depart from him Jer. xxxii. 40, 'from upon him,' from leaning upon him, or believing in him, as the word "me'alaw" imports. If that fear put in did once depart from us, we should no longer cleave to God; we stick to him only because he ties us to himself, and cannot be continually with him unless he 'holds us by his right hand,' Ps. lxiii. 23. The grace that is wrought, as well as the gospel which instrumentally wrought it, is 'kept by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Tim. i. 14; he begins every good work, and he performs it. He was the sole active cause in the creation of the faculties, and the principal cause in preserving them; he is the sole cause of the elevation of the faculties, and the preservation of them in that elevated state. As the virtue of the loadstone is not only the cause of the first attraction of the steel, but of its constant adhesion, therefore it is said: 1 Cor. i. 21, that 'God does establish us,' not has done, to note the continual influence of his grace upon us. It was the dropping of the two olive trees that constantly fed the lamps in the candlesticks, Zech. iv. 2, 8. Take this new birth in all the denominations of it, it is altogether ascribed to God. As it is a call out of the world, God is the herald, 2 Tim. i. 9; as it is a creation, God is the creator Eph. ii. 10; as it is a resurrection, God is the quickener, Eph. ii. 5; as it is a new birth, God is the begetter, 1 Peter i. 3; as it is a new heart, God is the framer, Ezek. xxxvi. 26; as it is a law in the heart, God is the penman, Jer. xxxi. 33; as it is a translation out of Satan's kingdom, and making us denizens of the kingdom of Christ, God is the translator, Col. i. 13; as it is a coming to Christ, God is the drawer, John vi. 44; as it is a turning to God, God is the attracter.

II. The second thing; it is necessary God should be the efficient of regeneration. He is, or none.

In regard of God.

1. As he is the first cause of all things. He is the creator of the lowest worm, and the highest angel; the glimmering perfections of the least fly, as well as the more glittering eminencies of the angelical nature, are distinct beams from that fountain of light and power. Shall not he then be the cause of the divine motions of the will, as well as of the natural motions of the creatures? Every perfection in a rational creature, or any other, supposes that perfection to be somewhere essentially; every impression supposes a stamp that made it, every stream a fountain from whence it sprang, every beam a sun, or some lucid body from whence it darts. Whence should this gracious work then be derived? Not from nature, which is contrary to it; not from Satan, who is destroyed by it. It must be then from God, since it must have some stable and perfect cause. He who was the cause of all the grace in the head is also the cause of all the grace in the members. The same sun that enlightens the heavens enlightens the earth. The grace that Christ had was 'the gift of God,' John iii. 34, much more must it be his gift to us, though we had souls as capacious as his. If the head derived not his grace to himself, the members cannot; for Christ being a creature, in regard of his humanity, must necessarily be dependent; for to make any creature independent upon God is to advance it above the degree of a creature-state, and make it God's fellow, yea, to have a godhead in itself, as being the first principle of its own being. To say any creature can move to God, without being moved by God, or live without his influence, is to make the creature independent on God in its operations; and if it be independent in its operations, it would be so consequently in its essence, besides, if it be not created by him, it may subsist without him, it stands in no need of his quickening. The believers in Scripture were very unadvised then to pray to God for his quickening and establishing grace, if he were not the enlivener and author of it. His power works in preservation as well as creation, John v. 17, and whatsoever is

dependent on him in preservation is dependent on him in creation and the first framing. And if it does not depend upon him in preservation, it is not his creature, but it is a god. All creatures have a dependence upon something immediately superior to them. The moon receives her light and chief beauty from the sun, which else would be but a dusky body; the earth its influence from the heavens. In artificial things the little wheels in a watch depend upon the greater, that upon the string (spring?), that in its motion upon the hand that winds it up. The higher any creature is, the more immediately it depends upon God in its production; the waters brought forth the fish, but God himself formed man.

2. As he is the promiser of it. The divine promise is only fulfilled by a divine operation, it is necessary then for the honour of his truth to be the performer of it. All his promises concerning this matter run in that strain, I will: Hosea ii. 19, 'I will betroth thee to me for ever; I will betroth thee to me in righteousness, in judgment, in loving-kindness, and in mercy: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord.' The Lord promises by this of knowing him all gracious works upon the soul, regeneration, faith, &c., for this knowledge is an effect of the covenant which God promises in that great copy of it: Jer. xxxi. 34, 'They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.' It is not a simple abstracted knowledge, for so the devils know God, and Christ crucified, but such a knowledge that implies faith and love, and a new frame of soul. It is necessary his power should make good what his goodness has promised. It was not necessary any word of promise should go out of his mouth, there was no engagement upon God to do it, but it is necessary this promise should be performed; though he were free before he promised, yet he is not free after he has promised, because his truth engages him to perform it, and perform it as his own act, as much as his mercy moved him to promise it as his own act. As mercy made it, so his mercy is as pressing for the performance, and there comes in a superadded obligation from that of his truth over and above his mercy, to perform it in the same manner he promised it, and in all the circumstances of it. So that,

supposing (which cannot be supposed) that his mercy should repent of making it, he would not be true if he did not perform it; besides, it consists not with his truth not to perform that by himself which he has promised by himself, nor with his wisdom to leave that to an uncertain cause at the best, and, further, a cause utterly unable (as every creature is) to produce that which he had promised to do with his own hand, as the cleansing the soul, pouring clean water upon it, pouring out a spirit of grace, writing the law in the heart, which imply his own act principally in this affair, in concurrence with the means he has ordained to that end. The performance of God's promise is as infallible as the cause that made the promise. No power can perform that for another which he promises himself to do; for the thing itself may be done by another, yet not being done by the party promising to do it, it is not truly done, and in conformity to the promise made. If it were possible then to be done by any but a divine hand, it would not be done truly, because God promises it as his own act, and therefore the working it must be his own act in conformity to his truth.

3. As he has the foreknowledge of all things. It is necessary God should foreknow everything future, and that shall come to pass. This is a perfection necessarily belonging to God; and to imagine the contrary is to frame an unworthy notion of God, and infinitely below the great creator and governor of the world. He therefore wills everything, for if he foreknew anything before he willed it in itself, or in its necessary causes, he foreknew nothing. If he did not will it, how can it come to pass? Therefore he did not foreknow that it would come to pass. If he did foreknow it, then he willed it, otherwise his foreknowledge depended upon an uncertain cause, and he might have judged that to come to pass which never might; unless the cause be determined by God, it is merely contingent. He willing therefore a work of grace in such and such persons, did foreknow that it would be wrought, because he did will that it should be, and his working is done by an act of his will: Rom. viii. 29, 'Whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' The foreknowledge of God being stable and infallible, and being in this

case a foreknowledge of what makes highly for the glory of all his attributes, can have no dependence upon an uncertain and fallible cause, but upon a cause as stable as his foreknowledge, which is his will, himself. His foreknowledge of this is not a foreknowledge of it in any created cause, but in himself as the cause; because, as it will appear further, no created cause could accomplish it.

In regard of the subject of this new birth.

1 In regard of the subject simply considered, the heart and will of man, none can corks upon it but God, or have any intrinsic influence to cause it to exercise its vital acts. Angels, though of a very vast power, cannot work immediately upon the heart and will of another creature, to incline and change it, by an immediate touch. All that they can do towards any moving the will, is by presenting some external objects, or stirring up the inward sensitive appetite to some passion, as anger, desire; whereby the will is inclined to will something. But the stirring up those natural affections in an unregenerate man, can never incline his will to good; for being the affections of the flesh, they are to be crucified. Angels also may enlighten the understanding, not immediately, but by presenting similitudes of sensible things, and confirming them in the fancy; but to remove one ill habit from the will or incline it to any good, is not in their power. God gave an angel power to purge the prophet's lips with a coal from the altar, Isa. vi. 6, 7, but that was done in a vision, and a symbol or sign only that his uncleanness was removed. A coal could have no virtue in it to purge spiritual pollutions from the spirit of a man. Neither can man change the will; men by allurements or threats may change, or rather suspend the action of another, as a father that threatens to disinherit his son; or a magistrate that threatens to punish a subject for his debauchery, may cause a change in the actions of such persons; but the heart stands still to the same sinful points, and may be vicious under a fair disguise. He only that made the will, can incline and 'turn it as the rivers of waters; the heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord,' Prov. xxi. 1, and so is every man's heart kept in the hands of him that created it, both

cabinet and key. No man knows the heart, no, the heart itself knows not everything which is in it. God knows all the wards in the heart, and knows how to move it. If a man could turn the heart of another, it could only be in one or two points; it cannot be conceived how he should alter the whole frame of it, make it quite another thing than it was before. The spirit of man being 'the candle of the Lord,' Prov. xx. 27, not to give light to him, but lighted by him, can only when it is out be re-lighted, and, when it burns dim, be snuffed by the same hand. Or, suppose for the present he could do this, it must be with much pains and labour, many exhortations and wise management of him upon several occasions. But to do this by a word, in a trice, to put a law into the heart in a moment, and give the hidden man of the heart possession of the will, that a man knows not himself how he came to be changed, this whole work bears the mark and stamp of God in the forehead of it. Men may propose arguments to another, and he may understand them if he has a capacity, but no man can ever make another have a capacity who is naturally incapable; it is God only can make the heart capable of understanding, he only can put a new instinct into it, and make it of another bent; it is he that renews the spirit of the mind to enable it to understand what he does propose, and elevates the faculty to apprehend the reason of it.

2. In regard of the subject, extremely ill qualified. Can any question the divinity of the work, when stones are made children to Abraham; when waters of repentance are drawn out of a hard rock, Aaron's dry rod made to bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit, Num. vii. 8, when souls deeply allied to the kingdom of darkness are translated into the kingdom of light? To see habits strengthened by custom, in a consumption, and hearts filled with multitudes of idols in several shapes, casting them out with indignation, and flourishing with new springing graces, it is too great a miracle to be wrought by the hand of any creature. Could anything but the arm of the Lord change the temper of the thief upon the cross, to advance further in the space of an hour in the kingdom of God, than all the apostles had done in the three years' converse with their Master; to confess him, when one of the most eminent of them had denied him; to be more knowing in an

instant, than they had been in a long time; and acknowledge his spiritual kingdom, when they even after his resurrection, and just before his ascension, expected a temporal one? Acts i. 6, 'Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' If a Socrates, or a Cato, or those braver lights among the heathen, were turned to God, the interest of God in the work might upon some seeming ground be questioned; but when the leviathans in sin, drunkards, extortioners, adulterers, men guilty of the greatest contempt of God and the light of nature, in whom lust had kept a peaceable possession in its empire for many years, are thoroughly changed, who can doubt but that such must indeed be 'washed and sanctified by the Spirit of our God'? 1 Cor. vi. 11. What can this be but the will of God, since their hearts were so delightfully filled with evil, that they had no room nor love for any holy thought? It is not conceivable that where sin has made such a rout, and cut and slashed all morality in pieces, things should be set in order there, but by a power stronger both than sin and the law, from whence sin derives its strength. It is no less than a divine miracle to renew an habituated sinner.

(3.) In regard of the nature of this new birth. It is a change of nature; a nature where there was as little of spiritual good as there was of being in nothing before the creation. It is a change of stone into flesh; a heart that like a stone has a hardness and settledness of sinful parts, a strong resistance against any instrument, an incorporation of sin and lust with its nature. Where the heart and sin, self and sin, are cordially one and the same, none can change such a nature but the God of all grace, who has all grace to contest with all the power of old Adam. No man can change the nature of the meanest creature in the world; he may tame them, bring them to part with some of their wildness, but he cannot transform them. If no man can transform the lowest creature from one nature to another, much less can any but God transform man into another nature.

This nature is changed in every believer; for it is impossible a man should stand bent to Christ, with his old nature predominant in him, any more than a pebble can be attracted by a loadstone, till it put on

the nature of steel. An unrighteous nature cannot act righteously, it must therefore be a God, who is above nature, that can clothe the soul with a new nature, and incline it to God and goodness in its operations. Now to see a lump of vice become a model of virtue; for one that drank in iniquity like water, to change that sinful thirst for another for righteousness; to crucify his darling flesh; to be weary of the poison he loved for the purity he hated; to embrace the gospel terms, which not his passion but his nature abhorred; to change his hating of duty to a free-will offering of it; to make him cease from a loathing the obligations of the law, to a longing to come up to the exactness of it; to count it a burden to have the thoughts at a distance from God, when before it was a burden to have one serious thought fixed on him, speaks a supernatural grace transcendently attractive and powerfully operative. Heavy elements do not ascend against their own nature, unless they be drawn by some superior force. To see a soul neighed down to the earth, to be lifted up to heaven, must point us to a greater than created strength that caused the elevation. These acts are supernatural, and cannot be done by a natural cause; that is, against the order of working in all things, for then the effect, as an effect, would be more noble than its cause.

(4.) In regard of the suddenness of it. Peter and Andrew were called when they thought of nothing but their nets; and Paul changed by a word or two, who before was not only unwilling, but rebellious. Some have gone into a church wolves, and returned lambs. This change comes upon some that never dreamt of it, and has snatched them out of the arms of hell; upon others who have resisted with all their might any motion that way, and were never greater enemies to any, than to those that would check their sinful pleasures with such admonitions, and yet these have been on the sudden surprised. What ground is there to ascribe any of this, but to a divine work? Many have dropped in unto a sermon with no intention to stay, who have felt God's hook in their souls; have leaped like fish out of their element for a while, and God has caught them in his hand. Have you never heard of some who have gone to make sport with a convincing sermon, or to satisfy lust with unclean glances, who have been made

prisoners by grace before their return? This quickness of the soul in coming to Christ was promised to be the fruit of the gospel: Hosea iii. 5, 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness,' when they should 'seek the Lord and David their king.' The word "pachad" signifies not only to fear, but to hasten; both significations may be joined together in the sense of the verse. They shall make haste to fear the Lord and his goodness; surely the power that performs it, is the same with the goodness which promised it. Thus some of the disciples have followed Christ at the first call, and moved readily to him, as iron to the loadstone. For a man that was at a great distance from God, and any affection to him, to be filled on the sudden with a warm love and zeal for him, when nothing of interest could engage him (and sometimes it has been with loss of friends, estate, yea, life too), is as great a discovery of a divine hand, as if a fly were changed into the shape and spirit of a hero; because a spiritual change is more admirable than a natural; and the more by how much the enmity, which was greater, is driven out, for a choice affection to rise up in its stead. The season when such a work is wrought is more significant of a divine force, when men have been in the heat and strength of the pursuit of their sinful pleasures, being then torn out of the embracements of lust with an outstretched arm of God.

(5.) In regard of the excellency of the new birth. Is it reasonable to think that the image of God should be wrought by any other hand than the hand of God, or the divine nature be begotten by anything but the divine Spirit? Since none but man can beget a child in his own likeness, none but God can impart to a soul the divine nature. It is not a change only into the image of God with slight colours, an image drawn as with charcoal; but a glorious image even in the rough draught, which grows up into greater beauty by the addition of brighter colours. 'Changed,' says the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'into the same image from glory to glory;' glory in the first lineaments as well as glory in the last lines. Is it not too beautiful then, even in the first draught, to be wrought by any pencil but a divine? It is next to the formation of Christ, for it is an initial conformity to him. God is the fountain of all our good things. If 'every good and perfect gift comes

from him,' James i. 17, shall not the best of beings be the author of the best of works? If believers are 'light in the Lord,' Eph. v. 8, they are no less light from him and by him who is the 'Father of lights.' It is a 'heavenly calling,' Heb. iii. 1, therefore a heavenly birth. The new heart, the spiritual house wherein God dwells, as well as in the heavens, was not made with a less power and skill than the earth, which is his footstool, or the heaven, which is his throne. If none be able to make God a footstool, much less a throne, as Jerusalem, the church, is called in the times of the gospel, Jer. iii. 17. (The embroideries and ornaments of the material tabernacle were not made by common art, but by a Bezaleel inspired by the Spirit of God, Exod. xxxi. 3); can any but himself rear up a temple for the God of heaven to dwell in? 1 Cor. iii. 9. Or is the spiritual house of God fit to be made by and but by that God that dwells in it? It was according to the image of God that we were first created; it is according to the image of Christ that we are new created, Rom. viii. 29. Who understands the image of the Son but the Father? Who knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him? The new creature, according to the copy, can only be wrought by him to whom the copy is only visible. It is for the honour of God to allow him to be the framer of all creatures in the rank of beings. Is it not a dishonour to him not to acknowledge him the framer of the new creature in the rank of spiritual beings, since the later is more excellent than the treasures of the earth or the stars of heaven, than body or soul; since the image of God consists not so much in the substance of the soul as in a likeness to God in a holy nature? Eph. iv. 24. To be a righteous regenerate man is more excellent than to be a man; the most glorious effect, then, must have the most glorious cause. One beam of this divine image is too excellent to be the workmanship of any but a divine hand. The very first regenerate thought, to the last dropping off of impurity, is from the same hand. The first drawing us from sin, much more the stripping us of it, is more admirable than the drawing us out of nothing.

(6.) The end of regeneration manifests it to be the work of God. It is to display his goodness. Since this was the end of God in the first

creation, it is much more his end in the second. What creature can display God's goodness for him, or give him the glory of it, without first receiving it? Goodness must first be communicated to us, before it can be displayed or reflected by us. The light that is reflected back upon the sun by any earthly body beams first from the sun itself. Both the subject and the end are put together in Isa. xliii. 20, 21, 'The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.' The Gentiles shall have the gospel, who are beasts of the field for wildness, dragons for the poison of their nature, owls for their blindness and darkness. The waters of the gospel shall flow to them to give drink to their souls. This people have I formed for myself. Even beasts, dragons, owls, if formed for himself, they could not be formed but by himself, who only understands what is fit for his own praise. How can such incapable subjects be formed for such high ends, without a supernatural power? So in Isa. lx. 21, 'The branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.' Planted by God, that God might be glorified by them. As God only is the proper judge of what may glorify him, so he is the sole author of what is fitted to glorify him. Nothing lower than the goodness of God can instil into us such a goodness as to be made meet to praise, serve, and love him; such a holiness as may fit us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and enjoy him for ever. As infinite wisdom formed us in Adam, and moulded us with his own hand to be a model of his perfection, so are we no less his workmanship in Christ by a second creation to good works, which, as they are ordained by the will of God, so they are wrought in us by the skill and power of God; what is ordained positively by him and for him is wrought by him. The whole world consists but of two men and their offspring the first man, Adam, the second man, Christ; both they, and all in them, created by God. It is a forming a creature for himself for his own delight. What delight can God take in anything but himself, and what is like himself? Man in his best estate is vanity. As his being is, so are his operations. Vanity, and the operations flowing from thence, are no fit object for the delight of an

infinite excellency and wisdom. What pleasure can he have in those things which are not wrought by his own finger? Who knows how to dress anything savoury and pleasant to God but his own grace? Can a finite thing touch an infinite being to enjoy him without the operation of an infinite virtue? Can God delight in anything principally but himself, as he is infinitely good; or in other things but as they come nearest to that goodness? Whatsoever has a resemblance to a superior being must be brought forth into that likeness by something superior to itself.

Now since the ends of this work are so high as to fit us for his praise, his delight, and a fruition of him; since it is to bring the interest of God into the soul, set him up highest in the heart who before was trampled under our feet, enthrone him as king in the soul, cause us to oppose all that opposes him, cherish everything that is agreeable to him, this must be his work or the work of none.

(7.) The weakness of the means manifests it to be the work of God. How could it be possible that such weak means, that were used at the first plantation of the gospel, should have that transcendent success in the hearts of men without a divine power? That a doctrine attended with the cross, resisted by devils with all their subtilty, by the flesh with all its lusts, the world with all its flatteries, the wise with all their craft, the mighty with all their power, should be imprinted upon the hearts of men; a doctrine preached by mean men, without any worldly help, without learning, eloquence, craft, or human prudence, without the force, favour, or friendship of men, should get place in men's hearts without a divine inspiration, cannot well be imagined. If it be said there were miracles attending it, which wrought upon the minds of men, it is true; but what little force they had in our Saviour's time the Scripture informs us, when they were ascribed to Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Though miracles did attend it after the ascension of our Saviour, yet the apostle ascribes not so much to them as the means, as he does to the 'foolishness of preaching,' it was that which was the 'power of God,' 1 Cor. i. 18; it was that 'whereto God saved them that believe,' 1 Cor. i. 21. But the

greatest change that ever was wrought at one time was at the first descent of the Spirit, by a plain discourse of Peter, Acts ii., extolling a crucified God before those that had lately taken away his life, those that had seen him die, a doctrine which would find no footing in their reasons, filled with prejudice against him, and had expectations of a temporal kingdom by him. Must not this change be ascribed to a higher hand, which removed their rooted prejudices and vain hopes, and brought so many as three thousand over at once? If there be 'diversities of operations, it is the same God that works all in all,' 1 Cor. xii. 6. He conveys this 'treasure in earthen vessels, that the power might appear to be of God, and not of men,' 2 Cor. iv. 7. Such weak means as earthen vessels cannot work such miraculous changes. Therefore perhaps it was that the preaching of Christ in his humiliation had so little success attending it, that nothing should be ascribed to the word itself, but to the power of God in it. To evidence that success depended on the good pleasure of God, who would not make his preaching in person so successful as that in his Spirit, which appears by Christ's thanksgiving to his Father for revealing these things to babes, and not to the wise: 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,' Luke x. 21. Have you never heard of changes wrought in the spirits of men against their worldly interest, when they have been made the scorn of their friends, and a reproach to their neighbours? Can the weakness of means write a law so deep in the heart, that neither sly allurements nor blustering temptations can raze out; that a law of a day's standing in the heart should be able to mate the powers of hell, the cavils of the flesh, and discouragements from the world, when there are no unanswerable miracles now to seal the gospel, and second the proposals of it with amazement in the minds of men? The weakness of the means, and the greatness of the difficulties, speaks it not only to be the finger but the arm of God, which causes the triumphs of the foolishness of preaching. When the proposal crosses the interest of the flesh, restrains the beloved pleasure, teaches a man the necessity of the contempt of the world, and that men should exchange their pride for humility, the pleasure of sin for a life of holiness; for a man not only to cease to love his vice, but extremely to hate it; to have divine

flights, when before he could not have a divine thought; to put off earthly affections for heavenly, and all this by the foolishness of preaching, it is an argument of a divine power, rather than any inherent strength in the means themselves.

(3.) The differences in the changes of men evidence this to be the work of God, and that it is from some power superior to the means which are used. As God puts a difference between men in regard of their understandings, revealing that to one man which he does not to another, so he puts a difference between men in regard of their wills, working upon some and not upon others, working upon some that have known less, and not working upon some that have known more, some embracing it, and others rejecting it. We may see,

[1.] The difference of this change in men under the same means. One is struck at a sermon, when multitudes return unshaken. Why is not the case equal in all, if it were from the power of the word? How successful is Peter's discourse, closely accusing the Jews of the murdering of their Lord and Saviour, which is the occasion of pricking three thousand hearts? Yet Stephen using the same method, and close application of the same doctrine, Acts vii. 62, had not one convert upon record. While Peter's hearers were pricked in their hearts, these gnashed with their teeth, ver. 54. The corruption of the former was drawn out by the pricking of their souls, the malice of the latter exasperated by the cut of their hearts. What reason can be rendered of so different an event from one and the same means in several hands, but the overruling pleasure of God? The reasons were the same, set off with the same human power; the hearers were many of the same nation, brought up in the reading of the prophets, full of the expectations of a Messiah; they had both reasons and natural desires for happiness, as well as the other, yet the one are turned lambs, and the others worse lions than before; the bloody fury of the one is calmed, and the mad rage of the other is increased. The grace of God wrought powerfully in the one, and lighted not upon the other. Two are grinding at the same mill of ordinances, one is taken

and another is left. Man breathes into the ears, and God into what heart he pleases.

[2.] The differences in the changes of men under less means. One is changed by weaker means, another remains in his unregeneracy under means in themselves more powerful and likely; some are wrought upon by whispers, when others are stiff under thunders. The Ninevites by one single sermon from a prophet are moved to repentance; the Capernaïtes, by many admonitions from a greater than all the prophets, seconded with miracles, are not a jot persuaded; some remain refractory under great blasts, while others bend at lighter breathings. One man may be more acute than another, of a more apprehensive reason; yet this man remains obstinate, whilst another becomes pliable. Whence does this difference arise, but from the will of God drawing the one, and reusing the other to the conduct of his own will, since both will acknowledge what they are advised to, to be their interest, to be true in itself, necessary for their good, yet their affections and entertainment are not the same? Some of those Jews who had heard the doctrine of Christ, seen the purity of his life and the power of his miracles, admired his wisdom, yet crucified his person; they expected a Messiah, yet contemned him when he came; when the poor thief who, perhaps, had never seen one miracle, nor heard one sermon of our Saviour, believes in him, acknowledges him to be the Son of God, whom he saw condemned to the same death with himself, and dies a regenerate man under great disadvantages. A figure (says one) of all the elect, who shall only be saved by grace, and a clear testimony of an outstretched arm of grace. Those that our blessed Saviour admonished only as a doctor and teacher were unmoved, none stirred but those he wrought upon as a creator.

[3.] Difference of the success of the same means in different places. How various was the success of the apostles in several parts of their circuits! Paul finds a great door of faith opened at Corinth, and in Macedonia, and his nets empty at Athens; multitudes flocking in at one place, and few at another. He is entertained at Corinth, stoned at

Lystra, Acts xiv. 19, in danger of his life at Jerusalem, while the Galatians were so affected with the gospel, that they could have 'pulled out their eyes' for him. The apostle was the same person in all places; the gospel was the same, and had a like power in itself; men had the same reasons, they were all fragments from the lump of Adam: the difference must be then from the influence of the divine Spirit, who rained down his grace in one place and not in another; on one heart, and not on another; who left darkness in Egypt, while he diffused light in Goshen.

[4.] Difference in the same person. What is the reason that a man believes at one time under the proposal of weak arguments, and not at another under stronger? It is not *ex parte objecti*, for that was more visible and credible in itself, when attended by strong arguments, than when accompanied with weaker. Perhaps God has stricken a man's conscience before, and he has undone that work, shaken off those convictions; he has contended with his maker, and mustered up the power of nature against the alarms of conscience; struggled like a wild bull in a net, and broke it, and blunted those darts which stuck in his soul; he has afterwards been screwed up again, and the arrow shot so deep, that with all his pulling he could not draw it out. What but a divine hand holds it in, in spite of all the former triumphs of nature? How come convictions at last to be fixed upon men, which many a time before did but flutter about the soul, and were soon chased away? And God by such a method keeps up the honour of his grace in men after regeneration, and teaches them the constant acknowledgement of his power in the whole management. Do we not daily find that the same reasonings and considerations which quicken us at one time in the ways of God stir us not at another, no more than a child can a millstone; that we are quickened by the same word at one time, under which we were dull and stupid at another; and the same truth is deliciously swallowed by us, which seemed unsavoury at another, because God edges it with a secret virtue at one time more than another? Hereby God would mind us to own him as the author of all our grace, the second grace as well as the first. Upon all these considerations this can be no other than the

work of God. Can a corrupt creature elevate himself from a state of being hated by God, to a state of being delighted in by him? Satan's work none can judge it to be; the destroyer of mankind would never be the restorer; the most malicious enemy to God would never contribute to the rearing a temple to God in the soul, who has usurped God's worship in all parts of the world. Good angels could never do it, they wonder at it; the wisdom of God in thus creating all things in Jesus Christ is made known to them by it, Eph. iii. 9, 10. They never ascribed it to themselves; if they did, they could never have been good, their goodness consisting in praising of God, and giving him his due. Good men never did it; the first planters of the gospel (whereby it is wrought) always gave God the praise of it, and acknowledged both their own action, and the success, to be the effect of the grace of God, and upon every occasion admired it, Acts xi. 21, 23. It was 'the hand of the Lord' and 'the grace of God.'

III. The third general head, from what principles in God it flows, or what perfections of God are eminent in this work of regeneration.

What is observable in the forming Christ in the womb of the virgin, is observable in the forming Christ in the heart of a believer: grace to choose her to be the holy vessel; sovereignty to pitch upon her rather than any other of the lineage of David; truth to his promise in forming him in the womb of a virgin, and one of the house of David; wisdom and power in the formation of him in a virgin's womb, above the power of nature; mercy bears the first sway as the motive of the decree, but in a way of sovereignty to call out some, and not others; truth to himself obliges, after sovereign mercy had made the resolution; wisdom steps in to contrive the best way to accomplish what mercy had moved, and sovereignty had decreed; holiness rises up as the pattern; and power rides out for the execution. Mercy moves, sovereignty decrees, truth obliges, wisdom counsels, holiness regulates, power executes.

1. Mercy and goodness is a principal perfection of God, illustrious in this work. 'Born not of the will of man, but of God,' of the will of his mercy. Plato thought that heroes were born "ex eros Theon", from the love of God; divine love brings forth an heroic Christian into the world; all outward mercies are streams of God's goodness, but those are but trifles if compared with this. There is as much of God in imparting the holiness of his nature as in imputing the righteousness of his soul. We are justified by Christ, quickened by grace, saved by grace; grace is the womb of every spiritual blessing. To be delivered from places and company wherein we have occasions and temptations to sin, is an act which God owns as the fruit of his mercy: 'I brought thee out of the land of Ur of the Chaldees,' Gen. xv. 7, an idolatrous place; it is a greater fruit of his goodness to be delivered from a nature which is the seed-plot of sin. 'He heals our backslidden nature,' because he 'loves us freely.' It is therefore called grace, which is not only goodness and mercy, but goodness with a more beautiful varnish and ornamental dress.

(1.) Therefore in this take notice of the peculiarity of mercy. Such a goodness that not one fallen angel ever had, or ever shall have a mite of; neither did mercy excite one good thought in God of new polishing any of those rebellious creatures; mercy cast no eye upon them, but justice left them to their malicious obstinacy. That the rivers of living water should refuse to run in such a channel, or flow out of such a belly, to run in the heart of a man more muddy! As peculiar grace pitched upon the very flesh of Christ, to be limited to the second person, so the like grace pitches upon this or that particular soul, to be united to the body of Christ. That singular love which chose Christ for the head, chose some men in him to be his members: 'Chosen us in him,' Eph. i. 4. And the anointing which is upon the head is poured out by such a peculiarity of love upon the members, not only by an act of his power as God, but by an act of appropriated goodness, thy God, Heb. i. 9. God anoints his fellows with that holy gracious unction, as their God, not only as God; for anointing him as the head, under that particular consideration, he anoints also his fellows, his members, under the same consideration

too, because he is as well their God, the God of the members, as well as the God of the head, for they are his fellows in that unction; the difference lies in the greater portion of grace given to the human nature of Christ. And the apostle Peter, 1 Peter i. 3, intimates in his thanksgiving to God, that God begot us as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' the paternal affection he bears to Christ being the ground of the regeneration of his people; the paternal affection first pitching upon Christ, then upon others in him. Indeed, it is a peculiar affection. In his mercy to the world, he acts as a rector or governor, in that relation he proposes laws, makes offers of peace, urges them in his word, strives with men by his Spirit, enduing men with reason, and deals with them as rational creatures; he uses affections and mercies, which might soften their hearts, did they not wilfully indulge themselves in their hardness. This is his rectoral mercy, or his mercy as a governor, and as much as his relation of a governor can oblige him to. If men will not change their lives, is God bound as a governor to force them to it, or not rather to punish them for it? But in regeneration there is a choicer affection, whereby, besides the relation of a governor, he puts on that of a father, and makes an inward and thorough change in some which he has chosen into the relation of children. As a father, who cannot persuade his son lying under a mortal distemper to take that physic which is necessary for saving his life, will compel him to it, open his mouth, and pour it in; but as he is a governor of his servant, he will provide it for him, and propose it to him. To do thus is kindness to his servant, though he does not manifest so peculiar an affection as he does to his son. God governs men as he is the author of nature; he renews men as he is the author of grace; he is the lawgiver and governor; it does not follow that where he is so he should be the new creator too; this is a peculiar indulgence.

(2.) As there is a peculiarity of mercy, so there is the largeness of his mercy and goodness in this work. It was his goodness to create us, but a full sea of goodness made us new creatures: 1 Peter i. 3, 'Who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to 'a lively

hope,' "kata to polu autou eleos". His own mercy, without any other motive; much mercy, without any parsimony, not an act of ordinary goodness, but the deepest bowels of kindness, an everlasting spring of goodness, an exuberance of goodness. The choice love he bears to them in election cannot be without some real act; it is a vain love that does not operate; one great part of affection is to imitate the party beloved; but since that is unworthy of God to imitate a corrupt creature, he performs the other act of love, which is to assimilate us to himself, and bring us into a state of imitation of him, endowing us with principles of resemblance to him. It is abundant mercy to love them; it is much more goodness to render them worthy of his love, and inspire them with those qualities, as effects of his love of benevolence, which may be an occasion of his love of complacency. Worldly mercies do many times, yea, for the most part (if you view the whole globe of the earth) consist with his hatred, but this is a beam from a clear sun. At best other benefits are but the mercies of his hand, this of his heart. In those he makes men like others of a higher rank, in this like himself.

[1.] It is a goodness greater than that in creation. It is more an act of kindness to reform that which is deformed, than to form it at the beginning, because it is more to have a happy than a simple being. To repair what is decayed is a testimony of greater goodness than at first to raise it. Creation is terminated to the good of a mutable nature, regeneration is terminated to a supernatural good, and partaking of the divine nature. The creation was an emanation of his goodness, never entitled the work of his grace. Man's first uprightness was an impress of God; his second uprightness is far more pleasing to him, as being the fruit of his Son's death, wherein all his attributes are more highly glorified. It is a regeneration 'by the resurrection of Christ,' 1 Peter i. 3; that being the perfection of it, includes his death, which is the foundation of it, as the perfection of a thing includes the beginning. God pronounced all the structures of the first creation good, but not with those magnificent titles of his delighting in it, forming it for himself, that it might show forth his praise, which expressions testify a greater efflux of his goodness in this second

creation. Nor did Christ ever say his delight was in that, or in that one man Adam, but in the sons of men, of apostate Adam, as to be redeemed and renewed by him after their apostasy: Prov. viii. 31, 'My delights were with the sons of men.' What sons of men? The exhortation, ver. 32, intimates it, those that are his children renewed by him that hearken to him and keep his ways. God pronounced it good, but not his treasure, his portion, his inheritance, his segullah, his house, his diadem. All those things which he made, even the noblest heaven, as well as the lowest earth, he overlooks and speaks slightly of them: Isa. lxvi. 1, 2, 'All those things has my hand made, and all those things have been,' &c., to fix his eyes, "avit", upon a contrite spirit, a renewed nature. He speaks of them as things passed away, and is intent only upon the new creation; values it above heaven and earth, and all the ceremonial worship. What is the object of his greatest estimation partakes of a greater efflux of his goodness to make it so. And the apostle Peter aggrandises this abundant mercy in regeneration, from the term, 'unto a lively hope;' not such an uncertain hope as Adam had when he was fullest of his mutable uprightness; a living hope, "elpida dzosan", that grows up more and more into life, till it comes to an inheritance that fades not away as Adam's did. Surely there is more of bowels in the Spirit's brooding over a sinful soul, to bring forth this beautiful frame, than in brooding over the confused mass to bring forth a world.

[2.] All the grace and goodness God has is employed in it. In the creation you cannot say, all the goodness of God was displayed, as not all his power nor all his wisdom: for as to his power he might have made millions of worlds inconceivably more beautiful and more wisely contrived; for though there be no defect of wisdom and power, yet neither of those attributes were exerted to that height that they might have been. So for his goodness, he might have made millions of more angels and men than he did create, with as (and more) illustrious natures; for a man may conceive something more than God has displayed in the creation, as to the extensiveness of his perfections at least. But in this God has displayed, as it may seem, the utmost of his grace, for no man or angel can conceive a higher

grace than what God shows in this, of beginning in man a likeness to himself, and perfecting it hereafter to as high a pitch as a creature is capable of. Therefore called 'unsearchable riches of Christ,' Eph. hi. 7. A further good cannot be imagined or found out than what is there displayed. Therefore the apostle Peter speaks of God as effectually calling us into his eternal glory by Christ, under the title of 'the God of all grace,' 1 Peter v. 10, which calling includes all preparation for glory. All grace does not less fit us for it, than call us to it, there is more of grace in fitting us for it than barely in calling us to it; and the call itself has more of grace in it than the giving the possession of that inheritance you are called unto. It is not so high a favour in a prince actually to set his royal bride in the throne with him, as to call her to and prepare her for so high a dignity. To prepare a soul for it by regeneration is an act of pure grace; to give it after a preparation for it, is an act of truth as well as grace; nothing obliged him to the first, his promise binds him to the latter. What if I should say, this renewing of us, and subduing our sins in us, is a greater act of grace than a bare remission! Micah vii. 18, 19, seems to favour it. To pardon us is an act of his delightful mercy; but to subdue our iniquities is an act of his most tender compassion. Mercy is there joined with pardon, and compassion with subduing. And the latter expression, 'Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea,' may refer to both those acts of grace, against the guilt and filth of sin.

[3.] The freeness of his mercy is manifest in it. It is as free as election: Eph. i. 3, 4, 'Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings' (of which regeneration is none of the meanest), 'according as he has chosen us in him', "kathos exelexato". It is as free in the stream as it is in the fountain. Jesus Christ is as freely formed in us, as we were freely chosen in him, as freely, quoad nos, as to us, not in regard of Christ, who merited the former though not the latter. It is his own mercy, 1 Peter i. 3, 'his own will,' James i. 18, not moved by any other, as we do many things by the will of others when our own are not free, in which are mixed acts. It is in regard of this freeness called grace. Supposing God would create man, and for such an end as to enjoy blessedness, he could not create him otherwise than with a

universal rectitude, because, had God created him with a temper contrary to his law, he had been the author of his sin. Some therefore call not the righteousness of Adam grace, because it was a perfection due to his nature upon his creation. But there was no necessity upon God to bestow new creating grace, after he had stripped himself of the righteousness of his first creation. And also supposing God will restore man to that end from which he fell, and refit him for that blessedness, he cannot fit him otherwise than by restoring him to that righteousness, as a means of attaining that blessedness. Yet both these are free, because the original foundation of both is free. God might choose whether he would create man when he was nothing, and choose whether he would restore man when he was fallen. Yet there is more freedom in this latter than in the former, in regard of the measures of the new created righteousness, and in regard of the immutability of it, in regard also of demerit. Adam's dust, before creation, as it could merit nothing, so it had an advantage above us that it could not lie under demerit. But we, after the fall, are in a state of damnation, children of wrath, so that regeneration is not a creating us from nothing, but recovering us from a state worse than nothing. In regard that man was miserable, he was capable of mercy; but as he was a criminal, he was an object of severity. That is free mercy to renew any man by grace, when he might have damned him by justice, to work him for glory when he had wrought himself for damnation. The apostle therefore excludes all works whatsoever from any meritoriousness in this case: Titus iii. 5, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' I say, he excludes all works, because not one work, as good, was in being before the renewal of the soul, for so verse 3 plainly implies, when he concludes all men, himself too, in a state incapable of doing anything that was good; the honour of his truth indeed excites him to perfect it, but his grace only, without any other motive, moves him to bestow it. All the grace you have in regeneration sprung only from this; the righteousness you are arrayed with, the flames of love in your hearts, the flights of your faith, cost you nothing, they were all the births of love. Goodness decreed all when

you were nothing, grace formed all when you were worse than nothing, your faith is 'the faith of God's elect,' Titus i. 1. New creatures were chosen to faith by grace, and by the same grace was faith formed in the womb of the soul; electing grace preceded, renewing grace followed, the stream cannot be merited when the spring was free. Regeneration is an accessory to election. No man can merit the principle, therefore not the accessory.

2. As mercy and goodness, so the sovereignty of God is illustrious in this work. 'Of God,' in the text, is 'of the will of God.' The covenant runs in a royal style: 'I will put my Spirit into them; I will give a heart of flesh,' of my own free motion and good pleasure, like the patents of princes. God reserves this in his own power, to give to whom he pleases; Cameron says, that faith, which is a great constitutive part of regeneration, was not purchased meritoriously by Christ's death; and though Christ does give us faith as well as repentance, yet he does that, not as considered as a satisfier of God's justice in his death, but as God's commissioner in his exaltation, being empowered by God to give the conditions upon which they agreed together in the first compact about the work of mediation, unto all those that God had given him to satisfy for. Whether this opinion be well grounded or no, I will not determine; yet the making it depend solely upon election, and to be given as a fruit of election, that hereby we may be partakers of Christ, makes it more fully depend upon the sovereignty of God. God renews when he pleases. 'The wind blows where it lists,' John iii. 8. To some he affords means, to others not; he deals not with every nation as he dealt with Israel. In some, he works by means; to others, he gives only the means without any inward work; it is his pleasure that he works upon any one to will, his good pleasure that he gives to and one to do: Philip. ii. 13, 'of his good pleasure.' Some hear the word, others the Spirit in the word; some feel the striking of the air upon their ear, others the stamp of the Spirit upon their hearts. Who chose this rough stone to hew and polish, and let others lie in the quarry? Who frames this for a statue, a representation of himself, and leaves another upon the pavement? What does all this result from, but his sovereign pleasure?

(1.) No ultimate reason can be rendered for this distinction, but God's sovereignty. We can render an immediate reason of some actions of God: why the heavens are round, because that is the most capacious figure, and fittest for motion; why the sun is the centre of the world, as some think, because it may, at a convenient distance, enlighten the stars above, and quicken the things below; why our hearts are in the midst of our bodies, because they may more commodiously afford heat to all the members; so also, why God loved Adam, because he saw his own image in him; why he sends judgments upon the world, because of sin; why he saves believers and condemns unbelievers, because they receive the grace of Christ, those reject it. We have not recourse immediately to God's will for a reason; the nature of the things themselves affords us one, obvious to us. But no reason can be rendered of other actions of God but his good pleasure. Why he chose Abraham above other men, and delivered him from Ur of the Chaldees; why Israel above other nations, since all other men and nations descended from Adam and Noah, and they were in their natures equally corrupt with others; they were not in themselves better than others, nor other nations worse than they; so in Esau and Jacob, why the elder should serve the younger, since they both issued from the same parents, lay in the same womb, were equally depraved in their nature, had original sin equally conveyed to them by their parents: no reason can be rendered but the will of God. So, if it be asked, why men are condemned, because they do not believe. Why do they not believe? Because they will not. God has given them means and faculties. If you ask, why God did not give them grace to believe and turn their wills, no other answer can be given but because he will not. It is his free will to choose some and not others. Election is put upon his pleasure: Eph. i. 5, 'Predestinated according to the good pleasure of his will;' and the making known the mystery of his will is put upon his pleasure: Eph. i. 9, 'Having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure.' As God regards us absolutely, it is rather mercy than his good pleasure. Why has he changed our wills? Because he loved us, and bare good will to us in his everlasting purpose, to which he was incited by his own mercy. But if we

compare ourselves with others, and ask, why he renews this man and not that, then it is rather an act of the sovereign liberty of his will, for there cannot be the result of any reason from any thing else; he pitches his compassion where and upon whom he pleases. The apostle joins mercy and this sovereignty of his will together: Rom. ix. 15, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' He is so absolute a sovereign, that he will give no account of these matters but his own good pleasure. Why he renews any man is merely voluntary; why he saves renewed men is just; why he justifies those that believe is justice to Christ and mercy to them; but why he bestows faith on any is merely the good pleasure of his will. The pharisees believed not, because they were not of Christ's sheep, John x. 26; that is, they were not given to Christ by the Father, as is intimated, verse 29. And the prosperity of those which are given to Christ is resolved wholly into the pleasure of God: 'The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand,' Isa. liii. 10. In all our searches into the cause of this, we must rest in his sovereign pleasure; our Saviour himself renders this only as a reason of his distinguishing mercy, wherein himself does, and therefore we must, acquiesce: Mat. xi. 27, 'Even so, Father, for so it pleased thee.'

(2.) We may well do so, because he is no debtor to any man in the way of grace. There is nothing due to man but death; that is his wages; the other is a gift: Rom. vi. 23, 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to them it is not given,' Mat. xiii. 11. Who shall control him in the disposal of his own goods? 'Who shall say unto him, What dost thou?' Grace is his own treasure; if he gives the riches of it to any, it is his pleasure; if he will not bestow a mite on any man, it is no wrong; 'if any man has given to him, it shall be recompensed to him again,' Rom. xi. 35. It is not unjust with God to deny every man grace; it is not then unjust to deny a great part of men this grace: 'Who has enjoined him his way?' says Job; or, 'Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?' Job xxxvi. 23. He is not to be taught by man how to govern the world, neither can any man justly blame him, if they judge aright of his actions. Though every man is

bound to endeavour the conversion of others, and every good man has so much charity that he would turn all to righteousness if he could, and though the love of God is infinitely greater than man's, it cannot be argued from thence that therefore God should renew every man. This charity in man is a debt he owes to his neighbour by communion of blood, upon which the law of charity is founded, which obliges him to endeavour the happiness and welfare of his neighbour; but God is free from the engagements of any law, but the liberty of his own will; he is under no government but his own; he has none superior, none equal with him, to enjoin him his way, and to prescribe him rules and methods. If he gives any favour to man, it is his pleasure; if man improves it well, God is not indebted to him, and obliged to give him more, no more than a father is bound to give his son a new stock, because he has improved well the first he has entrusted him with; it depends only upon his pleasure.

(3.) God's proceedings in this case do wholly declare it. In the first gift of his people to Christ, he acted like a God greater than all in a way of super-eminent sovereignty: 'My Father which gave them me is greater than all', John x. 29. He acts as a potter with his clay; he softens one heart, and leaves another to its natural hardness. He converts Paul a persecutor, but none of the other pharisees who spurred him on in that fury and commissioned him to it; he snatches some from the embracements of lust, while he suffers others to run their race to hell. David, by grace, is made a man after God's own heart, and Saul left to be a man after his own will; some he changes in the heat of their pursuit of sinful pleasures, others he wounds to death by his judgments. The reason of the latter is deserved justice; the reason of the other is undeserved pleasure. He chooses the mean things of the world to be highest in his favour, and passes over those that the world esteems most excellent. 'Not many wise, not many mighty,' is his sovereign method. The amiable endowments esteemed by the men of the world have no influence upon him. He acts in this way with his own people; he gives sometimes to will, when he does not give presently to do; he distributes greater measures of grace to one than to another; he sometimes excites them by his grace,

sometimes lets them lie as logs before him, that he may be owned by them to be a free agent. And further, it must needs be thus, because God does not work in regeneration as a natural agent, and put forth his strength to the utmost; as the sun shines, and the fire burns, ad extremum virium, unless a cloud interpose to hinder the one, or water quench the other, but as an arbitrary agent, who exerts his power according to his own will, and withholds it according to his pleasure. For there are two acts of his sovereign will: one whereby he does command men to do their duty, promises rewards, and threatens punishment, but the subject is to be disposed to do God's will of precept. Here comes in another act of his sovereignty, whereby he wills the disposing such and such hearts to the accepting of his grace, and does will not to give others that grace, but leave them to themselves. This we see practised by God almost in every day's experience.

3. The truth of God is apparent in this work. Truth to his own purpose: 1 Tim. i. 9, 'Who has called us with a holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began.' Sovereignty first singles this or that man out; and truth to that firm and immutable counsel, and that resolve in his own mind, steps in to excite his holiness, wisdom, and power, to make every such person conformed to the image of his Son. It was not from any truth respecting any condition annexed to any promise he had made which he might find in the creature, for the apostle plainly excludes it, 'not according to our work'; for what motion can our work in a state of nature cause in God but that of anger and aversion arising from truth to his threatening, the condition whereof is fulfilled by us, but not one mite of good fruit that could as a condition challenge this great work at the hands of the truth of God by virtue of his promise. His truth to his threatening would have raised up thoughts of destroying men; his truth to his purpose carried on his design of effectually calling them. It is not an engagement of truth to his creature, but of truth to himself. So that if you ask why he has Peter, Paul, and others, since many better conditioned than they have rejected the gospel, the answer is, because he had so purposed in himself; and he is faithful, and cannot deny his own counsel, for that were to deny himself, and that eternal idea in his own mind: 2 Tim. ii. 13, 'He is faithful, and cannot deny himself,' in regard of his purpose, in regard of his absolute promise. Truth to his promise; his promise to his Son, for so Titus i. 2 is principally to be understood: 'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.' There was a donation of some made to Christ, and a donation of grace to Christ for them, deposited in his hands as a treasure to be dispensed to every one of them in their proper time. His truth comes in upon this double donative: a donative of grace to them in Christ, before the world began, which would be but as a useless rusty treasure, if not bestowed upon those for whom it was entrusted in his hands; a donative of some, according to this purpose, to Christ, whose death, and resurrection, and purchase, would be ineffectual, if those thus

given were not in time engrafted in him, and renewed by him, to be made partakers of all that which he purchased and preserved for them. Jesus Christ was to have a seed by covenant, a people to be conformed to his image. The issue then of forming a people for his seed, is the effect of God's truth to Christ. And consequent to this antecedent purpose in himself, and promise to Christ, he gives him an order to bring in those that were thus designed to be his sheep, which he calls his sheep by right of donation, before they were renewed: my sheep, by right of gift from my Father, mine by right of purchase at my death, mine by right of possession at their effectual call, these I must bring in; not I may, but I must; and they shall hear my voice: John x. 16, 'Other sheep I have; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice;' not they may, but they shall be inclined to comply with my word and call. Satan and their own lusts shall not hinder them from coming unto me, but they shall be overruled by a powerful Spirit. So that there is truth to his purpose, truth to his promise to Christ' truth to the depositum in Christ's hands, truth to his word published, that he would give a new heart. So that whatsoever heart his work is wrought in, it is a manifest effect of the truth of God to himself and his Christ. The gift of grace, in possession, is a necessary consequent of that gift of it, in purpose, before the world began.

4. The wisdom of God appears in this work. The secrets of wisdom shine forth in the great concerns of the soul in Christ, who is made wisdom principally to us in our sanctification, as well as righteousness and redemption. Wisdom in the imputation of righteousness, in the draught of sanctification, and in the perfection of it in a complete redemption; wisdom, like thread, runs through every part of the web. The new birth is the great wisdom of the creature; by this he becomes wise, since the Scripture entitles all fools without it. The inspiration of this wisdom can own no other but divine wisdom for the author. It is his own wisdom; for 'Who has been his counsellor?' Rom. xi. 34. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will, freely, wisely; a work of his will, a work of his understanding: Eph. i. 11, 12, 'Who works all things according to

the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory,' that the glory of the Father may shine out in us. If all things are thus wrought with the choicest counsel, much more the rarest work of God in the world. If all things are wrought with counsel, because he will have a praise from them, much more that from whence he expects to gather the greatest crop of glory. The bringing us to trust in Christ is for the praise of his glory; a glory redounds to him, because there is nothing of our own in it, but all his; a farther glory redounds to him, because it is in the wisest manner. It is to the praise and the glory of his goodness in the act of his will; to the praise of the glory of his wisdom in the act of his counsel. There was a mystery of wisdom in the first secretion and singling out this or that person; a revelation of wisdom in the preparations to it, and formation of it. If there be much of his counsel in the minute passages of his providence in the lowest creatures, which are the subjects of that providence, much more must there be in the framing the soul to be a living monument of his glory. It is not a new moulding the outward case of the body, but the inward jewel wrapped up from the view of men; the spirit of the mind, which, being more excellent, requires more of skill for the new forming of it.

(1.) The nature of the new birth declares it to be an effect of his wisdom. It is a building a divine temple, a spiritual tabernacle, for his own residence: 'ye are God's building,' 1 Cor. iii. 9. Strength will not build a house without art to contrive and proportion the materials; skill is the chief requisite of an architect. The highest pieces of art come from the most excellent idea in the creature. The beautiful fabric of grace is modelled by the wisest idea in God; that which is glorious in the erection, supposes excellent skill in the contrivance. Every renewed man is a 'lively stone:' 1 Pet. ii. a, 'Ye also as lively stones,' every one of you polished and carved by the wise Creator for an everlasting statue. It is he that has 'wrought us to the self-same thing,' 2 Cor. v. 6, "katargasamenos"; polished us and curiously wrought us, who were rough stones, covered with the rubbish of sin. As a wise builder, he lays the foundation in sound habits, whereon to raise a superstructure of gracious actions. The counterpart in the

heart is no less a fruit of his wisdom than the law in the tables of stone; wisdom in the first framing the law, wisdom also in the deep imprinting of it. That which enlightens the eyes, and makes wise to salvation, can be entitled to no other original cause than divine wisdom. The soul is a rational work of God. Surely, then, that which is the soul of the soul, the glory of the creature, the preparation for happiness, more pleasing to God than the brightest nature, than the natural frame of the highest soul, that which is the pleasure and delight, must be the fruit, too, of infinite wisdom. Bare effects of power are not the immediate objects of God's special delight.

(2.) The means of it declare it to be a fruit of his wisdom. Christ the exemplar has the treasures of wisdom; grace copied from it is part of those treasures. The gospel, the instrument, is 'the wisdom of God,' as well as 'the power of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 7. Divine skill framed the model, reared the building, no less sows the seed in the heart. What did partake of wisdom in the contrivance, progress, all the parts and methods of it, partakes of the same in the inward operations of it upon the soul.

(3.) The manner of it speaks it to be so. In regard of the enemies he has to deal with, there must be prudence to countermine the deep and unsearchable plots of the powers of darkness. As there is the strength of sin within, the might of Satan without, as fit subjects for his power, so there are the stratagems of Satan, the subtleties and deceits of the flesh, as a fit occasion for his almighty skill against hellish policy. In regard also of his working upon the soul, he works upon those that are so contrary to his design without imposing upon their faculties; he moves them according to their physical nature, though contrary to their moral nature; he makes us do willingly what we would not; he so tunes the strings that they speak out willingly what naturally they are most unfit for. The Spirit acts wisely in the revealing to us the knowledge of Christ, as Eph. i. 17, 'The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him,' which may note the manner of his acting in the revelation, which is the first work of the soul, as well as the effect it does produce, though I suppose the effect

is principally meant. Some question the wisdom of God in acting so upon the will as not to leave it to its own indifference in this change. What reason is there to question his wisdom? Do not the angels in heaven admire God's wisdom as well as his grace, who has immutably fixed them to that which is good? Do they question the wisdom of God for so happy a confirmation of them against that indifference which destroyed some of their fellows by creation? But is there not an evident art in this work, to make the will willing that had no affection to this change; to fit the key so to all the wards that not one is disordered; to move us contrary to our corrupt reason, yet bring us to that pass to acknowledge we had reason to be so moved; to move our faculties one by another as wheels in a watch; to present spiritual things with such an evident light as engages our understandings to believe that which they would not believe before, and our wills to embrace that which our affections gainsay? It must therefore be a fruit of divine skill since it is a fruit of divine teaching, John vi. 45.

(4.) There is a greater wisdom in it than in the creation of the world. The higher the work rises, the more of skill appears. It is a divine art to make man to live the life of plants in his growth, the life of beasts in his sense, the life of angels in his mind; more it is then to make him live the life of God in his grace. Man in his body partakes of earth, in his soul of heaven, in his grace of the heaven of heavens, of the God of heaven. The grace in the new birth is nearer the likeness of God than the figure of men in the first birth. God therefore does more observe the numbers and measures in the second creation than he did in the first. Man was the most excellent piece in the lower creation, therefore more of art in the framing of him than in the whole celestial and elementary world. The glorious bodies of sun, moon, and stars had not such marks upon them. The nearer resemblance anything has to God, the more of wisdom as well as power is signified in the make of it.

(5.) The holiness of God is seen in this work. The day of God's power breaks not upon us in the change of our wills, without his appearance

in 'the beauties of holiness,' Ps. cx. 3. The Spirit is called a spirit of holiness, not only as he is the efficient, but as he is the pattern, and like fire transforms into his own nature; for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The law in the tables of stone was an image; the law in the heart is an extract of God's holiness. Our first creation in a mutable state was according to his own image, Gen. i. 26. Our second creation is more exactly like him, in a gracious immutability. The holiness in Christ's human nature was an effect of the holiness of God; the holiness we have then in resemblance to Christ, must be a fruit of the same perfection. If we are renewed according to his image, it must be according to his holiness. To be merciful and just, is to have a moral image; to be holy, is to have a divine. The apostle intimates this in his exhortation, we must be holy in serving him, because he was holy in calling us: 1 Peter i. 16, 'As he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy,' &c. In this respect, God calls himself, not only a holy one, but the holy one of Israel: Isa. xliii. 15, 'I am the Lord your holy one, the creator of Israel, your king.' He is not only holy in himself, but displays his holiness in them, by an act of a new creation. By creator is not meant, his being the creator of them, as he is of all, even of wicked men and devils; but implies a peculiar relation to them, as distinguished from others. He is the creator of devils, holy in his actions towards devils, but not their holy one by any inward renovation, or consecrating them to himself, as he is the holy one of Israel. As he is a God in covenant, he is our God, therefore our God as he is a holy God, as well as he is a powerful God, communicating the one as well as the other in a covenant way, therefore the prophet Habakkuk joins them both together, 'O Lord my God, my holy one,' Hab. i. 12. His holiness is no less necessary for the felicity of his people, than his mercy and power. What happiness could his mercy move, his wisdom contrive, or his power effect, without the communication of his holiness? Mercy could not of itself fit a man for it, nor power give a man possession of it, without holiness attiring him with all those graces which prepare him for it. God, as sovereign, chose us; as merciful, pardons us; as wise, guides us; as powerful, protects us; as true, makes good his promises to us; but as holy, cleanses us from our old habits, makes us vessels of

honour, filled with the savoury and delicious fruits of his Spirit, his pleasant things. The implantation of grace in the heart, is no less an effect of his holiness, than the preservation of it is, which our Saviour intimates, when in his petition for it he gives his Father rather the title of holy, than of any other attribute: John xvii. 11, 'Holy Father, keep through thy own name.'

6. The power of God appears in this work. 'Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind,' John ix. 32; neither was it ever heard that any man could open the understanding of one that was born dark. Everything that pertains to life and godliness, of which regeneration is not the meanest, is the work of divine power: 2 Peter i. 3, 'According as his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue;' glory and virtue, by a hendiadis, for a glorious virtue; and the apostle adds, that this calling was an effect of a glorious power; it is not "eis", but "dia", through glory and virtue; the same preposition "dia", which, as joined with knowledge, is translated through; as much as to say, through a glorious virtue or power, both "agete" and virtus, signifying valour and strength in their several languages. When God hardens a man, he only withdraws his grace. But a divine virtue is necessary for the cure of our hereditary disease. There is no great force required to cut a dead man, but to raise him requires an extraordinary power. We may as well deny this work to be a new creation, a resurrection, as deny it to be an act of divine power. There is a word that calls; there is also a power to work: 1 Thes. i. 5. 'Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost;' that is, the power of the Holy Ghost. There was not only grace in the word, to woo, but the power of the Holy Ghost in it, to overcome the heart. There is not only an act of an almighty Spirit, but an act of his almightyess. The hand of the Lord created the world, 'the heavens are the work of his fingers,' Ps. viii. 3; but grace is the work of 'his arms,' Isa. liii. 1. It may be said of the first grace in the new birth, as it was of Reuben, Gen. xlix. 3, it is his 'might, the beginning of his strength, and the excellency of his

power.' Though ministerial gifts were as excellent as Paul's, whose preaching was with demonstration and power, and who knew the readiest ways to men's hearts, if a man ever did, yet 'the excellency of the power was of God;' and when he brandished his spiritual weapons, they were only 'mighty through God,' 2 Cor. x. 4. Though the declaration was his, yet the working was Christ's, Rom. xv. 18; none of his people are willing, till the day of his power, Ps. cx. 3.

(1.) It is as great, yea, greater power, than that put forth in creation. It is as great; it is the introduction of another form, not in a way of any action or fashion, but in such a manner as was in the creation, that is, by the mighty operation of God; otherwise it could not be called a new creature though it might be called a new thing. You call not that which is made by the art or power of man, as a watch, a clock, a house, a new creature; for there is nothing of creation in them, but art and industry, setting the pieces of matter, created to their hands, together in such a form or figure. But this is called a new creature, not so much in regard of the newness of the thing, but in regard of the power that wrought it, and the manner of working it, being the same with that of creation. And being termed so, it implies the exerting an efficacious power; for creation is not brought by a cessation of action (which would be in God, if the will were only the cause of it) but the employment of an active virtue. God does not hold his hand in his bosom, but spreads it open, and applies it to an efficacious action. Since it is a new creation, it implies a creator, and a creative power, creation cannot be without both. It is a greater power expended in regeneration than in creation; more power morally in this, than physically in that. One word created the world; many words are combined for the new preparation of the heart. It is easier to make a thousand glasses, than to set together one that is dashed in pieces. It is easier with God to make a world (quoad nos, as to our conception, for all things are alike easy with God), and create thousands of men with his image, as bright as Adam's, than to bring that into form which is so miserably defaced.

[1.] First, In regard of the subject, sin has turned man into a beast, and omnipotence only can turn a bestial man into angelical and divine. There is a less distance between the least dust and the glorious God, than there is between the holy God and an impure sinner; sin and grace are more contrary to one another, than aliquid and nihil, something and nothing. A straw may with less power be made a star, than a corrupted sinner be made a saint. In creation, God was only to put in nature, here he is to 'put off' one that is strong, and to bring in another altogether strange and new, it is hard to bring a man off from his old stock, and as hard to make him nakedly to trust Christ. It is more difficult to make a man leave his sin, than to change his opinion, since men are more in love with habitual wickedness than with any opinion whatsoever. In regard of the indisposedness of the soul. There is some foundation for a natural religion, there being general notions of God and his attributes, which would administer some conclusions that he was to be feared and revered; and according to these notions many cheeks of conscience, which would induce men to some moral behaviour towards God. But in the setting our hearts right to God, and creating them in a mediator, there was not the least dust in nature to build upon. In the creating of Adam's body, there was some pre-existent matter, the dust of the ground, whereof his body has by a divine power made and organised; but we meet with no pre-existent matter for the formation of the soul, which made him a rational creature; that indeed was the breath of God, not engendered by any concurring cause in nature. There is no pre-existent matter in the creature, of which this image is formed, though there be a pre-existent subject to receive the impression of it; it is not the rearing anything upon the foundation of nature, but introducing a nature wholly new, which speaks almightyyness. In regard of the contradiction in the subject. The stream of man's natural reason, the principles, of self, whereby he is guided, run counter to it, there is a pride of reason which will not stoop to the gospel, which in man's wisdom is counted foolishness. Man is an untamed heifer, a wild ass that snuffs up the wind, full of hatred to the ways of God, guided by gigantic lusts, which make as great a resistance as a mountain of

brass; stoutness of heart, strong prejudices against the law of God, fierceness of affection, drinking iniquity like water, universal madness, resisting the spirit, hare-brained imaginations; frowardness in the will, forwardness to evil, perversity against good; can anything, less than an almighty power, make a universal cure? It is more easy to make men stoop to some victorious prince, and become his vassals, than to bring men to a submission to God and his laws, which they entertain with contempt and scorn. Nothing obeyed God's word in the creation; though it contributed not to his design, yet it could not oppose him, it could not swell against him, because it has nothing. But every sinner is rebellious, disputes God's commands, fortifies himself against his entrance, gives not up himself without a contest. This pride is hereditary, it bore sway in the heart ever since Adam's fall, and has prescription of as long a standing as the world to plead for possession. What but infinite power can fling down this pride at the foot of the cross, make the heart strike its swelling sail to Christ, and become nothing in itself, that Christ may be all life in him, and all righteousness to him? It is only possible to God to make a camel, with this bunch on its back, pass through a needle's eye; no less than divine power can bring down these armies of opposite imaginations, which have both multitude and strength (and no man knows either their number or strength), and the whole frame of contradiction against the grace of Christ. Our Saviour intimates this creative power in that thanksgiving to his Father: Matt. xi. 25, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,' &c. Christ, in all his addresses to his Father, used attributes and titles suitable to the business he insisted on. The revelation of divine knowledge to babes, the moulding their hearts to receive it, was an act of God as he is Lord of heaven and earth, putting forth an infinite power in the forming of it. If God were the author of grace in the hearts of those babes, persons better disposed, and nearer the kingdom of heaven, as he was Lord of heaven and earth, then there must be some greater power than that of the creation of the world put forth to conquer the wise and prudent, whose wisdom and prudence stands armed in the breaches of nature to beat off the assaults of the gospel.

[2.] In regard of the opposition of the present possessors. The chasing out an armed devil, that has kept the palace in peace so long, must be by a power superior to his own, Luke xi. 21, 22. This great Goliath has his armour about him, has had long possession and dearest affections; the impulses of natural concupiscence take his part; he has his alluring baits, his pleasing proposals; the world and the flesh are linked with him in a league to hinder the restoration of the soul to Christ, and the restoration of God's image to the soul. A threefold cord is not easily broken. It must be a power superior to those three great posters in conjunction, that must bind the strong man; and casting him out, and spoiling his goods, are acts of power, Mat. xii. 29. Satan is too strong to be easily cast out, and the flesh loves him too dearly to be easily divorced from him; he is never like to lay down his arms by persuasions; though all the angels in heaven should entreat him, he would not give up one foot of his empire. Nay, though what God does propose has a greater weight of goodness, pleasure, and profit in itself, than what those three great impostors can offer, yet, since reason is weak and mightily corrupted under the conduct of sense, which has an alliance with Satan's proposals, and first sucks them in, it is not like to meet with any entertainment, as being against the interest of the flesh; and the will being backed with two such powerful seconds, as Satan and the world, to assist it in its refusals. Indeed, if he that is in the regenerate, were not greater and more powerful than he that is in the world, they would not be able to resist his allurements and subtilties, 1 John iv. 4. The triumphs of Christ at his ascension declare his power in his acquisition; with a strong hand he broke the chain of sinners, and 'led captivity captive' before he gave gifts to men, Ps. lxxviii. 18. He does the like in giving grace to the heart; he rides upon his white horse in the power of almighty grace, when he conquers the enmity in the soul, as well as when he overcomes the enemies of his church, Rev. vi. 2.

(2.) It is a power as great as that which wrought in the resurrection of Christ. It is considerable how loftily the apostle sets it out: Eph. i. 19, 20, 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he

wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places.' Exceeding greatness of his power, "huperthallon", with an hyperbole, according to the working or efficaciousness of his mighty power, noting the infusion of faith in the soul by a powerful impression, 'according to the working of the might or strength.' One word was not enough to signify the great power working: it is strength with a greater edge upon it; as when a man would fetch a mighty blow, he stirs up all his strength, sets his teeth on edge to summon all his spirits to assist his arm. The power of God in creation of nature is never in the whole Scripture set forth so magnificently as his power in the creation of grace is in this place. The apostle picks not out any examples of God's power in his ordinary works, or that power in lesser miracles which exceeded the power of nature, to illustrate this power by. He does not say, It is that power whereby we work miracles or speak with tongues: no; neither is it that power whereby our Saviour wrought such miracles when he was in the world. It is a more illustrious power than the giving sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, yea, or life to a putrefied carcass, this is an extraordinary power. But yet this gracious power is higher than all this, for it is as great as that which wrought the two greatest miracles that ever were acted in the creation as great as the raising Jesus Christ perfectly dead in the grave, and having the weight of the sin of the world upon him, and as great as that power which, after the raising of him, set him in his human nature at his right hand, above principalities and powers, above the whole angelical state, as much as to say, As great as all that power which wrought the whole scene of the redemption, from the foundation-stone to the top-stone. It is such an unconquerable power, whereby God brings about all his decrees which terminated in Christ. Some say this power is not exercised in the begetting faith, but in the faithful after faith is begun. It is very strange that a less power is necessary to beget, than to preserve a thing after it is brought into being. And the same power is requisite to raise the heart of the most moral man under heaven out of the grave of corrupted nature, as well as those that are furthest in their dispositions from God. As, had not our Saviour had the weight of the sins of men upon

him, had he been dead but an hour or two, lain in the grave with a little loose or light sand cast upon him, it would have required infinite power to have restored him to life. The apostle mentions this in other places, though not so highly as in this: Rom. vi. 4 'That like as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.' It must be understood thus. Even so we, being raised up by the glory of the Father, should walk in newness of life. And it may be partly the meaning of the apostle Peter, 1 Peter i. 3, 'Who has begotten us to a lively hope by, or through, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,' not only as the foundation of our hopes, but by a power conformable to that which raised Christ from the dead. I would only by the way note, that this infers a higher operation than merely an exhortation and suasion; for would any man say of a philosopher that had taught him morality, that he had displayed in him the exceeding greatness of his power, only upon the account of advising and counselling him to reform his manners, and live more soberly and honestly in the world? Our Saviour esteemed this one thing greater than all the other miracles he wrought, and declared himself to be the Christ more by this than by any other. When John sent to know who he was. he returns no other account than the list of his miracles: 'The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached,' Luke vii. 20. That which brings up the rear as the greatest is, 'the poor "euangelidzontai", are evangelised;' it is not to be taken actively of the preaching of the gospel, but passively, that they were wrought upon by the gospel, and became gosselled people, transformed into the mould of it, else it would bear no analogy to the other miracles; the deaf hear, and the dead were raised; they had not exhortations to hear and live, but the effects were wrought in them; so those words import not only the preaching of the gospel to them, but the powerful operation of the gospel in them. This greatest miracle in the catalogue is the only miracle our Saviour has left in the world since the cessation of all the rest.

I have insisted the longer upon these perfections in God apparent in this work.

1. To stir up every renewed person to a thankful frame towards God, that he should engage his choicest attributes for the good of a poor creature. To what purpose did the apostle so long and so highly speak of the power of God in raising them from a spiritual death, but that they should acknowledge it, and admire God for it? It cannot but raise high admirations and adorations of God, to consider how mercy moved for them, sovereignty called them out, wisdom modelled them, holiness cleansed them, and power framed them.

2. To stir up deep humility. It is a plain declaration of our miserable estate by nature, and the difficulty of emerging out of it, impossible for any creature to effect. Had not God been infinitely merciful, wise, holy, true, and omnipotent, and put forth his power to free men from a slavery to sin, not a man had been able to escape out of it; and these two, admiration of God, and humiliation of self, are the two great acts of a Christian, which set all other graces on work. Mercy speaks us very miserable, wisdom declares us fools, holiness unclean, and power extremely weak.

3. How mightily will it give a ground to the exercise of faith! He that is deeply sensible of this work of holiness and power in him, cannot but trust God upon his deed, as well as before he did upon his word. As you go to the promises without you, consider also the counterpart of the promise within you, and the efficacy of that power which wrought it. You have a ground of faith within you; the power extends to every one wherein this work is wrought: 'What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe;' this the apostle speaks to all the believing Ephesians.

4. Therefore look much into yourselves by way of examination, to observe the actions of God's wisdom, holiness, and power within you. The want of this makes many gracious persons live disconsolately. Paul was certainly diligent in his observation, since he speaks so

feelingly and experimentally of it. It is the way to answer Satan's objections, silence unbelieving thoughts, when you can trace the steps and operations of them in you; it would make you strive for an increase of this work of regeneration, that you may feel in yourselves more evidences of the holiness and power of God.

5. Those that want it may well despair of attaining it by themselves and their own strength. Divine wisdom and power are exerted in this work, and men may as well think themselves able to raise a dead man, yea, Christ from the grave, and set him at the right hand of God, as do this by their own strength. If we want an eye or a hand, all the creation cannot furnish us with either. How can any power but that which is infinite give us an eye to look to Christ within the veil, and a hand to clasp him in heaven?

6. It directs men where to seek it, and to seek it earnestly. At the hands of God, since infinite wisdom, holiness, and power, are necessary for the production of it. With earnestness, because it is so transcendent a work, has so many perfections of God shining in it, that creature-strength and wisdom is utterly unable to frame and raise it; and with hopes too, if they earnestly seek it, since God has hereby declared himself infinitely loving, in the combination of so many attributes for the effecting of it. Plead, therefore, the glory of God in these his attributes, and if God give you a heart to seek it, it is a probable argument he will give you that grace which he has given you a heart to desire.

IV. Quest. How God does this?

1. This work is secret, and therefore difficult to be described. The effects are as obvious to a spiritual sense, as the methods of it obscure to our understandings; secret as the original of winds, sensible as the sound and bluster of them, John iii. 8. If a dead man were raised, he would not know the manner how his soul returned into the body, how it took its former place, and made up a new union, yet he would know that he lives and moves. A gracious soul

knows that he was carnal, and now spiritual, blind, and that he now sees. He finds strength instead of weakness, inclinations to good instead of opposition, sweetness in the ways of God instead of bitterness. The methods of grace are obscure as those of nature: Eccles. xi. 5, 'Who knows the way of the spirit, or how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child? even so thou knows not the works of God who makes all.' The manner of the formation of Christ in the soul is as undiscernible as the formation of a child, or the manner of Christ's conception in the womb of the virgin, both which are fearful and wonderful, as it is said of the first, Ps. cxxxix. 14, 'Who can declare his generation?' Isa. liii. 8; that is, the generation of Christ, either in his person or in his people. We cannot give a satisfactory account of the natural motions of our souls, how one faculty commands another, how the soul governs the several parts of the body, what the nature of the action of our mind is in contemplation and reflection, how our wills move the spirits in the body, whereby the members are acted in their motion, and the functions of life performed. Much more undiscernible are the supernatural methods of the Spirit of God. We know ourselves heirs to the corruption of the first Adam by the inbeing of it, the light of the grace of the second Adam discovers itself in the soul, but the manner of the descent of either is not easily to be determined. The loadstone's attracting of iron is the best representation of this work; the soul, like that, moves sensibly, cleaves strongly to God; but wherein this virtue consists, how communicated, both in that of nature and this of spirit, dazzles the eye of reason.

2. Yet this is evident, that it is rational; that is, congruous to the essential nature of man. God does not deal with us as beasts, or as creatures destitute of sense, but as creatures of an intelligent order. Who is there that believes in Christ in such a manner as heavy things fall to the earth, or light things fly up to the air, or as beasts run at the beck of their sensual appetite, without rule or reason? If the Spirit of God wrought so upon man, this were to lay our faculties asleep, not to act them, but to act only upon them; this were to invert the natural order by creation, to raze out the foundations of virtue,

and deny the creature the pleasure of his condition, who, according to such a manner of operation, could not understand his own state, no more than a brute can the harmony of music, or the pleasing variety of colours. But grace perfects our souls, possesses them with new principles, moves one faculty by another, like the motions of the wheels in a clock or watch; like the common course of providence, wherein he orders all affairs according to the dependence of them one upon another by creation, without making any inroad upon the natural rights of any creature, but preserving them entire, unless in some miraculous action. He diffuses a supernatural virtue into the soul, not to thwart it in that course of working he appointed it in the creation, but to move it agreeably to its nature as a rational being. As the sun conveys a celestial virtue upon the plants, drawing them forth by its influence according to their several natures, so the Holy Ghost introduces a supernatural principle into men, whereby they act as reasonable creatures in a higher strain. What methods our Saviour used in the first declaration of the gospel, he uses in the propagation of it in the hearts of men. The same reason that is used in writing the indenture is used in writing the counterpart. He might, by his omniscient wisdom, have found the way to the most secret corner of every man's heart, and by his power have set up what standard he pleased in every part of the castle, without proposing the gospel in the way of miracles and arguments; but he transacts all that affair in such a manner, that men might be moved in a rational way to their own happiness. He required a rational belief, as he gave rational evidences: John x. 37, 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not;' that is, the works that none but one empowered by God could do. God, that requires of us a reasonable service, would work upon us by a reasonable operation. God therefore works by way of a spiritual illumination of the understanding, in propounding the creature's happiness by arguments and reasons, and in a way of a spiritual impression upon the will, moving it sweetly to the embracing that happiness, and the means to it which he does propose; and indeed without this work preceding, the motion of the will could never be regular.

God does this by a double work.

1. Upon the understanding.

2. Upon the will.

1. Upon the understanding. The opening the eyes precedes the conversion from darkness to light, in God's operation as well as in the apostles' commission, Acts xxvi. 18. The first appearance of life, when God raises the soul, is in the clearness and distinctness of its knowledge of God, Hos. vi 2, 3. And the apostle, in his exhortation to the Romans, tells them the way for the transformation of their souls was by the renewing of their minds: 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds,' Rom. xii. '2. The light of the sun is seen breaking out at the dawning at the day, before the heat of the sun be felt. As the action of our sense is to sensible objects, so is that of our soul to spiritual. Our eye first sees an object before our hearts desire it, or our members move to it; so there is an apprehension of the goodness of the thing proposed, before there be any motion of our wills to it; so God begins his work in our minds, and terminates it in our wills. In regard of this, as a state of nature is set forth under the term of darkness, so a state of grace is often termed light, that being the first work in the new creation, as it was the first word of command in the old, 'Let there be light,' 2 Cor. iv. 6, Col. iii. 10, and is therefore called a renewing 'in knowledge,' or unto knowledge or acknowledgement, "*anakainoumenon eis epignosin*". If you consider the Scripture, you will find most of the terms whereby this is set forth to us have relation to the understanding. The gospel itself is called knowledge, Luke i. 77, wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 30. What faculty in man is appointed for the apprehending of a science to gain wisdom, but the understanding? That whereby we receive the gospel is called 'the spirit of the mind,' 'the eyes of the understanding' and 'sight,' which is put before believing: John vi. 40, 'Every one which sees the Son, and believes on him.' The work of grace is called 'revelation,' Gal. i. 16, 'illumination,' Eph. i. 18, 'translation from darkness to light,' 'opening the heart.' The action of our minds being enlightened, is

called 'comprehending', Eph. iii. 18, and 'knowledge,' 2 Peter i. 2. All respect the understanding as the original wheel which God primarily sets in order, from whence he does influence secondarily all the other faculties which depend upon its guidance, God preserving hereby the order which he instituted in nature. Therefore, when the understanding savingly apprehends the deformity of sin, the will must needs hate it; when it apprehends the mercy of God, and the beauty of holiness, the will must needs love him, and the higher the degrees of this saving illumination are in the mind, the stronger and firmer are the habits and acts of grace in the will. This illuminative act of the Spirit is before, prior natura, the other of inclining the will, for the understanding is first exercised about the word, as verum, true, before the will is concerned in it as good. The understanding takes in the light of the gospel, which, by the working of the Spirit, is reflected upon the will, whereby it is changed into the image of Christ, whose gospel it is: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image.' The first act is of the mind, which is the eye of the soul; where the apostle intimates, that the whole progress, as well as the first change, is wrought in this manner.

This is wrought,

1. By removing the indisposition and prejudices which naturally are in the mind. As a wise physician which orders his medicines for the removing of the principal humour. Chains of darkness must be broken, films upon the eye must be removed, which hinder the act of vision; for what the eye is to the body, that the understanding is to the soul. The darkness of ignorance is promised in the covenant to be scattered: 'They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them,' Jer. xxxi. 34. This being a law in the inward parts, the eye must be cleared to read it, as well as the heart cleansed to obey it. The object being spiritual, requires a spiritual disposition in the faculty for the reception of it. This is called in Scripture a giving eyes to see, and ears to hear, Deut. xxix. 4, and the revealing things not only by the word, but by the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 10, which, in regard of

rectifying the reasons and judgments of men, is called a 'spirit of judgment,' Isa iv. 4, 'and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof; by the spirit of judgment. and the spirit of burning:' a spirit of judgment, as it is light in the understanding, removing the darkness, a spirit of burning, as it is heat in the heart, thawing the hardness. It reduces the mind into a right order, and teaches it to judge between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, the want of which is the cause of sin; whence sins are called "agnoemata", Heb. ix. 7, errors, as arising from error in judgment. Since the mind is hued with fogs, and incapable to perceive the splendour of divine truths, God acts upon the mind by an inward virtue, causing the word proposed to be mixed with an act of faith, which he begets in the soul, whereby it apprehends the excellency of that state presented to it in the gospel. As there is a manifestation of his name in the word, so there is an operation of his grace, an internal teaching by God, as well as an external by the gospel; the proposal of the word by man, the opening and fitting the heart by God: John vi. 45, 'Every man that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me'. Christ taught all by his ministry, the Father only some by his Spirit. Learning of God goes before coming to Christ, and those two acts are plainly distinguished: Isa. vi. 9, 10, 'Hear and not understand.' The lock of their minds was to be opened, as well as that of their ears; the prophet's voice could unlock the one, the Spirit only had the key of the other. Men may enlighten as moral causes, God only as the efficient cause, to root out the inward indisposition. The Spirit also removes the prejudices against Christ as undesirable, against holiness as troublesome, takes down the strength of corrupt reasonings, pulls down those idols in the mind and false notions of happiness, out-reasons men out of their inward thoughts of a happiness in sensual pleasures, pride of life, mammon of honour or wealth, which are the root of our spiritual disease, and first to be cured. In this there is a manifest difference between the working of Satan and the operation of God; he sets his battery against the affections, because the entry is there easiest; God breaks in upon the understanding, which, being the chief fort, will quickly be a means to reduce the lesser citadels. And when the work begins

in removing the blindness, it is the way to a true conversion; when it begins only in the affections, it is a prognostic of a quick starting aside. In an outward exhortation, God acts suitably to our nature, since we are endued with understanding and will; but in acting upon us within, he does remedy the vice of our nature. since our reason and will are corrupted.

(2.) It is wrought by bringing the mind and the object close together. Sight is produced in a blind man by drawing off the scales from his eyes, and the recourse of spirits to the eye necessary for sight; besides this, there must be outward light, and objects coloured by that light; and from the eye so disposed within, and the thing discovered without, arises the action of sight. So from the preparation of the understanding, and the application of the object, arises this action of spiritual vision. There is a double opening, one of the gospel, the other of the understanding; our Saviour did both, he 'opened the Scriptures,' Luke xxiv. 32, and 'opened their understandings,' ver. 45, that there might be a mutual entrance, that the word might dwell in their hearts, and their hearts have admission into the word. The Spirit shows the great things of the gospel to the soul: John xi. 14, "anangelei", 'He shall receive of mine, and show it unto you,' not in general, but bring them near to them, to make them view 'and know the things that are freely given to them of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 12, the benefits of the death and resurrection of Christ. He repeats them again and again, that there may be an evidence in the mind that they are the royal gifts of God. There is a knowledge, before this work of the Spirit, but as of things at a distance. Many know the things proposed in the gospel, but they know it not as a glorious gospel, nor see the wonders in this law, till the Spirit brings that and the faculty close together. As a man may discern a statue or picture at a distance, but till the eye and the objects meet close together, it cannot discern the beautiful workmanship upon them with any affection to them. Not that a man knew nothing, or knows new reasons of those things which he knew before; but there is a nearer, and therefore clearer, representation of them, which is demonstratio ostensiva, whereby he knows them in another manner than he did

before. As a man may know the promises before, but they were not brought so near to him as to taste them; taste being an addition to knowledge, whereby a man knows that sensibly which before he only knew notionally. It is one thing to know a mechanical instrument, and another to know it in the operation of it, when it is applied to its proper use. It is like a man that has his understanding more cleared by seeing mathematical demonstrations, and lines drawn, than by all the rules of art in his head.

(3.) By fixing the mind upon the subject so closely presented. The Spirit settles that light and the object so in the mind, that it can no more blow it out than puff out the sparklings of a diamond, or than an artist endued with the habit of some art can divest himself of his skill. Many men have some convictions of truth, but flashy and uncertain, and which slip from their minds. But when the Spirit opens the heart, it holds the object to the mind, and the mind to the object, starts one holy thought after another about the truth it has darted in, makes the mind peer about it, and take notice of every lineament of that truth that we eye, and those thoughts lie down, rise up, and walk with us. When Lydia's heart was opened, she 'attended to the things spoken by Paul,' Acts xvi. 14, her whole heart cleaved to them. In this respect the Spirit is a remembrancer, making the soul ponder and over again with all intenseness of mind the goodness and truth of those things in the gospel which are brought unto it, that the heart is, as Paul was, 'bound in spirit to Jerusalem,' Acts xx. 22. The thoughts of that journey did so haunt him and follow him, as the shadow does the body, that no arguments of friends, nor fear of danger, could divert him; the soul is bound by them, one consideration overtaking another, and all at work beating upon the mind. Hence consideration is put before conversion: Ezek. xviii. 28, 'Because he considers and turns away from all his transgressions.' And it is called the 'engrafted word,' fastened to the soul as a graft to the stock; when the heart is opened by the Spirit, the word is inserted in and bound to it, and at last the heart becomes one with the word, and grows up with it.

(4.) By bringing the soul to an actual reasoning and discourse upon the sight of the evidence. God convinces the judgment with reasons proper to evidence the truth and goodness of what he does propose, and that with pregnant and prevailing demonstrations, which give a competent satisfaction; therefore called the 'demonstration of the Spirit and power,' 1 Cor. ii. 4, that is, a spiritual and powerful demonstration. When the eye is opened, and the revelation made, and held close and fast to the soul with a divine demonstration, that this is the only means to elevate him to a high condition, and at last bring him to a blessed immortality, the understanding is moved to compare the force of those arguments, and consequently judges that true which before it counted false and foolishness, and comes by the help of this spiritual light to reason spiritually, and spiritually to discern the proposition made to it. It compares its natural state with the happy state offered to it, its own ignorance with that light, its own misery with that mercy. God will not have man, that is so far above a beast, do anything without reason; for this would be to do it brutishly, though the thing done were never so good, When men act as men, they follow the judgment of the best reason they can. And shall man, that was created a rational creature, be renewed without reason, when the very work is to advance him to the true state of a reasonable creature, and his reason is enlightened by the Spirit, that it may rightly judge of the demonstrative arguments it offers to him? Is there not as much reason for the guidance of the will in the highest concern, as for the conduct of it in affairs of a lower sphere? Man was first endued with reason, that he might rationally serve God; and his depraved reason is reformed, that he may rationally return to God. If, therefore, he act like a man in other things, he does not surely act like a brute in this; but the Spirit excites that reason he has enlightened to judge of those excellent things he does propose, and the strength of the arguments he backs them with, which are so clear and undeniable that they cannot be refused by a mind divested of those indispositions which drew out before a contempt of them. The change in the will being an election and choice, cannot be made without convincing and satisfying reasons which induce it to that choice, and justify the election it has made. That can hardly be called

faith, when a man believes that which he does not think upon the highest reason was his duty to believe. And indeed what man is there that cannot allege some reason why he is induced to this or that act? God moves men by presenting things to the understanding under the notion of good, honest, profitable; and when the understanding is enlightened to judge of things in some measure under the same notion that God proposes them, a man's own reason cannot but upon a view of them assent unto them, and that assent is followed with a change, according to the degrees of that illumination, if it be a saving one. Upon this account that our own reason is excited to judge of the proposal, our faith can no more be said to be a human faith, or the work to proceed from our own power, than it can be said to be sensitive because it comes by hearing; for though faith depends upon hearing and reasoning, as upon natural powers, yet the light whereby the faculties are acted is wholly supernatural, and from the Spirit of God.

(5.) Hence follows a full conviction of the soul. Both the knowledge of its own misery, and the amiableness of the gospel offer, whence issues a weariness under the one and desires for the other. By this enlightening, the soul sees sin in its empire, God in his wrath, Satan in his tyranny, and the hardness of the stone within him; he sees the law accusing, sin triumphing, heaven shut and hell open, God ready to judge him, and his soul every way deplorable. He sees also in the gospel how Christ has expiated sin, answered the demands of the law, stills the clamours of conscience, satisfied the justice of God by bearing his wrath; hereupon the soul closes with Christ, and is born again. Here are heaps of sin that cannot be numbered, on the other side are riches of mercy that cannot be reckoned, there is sin to damn, here is a Christ to save; heaven and hell, sin and Christ, damnation and salvation, are presented in their proper colours, and pressed upon the understanding; which beholds all by a clear light. And thus, by the illuminative virtue of the Spirit, the soul is laid at God's foot in a sense of its misery, and then drawn into Christ's arms by a sense of his grace. This is wrought by a connective persuasion, for so the word "elegchein" signifies, John xvi. 8, which causes both a

sight of sin and a sense of righteousness, and produces a full assent in the understanding.

2. The next faculty wrought upon is the will. The will is inclined, as well as the understanding enlightened, whereby spiritual things are approved with a spiritual affection, the same hand that darts light into the mind, puts heat into the will. After the act of understanding has preceded in a serious consideration, and thorough conviction, the act of the will, by virtue of the same Spirit, follows in a delightful motion to the object proposed to it; it is conducted by light, and spirited by love; the understanding hands the object to the will, as necessary to be embraced, and the arms of the will are opened to receive it, as the eyes of the mind are to behold it.

For the understanding of this, take these propositions.

Prop. 1. There seems to me to be an immediate supernatural work upon the will, as well as upon the understanding: not that the understanding is only enlightened, and the will follows the dictate of that without any further touch of the Spirit upon it; but the will, as it is the will, and therefore cannot be forced, there is need of a moral cause which may determine it according to its nature, and draw it by the cords of a man. When a master instructs a youth in his trade, he does it by arguments morally; when he holds his hand with the instrument in it, and directs the motion, he acts physically; so does the Spirit exhort us to spiritual motion, telling us inwardly which is the way, that we may walk in it, and take our wills by the hand, as it were, and lead them in the way they are to go. A nurse's tongue and exhortation is not enough to make a child to go, because of the weakness of its limbs; nor the light in the understanding sufficient to move the will, wherein there is an habitual weakness and contradiction. How did God work up the wills of the Egyptians to lend their jewels to the Israelites, but by some immediate touch. Their reason might have furnished them with many more arguments against it than it could for it. They knew the Israelites had been highly injured, and that very lately, too; that they could not but have

a deep sense of their oppression, and intentions of revenge, as far as their power extended. They knew that the Israelites prepared for flight, and might more than conjecture that they intended never to return or send their jewels to them; for what need had they of so many goods barely to sacrifice in the wilderness? How were their wills thus banded against so many arguments against this action, and without any strong reasons to move them to consent to such a desire of the Israelites? How must this be but by the efficacious power of God, not forcing their wills, but taming their fierceness, softening them by a secret instinct, and exciting them to a grant of the Israelites' request? The apostle says, God 'gives to will.' If there were not a particular act upon the will, it had better been said, God gives to understand and know, and man to will and do. After the evidence set up in the understanding, there is a secret touch upon the will, opening and enlarging it to run the way that is proposed in an excellent and charming manner. As the poser of God raises every part of Christ, so the same power raises every faculty of the soul; it was also a physical power, since mere exhortation would never have effected it.

(1.) The Scripture intimates this in the terms whereby it signifies this work to us, as creation, resurrection, regeneration, new birth, all which denote some physical operation distinct in each faculty in the new creation, as there was in the first; not only the law in the mind to direct, but the heart of flesh to comply, is God's act. The fleshy heart is wrought by him, as well as the knowledge of the mind lighted by him. In generation something is removed, another thing introduced; in regeneration then of the will, there is consonant to that an eradication of corrupt habits, and an implantation of gracious ones. It is called a 'giving a heart,' a 'circumcision of the heart to love God,' Deut. xxx. 6. Love is an act of the will, though it supposes a knowledge of the amiable object in the understanding. If faith be principally in the will, as I think it is, as to consent; and the words leaning, resting, coming rather note an act of the will than an act of the understanding; there is then an operation of God upon the subject, viz. the will, in the implanting of it.

(2.) The will is corrupted as well as the understanding. The works of the flesh issue from both; if the corruption were only in the understanding, then that being removed, the will would be regenerated. As in a watch, if the fault be only in one wheel, that being mended, the whole frame is rectified; but if there be a flaw in all, the mending of one, though the principal one, which moves the rest, will not set every wheel right, without a particular application of art to restore them to their due frame. Was not original righteousness subjectively in the will as well as in the mind? Did not a stoutness in the will succeed in the place of that righteousness, as well as darkness in the place of light? Must not there then be a habit of mollifying grace bestowed upon the one as well as a habit of enlightening truth set up in the other; an inclination to good in the will, and an aversion from evil, as well as the knowledge of both? The corrupt proneness in the will is the cause that it is easily excited to evil by the persuasion of the devil and the world; and is there not need of an inward rectitude in the will to bias it to a free embracing and close adherence to the good proposed to it by God, that his grace may be efficacious in every part? This work is a quickening a man under a universal spiritual death; the will was dead, as well as the mind dark, which must have life instead of its deadness, as the other has light instead of its darkness; and if they be two distinct faculties, then there are two distinct acts of the Spirit, though they depend one upon another. There is no less power requisite to make us spiritually willing than to make us spiritually knowing, since the corrupt habits in our wills are rather stronger than the prejudices in our understandings; therefore there seems to be a distinct act in removing the resistance from the one as well as expelling the darkness from the other. As the Spirit takes away the wisdom that was sensual, earthly, and devilish, so it divests the will of that disposition whereby it was enamoured on that devilish wisdom of the flesh, and makes it willing to cut off the right hand and right eye, to deny sin, which is the very self, and engage in an irreconcilable quarrel against all that which engrossed its choicest affections..

(3.) If the understanding has such a power, by virtue of its illumination, without an act also of the Spirit upon the will, and a particular application of the understanding to the will, and the will to the understanding, why did not Adam's will follow his understanding? His understanding was clear, without darkness; his affections first made the rebellion; sense was the leader, and the will the follower. Eve's understanding was not silent under the temptation of Satan, her knowledge was actuated in that speech, 'God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die,' Gen. iii. 3. She cites the word, her understanding must needs concur with it, unless it were corrupted and darkened before the fall. Where lay the resistance? In the affections, and the will which sided with them. Why may not the will, possessed with those evil habits, resist the understanding imperfectly restored to its primitive light, as well as Adam's will did where there was no scale or film upon the eye of his soul? And likely his affections had kept their due order, if the will had preserved its due dependence upon reason, and its sovereignty over the sensitive part. Do we not find that our wills are oftener in contradiction to the true sentiments of our understanding, and in conjunction with the affections, than in a due subordination to the one and commanding over the other? Is it not frequently seen that men of much light, knowledge, and gifts of reason, answer not the end of that illumination, and are without a will to turn to God? Besides, since corruption came in by the way of the affections, when the understanding was clear, how can regeneration of the will come in by the illumination of the understanding, without a particular operation upon the will and affections? If it be said, the will follows the dictate of the understanding, why did it not so in Adam? If we were perfectly restored, as Adam was in innocence, without the grace of God in our wills, as well as light in our understandings, we were not like to keep up in due order.

(4.) God in his other creatures gives not only a light and fancy in nature, but endues them with such principles that incline them to their motion, as connatural to them. Why then, shall we not think,

since the will is an habitual power, that when the will is moved to supernatural ends, it is endued with such a supernatural habit, whereby it may be sweetly and readily moved to the chief good as its proper object? Are there not corrupt habits in the will, which the Scripture calls 'lusts,' and 'the works of the flesh,' Gal. v. 19-21, which the Spirit mortifies as well as those of the mind? Why not, then, gracious habits set up in the room of the other in this faculty as well as in the other?

(5.) If there were not a physical operation and habits in the will, what would become of infants, who cannot in that state be renewed without such a kind of working? They are not capable of moral exhortation, we cannot conceive any other way the Spirit has to work upon them, but by such a physical operation, putting habits into their wills, whereby they are renewed and sanctified; they are capable of the habit, though not of the act. We never find our Saviour spending any exhortations upon infants, but he took them in his arms and blessed them, and told us that of such is the kingdom of heaven; and if the kingdom of heaven be of such, there is some operation upon them different from this method of working only upon their understanding.

(6.) If there were not some operation of the Spirit upon our wills, regeneration and conversion would be more our work than God's. If the Spirit terminates his working only upon the understanding, and the will be moved by the understanding alone, without any conjunction of the Spirit in the work upon the will, then the Spirit does not immediately concur to the chiefest part of regeneration, but as it illuminates the mind; for the chief part of renewing grace is in the will; so it would be more our work than God's, if the moral only were his, and the physical operation only ours. It was in a less affair than this, wherein David blessed God for the people's willingness, offering so freely, acknowledging it indeed the people's act, but by God's overruling their wills, 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14.

(7.) God is all in all in glory: 1 Cor. xv. 28, 'When Christ shall have delivered the kingdom to his Father, God then shall be all in all,' all in their understandings, all in their wills; he shall be the immediate cause of all things, and govern and dispose all things by himself, and for himself; binding the souls of all the glorified by everlasting ligatures to himself; all in all to the glorified, all light in their understanding, all love and delight in their will, objectively, efficiently. What efficacy he has in glory, shall we deny him in grace in every particular faculty?

Prop. 2. Yet this work, though immediate, is not compulsive and by force. It is a contradiction for the will to be moved unwillingly, any force upon it destroys the nature of it; if it be forced, it ceases to be will. It is not forced, because it is according to reason, and the natural motion of the creature; the understanding proposing, and the will moved to an embracing; the understanding going before with light, the will following after with love. The liberty of the will consists in following the guidance of reason; to have a liberty to go against it, is the greatest misery of the creature. That is properly constraint, when we are compelled to work contrary to the natural way of working; there is no constraint by force, but there is a kind of a constraint by love, because the Spirit accompanies this operation with so much efficacy, that instead of that sadness we should have in a thing we were forced unto, there is an unspeakable joy and contentment in the soul; it not being possible to taste so much of the love of God, to be delivered from so fearful a condemnation, to be brought to so glorious a hope, without being seized upon with much pleasure and delight. God changes the inclination of the will, but does not force it against its inclination; the will, being a rational faculty, cannot be wrought upon but rationally. Since the main work consists in faith and love, it is impossible there can be any force; no man can be forced to believe against his reason, or love against his will, or desire against his inclination. Belief is wrought by persuasion; no man can be persuaded by force. It cannot be conceived, that the will should will against the will. No man can be happy against his will, all happiness consisting in a suitableness of

the object to the faculty; those things that in themselves are the greatest pleasures of the world, if they please not a man, cannot confer any happiness upon him. The Spirit never works thus, because 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' 2 Cor. iii. 17; he destroys not the liberty, but reduces it to will more nobly than before. Besides, the liberty of the will does not stand in indifference to this or that thing, for then the will would lose its liberty every time it has determined itself to any one thing, because after the determination it would be no longer indifferent to the other. But the liberty of the will consists in being carried out according to the dictate of the practical judgment, and not by a blind instinct. God does not deal with us as stones and logs, or slaves, whom the whip makes to do that which they hate in their hearts; but conducts us in ways agreeable to our nature; he calls, saying, 'Seek you my face;' and inclines the will to answer, 'Thy face, Lord, I will seek,' Ps. xxvoo. 8. That God who knows how to make a will with a principle of freedom, knows how to work upon the will, without entrenching upon, or altering the essential privilege he bestowed upon it; he that formed us, as a potter does his vessel, knows very well the handles whereby he may take hold of us, without making any breach in our nature.

Prop. 3. It is free and gentle. A constraint, not by force, but love, which is not an extrinsic force, but intrinsic and pleasant to the will; he bends the creature so, that at the very instant wherein the will is savingly wrought upon, it delightfully consents to its own happiness; he draws by the cords of a man, and by a secret touch upon the will makes it willing to be drawn, and moves it upon its own hinges. It is sweet and alluring; the Spirit of grace is called 'the oil of gladness;' it is a delightful and ready motion which it causes in the will, it is a sweet efficacy, and an efficacious sweetness. At what time God does savingly work upon the will, to draw the soul from sin and the world to himself, it does with the greatest willingness, freedom, and delight follow after God, turn to him, close with him, and cleave to him, with all the heart, and with purpose never to depart from him: Cant. i. 4, 'Draw me, and we will run alter thee.' Drawing signifies the efficacious power of grace; running signifies the delightful motion of

grace; the will is drawn, as if it would not come; it comes, as if it were not drawn. His grace is so sweet and so strong, that he neither wrongs the liberty of his creature, nor does prejudice his absolute power. As God moves necessary causes, necessarily; contingent causes, contingently; so he moves free agents freely, without offering violence to their natures. The Spirit glides into the heart by the sweet illapses of grace, and victoriously allures the soul: Hosea ii. 14, 'I will allure her, and speak to her heart;' not by crossing, but changing the inclination, by the all-conquering and alluring charms of love, as a man does that person whom he intends for his spouse; for to that he alludes, because in the latter part of the chapter, he speaks of the consummation of his marriage with the church: ver. 16, 'In that day thou shalt call me Ishi.' In what day? In the day that he should allure her, and speak to her heart. God puts on the deportment of a lover in changing the frame of the will. The Spirit is as one that leads the way into truth (the Spirit 'shall guide you, "hodegesei", into all truth,' John xvi. 13); not drags; he opens the heart, not by a forcible entry, but as a key that fits every ward in the lock. The attraction of the will is much like that of iron by the loadstone, which had no motion of itself till the powerful emissions of the loadstone's virtue reached it, and then it seems to move with a kind of voluntariness; there is no force used, but a delicious virtue emitted

which does, as it were, both persuade and enable it to join itself to its beloved attracter. There is a secret virtue communicated by God, which, as soon as it touches the soul, puts life and delightful motion into it, which before lay like a log. It embraces Christ as its portion, and passes a decree that it will keep his words: Ps. cxix. 67, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord. I have said that I will keep thy words.'

Prop. 4. It is insuperably victorious. What the mouth of God speaks, what his will purposes, his hand does fulfil, 1 Kings viii. 24. It is not a faint and languishing impression, but a reviving, sprightly, and victorious touch. As the demonstration of the Spirit is clear and undeniable, so the power of the Spirit is sweet and irresistible; both are joined, 1 Cor. ii. 4. An inexpressible sweetness allures the soul,

and an unconquerable power draws the soul; there are clear demonstrations, charming persuasions, and invincible efficacy combined together in the work. He leaves not the will in indifference. If God were the author of faith only by putting the will into an indifference, though it be determined by its own proper liberty, why may not he also be said to be the author of unbelief, if by the same liberty of this indifference it be determined to reject the gospel? For in the same manner God is author of one motion of the will as well as of the other, if he does no more than leave the will in an equilibrium. This irresistibleness takes not away the liberty of the will. Our Saviour's obedience was free and voluntary, yet necessary and irresistible. He could not sin in regard of the hypostatical union, yet he had a greater aversion to sin than all the angels in heaven. Is not God freely and voluntarily good, yet necessarily so? He cannot be otherwise than good, he will not be otherwise than good. So the will is irresistibly drawn, and yet does freely come to its own happiness. The soul is brought over to God, and adheres to him, not by a necessity of compulsion, but of immutability. As the angels necessarily obey God, not by compulsion, but from an immutable love. A sinner is necessarily a servant to sin, a regenerate man necessarily a servant to God; both by a kind of necessity of nature. Our main business, then, is to see what new enlightenings there are in our minds by the Spirit in the gospel, what tastes and relishes we have of divine truths, how our wills are allured to a sincere and close compliance with the proposals of God in the gospel, what vigour is in them. This is God's method, to work first upon the understanding, then upon the will. That work which begins first in the affections, without light dawning and breaking in upon the mind, and growing up by consideration and inquiries into the gospel is to be suspected, and is not like to be durable.

This is the Scripture method, and every regenerate person may find it more or less in himself.

V. The use is,

1. For instruction.

(1.) If God alone be the author and efficient of the new birth, then it does instruct us how insufficient a good education of itself is to produce this work in the soul, and how unfit to be rested on, without a further work. I doubt many may rest upon a religious education, without searching and inquiring into themselves what further work of God has been wrought upon them. God has entrusted parents with a power of instructing their children, but reserves the power of renewing grace to himself. If parents may set the object before them, God only can give them a spiritual eye to discern it; if they may inform the understanding, a divine touch only can bend the will; if they may lay the wood of spiritual lessons together, yet the fire to kindle them in the heart, and consume the lusts, must descend from heaven. Education may correct, but not extirpate the malignity of nature; good instruction, meeting with an orderly constitution, may sow the seeds of moral virtue, and restrain natural corruption, but not weed that out of our nature, or plant the root of grace, any more than the skilful management of a beast can change its natural inclination, though it may curb it. The folly bound up in the heart of a child is too strong for the wisdom of man, and is wholly to be expelled by the wisdom which comes down from heaven, set up in the heart by Christ, who is the wisdom of the Father. The little stars of precepts glittering in the mind, cannot make the young plants sprout up with their heads towards heaven, without the influence of the sun. Christ, the Sun of righteousness, fixed in the soul by the Spirit, can do more than all the stars of moral instructions in the world. Timothy had as religious instruction from his religious mother and grandmother as any in the world, both being believers, 2 Tim. i. 5, yet Paul calls him his 'own son in the faith,' 1 Tim. i. 2, as having 'begotten him in the gospel.' Those instructions did not beget him, though they might facilitate the evangelical work which was wrought by the gospel in Paul's ministry. Therefore the apostle manifestly distinguishes between instructors and fathers: 1 Cor. in 15, 'Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the

gospel.' He distinguishes their instructions from Christ, the efficient cause, and himself through the gospel, the instrumental cause. Yet such instruction is not to be neglected when children are capable; God may set home that by the gospel, which has been sucked in in younger years. Men may as well turn their backs upon the hearing the word, because it is insufficient without the operation of the almighty grace. Instruction and prayer should go hand in hand together; but take heed of resting upon a good education.

(2.) It instructs us that regeneration does not depend merely upon the word, if God alone be the efficient cause of it. It depends upon the inward efficacy of the Spirit. Had it depended upon the power of the apostles, or the outward demonstration of that word, they would have converted all that they had preached to, they would not have suffered any to have remained obstinate against the gospel: charity would have obliged them to the exercise of their power; and their power would have made their charity effectual. As God does seldom work without means, so means can never work without God. David had the law of God in his hand, but could not learn it without God's teaching; therefore he prays, Ps. lxxxvi. 11, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord: I will walk in thy truth.' And in many places of the 119th Psalm he takes notice, that all spiritual knowledge comes from God, though in the way of his precepts: ver. 98 'Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies'; and ver. 104, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding.' While we use the means, our eye should be upon God. Thomas had his fingers upon our Saviour's wounds, but his thoughts upon Christ's divinity: 'My Lord, and my God.' Food maintains the body, but by virtue of the soul animating it, and enabling it to concoct that food. The Spirit of God is the soul of the gospel, and of all means, to make them efficacious; and with this power of the Spirit the weakest means can effect more than the greatest means without it, which, indeed, can produce little or nothing. Peter's sermon, Acts ii., was but short, but improved by the Spirit to the conversion of three thousand souls. Means can do nothing of themselves to change the heart. When the disciples had two ordinances representing the death of Christ, i. e. the Passover

and the Lord's supper, pride, the great enemy to regeneration, put up its head above water; they quarrelled 'who should be greatest,' Luke xxii. 24.

(3.) There is no reason to confide in our own purposes and resolutions, or any strength of our own, if God alone be the efficient cause of regeneration; for it depends not upon our resolves without the grace of God. Satan fears not our vows; he knows, without grace they are but as light feathers, easily to be puffed away by him; but sparks, which, without his breath, the flood of corruption in our souls would extinguish as soon as they begin to appear. How can our resolves without grace renew us, when Peter's resolve, with his inherent grace, could not defend him? who, after his boasting, when certainly he sincerely meant what he said, fell so shamefully, that he stood in need of a new conversion. How soon do we, after a transient awakening fall to nodding in our spiritual sleep? If grace be not present with us to cure our lethargy, our purposes are as empty sails hoisted by us, the breath of the Spirit only fills with a full gale for motion. We can never 'steadfastly look into heaven, and see the glory of God,' unless we be 'full of the Holy Ghost,' Acts vii. 55. Stephen's eye would have been twinkling, had not the divine Spirit fixed it. How soon will a slight blast of a temptation shake a building, which has no other foundation but the moveable sand of our own purposes, when as slight a temptation shook the image of God out of Adam with all its brightness, who was built with God's own hand, with a power also to keep himself! Adam could not be without purposes of obedience when he heard the precept, yet with a slender temptation came tumbling to the dust, and fell as low as hell. A vain confidence in our own resolutions is so far from being a cause of this spiritual birth, that it is rather a hindrance, and part of the pride of nature, that must be demolished, and to be reckoned as one of the eldest things among these old things that are to pass away. Trust not, therefore, to yourselves; look up daily for the divine influence; lean not to your own understanding, though in part enlightened; confide not in your own wills, though in part inclined to the best things, pursue nothing in your own strength.

(4.) It is an injury to God to associate any thing with him in this work, which he challenges as his own production. Would it not be a disparagement to deny him the sole efficiency in one of the noblest works of his wisdom and holiness? That he who wrought the comely fabric of the first creation by his power and wisdom, without a co-partner, or deputing any of the highest angels to bring the world into form, should not have the honour of a work which bears the stamp of a higher wisdom and power than the whole creation! That he who contrived the models of the little creatures in the world, should leave this to the foolish contrivance of any creature! Why should we imagine that the divine image, upon whom the highest blessedness of the creature depends, should be of so little value in the judgment of God's infinite wisdom, as to be turned over from the care of so wise a workman, to the capriciousness of a light and uncertain will, more blind and mutable than Fortune the heathen goddess? It is more (we have heard) to frame so excellent a piece as the new creature is, out of the rubbish of sin, than to frame the whole celestial and elementary world out of a rude mass of matter; since there is a greater gulf to be shot between corruption and grace than between nothing and the beautiful structure of heaven and earth; and, therefore, we may less disparage him, in denying him the title of creator of the world, than that of the creator of a new heart, since he has promised by his own mouth to do it with his own hand. The apostle cannot be charged with ignorance, but knew what he said in that comprehensive thanksgiving for 'all spiritual blessings in Christ;' if all, then one of the highest, the new creation, is not intended to be left out of the roll of spiritual blessings, associating none with God, as the principal, but Christ as the Mediator, conveying this grace by his Spirit, according to the orders of the Father: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,' Eph. i. 3.

(5.) See from hence how excellent a thing it is to be born again, if God be the sole efficient of it! Whatsoever God is the author of in his ordinary works, is excellent in its kind, they are all the effects of his will; this is an effect of his gracious will. Other generations are by the

will of man, wherein the will of God concurs with them; this is solely by the will of God, without any concurrence of the will of man in the first work, called therefore by way of excellency, 'the faith of the operation of God,' Col. ii. 12, not a gift conveyed by angels, but his Spirit. A grain of grace of God's planting is more worth than millions of gold of man's getting; a more worthy gift than all the gold of Ophir, which God gives to men by their industry, who shall never see his face; but this by his own Spirit in order to glory. It is a royal gift he reserves in his own hands, to bestow upon those that were his favourites in his eternal purposes; it grows not in every man's ground, neither is it sown in every man's field. The soul is more excellent than the body, not only in respect of its nature, but in respect of its immediate author. God is called particularly, 'The Father of spirits,' not of bodies, though he is so; but in the production of bodies he acts by the hand of nature, in the production of the soul by his own hand. In that work he acts by the intervention of second causes; in this, without serving himself of any other efficient cause but his own will. If the soul, as being the only work of God, is therefore more excellent, then certainly a new-born soul is more excellent than anything in the world, in regard God is the author of it in a more peculiar manner, by the operation of his choicest affections.

(6.) If God be the efficient of regeneration, then there is a necessity of the influence of God in all the progress of grace. It is yet imperfect, the same hand that planted it must also water and dress it. There is a tough sinew left in man's will, which makes him halt after he has the new name of Israel put upon him, a weakness of faith, a coldness of love, a faintness of zeal. What he is the creator of, is nursed by his providence; what he is the new creator of, is fostered by a succession of grace. The scripture therefore appropriates all to him: he is the God that calls us, the God that anoints us, the God that carries us, the God that establishes us, the God that keeps us, and the God that perfects us. He is the author of grace in its first issue, its fruitful sproutings, its delicious ripenings, it depends upon him in creation, preservation, augmentation, as well as natural things depend upon

him in all their progressive motions, from one degree to another, as the author of nature. When nature was most unspotted, grace was necessary to preserve and fix it in that state. Adam needed the assistance of grace with the embellishments of nature. The same power that inspires us with life, inspires us with a perpetual continuation of it. If the tide that turns the stream of the river desert it, and return to its own channel, the river will return to its natural current. Our hearts will decline, our life languish, unless fed by that supernatural efficacy which did first produce it. The plants cannot grow merely from their own internal form, nor trees bring forth their pleasant fruits without the influence of rain and sun, feeding and hatching their innate spirits, and drawing them out to make a show of themselves in flowers and fruits; and when they are brought forth, they stand in need of the same rain to fill them, the same sun to ripen them.

(7.) If God be the efficient, &c., we see whither we are to have recourse in all the exigencies of the new creature, to whom, but to the author of those beginnings of eternal life! God is all, in all parts of this glorious work: 'The God of all grace, who has called us into his eternal glory, make you perfect, strengthen, establish, settle you,' &c., 1 Peter v. 10. There is need of preserving, strengthening, increasing, quickening, and perfecting grace.

These you need, and these must be sought, and will be had from the same goodness and power by which you were new born.

[1.] Preserving grace.

First, God only can give it. There is a necessity of it; as God rears it, so he only can keep it from pining away. Plants will wither if the rain do not descend; the flame will be extinguished if fuel be not added. There is as much a necessity of a constant influence to keep up this new nature, as there is of the sun to preserve the horizon from that darkness which would invade it upon the turning its face to other parts of the world. The perpetual duration of renewing grace is not

essential to grace, for then Adam and the angels had stood by virtue of their grace, for nothing ever loses its essential property; but it is by an additional grace, distinct from the first grace wherein our regeneration does consist, as the preservation of the creatures in their natural beings is by an act of God, distinct from his creative act. The first grace God gives now is a bounty to his creatures, but it is further an obligation upon himself, not as it is grace, or as it is his own work, for Adam's grace which failed was brought by his fingers, inspired by his breath, but as it is a new covenant grace which alters the condition of it. God's finger wrote the law in the heart, and his breath can only blow the dust off, that would fill the engraved letters.

Secondly, God will preserve it. Job would argue with God, and ask him, 'Is it good unto thee that thou should despise the work of thine hands?' Job x. 3. Is it agreeable to his goodness and wisdom to slight and neglect the work of his own heart; not a fruit of his common liberality to the creation, but a choice fruit of his redeeming love? His common love, as he is the author of nature, preserves the old creation; much more his special love, as he is the author of the new nature, will preserve the new creation. His general goodness made the world, but his gracious goodness formed the soul; the one is more splendid than the other, therefore the effect more durable. Mercy compasses the godly about. Ps. xxxii. 10, like bulwarks that surround a city for its defence, against the assaults of spiritual enemies. A higher providence attends man than other creatures, because he is of a more noble constitution; upon the same account a higher providence must attend the new creature, as being far more noble than mere man. God embraces all creatures in his arms with a common love as creatures, he lays the new begotten ones in his bosom by a special love. His power too is to be considered. He will not want a power to preserve that which he did not want power to new create. The power being the same that raised Christ from the dead, which raised any from their natural condition, will have the same issue, since it never suffered Christ to return to the grave again, neither will it suffer any new born soul to return to a spiritual death. Every new creature is the Father's by purpose, and by actual traction;

they were his before they were Christ's. The Father draws them to Christ; and the power of Christ will be as eminent to preserve them, as the power of the Father was to draw them. Why were the creatures brought, by that instinct God put into them, into Noah's ark, but to be preserved from the destroying deluge? Why did he take pains to write the law anew in the heart, if he would suffer it to be dashed out again? If he would not preserve his own work, why did he not let the soul lie wallowing in its old filthiness, and forbear the expense of those fresh colours he has new drawn his image with? It seems to be a greater power to take off all that load of sin which lay upon you, than to preserve you from having so great a burden again upon you. It is not reasonable to think that God should be at so much cost, only to restore man to Adam's mutable condition, whereby to incur a greater condemnation.

[2.] Strengthening grace. This we need, as well as preserving grace. It is God that strengthens us in the inward man; by that strengthening grace the new creature can do all things, without it nothing. Through him we are more than conquerors over principalities and powers, Rom. viii. 37, 38. Strength to mount up to heaven as an eagle, to run our race without weariness, to walk without fainting, to combat difficulties without sinking fears, is only to be had by waiting upon the Lord, who is the fountain whence all these flow, Isa. xl. 31, and by his grace confers a supernatural fortitude: Isa. xl. 31, 'But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.' Look not therefore for strength in your new nature; look for it in God, in that Spirit which first renewed you, since that glorious power is imparted to strengthen you. which was at first employed to new-create you. This was the matter of the apostle's prayer for the Colossians, and this should be ours: Col. i. 9, 11, 'Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.' There is much weakness in us, a medley of lusts, an army of enemies, but the way is open for us to that glorious power, to endue us with a new vigour, which first seized upon us with an insuperable efficacy, our shattered and weakened sins shall not be able to resist that glorious

power by which they could not stand the shock of when they were in their full strength. 'God will be a sun and a shield,' Ps. lxxxiv. 11, a sun to dispel our darkness, a shield to secure us from darts; a sun against the allurements of the world, defeating them by a charming light; a shield against the allurements of the world, overpowering them by an irresistible force; the sun that gave us life, the shield that secures our strength. The glorious power which we need in our progress lies in the same arm which wrought our deliverance, and from thence must be fetched. It is only by him that we have strength to tread down the wicked one's temptations; and those fiery darts are made as ashes under the soles of our feet, Mal. iv. 8.

[3.] We need increasing grace; and that is from God. The increase depends upon him, as well as the first planting. When we want it, he is the fountain from whence we must draw it; so did the disciples, Luke xvii. 5, 'Increase our faith,' or add to us faith, "prosthes hemin". Every new spring, fresh bud, spreading blossom, is an addition by his influence. When we have it, we must acknowledge his sole hand in it, so the apostle did when he saw the growth of the Thessalonian faith, and the abounding of their charity: 2 Thes. i. 3, 'We are bound to thank (eucharistein ofeilomen) God always for you, because that your faith grows exceedingly.' He did it by obligation: no such tie had lain upon him had God left them to increase it themselves. The new fruits you bear is from his new purging, as the first power to bear was from his planting, John xv. 2. If you would thrive, it must not be by your own, but by the increases of God; 'God gives the increase,' both in the outward administration and inward operation of the gospel, 1 Cor. iii. 7. Faith, in every assent, is conducted by that power which first settled it in the heart, and without it cannot commence any higher degree. As every spark of spiritual life is by his kindling, so every sparkling of that spark is by his blowing. Look for it at God's hands, beg of him to write that law deeper, which his fingers first engraved in your hearts. It is God's being 'a dew to Israel' makes him grow up in beauty as 'the lily and the olive tree,' in strength 'cast out his roots as the cedars of Lebanon,' Hosea xiv. 5-7. If you would grow up as calves of the stall, you must lie under the healing wings of the

Sun of righteousness: Mal. iv. 2, 'Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings,' &c. That Sun which by his beams conveyed into you a spiritual life, can only by the same heat influence you to a taller growth. Every drop of the knowledge of his will till you come to be filled, every mite of wisdom and spiritual understanding, is to be drawn from him only, Col. i. 9, both the additions of knowledge and the deeper impressions and lively sproutings of what we know.

[4.] Quickening grace. This also we need. As our life, so the liveliness and activity of grace depends upon the divine influence; a divine motion is necessary to elevate our souls to those actions which are supernatural; our grace depends upon God in actu secundo, as well as actu primo. As God first puts a nature into creatures (in the exercise as well as the being) and then quickens them by his providential concurrence in those acts suitable to their nature, which acts are therefore natural to those creatures, so by a gracious concurrence he does quicken the new nature in the soul to the exerting of gracious operations, according to that nature he has endued it with. As he tunes the strings by his skill to fit them for a divine harmony, so he enlivens them by his touch to make what music he pleases; every heavenly prayer, every gracious groan, every start of spiritual affection, is from the Spirit tuning, quickening, assisting against infirmities and deadness. There must be a continued drawing to make a continued running. 'Draw us, and we will run after thee,' Cant. i. 4. It was the church, the gracious church, the spouse and dove of Christ, yet sensible of her own inability to quicken her pace to new communion with Christ, without fresh communications first from him. There is a bias in the soul to direct it in a right motion; there must be a hand without to put it upon that motion; Christ must 'put his hand in at the hole of the door' before a lazy soul, though gracious, will stir at his call, Cant. v. 3; or as a child, which has a principle of motion, must be assisted and quickened by the nurse before it can move a step. Grace is more prevalent to keep us from sin than excite us to holiness, yet neither can be done by it without new quickenings; our motion is in him and by him, as well as

our life, spiritually as well as naturally Acts xvii. 28, 'In him we live, move, and have our being;' the old stock must have continual supply. Without Christ we can do nothing, John xv. 5; without him we cannot have grace in the plant, nor grace in the fruit. As the soul excites the spirits in the eye to an act of vision,—if they be not quickened by their governor, though things be before our eyes they see nothing,—so the Spirit of God excites, as it were, the spirits of grace to their particular acts, faith to apprehend and love to work. The goodness that made the promise guides the hand of the soul to fasten upon it: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' As God makes the promises, so he makes the meeting between the soul and the promise; every motion proceeds from God's touch upon the heart enlarging it, therefore our dependence must be upon God's grace: Ps. cxix. 32, 'I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' I will run, not by my own strength, but by the hand of God enlarging and enlivening my heart. Indeed, if God did not give to act as well as implant the habit, he would give no more to us in the new covenant than he gave to Adam in the old, who had a power to do, but not the act of doing; his power was from God, but the act of obedience depended upon himself, and for want of actual obedience he fell. We see whence we must derive our quickenings; we want them because we expect them from the new nature in us, not from the author of that nature, and the concurrence of his grace with it, and depending upon habitual more than actual grace is the cause of our having many a slip. We are as dead lumps, notwithstanding all the grace we have, if God did not cause a free life to spring up in us by successive breathings.

[5.] Perfecting grace is only from God. He is the finisher of what he is the author of, Heb. xii. 2, and in our spiritual warfare supplies us with new recruits, till the combat end in victory, and the victory in triumph. He will come 'as the former and the latter rain,' Hosea vi. 3: as the former rain to open the womb of the earth, and the latter rain to ripen the fruits of the earth. As he has laid the foundation of mount Zion, so he will perform the whole work in it; he fulfils the

work of faith with the same power wherewith he begins it, 2 Thes. i. 11. The power which caused the resurrection of Christ caused his ascension; he had his forty days upon the earth, after his resurrection, before he was taken up to glory. There is a continuance of a believer in the world after his resurrection from a spiritual death, but the same power which caused his spiritual resurrection will as surely cause his heavenly ascension. That arm that brought him out of Egypt will conduct him to the limits of Canaan, the flourishing pastures of the promised land. Grace is the first gift, glory is the latter; glory follows upon the heels of grace: 'He will give grace and glory,' Ps. lxxxiv. 11. Grace to fit for glory, and glory to reward his own grace; all grace till it ends in glory. God must be sought and depended on for this; we cannot will our perfection without grace, as we cannot will our regeneration without grace; God gives the will, the progressive as well as the initial will. Then seek only to God, depend upon him only, for the warmth of his goodness, to bring those chickens to perfection which he has gathered under his wing; his affections are not tired, it is a pure disinterested love mingled with no defects; his wisdom and power is no less able to perfect than his love is to incite him to it.

Use 2. The second use is of comfort.

Is God the author of regeneration? He that is the God of all grace is the God of all comfort too. Where he is the one, he will be the other. As he creates the soul to good works, so he creates it to heavenly consolations. When God acts as a God of justice toward sinners, he appears as a terrible God in his punishments; when he acts towards saints as a God of grace, he appears as a comforting God, he fills the one with all terrors, prepares the other for all comforts; he calls you by a new creation into his eternal glory, and sends therefore some sparkles of glory into the soul here. Are you born of God? You approach in excellency as near to Christ as a creature's capacity will admit. Christ was his natural begotten son, believers his spiritually regenerated children. Christ is 'the first born,' but 'among many brethren,' Rom. viii. 29, that Christ 'that sanctifies, and we that are

sanctified, are all of one,' Heb. ii. 11, of one nature, say some, of one Father, say others; therefore 'he is not ashamed to call them brethren,' one nature does not so much make us brethren as one father. Christ was not regenerated, but generated, he stood not in need of the other, because the first generation failed not, neither could he, being God, he is the exact image of his Father's person, and so particularly of all his attributes, because he partakes of his essence. Believers are the living images of God's holiness, not partaking of all his attributes, but of that.

Particularly,

(1.) God will rejoice in his own work. If he rejoiced in the first planting of his image at the creation, he will no less rejoice in it at the restoration and with more gladness embrace the son that is returned from death to life by returning from his debauched course, than that son that remained with him all the while. Why does he renew the face of the earth by the mission of his Spirit, but that he may rejoice in his works? 'Thou sends forth thy Spirit, they are created: and thou renews the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works,' Ps. civ. 30, 31. If God shall in time rejoice in the earth, wherein he had little joy after the creation of it, and soon repented of his work, he will rejoice in the noblest work, in the frame of his image, which, next to Christ, makes all other works of the lower creation pleasant to him. He 'creates Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy,' and he will rejoice in the new creation of his people, in the people he has new created, Isa lxxv. 18, 19.

(2.) He will destroy all enemies to his own work. How will his love pierce into every part, and employ his power in destroying the enemies of his work; whip buyers and sellers out of his spiritual temple, cast out all their remaining rubbish; let not his house be always a den of thieves, that shall rob God of his glory, and his temple of its beauty! That God that can raise men five thousand years ago dead as easily as one dead the last minute, can remove all the

bands of corruption, though never so strong. If he has raised you from death, he will lift you up from all the remainders of death; the grave-clothes which yet remain about you, shall be in time untied, as well as the soul unloosed from the principal bands of death. Though there be in you a 'spirit that lusts to envy,' as well as a spirit that lusts to love, yet 'God gives more grace,' James iv. 5, a. Lusts will down, corruptions fall in time before his grace, darkness must hide its hated head, when that word breaks louder from his lips, 'Let there be light.' The promises of a thorough sanctification belong to you, as well as the promises of a perfect remission. If God be the teacher, no matter what the scholar is; if God be the workman, no matter what the matter is; if God be the guardian, no matter what the enemies are; nothing is too rugged for his skill, or too hard for his power.

(3.) He will order all things for the good of his own work. 'They shall not labour in vain; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord,' Isa. lxxv. 23. He did not want grace to restore them, he will not want comforts to support them. Their very afflictions shall be ordered to preserve the work of his own heart in them; and while he prunes and cuts, he will purge away the luxuriant corruptions, that his vine may be more beautiful and delicious. And if he does chasten you sharply, it is that you may be nearer 'partakers of his holiness,' Heb. xii. 10.

Use 3. The third use is of exhortation.

1. To the renewed.

(1.) Walk humbly. Swell not big, as if your own power had procured it, let not pride spread its sails in your souls. Consider, you are creatures still, though new creatures. As God put into you whatsoever you have of natural existence, so he has put into you whatsoever you have of spiritual; you are dust still by your natural creation, though new formed by the Spirit. There is nothing of grace, no act of grace, but you receive mediately or immediately from God. You opened not your own eyes, nor thrust back the lock of your own hearts, nor can call one spark of that spiritual life you have, your own

creature; it moved not at your beck, obeyed not your orders; it is when God says, Go, that it goes, and, Do this and that, Settle upon this or that soul, and it does it. How humble should you be, since grace does nothing in any but by God's order, not your own. God works in us, we add nothing to God. The melted wax receives the stamp from the seal, but the wax adds nothing to the seal. 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' 'If thou did receive it, why dost thou boast as if thou had not received it?' 1 Cor. iv. 7. Grace is God's communication to you, not yours to yourselves. What is received, is not your own work, but another's gift; were it desert, we had reason to boast; but being a gift, we have no reason to grow big. Lie therefore before him in your own nothingness. Renewing grace first lighted upon you when you were humble; and grace in its increase flourishes when the soul is in the same posture.

(2) Ascribe all that you are, as renewed creatures, to God. Ascribe it wholly to him; let self rub off every filing of this gold from its own fingers. 'Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the praise,' Ps. cxv. 1. The repetition removes the glory far from themselves. If praise be comely for an upright person, it is most comely in the greatest cause that can happen to him, Ps. xxxiii. 1. Account yourselves therefore nothing, and God and grace all; and let no shootings be heard in your souls while God is rearing up the divine temple, but those of Grace! Grace! Zech. iv. 7, both in the foundation and superstructure, till he comes to the top stone. Your breathing after God is but the effect of his breathing after you; the moon has no light of herself, but what she receives from the sun; nor any creature a spark of grace, but what is derived from the Father of lights. God's purity is as the sun, your grace as a beam from that sun, not primitive in your nature, but derivative from God. Were it not from grace, Saul had never been Paul, nor Peter a penitent, nor Mary a convert, nor Zacchaeus a Christian, nor had thou ever been brought to the sweetness of a spiritual life, or advanced to the state and comforts of another world. Did you will to run till mercy moved your wills and spirited the feet of your souls? Your will, your race, was nothing; God's grace was all, Rom ix. 16. Was it not his word of

command, Let there be life? Was it not his invincible power battered down the strongholds of sin? Oh seriously think, O Christian, that dry and desert heart of thine could never have been mollified and watered by rocky nature, nor virtue ever bud and blossom in that barren soil, unless the soil were mended, as well as the plant fixed, by some powerful hand. Bless God, therefore, since had it not been for him, you had never been humbled, never been renewed, never reached so high as a holy desire, or a penitential tear, but lain till this day, and for ever, bemired in fallen nature.

That you may know what reason you have to bless God with the highest praises, consider,

[1.] What your obligation is, how great! What good would your creation have done you since your fall without a new creation by the same hand? It must have rendered you miserable without this, and could never have rendered you happy but by the intervention of this. Without this you might have been his sons and daughters by creation, and devils by corruption. The heathens were God's offspring, as they were rational creatures, Acts xvii. 28, and the devil's children, as they were corrupt creatures. You might have had the image of God in a glimmering reason, without his image in a divine holiness. Was it not a greater obligation to restore that with kinder circumstances which you had wilfully thrown away, when it was in no wise due to you, than it was at first to bestow it? There was something like debt at first; supposing God would create a rational creature, integrity and innocence was naturally due to it, in regard of the holiness and wisdom of God, unless he would have been the author of the creature's sinfulness; but since that voluntary defection, the restoration was in no sort due, therefore the obligation greater. If God had created a thousand worlds, and given you the lordship of them for some millions of years, had this been such a kindness as to afford you a new nature, whereby you will be eternally happy in a likeness to God and enjoyment of him? As the work of redemption, so this of regeneration, darkens the glory of the work of creation; since more of grace, wisdom, power, holiness, are the

springs of it, the obligation must be far greater; the difference is as great as between heaven and earth. Will you not bless God for making you creatures, for recovery from a fit of sickness? Is the obligation less in delivering you from a spiritual death? Is not the reason of blessing God greater for the second creation than the first, since it is the same skill adorns you with his image in the new creation, which beautified man with that image at the first?

[2.] Was there not as much unfitness in you as in the worst of men by nature? Not one good disposition grew upon nature, but all was the work of preventing grace. Could, then, the iron gates of your hearts fly open of themselves? Or could any else but a God break them open? Was not your nature carried as violently to sin as any, perhaps not into such brutish sins as others, yet more refined and devilish? If you did not launch out into the grossest sins, you owe your preservation to restraining grace. That Socrates was better and wiser than another, was from God, in the acknowledgement of a heathen, who says he was chosen to virtue, "Kata tou Theou cheirotonian", by the divine suffrage. Were your strings better? Sure they were of God's tuning. Man was not more unfit for a natural being before God created him, than the best man in the world was for a spiritual being, till God wrought him with his own finger. Was not the worst in the world naturally as fit for it as yourselves? Did any better thing dwell in your flesh than in theirs, to give grace entertainment? Did not grace at first make its way, conquering, and to conquer, and not one blow struck by you to facilitate the victory? Nay, were you not so far from having a grain of grace by nature, that there was nothing but opposition and rebellion against the Author of it? Did you not want everything to make you lovely in God's eye? Nay, did you not hate him while he had a love of benevolence towards you? And have you not reason to bless him then, that he would not disdain to look upon you, such an impure and rebellious creature? Perhaps our case was the same with hers, Hos. ii. 5, who said, 'I will go after my lovers.' She decreed to follow her idols, and was resolved not to be reclaimed; but God resolved otherwise, ver. 6, 7, who would not leave her till he had made her change her base and unworthy resolution for

better: 'She shall say, I will return, &c.' And was it not a happy resolution in the divine breast, not to suffer you to run mad and furiously to bell? What an irrecoverable condition had you been in if God had not spoken a powerful word, 'Hitherto thou art gone, but no further shalt thou go!' Were you not once in your blood, and pitied by no eye, when God said, Live? And can you not wonder at the mercy of his lips, and raise your notes above an ordinary strain? Read over the records of the first work upon thy heart, and see if anything were written there with thy own finger. The very sense of thy own wretchedness was God's writing on thy heart; thou was weighed in the balances and found wanting; lighter than vanity, nothing of thy own to concur with God, but folly and misery.

[3.] If grace found thee unfit and rebellious, there could then be nothing of the least desert; and this should make you cast a wondering eye at the greatness of God's kindness. Man's voluntary defection, without any violence offered to him, had rendered him unworthy of any recovery; you did no more deserve it than the worst devil, who shall never have one line of it drawn upon him. Not one previous disposition, not one sigh or groan for it, could be discerned, much less the draught itself. Your true earnings were nothing but that death you lay under. The unloosing any band of it, or knocking off any fetter, was merely free grace. Is there not, then, reason to bless the Lord, when an undeserved power has been put forth to new create you, when a deserved power might have buried you for ever under your own ruins? Suppose you had been the most exact moralists in the world, the supernatural grace of the new birth could not be deserved by you, because nothing can be merited but by an act as excellent as the reward. No man can merit by any act a thing of a greater value than the act itself; but this grace is of another order, and far superior to any moral natural work. Indeed, upon covenant, if a man does such a thing, he shall have such a reward, the thing promised may be challenged upon the performing the condition, but cannot be said to be merited, because the act was inferior to the reward in the true value of it, but this grace could neither be merited nor challenged at God's hand upon a condition, since he had made

no promise in this kind to give you a right to such a demand. It is one thing to be capable of it, another thing to have a just right. A sinner in the state of sin is capable of being changed, but not capable of having a right to that change. Well, then, you could never deserve such a mercy; and will you prize it and bless God for it?

[4] Since you did not deserve it, no, nor the proposals of it, consider what a condition you had been in had God left you to yourselves, or put your wills only into an indifference. Had it been by a mere suasion, or a naked proposition of the truth, I suppose you are so sensible of the mutability of your wills, that you might well believe you should scarce have complied with God. Your security at best had been but as good as Adam's, who had his posse but not his velle. What furious passions and devils in your souls were set against him! and had you been left to your own choice, you would not have stirred one foot to follow his chariot. If you did 'purify your souls in obeying the truth,' it was 'through the Spirit,' 1 Peter i. 22; and all the faith you have was from the same fountain, Acts xviii. 27, 'which believed through grace.' Put it to yourselves: Do you think your hearts were not so stout, that nothing but divine grace could mollify them? Do you think there would have been any heat or warmth in you unless God had kindled the flame? Can you imagine your frozen hearts would have melted but by a divine breath? It was happy for you that God would put your wills beyond an indifference, and deal with you by the same power as he dealt with Christ, not leaving him or you in a doubtful state between life and death. How happy was it for you that God would be conqueror, and surmount your resistance, tame your force, scatter your counsels, level your mountain, and bring your fierceness under the yoke; that he would not wait your choice and leisure, but make the event certain; that he had mercy on you, because he would have mercy; that he would turn the stream of your hearts by the overmastering tide of his grace, and overpower the flesh in the chief parts of your souls, and secure the rational powers of mind and will for himself! How glad may you be of the loss of that indifference that secures your happy estate for ever! Who that is in favour with a prince would not willingly have his will fixed to please

him, and dread nothing more than such an indifference, whereby he might hate his prince and lose his favour?

[5.] Is there not reason you should bless God, when he has dealt thus graciously with you, and not with many others in the world, why any of you should be raised up to a spiritual life, when you see many others near you stretched out in a spiritual death; why one upon the same bench and not another; why one should be gathered with his arm, and another left to the jaws of the devouring lion, why you should have any choice fruit grow in any of your hearts, when thorns and briars grow in every hedge? That God should have afforded you means of regeneration, and not to most others in the world, is a ground of blessing and praise, much more that he should afford you the grace of regeneration, and not to many others under the same means. He has not dealt so with every nation in giving them the means, Ps. cxlvii. 19; he has not dealt so with every person in giving them the grace. That wind that blows where it lists has left other dry bones to remain dry still, passed by others more civil and of sweeter conversations; drawn his image in one, and left others to tumble down to hell in the likeness of Adam, wherein they were born, overlooked one that was not far from the kingdom of heaven, and laid hold on another that was many leagues further from Christ. The Spirit of God only makes this distinction: he will pour out his grace in Galatia and Macedonia, and not suffer it to be known in Bithynia: Acts xvi. 6-8, 'And they essayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not;' cause it to rain in one city, on one person, and not on another; call one out of the grave, and leave others under the bands of death and in the dregs of human nature. You see your calling, and you may see how distinguishing it is, 'not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty,' 1 Cor. i. 26. Can you see this and not bless the caller, the renewer? A less favour wrought so much upon David's heart that he would bless God in spite of mocks and scoffs, 2 Sam. vi. 21. Oh rich discriminating grace! Where any are peculiar monuments of grace, they should have peculiar notes of praise. What reason can others have to bless God, if such should have no hearts to bless him for so great a mercy? All are under God's will

of precept, all are under his will of promise, if they perform that precept; but all are not under his will of purpose, to give them strength to perform that precept.

[6.] It is to be considered, too, with what pains and patience God wrought this work in your hearts. You may best know what ado God had with your hearts before they were thus formed according to his will. Were they not as clay to the potter, which needed much tempering before they were fit for use? Did God find that pliability in you that the devil found? Had he a cordial welcome at the first proffer? Do you not remember resistance enough to make you for ever ashamed that ever you should put the blessed God to that toil? And yet you know not the thousandth part of that resistance God knew was lodged in your nature. Do you not remember how he met you at every turn, hedged up your perverse way with thorns, before he could be admitted to speak a word to your heart, how he answered one objection after another, whereby you would have stifled his work? Can you remember this, and not admire the mercy that took such pains with so unprofitable a heart? It is called a resurrection, but it is more. Before the resurrection of the body, one part of man lives and waits for reunion though the body be crumbled into very dust; but there is no life in you naturally: so little in you to take part with God, that even that which is the glory of man, his mind, and reason, and wisdom, were in arms against this work, as well as the sensitive and brutish part, for 'the carnal mind was enmity against God,' Rom. viii. 7. What was your language to God at first, but like that of the hellish spirit in the man in Luke iv. 34: 'What have we to do with thee?' Yet he dealt with you as the sun with the earth, which scatters the mists it sends out to choke its light, and spreads its warm wings over the face of the world. So does God, though men offend him with the steams of their sins, and uncivilly command him to depart from them, yet he leaves them not till he has made them willing that he should do them good.

[7.] The work itself requires admiration and blessing in regard of the excellency of it. It is more admirable than all the miracles of nature;

the whole world can no more compare with it than a dunghill can equal the worth of a rock of diamonds; all blessings which make you happy spiritually and eternally are wrapped up in it. What can God give greater than his own nature? What are you capable of more than what he has done and will do upon that foundation? If God had only given thee knowledge, thou might have been a devil for all that; but the new nature makes you equal with angels. What man or angel could you be born of with so great advantage as to be born of God? There is no higher being to be born of. What can he do more than thus to beget you? You are new-born according to that image after which his only Son was eternally begotten; conceived by that Spirit whereby Christ was conceived in the womb of the blessed Virgin; raised by the same almighty hand whereby the great pattern of the new birth was raised from the dead. It is the highest elevation of human nature to be united to the Son of God, and to be made like to that glorious image. Greater gifts cannot be than these two, Christ to descend to partake of human nature, and the creature elevated to partake of the divine. If you will not loudly bless him for this, what can God do that shall deserve your praise, since a greater he cannot confer, more full of the spirits of his favour towards you?

[8.] May there not be some circumstances in your particular new birth that may raise your hearts to blessing and praise? Perhaps thou were 'born in a day,' as his promise is of a nation, Isa. lxvi. 7, 8, and without those racking pains which attend the new birth of many. He did not take thee by the throat, nor arrest thee with legal terrors, but breathed upon thee with a gentle wind; conceived and formed thee in a little space of time, that thou were within the prospect of heaven before thou thought thyself out of the suburbs of hell, and brought thee forth a man-child before thou didn't imagine thyself to be delivered. Was it not mercy to renew thee without worrying thee; to melt thee by a gentle fire of love, not break thee piece-meal by the hammer of wrath, that thou should scarce discern the lance from the balsam, and the wound from the plaster? Perhaps he arrested thee in a full course of sin, in some desperate career, when some plot was laid for a high piece of wickedness. It had been an act of his power

had thou been brought up in some religious family, tutored in the ways of religion by a choicer education; but perhaps God took thee from the very steams of hell, when thou had not one thought of him, and he might have let thee alone as well as he did others of thy companions. It had been admirable power to turn clear water into wine, but more to turn stinking and putrefied water into a generous wine. Do not the visible characters of mercy and power in such a case call for more praise at thy hands? Can any other cause have a pretence to put in for a share in thy acknowledgements?

[9.] You are not without many examples to move you to this acknowledgement. Our Saviour himself could not regard the centurion's faith without astonishment. He wondered at that in his humanity which he wrought himself by his divinity, Mat. viii. 10. And when Peter professes his faith in him by acknowledging him to be the Son of God, Christ presently owns his Father as the author of it: Mat. xvi. 17, 'Flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' Angels sang both at the first and second creation, and shouted for joy when the corner-stone thereof was laid, Job xxxviii. 6, 7. When they saw its beautiful order, they then showed themselves to be the sons of God indeed, in glorifying their Father for his incomparable works. The second creation being more glorious than the first, is not celebrated by them with fainter shootings; if God has then hallelujahs for you, it is fit he should have hallelujahs from you. If angels speak loud, it is not fit you should speak low; it is their concern, as they are God's friends and servants; your concern, as you are his workmanship, of his own carving. The saints in all ages of the church have led the way in this acknowledgement. The elders, made kings and priests on earth, in a conquest of Satan and their own hearts, crowned with a blessed grace, cast down their crowns at the feet of God Rev. ix. 11, 'For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created,' both the present new creation and the old. 'Thou hast loosed my bonds,' Ps. cxvi. 16. What follows? 'I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.' And God's renewing David's youth like the eagle's, his changing him into a new man, says Jerome, is one argument of David's praise, Ps. ciii. 6. Add to this,

heathens have acknowledged it to be the work of God, one examining the reason why Homer calls virtuous men "dious", answers. Because goodness was not a work of art, but "ergon Dios". If divining and mystical knowledge be "theiai tini epipnoiai", by divine inspiration, shall we say of virtue it is "ergon technes thentes", the work of man's art? Where do you find any like Nebuchadnezzar, gazing upon the divine formation in his own heart, and proudly crying out, 'Is not this great Babylon which I have built?' Does such language drop from a David's mouth? No; but 'thou hast quickened me.' Or from Paul? No, 'by grace I am what I am.' Every inch, every spark, every joint of the new man is from grace.

[10.] If you do not acknowledge it to God, and bless him for it, you may justly suspect you are not born of him. It is the nature of true grace to reflect back upon God, as it is of a sunbeam shining upon a wall to reflect back upon the sun. Blessing God for it, is a character of a renewed man. It is an evidence of the ruin of the contradiction of nature against God, when man can strip himself of all, and own God the prime fountain of what he is and has. If a man boast of his being the cause of a new birth in himself by any work of his own, it is a shrewd sign he is not renewed, because by such boasting he crosses the main end of the gospel, which is to stain the pride of man, and debase him to the dust from all grounds of glorying in himself. How jealous was the apostle in this case, and therefore backs his assertion again and again, that he might beat man's hands off from fingering anything of God's glory: Eph. ii. 5, 'By grace you are saved;' again, verse 8, 9, 'and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' Once again, 'Not of works.' And the reason why he is thus earnest, was perpetually to discountenance self-confidence, 'lest any man should boast.' The design of God in all gospel dispensations, is to pull away the stool whereon the flesh sits to glory: 1 Cor i. 29-31, 'That no flesh should glory in his presence.' It would seem strange that the new birth, a main gospel work, should be wrought without promoting a gospel end. To have a new birth, and such a flourishing pride, opposite to the end of it, is a contradiction. If the doctrine of faith does exclude boasting, as Rom. iii. 27, boasting is 'excluded by the

law of faith,' the grace of faith also will exclude it; where the new birth is wrought, pride, the great enemy to it, will surely be captivated. We are then something in and by God, when we are most nothing in ourselves.

Well, then, be much in the work of praising God, who shined into thy heart when it was dark, and sealed instruction to thee; who took away the stony heart, and introduced one of flesh in the room; who manifested a day of power in the night of your weakness. Can you, dare you, to ascribe it to yourselves? Let God then have the praise. It is our fault we are more in complaints of what we want, than acknowledgements of what we have. Oh, rob not God of his deity, pretend not yourselves partners with him in the least of the stock. The more you return the glory of his grace, the more will he return the comfort of it to you; the more you give him that glory he is so jealous of, the more he will give you that grace he is so liberal of.

(3.) A third duty for those that are renewed. Acknowledge God in all the changes you see in others. Miracles must be regarded. It is greater for the apostles to act with new hearts than to speak with new tongues; greater than to stop the sun in its course, which would set all the world upon an astonished gaze. Shall any such miraculous work be done in our view, and we stand only as stupid spectators, and not render to God that glory which is due to him for his choicest work? As the sight and consideration of the material creation kept up the notion of the being of God as creator, so the consideration of his works upon the souls of men will quicken thy sentiments of God as a new creator. One is an argument to prove the power of his essence, the other an argument of the power of his grace. Noah does not bless them first for that act of filial duty showed to his father, but blesses God as the author of that modesty Shem had shown in covering his father's nakedness: Gen. ix. 26, 'Blessed be the God of Shem.' When a great number were turned to Christ, Barnabas presently cast up his eye to the grace of God, 'he saw the grace of God,' Acts xi. 21-23. Let every Lazarus you see raised from the grave raise up your faith to a higher elevation, and dress it in a jubilee attire. When you see a new

temple reared to God, own it as the Lord's doing, and let it be marvellous in your eyes.

(4.) Be content with every condition your new creator shall cast you into. Discontent at any of God's dispensations does ill become one whom God has new begotten to a glorious inheritance. What can he do more than he has done, and what he will do upon that foundation? All that he acts is to further that which he has so powerfully and mercifully begun. What son would repine at the losing a rattle, as long as he is born to a never-fading inheritance? If grace has put forth a power to new create you, it will not use that power otherwise than for your good. It may contradict your carnal desires, not your spiritual interest. Well may any man be content with the jewel that is left, though the casket be lost. All things are too light if put into the balance with the new birth: the dearest husband or wife, the sweetest children or friends, the most flourishing inheritance; study, therefore, contentment in the worst condition upon this ground; you know not how soon you may be put to practise all your skill. Do you not see the heavens gathering blackness over your heads? A new birth, that allies us to God as his children, will be of more force to settle us, than calamities can be to discompose us; for never was child so dear to an earthly, as a new created soul is to its heavenly Father.

(5.) Walk worthy of the author of it. A verbal acknowledgement will signify little without a real imitation of the virtues of him 'that has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,' 1 Peter ii. 9. A holiness is to be expressed by you, like the holiness of that God who has renewed you. Let no devilish or brutish carriage be yoked with a divine birth, indeed it cannot; the bespotting corruption of the world will not agree with the regeneration of the soul; the stains of the flesh are inconsistent with the purity of the new nature. Belial and Christ, God and Satan, are not joint begetters; Satan's impure breathings upon you should not be admitted to mix with the breath of God. A new nature by grace must not imitate a brutish nature by sin; a soul born of God must not be fashioned according to the world. If you

differ from the world in your nature by grace, differ from the world also in your carriage by holiness. It is uncomely for one born of God to be taken with the foolish, flaunting pride of the world, more than the pattern God has set him; that is, to imitate beasts, not a heavenly Father. The world is little, nothing, vanity in the eye of God; so should it be in the eye of a divinely begotten soul. Use the world as travellers an inn, to lodge, not to dwell in, to accommodate you in your journey to that Father of whom you were born. Let a heaven-born nature be attended with heavenly flights, longing for that happy state wherein nothing but the divine nature shall be seen in union, as nothing but fire is seen in melted gold.

(6.) Mourn for your imperfections. Give God his due, and grieve for your defect in paying him his own. The soul in creation comes pure out of God's hand, but it is poisoned by the flesh, and the impurity in the sensitive part of man. Though your grace be from God, yet your imperfections are from yourselves. The waters that run through sulphur and alum mines flow from the sea, but the ill taste and scent are communicated by the matter it mixes with in its passage. God is the author of your faith, but not of the weakness of your faith; the author of your love, but not of the coldness of your love; the author of your zeal, but not of the faintness of your zeal. Chide your hearts, therefore for your weakness, as Christ did his disciples for their slowness in faith. 'Rejoice with trembling,' Ps. ii. 11, rejoice in what you have, and mourn for what you want and come short in. Reason you have, since there is too much of the power of nature remaining with our best grace, so that it may be said of it, as Lot of Zoar, What grace has enclosed is but a little one.

Exhort. 2. To those that are not born of God. You see at whose hands you are to seek it. God was the first contriver of the gospel, the first preacher of the gospel, the sole artist in any gospel operation. No man can come except the Father draw him; not some men, but no man; every man must therefore seek to this great attracter. It is a vanity of human nature, that every man loves to be "autodidaktos", his own teacher; and no less a vanity it is, that every man loves to be

"autogennetos", his own begetter. Men glory in the knowledge they get without a teacher, and no less glory in any change they can hammer out without a spiritual Father. As he that scorns to be taught by another shall surely have a fool to his tutor, so he that thinks to gain spiritual life by himself, shall be sure to have death for his quickener. No man would seek life from death, or light from darkness, and the best natural man is no better. The glory of the Lord must rise upon us, before we can rise out of our death in sin: 'Arise, and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,' Isa. lx. 1.

(1.) Seek it only at the hands of God. It is not to be had by outward rules, but divine influence; the streams of life must come from him, since with him only is the fountain of life: Ps. xxxvi. 9, 'I will give a heart of flesh;' I alone, without any other co-ordinate cause, either man or angel. He only has the key of the heart, as well as that of the womb; confide not in yourselves. Adam was a root to convey sin and death, but no root to convey spiritual life. Corruption comes by propagation from him, grace only by spiritual regeneration from God. Would any wise man seek for water in a desert, or for grace from himself, who is naturally a dry wilderness? What toad, naturally full of poison, ever made himself sweet and wholesome? As Christ was by the grace of God made partaker of our nature in his incarnation, so by the same grace only can we be made partakers of his nature by regeneration. We are naturally weeds; if ever we be flowers in God's garden, the transformation must be God's act alone.

Seek it of God. But,

[1.] In the use of means, not abating anything of thine own industry. Seek, while God offers it; hold your mouth under the fountain while it runs. Moses hewed the tables, but God wrote the law. God promised David and Gideon victory, but not with their hands in their pockets, but their arms and armies about them. Moses must fight with the arms of Israel, but pray to the God of battles and victory. We must with one hand use the directions God has given, and lift up the

other in spiritual supplication for success upon them. Therefore let not the doctrine of God's being the cause of the new birth encourage your laziness and sloth. This sloth among men Chemnitius thought to be the occasion of Pelagius his error, who, seeing the laziness of Christians, thought to correct it by making them think highly of their own strength; but that was a dangerous extreme.

[2.] Yet let your eye be solely upon God in the use of them, since all the means in the world cannot do it without him. Unless God pull up the floodgates, no water of life can stream into the soul; means can no more of themselves cast out death than the disciples could cast out some devils; but Christ was able to do what they could not. All the angels in heaven and men upon earth have not been able, these almost six thousand years, to make one fly; yet all the angels and the whole frame of the world were made by God in six days. Men speak to the sense, God to the heart; they to the understanding, and God into it; men argue with the will, and God persuades it. All the clamours of the whole nation of the Jews, yea, of all the men in the world, would not have made Lazarus stir out of the grave, had not our Saviour spoken the word, 'Lazarus, come forth.' How often do the clouds of heaven drop upon men, yet they still remain as a dry chip, their stony hearts perhaps moistened with some transient flashy affections, but not mollified into flesh. Pray therefore to God, before the use of any means, Lord, breathe life so powerfully upon me, that I may walk before thee, and never find myself again in a natural winding-sheet. Let thy voice, Lord, be heard and felt by me as the voice of thy Son was by Lazarus. To use means without a seeking to God for his blessing, is to be exercised in divine institutions with an atheistic spirit. He is an atheist that expects nourishment from his meat without God's benediction, and he no less that runs to means without lifting up his heart to God, thinking to get grace conveyed by the means without God's operation.

(2.) Direction. Plead much with God from the glorious attributes he honours in this work. Lord, here is a subject for thy power to work upon. God made the heavens when there was nothing but a rude

mass; he brought forth the sun, moon, and stars, with all their glory, out of the barren womb of nothing. Is thy heart worse than nothing, more contradictory to God than nothing? It is so. Assume an argument from hence: Lord, here is a subject for thy power above what was manifested in creation; there is not a more tough heart in the world than mine; lose not the opportunity of displaying the greatness of thy power, since there is scarce a heart more stout and unwieldy than mine is. Lord, bestow a vital principle upon me; thou did it to the lifeless body of Adam; thy power will be more magnified in the breathing upon a lifeless soul of a son and daughter of Adam. In the same manner plead his wisdom and holiness. Plead also the enmity thy sin has against him, the wrong it has done him, in spoiling the creation, changing the end of it, hindering thee from thy natural duty, and that it is not for the interest of his glory to let sin bear such a sway and dominion, and usurp his room in one who would fain be another man.

(3.) Be deeply sensible of the corruption of thy nature; the want of this is the cause there is so little sense in men and women of the absolute necessity of the grace of regeneration, and a change of nature. Therefore labour to see yourselves in a forlorn condition by spiritual death. Look upon your great fall as a son of Adam, a slave of Satan, and possessor of a hellish nature, and at a vast distance from God and happiness.

(4.) Grieve not the Spirit in any of his operations. Quench not the sparks of the Spirit in any previous preparations and dispositions to this new birth. Be pliable to his breathings, hoist up your sails to receive his gales; when he knocks, open thy heart as wide as may be, push it to the furthest point, that there may be no remora; let all the house be free for his triumphant entrance. Since thy strength is too weak for it, beg of him at such a season to break it open; set upon prayer at such a season, and leave not till you have prayed your spirits up and your resistance out. How ungrateful and foolish is it to grieve that Spirit, who offers to form you into a new birth, and bring the life and joy of heaven into your heart! This is the only means to

recover the loss you had by the fall of Adam, and surmount all the misery of it. Seek to him; he that can gather the dust of your bodies, if blown to the further part of the world, and knit it together, can overcome the filthy and deadly noisomeness of your souls; he can make a barren wilderness to become pools of water, a lump of vanity a garden of pleasure, a heap of rubbish to sprout up a new-born sun. If you would therefore be animated with a spirit of life, you must approach the beams of the sun, and lie under the rich and enlivening influences of it.

REGENERATION

Asahel Nettleton

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God - John 1:12-13

The important and simple doctrine taught by these words, is that those who receive Christ - who have power given them to become the sons of God and who believe on his name are born of God. In other words, every real Christian becomes such by a special exertion of Almighty power to change his heart. The phrase born of God - begotten of God, so often used by the writers of the New Testament is figurative. Its propriety, when applied to things of a spiritual nature, arises from the analogy which exists between the beginning of our natural and spiritual existence. Believers are the sons of God and this must be understood in a peculiar sense. All men equally receive their existence and natural faculties from the Creator, and in this sense are all the children of God. But when the Scriptures apply the phrases sons of God and children of God to the saints by way of distinction, it must be to point out a relation to God which is not common to all men. This relation is wholly of a new and spiritual nature; and God is the sole author of it, and by virtue of it they are his sons, they are said to be born of him; begotten of him, in allusion to the relation between earthly parents and their children.

The object of this text is to deny that our relation to God as his spiritual children is produced in any way, but by his own special and sovereign power. It was originally adapted to oppose the carnal prejudices of the Jews. For the common opinion was that all who could be counted as the children of Abraham were heirs of the divine promises and entitled to eternal life. This notion was uniformly opposed by Christ and his apostles. Leaving an attempt to ascertain the precise meaning of the phrases "not of blood, nor of the will of

the flesh, nor of the will of man," I observe that there were three ways in which individuals became the reputed children of Abraham: by regular descent; by unlawful connection; and by adoption. Let the method be which it might, the Jews supposed that whoever became a child of Abraham, of course, became a child of God. The celebrated Lightfoot supposes the object of the Evangelist is to cut off the false hopes of the Jews, by denying that either method and of course any method of becoming the children of Abraham would make them the children of God. Another birth is necessary; a new filiation from above. They must be born again - born of God. Whatever may be the particular meaning of the text, the obvious general impression from it, and the one designed to be made by the sacred writer is that all other ways of becoming the sons of God are false and visionary, except that of being born of him. It was spoken to meet the prevailing prejudices of the day, and may now be used in the same manner.

Of all subjects, that which respects change from death unto life, is certainly one of the most important, and interesting to us. To have clear and definite ideas here is of great moment. Error on such a fundamental point is awfully perilous.

In one sense all things are of God. He is the Creator and governor of all. All a man's powers and faculties are from God, and all the means of grace and institutions of religion are ordained by him. But when the Scriptures speak of being born of God, they mean something more than that a man is influenced by these means and institutions in the use of his ordinary powers and faculties. To prevent misconception, I have said that regeneration is the special work of Almighty power. Errorists have never dared to deny, directly, that saints are born of God; because this would be to renounce all appearance of belief in the Scriptures. They have chosen a surer method of propagating their sentiments. While they retain the language of the sacred writers, they have attacked and frittered away their meaning, until regeneration becomes the mere application of an external rite, or a persuasion of mind affected in an ordinary manner and a consequent reformation of morals.

To expunge error serves to illustrate the truth. I shall briefly consider some false notions respecting regeneration and then proceed to illustrate what it is to be born of God.

I need not consume the time in labouring to prove that baptism is not regeneration. Nothing is plainer than that an external rite cannot change the heart. Baptism is only a sign or token of the saving influences of the Holy Spirit, and is not that work itself. It cannot be the token of a thing, and the thing itself at the same time. Both the Scriptures and experience show, that all who are baptized are not regenerated; for in their lives and conversation many who are baptized differ not from the "world which lieth in wickedness." On this, I shall only add the words of an eminent English divine, "This scheme," says he, speaking of regeneration by water baptism, "is the utter rejection and overthrow of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." And again, "The vanity of this presumptuous folly is destructive of the grace of the gospel; invented to countenance men in their sins; and to hide from them the necessity of being born again; and therein of turning unto God. But my beloved Christian brethren, you have not so learned Christ."

The absurdity of substituting this and other things of a like nature is so palpable and gross, that it is very likely to be seen and apprehended, where any considerable degree of knowledge respecting the nature of religion exists. There is far less danger from such extravagant notions than from those which are more specious and imposing.

Pelagius in the 4th century first invented and advocated a scheme of regeneration which, with a few modifications, sometimes in the phraseology, and sometimes by partial additions or diminutions, has been the scheme of the great body of all sectaries, who have dissented from orthodox evangelical sentiments. Authors have appeared in different periods and in various countries, who have brought forward this specious scheme of the new birth, as principally illustrated, or defined by themselves; and many whose reading is

superficial have been deceived into this supposition. The fact is, that almost the whole system of vague and inadequate notions on this great subject is only the heresy of Pelagius, so universally condemned by the ancient Church, which has now been newly dressed up, after the modern fashion, to secure a better reception.

The fundamental truths of the Pelagian and Arminian scheme, (for they are in substance the same) are these:

(1). That God not only proclaims the offers of grace and salvation to all men alike, but that the Holy Spirit is equally and sufficiently distributed to all men to insure their salvation, provided they duly improve the benefits bestowed upon them.

(2). That the precepts and promises of the gospel are not only good and desirable in themselves, but so suited to the natural reason and interests of mankind, that they will of course be inclined to receive them, unless overpowered by prejudice, and an habitual course of sin.

(3). That the consideration of the threatenings and promises of the gospel is sufficient to remove these prejudices and reform that course.

(4). That those who thus seriously reflect and amend their lives have the promise of the Holy Spirit, and are entitled to the benefits of the new covenant.

Under this specious statement of fundamental principles which is apt to strike an inconsiderate mind in a favorable manner, the very life and soul of gospel truth is taken away. On this scheme, all men are regenerated alike, originally; all having an equal measure of the Spirit, and the difference between one man and another is to be ascribed wholly to himself; to the improvement he has made of the blessings vouchsafed. And regeneration is a reformation of life, induced by moral suasions, or commenced in consequence of the understanding being enlightened and the affections being moved by

divine truth alone. If you ask, how does salvation proceed from divine grace on this plan, the answer is that all the means of improvement are bestowed by God and herein is the grace.

The whole scheme is simply this, God gives faculties and grace to all, and to all alike and thus furnished, they work out their own salvation, being persuaded to do this by the promises and threatenings of the gospel. The dreadful mischief which this extensive and popular scheme has caused springs from its plausibility - from such an appearance of truth, mixed with so many great and dangerous errors.

That the Holy Spirit makes use of the word and many other instruments to bring sinners to Christ, I have no doubt. But that men are naturally so inclined, as to approve of and obey the precepts of the gospel, unless some peculiar course of sin or prejudice prevent them, contradicts the whole tenor of the gospel, in which it is a fundamental principle, that by nature we are children of wrath, and that we are at enmity with God and blinded to the light of his truth and dead in trespasses and sins. That the Holy Spirit is communicated to all in a sufficient manner to save them, entirely overthrows the idea of any special grace, and makes one man as much born of God as another! Our text says that as many as received Christ, and believed on his name, were born of God. If so, others who did not, were not born of God, and the undistinguishing influences of the Spirit cannot be maintained.

It is a great stumbling block, in the way of many, that God should give more of his Spirit to one, than another. To remove this subject of prejudice, Pelagius and multitudes ever since, have maintained that all men receive gifts alike, and are alike furnished to work out their salvation. This effectually destroys the new birth, and makes it alike common to every man. On this scheme Judas had as much grace as Paul, Ahab who sold himself to work wickedness, as David, a man after God's own heart. All the difference between them, was owing to the different manner in which they improved their privileges.

I know such doctrine is agreeable to corrupt nature; and the easy reception it has met with ever since it was first preached proves how agreeable it is to carnal reason. But neither the Scriptures nor experience afford us any reason to believe it. I do not doubt that the Spirit of God strives with all men who are not reprobates. I fully admit it. I admit that the promises and threats of the gospel would be sufficient to persuade us to a holy life, if our understandings were neither darkened, nor our affections depraved. But after all this, I deny that common grace makes us the sons of God, or that we are persuaded to be Christians without any special divine influence; or that all men receive the same measure of the Spirit.

After all preparatory means - all the promises and threats of the gospel - all the operations of common grace - and all exertions of unregenerate sinners, they must be born of God to become his children. There must be a new creation, - a work accomplished by Almighty power - a sovereign - special - supernatural act, like making a world, or raising the dead, as to the power exerted, and without such an act no one can ever see the kingdom of heaven. Persuasion is not sufficient to make men new creatures. If the Spirit operates on the minds of men only by setting persuasive arguments or motives before them, be the kinds never so diverse or well adapted to this purpose, yet after all, it depends on the will of man whether any shall be regenerated or not. On this scheme the glory of regeneration would belong to ourselves. It would be uncertain also, whether Christ would have any spiritual seed, as it would depend after all upon the uncertain determination of each individual before whom the motives were set. This then contradicts the Scriptures. God does not confine his operations to setting motives of persuasion before men, thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.

Moral persuasion to a better life confers no new real, supernatural strength to the soul, which may enable it thus to live. No new taste - no new spiritual discernment springs from persuasion. If regeneration comes thus, then a man begets himself, he is born of

himself, he makes himself to differ from others. On this plan the Spirit of God has no more to do than Paul or Apollos.

Besides, this is not for what we pray; we pray not that motives may be set before us to regenerate ourselves, but that God would change us, create us anew. The ancient churches urged this prayer upon the heretics, who denied a supernatural work in regeneration, and they felt themselves sorely pressed without.

There is then only one way left for a creature dead in trespasses and sins to rise to life. This is by the power of God which quickens him - creates him anew. Observe in what language sacred writers have chosen to communicate their ideas on this subject: born of God; begotten of God; quickened; or made alive from the dead; created anew. If it be said this is figurative language, I agree to it, but if there be any correctness in the figures, the work of regeneration must be the commencement of a new spiritual existence. On any other grounds the language of the Scriptures is of all books the most fancied, unmeaning, and obscure.

You may suppose all the preparation, all the knowledge; motives; morality (in the common acceptation of the term); unregenerate strivings which you please; after all there must be a new creation, - the dead must be quickened - believers must be born of God. The same energy which brought Christ from the dead - the exceeding great power of the living God must perform the work. This is the apostle's statement, that we may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.

Indeed, my friends, where else can we look for the origin of such a change as makes believers pass from death to life but the omnipotence of the divine Spirit? Is it our understanding which accomplishes this change? But our understanding is darkened. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know

them." Is it our will? But we are "prone to evil as the sparks fly upward." Our wills are perverse and rebellious. Is it our strength? Christ died for the ungodly who are without strength. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought. Is it our merits? We merit nothing but utter rejection. Is it the ministers of God who persuade us? Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God gives the increase.

Every effort has been made by the ingenuity of man, by palpably erroneous schemes, and by plausible ones, to wrest the glory of this work from the hands of the divine Spirit, and claim the operation for ourselves; at least to share in the honor of it. After all, its origin can be traced only to the free and sovereign grace and Almighty power of God. The work is all his; and the glory must and will forever belong exclusively to him.

It is a doctrine supported by the great light of the Reformation and by the pillars of the evangelical churches ever since: that regeneration is a physical work. And by this they mean there is an actual new creation, as absolutely so as when the world was created; that a new spiritual taste or discernment, and principle is implanted by a sovereign creative operation, and not simply a new direction given to the old faculties.

Such a work being proved, the whole system of evangelical truth; the doctrines of grace; of divine sovereignty; of election; of redemption only by Christ; of human depravity and others connected with them, all flow from it. There is one grand, harmonious, and perfect system: and God is the sum - the substance and the glory of all.

My friends, I am fully aware of the difficulties incident to the doctrines here laid down. I know full well how ready the natural heart is both to oppose, and misconstrue them. But if the Bible supports them, it is enough. Here our carnal reason must bow. Here our proud hearts must submit. Charge them with mystery - with inconsistency - with unprofitableness, O sinner, and you assail not

man, but God. Look on his word and read. There it stands; and it is written in characters of light, "which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

This is the only birth which can fit us for heaven, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We may please our fancies, and gratify our self-righteousness, by adopting loose Pelagian sentiments on this subject; we may remonstrate against such absolute dependence on the grace of God as has now been advocated, but a new heart, and a right spirit will after all be found of such absolute necessity, that without them we must perish forever.

Regeneration Necessary to Perceive the Beauty and Excellency of Divine Things

by Charles Hodge

The following excerpts are from an essay written by Charles Hodge entitled "Regeneration and The New Divinity Trend" taken from the Princeton Review: First Series, published in New York by Wiley and Putnam in 1846. It was written in review of "Regeneration and the Manner of Its Occurrence, A Sermon from John 5:24". Preached at the Opening of the Synod of New York, in the Rutgers Street Church, on Oct 20 1829, by Samuel H. Cox, D.D., Pastor of the Laight Street Presbyterian Church. Hodge takes on some common philosophic arguments against the doctrine of monergistic regeneration. He successfully refutes the synergistic teaching that the natural man's decision to trust Christ must come from an indifferent moral disposition, as often claimed. Hodge shows that the only reasonable explanation for holy decisions is that they must spring from holy first causes and inclinations. The ideas in the following excerpts of Hodge's fine essay must be mastered by anyone who intends on teaching a gospel that is faithful to the Scripture. The essay is not a biblical exposition (that is done elsewhere), but rather, a response to philosophical opposition to the truth of the Spirit's monergistic work of grace in the soul of the elect.

...[Jonathan] Edwards not only admits that moral principles and habits may and must exist in the soul prior (in the order of nature) to moral action, but his whole system of practical theology, as it seems to us, rests on this foundation. The great fundamental principle of his work on the affections is this: All gracious or spiritual affections presuppose and arise from spiritual views of divine truth. These views the natural man neither has, nor can have, while he remains such. Hence arises the necessity of such a change of being wrought in

the state of the soul that it can perceive the beauty and excellence of divine things. This change consists in imparting to the soul what he calls 'a new sense' or a new taste, or relish, or principle, adapted to the perception and love of spiritual excellence.

...After having stated that the exercises of the true Christian are specifically different from those of unsanctified men, he infers that if the exercises are different, the principle whence they proceed must be different, or there must be, 'as it were, a new spiritual sense, or a principle of a new kind of perception of spiritual sensation.' And he hence explains why it is that 'the work of the Spirit of God in regeneration is often in Scripture compared to giving a new sense, giving eyes to see and ears to hear, unstopping the ears of the deaf and opening the eyes of them that were born blind, and turning them from darkness to light...'

...[The question is] why does one man see and feel a beauty in certain objects when others do not? Is there is no difference between the clown and the most refined votary in the arts, but in their acts? Is any man satisfied by being told that one loves them, and the other does not; that it is in vain to ask why; the fact is enough, and the fact is all; there is no difference in the state of their minds antecedent to their acts; there can be no such thing as a principle of taste of sense of beauty, distinct from the actual love of beauty?

We are disposed to think that no man can believe this: that the constitution of our nature forces us to admit that if one man, under all circumstances and at all times, manifests its quick sensibility to natural beauty, and another does not, there is some difference between the two besides their acts; that there is some reason why, when standing before the same picture, one is filled with pleasure and the other is utterly insensible. We cannot help believing that one has taste (a quality, principle, 'or inward sense') which the other does not possess. It matters not what it may be called. It is the ground or reason of the diversity of their exercises which lies back of the

exercises themselves, and must be assumed to account for the difference of their nature.

Now, there is moral as well as natural beauty, and it is no more unintelligible that there should be a 'sense', or taste, for the one than for the other. The perfect character of God, when exhibited to different men, produces delight and desire in some, repugnance in others. We instinctively ask, why? Why do some perceive and delight in his moral beauty, while others do not? The answer, some love, and others do not, is no answer at all. It is merely saying the same thing in other words. There must be some reason why one perceives this kind of beauty, to which the others are blind; why one is filled with love the moment it is presented, and the other with repugnance. And this reason must lie back of the mere exercise of this affection, must be something besides the act itself and such as shall account for its nature.

It may be said, however, that the cases are not analogous: that the emotion excited by beauty is involuntary, while moral objects address themselves to the voluntary affections; and that it is admitted that there is not only 'something' back of each exercise of love, but we are told distinctly what it is, namely, the soul with its essential attributes, its ultimate or supreme choice, or dominant affection, and the object in view of the mind. Accordingly it is easily accounted for that when the character of God is presented, one man is filled with love, another with repugnance. The reason of the difference in these acts does indeed lie back of the acts themselves; for it is found in the ultimate of supreme choice of the different individuals.

But how is this to be accounted for? If there is no necessity for accounting for the particular character of the first or ultimate choice (if so it must needs be called), there is no need of accounting for the others. The difficulty is not at all met by this statement. It is only pushed back from the secondary and subordinate to the primary and dominant preference. There it returns. The question still is, why does

the soul of one man make this supreme choice of God, or in other words, love him, while another sets his affection on the world? There is precisely the same necessity for assuming some ground or reason for the nature of the first choice, as for any acts subordinate and subsequent to it.

Let us suppose two individuals called into existence, in the full maturity of their faculties; each has a soul with the same constitutional powers, or essential attributes; the one is filled with delight the moment the character of God is presented, and the other is not; or the one loves his Maker as soon as the idea of His excellence is presented, the other does not. According to this theory, there is no reason for the difference. There is nothing back of the first act of choice that is not common to both.

If instead of two individuals, we suppose two millions, one portion having their affections spontaneously called forth on their first view of their Maker, the other unaffected; we have only a greater number of effects without a cause, but the case is the same. It will not do to answer that the choice is made under the influence of the desire of happiness, for this being common to all, is no reason for the difference or the result, which is the very thing to be accounted for. To say that the choice is made under the influence of the desire of happiness is only to say that when the character of God is presented it gives pleasure. But the same character is presented in both cases, the same desire exists in both, yet in one it gives pleasure, is an object of desire; in the other not.

This is the fact which is left entirely unaccounted for on the theory in question, and for which the mind as instinctively seeks a cause, as it does for any other effect. To account for the difference from the nature of agency is to assume the liberty of indifference. For if the choice be made prior to the rising of desire towards the object, then it is made in indifference and is of no moral character. If the desire rises, it is love; which is the very thing to be accounted for. We are at a loss to see how this theory is to be reconciled with the Calvinists'

doctrine on the will, which is not peculiar to Edwards, but constituted the great dividing line between Calvinists and Arminians from the beginning.

We feel, therefore, a necessity for assuming that there is 'something' back of the first moral act besides the soul and its essential attributes, which will account for the nature of that act, which constitutes the reason why, in the case supposed, the soul of the one individual rose immediately to God, and the other did not; and the 'something' assumed in this case is no more indefinite and undefinable than the constitutional propensity to live in society, to love our children, or the mental quality called taste, all which are assumed from a necessity not more imperious than that which requires a holy principle to account for the delight experienced in view of the character of God. And 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 the influences of his Spirit in regeneration. Neither, therefore, the objection, that what is not an act must be an essential attribute; nor the unintelligible nature of a 'principle of nature' is, in our view, any valid objection to the common doctrine on regeneration.

There is [another] objection, however, to this doctrine, and that is that it renders the sinner excusable, because it makes regeneration to consist in something else than the sinner's own act. This objection, as it seems to us, can only be valid on one or the other of two grounds; the first is that the common doctrine supposed sin to be a physical defect, and regeneration a physical change; and the second is that man is responsible solely for his acts, or that there can be no moral principle anterior to moral action. With regard to the first, it is enough to say that no physical change, according to the constant declaration of Calvinistic writers, is held to take place in

regeneration, and that no such change is implied in the production of a holy principle ...

The second ground is inconsistent with the common notions of men on the nature of virtue, and if true would render the commencement of holiness or regeneration impossible. It is according to the universal feeling and judgement of men that the moral character of an act depends upon the motive with which it is done. This is so obviously true that Reid and Stewart, and almost all other advocates of the liberty of indifference, readily admit it. And so do the advocates of the theory on which this objection is founded, with regard to all moral acts excepting the first. All acts of choice, to be holy, must proceed from a holy motive, excepting the first holy choice which constitutes regeneration: that may be made from the mere desire of happiness or self-love.

We confess that this strikes us as very much like a relinquishment of the whole system. For how is it conceivable that anything should be essential to the very nature of one act as holy, that is not necessary to another? Is not this saying that that on which the very nature of a thing depends may be absent, and yet the thing remain the same? Is it not saying that that which makes an act what it is and gives it its character, may be wanting or altered, and yet the character of the act be unaffected?

It is the motive which gives the moral character to the act. If the motive is good, the act is good; if the motive is bad, the act is bad; if the motive is indifferent, so is the act. The act has no character apart from the motive. This, it seems, is admitted with regard to all moral acts excepting the first. But the first act of a holy kind is an act of obedience, as well as all subsequent acts of the same kind. How then is it conceivable that the first act of obedience performed from the mere desire or self-love can be holy, when no other act of the same kind and performed from the same motive, either is or can be? How does its being first alter its very nature? It is still nothing more than an act done for self-gratification, and cannot be a holy act.

It is said we must admit this, from the necessity of the case, or acknowledge that there can be holiness before moral action. We prefer admitting the latter and believing that 'God created man upright', and not that he made himself so. That there was a disposition, or relish, or taste for holiness, before there was any holy act, which to us is far more reasonable than that an act is holy because the first of a series, which, if performed from the same motive at a different point of the line, would have a different character.

...By the power of the Holy Spirit the truth may be so clearly presented and so effectually applied as to produce that change which is called regeneration; that is, as to call into existence a taste for holiness, so that it is chosen for its own sake, and not merely as a means of happiness.

It is evident, therefore, that the theory which denies the possibility of moral distinctions being carried back of acts of choice forces its advocates to adopt the opinion that the first holy act is specifically different from all the others... for the difficulty still remains, why the character of God should appear desirable to one being and not to another, if both are called into existence in *puris naturalibus* (with purely natural qualities).

[Edwards's replies]

"...It is agreeable to the sense of the minds of men in all ages, not only that the fruit or effect of a good choice is virtuous, but the good choice itself from which that effect proceeds; yea, and not only so, but also the antecedent good disposition, temper or affection of the mind from whence proceeds that good choice, is virtuous. This is the general notion, not that principles derive their goodness from actions, but that actions derive their goodness from the principles whence they proceed; and so the act of choosing that which is good is no further virtuous than it proceeds from a good principle or virtuous disposition of mind; which supposes that a virtuous

disposition of mind may be before a virtuous act of choice; and that therefore it is not necessary that there should first be thought, reflection, and choice before there can be any virtuous disposition. If the choice be first, before the existence of a good disposition of heart, what signifies that choice? There can, according to our natural notions, be no virtue in a choice which proceeds from no virtuous principle but from mere self-love, ambition, or some animal appetite." - 140 Jonathan Edwards, Works, vol 1 (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1974), p. 177.

Regeneration Or the New Birth

by A.W. Pink

Introduction

Two chief obstacles lie in the way of the salvation of any of Adam's fallen descendants: bondage to the guilt and penalty of sin, bondage to the power and presence of sin; or, in other words, their being bound for Hell and their being unfit for Heaven. These obstacles are, so far as man is concerned, entirely insurmountable. This fact was unequivocally established by Christ, when, in answer to His disciples' question, "Who then can be saved?", He answered, "with men this is impossible." A lost sinner might more easily create a world than save his own soul. But (forever be His name praised), the Lord Jesus went on to say, "with *God* all things are possible" (Matt. 19:25, 26). Yes, problems which completely baffle human wisdom, are solvable by Omniscience; tasks which defy the utmost efforts of man, are easily accomplished by Omnipotence. Nowhere is this fact more strikingly exemplified than in God's saving of the sinner.

As intimated above, two things are absolutely essential in order to salvation: deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin, deliverance from the power and presence of sin. The one is secured by the meditorial work of Christ, the other is accomplished by the effectual operations of the Holy Spirit. The one is the blessed result of what the Lord Jesus did *for* God's people; the other is the glorious consequence of what the Holy Spirit does *in* God's people. The one takes place when, having been brought to lie in the dust as an empty-handed beggar, faith is enabled to lay hold of Christ, God now justifies from all things, and the trembling, penitent, but believing sinner receives a free and full pardon. The other takes place gradually, in distinct stages, under the Divine blessings of regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. In regeneration, indwelling sin receives its death-wound, though not its death. In sanctification, the regenerated soul is shown the sink of corruption that dwells within, and is taught to loathe and hate himself. At glorification both soul and body will be forever delivered from every vestige and effect of sin.

Now a vital and saving knowledge *of* these Divine truths can not be acquired by a mere study of them. No amount of pouring over the Scriptures, no painstaking examination of the soundest doctrinal treatises, no exercise of the intellect, is able to secure the slightest spiritual insight into them. True, the diligent seeker may attain a natural knowledge, an intellectual apprehension of them, just as one born blind may obtain a notional knowledge of the colorings of the flowers or of the beauties of a sunset, but the natural man can no more arrive at a *spiritual knowledge* of spiritual things, than a blind man can a true knowledge of natural things, yea, than a man in his grave can know what is going on in the world he has left. Nor can anything short of Divine power bring the proud heart to a felt realization of this humbling fact; only as God supernaturally enlightens, is any soul made conscious of the awful spiritual darkness in which it naturally dwells.

The truth of what has just been said is established by the plain and solemn declaration of 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Alas that so many evade the sharp point of this verse by imagining that it applies not to them, mistaking an intellectual assent to spiritual things for an experimental acquaintance of them. An external knowledge of Divine truth, as revealed in Scripture, may charm the mind and form ground for speculation and conversation, but unless there is a Divine *application* of them to the conscience and heart, such knowledge will be of no more avail in the hour of death than the pleasing images of our dreams are of any satisfaction when we awake. How awful to think that multitudes of professing Christians will awaken in Hell to discover that *their* knowledge of Divine truth was no more substantial than a dream!

While it be true that no man by searching can find out God (Job 11:7), and that the mysteries of His kingdom are sealed secrets until He deigns to reveal them to the soul (Matt. 13:11), nevertheless, it is also true that God is pleased to use means in the conveyance of heavenly light to our sin-darkened understandings. It is for this reason that He commissions His- servants to preach the Word, and, by voice and pen, expound the Scriptures; nevertheless, their labors will produce no eternal fruits unless He condescends to bless the seed they sow and give it an increase. Thus, no matter how faithfully, simply, helpfully a sermon be preached or an article written, unless the Spirit *applies* it to the heart, the hearer or reader is no spiritual gainer. Then will you not humbly entreat God to open *your* heart to receive whatever is according to His holy Word in this booklet?

In what follows, we shall, as God enables, seek to direct attention to what we have referred to at the beginning of this booklet as the second of those two humanly insurmountable obstacles which lies in the way of a sinner's salvation, and that is, the fitting of him for Heaven, by the delivering of him from the power and presence of sin. Such a work is a Divine one, and therefore it is *miraculous*.

Regeneration is no mere outward reformation, no mere turning over a new leaf and endeavoring to live a better life. The new birth is very much more than going forward and taking the preacher's hand: it is a supernatural operation of God upon man's spirit, a transcendent wonder. All of God's works are wonderful. The world in which we live is filled with things which amaze us. Physical birth is a marvel, but, from several standpoints, the new birth is more remarkable. It is a marvel of Divine grace, Divine wisdom, Divine power, and Divine beauty. It is a miracle performed upon and within ourselves, of which we may be personally cognizant; it will prove an eternal marvel.

Because regeneration is the work of God, it is a *mysterious* thing. All God's works are shrouded in impenetrable mystery. Life, natural life, in its origin, in its nature, its processes, baffles the most careful investigator. Much more is this the case with spiritual life. The Existence and Being of God transcends the finite grasp; how then can we expect to understand the process by which we become His children? Our Lord Himself declared that the new birth is a thing of mystery: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but *canst not tell* whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, so is every one that is *born* of the Spirit" (John 3:8). The wind is something about which the most learned scientist knows next to nothing. Its nature, the laws which govern it, the causation, all lie beyond the purview of human inquiry. So it is with the new birth: it is profoundly mysterious.

Regeneration is an intensely *solemn* thing. The new birth is the dividing line between Heaven and Hell. In God's sight there are but two classes of people on this earth: those who are dead in sins, and those who are walking in newness of life. In the physical realm there is no such thing as being *between* life and death. A man is either dead or alive. The vital spark may be very dim, but while it exists, life is present. Let that spark go out altogether, and, though you may dress the body in beautiful clothes, nevertheless, it is nothing more than a corpse. So it is in the spiritual realm. We are either saints or

sinners, spiritually alive or spiritually dead. children of God or children of the Devil. In view of this solemn fact, how momentous is the question, Have I been *born again*? If not, and you die in your present state, you will wish you had never been born at all.

—ARTHUR W. PINK.

Chapter 1 - Its Necessity

1. *The need for regeneration lies in our natural degeneration.* In consequence of the fall of our first parents, all of us were born alienated from the Divine life and holiness, despoiled of all those perfections wherewith man's nature was at first endowed. Ezekiel 16:4, 5 gives a graphic picture of our terrible spiritual plight at our entrance into this world: cast out to the loathing of our persons, rolling ourselves in our own filth, impotent to help ourselves. That "likeness" of God (Gen. 1:26) which was at first stamped on man's soul, has been effaced, aversion from God and an inordinate love of the creature having displaced it. The very fountain of our beings is polluted, continually sending forth bitter springs, and though those streams take several courses and wander in various channels, yet are they all brackish. Therefore is the "sacrifice" of the wicked an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 15:8), and his very ploughing "sin" (Prov. 21:4).

There are but two states, and all men are included therein: the one a state of spiritual life, the other a state of spiritual death; the one a state of righteousness, the other a state of sin: the one saving. the other damning; the one a state of enmity, wherein men have their inclinations contrary to God, the other a state of friendship and fellowship, wherein men walk obediently unto God, and would not willingly have an inward notion opposed to His will. The one state is called darkness, the other light: "For ye were (in your unregenerate days, not only in the dark, but) darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:6). There is no medium between these conditions; all

are in one of them. Each man and woman now on earth is either an object of God's delight or of His abomination. The most benevolent and imposing works of the flesh cannot please Him. but the faintest sparks proceeding from that which grace hath kindled are acceptable in His sight.

By the fall man contracted an *unfitness* to that which is good. Shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Ps. 51: 5), man is a "transgressor from the womb" (Isa. 48:8): "they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Ps. 58:3), and "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). He may be civilized, educated, refined, and even religious, but at heart he is "desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9), and all that he does is vile in the sight of God, for nothing is done from love to Him, and with a view to His glory. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matt. 7:18). Until they are born again, all men are "unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

By the fall man contracted an *unwillingness* to that which is good. All motions of the will in its fallen estate, through defect of a right principle from whence they flow and a right end to which they tend, are only evil and sinful. Leave man to himself, remove from him all the restraints which law and order impose, and he will swiftly degenerate to a lower level than the beasts, as almost any missionary will testify. And is human nature any better in civilized lands? Not a whit. Wash off the artificial veneer and it will be found that "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 27:19). The world over, it remains solemnly true that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Christ will prefer the same charge in a coming day as when He was here on earth: "Men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19). Men will not come to Him that they might have "life."

By the fall man contracted an *inability* to that which is good. He is not only unfitted and unwilling, but *unable* to do that which is good.

Where is the man that can truthfully say he has measured up to his own ideals? All have to acknowledge there is a strange force within dragging them downward, inclining them to evil, which, notwithstanding their utmost endeavors against it, in some form or other, more or less, conquers them. Despite the kindly exhortations of friends, the faithful warnings of God's servants, the solemn examples of suffering and sorrow, disease and death on every side, and the vote of their own conscience, yet they yield. "They that are in the flesh (in their natural condition) *cannot* please God" (Rom. 8:18).

Thus it is evident that the need is imperative for a radical and revolutionary change to be wrought in fallen man before he can have any fellowship with the thrice holy God. Since the earth must be completely changed, because of the curse now resting on it, before it can ever again bring forth fruit as it did when man was in a state of innocency; so must man, since a general defilement from Adam has seized upon him, be renewed, before he can "bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4). He must be grafted upon another stock, united to Christ, partake of the power of His resurrection: without this he may bring forth fruit, but not "unto God." How can any one turn to God without a principle of spiritual motion? How can he live to God who has no spiritual life? How can he be fit for the kingdom of God who is of a brutish and diabolical nature?

2. *The need for regeneration lies in man's total depravity.* Every member of Adam's race is a fallen creature, and every part of his complex being has been corrupted by sin. Man's heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). His mind is blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4) and darkened by sin (Eph. 4:18), so that his thoughts are only evil continually (Gen. 6:5). His affections are prostituted, so that he loves what God hates, and hates what God loves. His will is enslaved from good (Rom. 6:20) and opposed to God (Rom. 8:7). He is without righteousness (Rom. 3:10), under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10) and is the captive of the Devil. His condition is truly deplorable, and his case desperate. He cannot

better himself, for he is "without strength" (Rom. 5:6). He cannot work out his salvation, for there dwelleth no good thing in him (Rom. 7:18). He needs, then, to be born of God, "for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creation*" (Gal. 6:15).

Man is a fallen creature. It is not that a few leaves have faded, but that the entire tree has become rotten, root *and* branch. There is in every one that which is radically wrong. The word "radical" comes from a Latin one which means "the root," so that when we say a man is radically wrong, we mean that there is in him, in the very foundation and fiber of his being, that which is intrinsically corrupt and essentially evil. Sins are merely the fruit, there must of necessity be a root from which they spring. It follows, then, as an inevitable consequence that man needs the aid of a Higher Power to effect a radical change in him. There is only One who can effect that change: God created man, and God alone can re-create him. Hence the imperative demand, "Ye *must* be born again" (John 3:7). Man is spiritually *dead* and naught but all-mighty power can make him alive.

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men" (Rom. 5:12). In the day that Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, he died spiritually, and a person who is spiritually dead cannot beget a child who possesses spiritual life. Therefore, all by natural descent enter this world "alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18), "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). This is no mere figure of speech, but a solemn fact. Every child is born entirely destitute of a single spark of spiritual life, and therefore if ever it is to enter the kingdom of God, which is the realm of spiritual life (Rom. 14:17), it must be *born* into it.

The more clearly we are enabled to discern the imperative *need* of regeneration and the various reasons *why* it is absolutely essential in order to a fallen creature being fitted for the presence of the thrice holy God, the less difficulty are we likely to encounter when we

endeavor to arrive at an understanding of the *nature* of regeneration, *what* it is which takes place within a person when the Holy Spirit renews him. For this reason particularly, and also because such a cloud of error has been cast upon this vital truth, we feel that a further consideration of this particular aspect of our subject is needed.

Jesus Christ came into this world to glorify God and to glorify Himself by redeeming a people unto Himself. But what glory can we conceive that God has, and what glory would accrue to Christ, if there be not a vital and fundamental difference between His people and the world? And what difference can there be between those two companies but in a *change of heart*, out of which are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23): a change of nature or disposition, as the fountain from which all other differences must proceed—sheep and goats differ in nature. The whole mediatorial work of Christ has this one end in view. His priestly office is to reconcile and bring His people unto God; His prophetic, to teach them the way; His kingly, to work in them those qualifications and bestow upon them that comeliness which is necessary to fit them for the holy converse and communion with the thrice holy God. Thus does He "purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived" (1 Cor. 6:9). But multitudes *are* deceived, and deceived at this very point, and on this most momentous matter. God has warned men that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9), but few will believe that this is true of *them*. Instead, tens of thousands of professing Christians are filled with a vain and presumptuous confidence that all is well with them. They delude themselves with hopes of mercy while continuing to live in a course of self-will and self-pleasing. They fancy they are fitted for Heaven, while every day that passes finds them the more prepared for Hell. It is written of the Lord Jesus that "He shall save His people *from* their sins" (Matt. 1:21), and not *in* their sins: save them not only from the penalty, but also from the power and pollution of sin.

To how many in Christendom do these solemn words apply, "For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful" (Ps. 36:2). The principal device of Satan is to deceive people into imagining that they can successfully combine the world with God, allow the flesh while pretending to the Spirit, and thus "make the best of both worlds." But Christ has emphatically declared that "no man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24). Many mistake the force of those searching words: the true emphasis is not upon "two," but upon "serve"—none can *serve* two masters. And God requires to be "served"—feared, submitted unto, obeyed; *His* will regulating the life in all its details, see 1 Samuel 12:24, 25. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him *only* shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10).

3. *The need for regeneration lies in man's unsuitedness to God.* When Nicodemus, a respectable and religious Pharisee, yea, a "master in Israel," came to Christ, He told him plainly that "except a man be born again" he could neither see nor enter the "kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5)—either the Gospel-state on earth or the Glory-state in Heaven. None can enter the spiritual realm unless he has a spiritual nature, which alone gives him an appetite for and capacity to enjoy the things pertaining to it; and this, the natural man has not. So far from it, he cannot so much as "discern" them (1 Cor. 2:14). He has no love for them, nor desire after them (John 3:19). Nor can he desire them, for his will is enslaved by the lusts of the flesh (Eph. 2:2, 3). Therefore, before a man can enter the spiritual kingdom, his understanding must be supernaturally enlightened, his heart renewed, and his will emancipated.

There can be no point of contact between God and His Christ with a sinful man until he is regenerated. There can be no lawful union between two parties who have nothing vital in common. A superior and an inferior nature may be united together, but never contrary natures. Can fire and water be united, a beast and a man, a good angel and vile devil? Can Heaven and Hell ever meet on friendly terms? In all friendship there must be a similarity of disposition; before there can be communion there must be some agreement or

oneness. Beasts and men agree not in a life of reason, and therefore cannot converse together. God and men agree not in a life of holiness, and therefore can have no communion together (Condensed from S. Charnock).

We are united to the "first Adam" by a likeness of nature; how then can we be united to the "last Adam" without a likeness to Him from a new nature or principle? We were united to the first Adam by a living soul, we must be united to the last Adam by a quickening Spirit. We have nothing to do with the heavenly Adam without bearing an heavenly image (1 Cor. 15:48, 49). If we are *His* members, we must have the same nature which was communicated to Him, the Head, by the Spirit of God, which is *holiness* (Luke 1:35). There must be one "spirit" in both: thus it is written, "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). And again God tells us, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). Nor can anything be vitally united to another without life. A living head and a dead body is inconceivable.

There can be no communion with God without a renewed soul. God is unable on His part, with honour to His law and holiness, to have fellowship with such a creature as fallen man. Man is incapable on his part, because of the aversion rooted in his fallen nature. Then how is it possible for God and man to be brought together without the latter experiencing a thorough change of nature? What communion can there be between Light and darkness, between the living God and a dead heart? "Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3). God loathes sin, man loves it; God loves holiness, man loathes it. How then could such contrary affections meet together in an amicable friendship? Sin has alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18), and therefore from His fellowship; life, then, must be restored to us before we can be instated in communion with Him. Old things must pass away, and all things become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

Gospel-duties cannot be performed without regeneration. The first requirement of Christ from His followers is that they shall *deny self*. But that is impossible to fallen human nature, for men are "lovers of their own selves" (2 Tim. 3:2). Not until the soul is renewed, will self be repudiated. Therefore is the new-covenant promise, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 11:19). All Gospel duties require a pliability and tenderness of heart. Pride was the condemnation of the Devil (1 Tim. 3:6), and our first parents fell through swelling designs to be like unto God (Gen. 3:5). Ever since then, man has been too aspiring and too well opinionated of himself to perform duties in an evangelical strain, with that nothingness in himself which the Gospel requires. The chief design of the Gospel is to beat down all glorying in ourselves, that we should glory only in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:29-31); but this is not possible till grace renews the heart, melts it before God, and moulds it to His requirements.

Without a new nature we cannot perform Gospel-duties *constantly*. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" (Rom. 8:5). Such a mind cannot long be employed upon spiritual things. Prickings of conscience, terrors of Hell, fears of death, may exert a temporary influence, but they do not last. Stony-ground may bring forth blades, yet for lack of root they quickly wither away (Matt. 13). A stone may be flung high into the air, but ultimately it falls back to the earth; so the natural man may for a time mount high in religious fervor, but sooner or later it shall be said of him, as it was of Israel, "their *heart* was not right with Him, neither were they *stedfast* in His covenant" (Ps. 78:37). Many seem to begin in the Spirit, but end in the flesh. Only where *God* has wrought in the soul, will the work last forever (Eccl. 3:14: Phil. 1:6).

As regeneration is indispensably necessary to a Gospel-state, so it is to a state of heavenly glory. It seems to be typified by the strength and freshness of the Israelites when they entered into Canaan. Not a decrepit and infirm person set foot in the promised land: none of those that came out of Egypt with an Egyptian nature, and desires for

the garlic and onions thereof, with a suffering their old bondage, but dropped their carcasses in the wilderness; only the two spies who had encouraged them against the seeming difficulties. None that retain only the old man, born in the house of bondage; but only a new regenerate creature, shall enter into the heavenly Canaan. Heaven is the inheritance of the sanctified, not of the filthy: 'that they may receive an inheritance among them which are sanctified through faith that is in Me' (Acts 26:18). Upon Adam's expulsion from paradise, a flaming sword was set to stop his reentering into that place of happiness. As Adam, in his forlorn state, could not possess it, we also, by what we have received from Adam, cannot expect a greater privilege than our root. The priest under the law could not enter into the sanctuary till he was purified, nor the people into the congregation: neither can any man have access into the Holiest till he be sprinkled by the blood of Jesus: Hebrews 10:22" (S. Charnock).

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Said Christ, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). For whom? For those who have, in heart, "forsaken all" to follow Him (Matt. 19:27). For those who love God (1 Cor. 2:9) love the things of God: they perceive the inestimable value and beauty of spiritual things. And they who really love spiritual things, deem no sacrifice too great to win them (Phil. 3:8). But in order to love spiritual things, the man himself must be made spiritual. The natural man may hear about them and have a correct idea of the doctrine of them, but he receives them not spiritually in the love of them (2 Thess. 2:10), and finds not his joy and happiness in them. But the renewed soul longs after them, not by constraint, but because God has won his heart. His confession is "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Ps. 73:25). God has become his chief good, His will his only rule, His glory his chief end. In such an one, the very inclinations of the soul have been changed.

The man himself must be changed before he is prepared for Heaven. Of the regenerate it is written, "giving thanks unto the Father, which

hath *made us meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). None are "made meet" while they are unholy, for it is the inheritance of the *saints*; none are fitted for it while they are under the power of darkness, for it is an inheritance *in light*. Christ Himself ascended not to Heaven to take possession of His glory till after His resurrection from the dead, nor can we enter Heaven unless we have been resurrected from sin. "He that hath wrought (polished) us *for* the self-same thing (to be clothed with our Heavenly house) is God," and the proof that He has done this is, the giving unto us "the earnest of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 5:5); and where the Spirit of the Lord is "there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17), liberty from the power of indwelling sin, as the verse which follows clearly shows.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). To "see" God is to be introduced into the most intimate intercourse with Him. It is to have that "thick cloud" of our transgressions blotted out (Isa. 44:22), for it was our iniquities which separated between us and our God (Isa. 58:2). To "see" God, here has the force of *enjoy*, as in John 3:36. But for this enjoyment a "pure heart" is indispensable. Now the heart is purified by faith (Acts 15:9). for faith has to do with God. Thus, a "pure heart" is one that has its affections set upon things above, being attracted by "the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 17:15). But how could he enjoy *God* who cannot now endure the imperfect holiness of His children, but rails against it as unnecessary "strictness" or puritanical fanaticism? God's face is only to be beheld in righteousness.

"Follow peace with all, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). None can dwell with God and be eternally happy in His presence unless a radical change has been wrought in him, a change from sin to holiness. This change *must* be, like that introduced by the fall, one which reaches to the very roots of our beings, affecting the entire man: removing the darkness of our minds, awakening and then pacifying the conscience, spiritualizing our affections,, converting the will, reforming our whole life. And this great change must take place here on earth. The removal of the soul

to Heaven is no substitute for regeneration. It is not the place which conveys likeness to God. When the angels fell, they were in Heaven, but the glory of God's dwelling place did not restore them. Satan entered Heaven (Job 2:1), but he left it still unchanged. There must be a likeness to God wrought in the soul by the Spirit before it is fitted to enjoy Heaven.

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50). If the body must be changed ere it can enter Heaven, how much more so the soul, for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" (Rev. 21:27). And what is the supreme glory of Heaven? Is it freedom from toil and worry, sickness and sorrow, suffering and death? No: it is, that Heaven is the place where there is the full manifestation of Him who is "glorious in holiness"—that holiness which the wicked, while presumptuously hoping to go to Heaven, despise and hate here on earth. The inhabitants of Heaven are given a clear sight of the ineffable purity of God and are granted the most intimate communion with Him. But none are fitted for this unless their inner being (as well as outer lives) have undergone a radical, revolutionizing, supernatural change.

Can it be thought that Christ will prepare mansions of glory for those who refuse to receive Him into their hearts and give Him the first place in their lives down here? No, indeed; rather will He "laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh" (Prov. 1:26). The instrument of the heart must be tuned here on earth to fit it to produce the melody of praise in Heaven. God has so linked together holiness and happiness (as He has sin and wretchedness) that they cannot be separated. Were it possible for an unregenerate soul to enter Heaven, it would find there no sanctuary from the lashings of conscience and the tormenting fire of God's holiness. Many suppose that nothing but the *merits* of Christ are needed to qualify them for Heaven. But this is a great mistake. None receive remission of sins through the blood of Christ, who are not first "turned from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18). God subdues their iniquities whose sin He casts into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). Pardoning sins

and purifying the heart are as inseparable as the blood *and* water which flowed from the Saviour's side (John 19:34).

Our being renewed in the spirit of our mind and our putting on of the new man "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:23, 24), is as indispensable to a *meetness* for Heaven, as an having the righteousness of Christ imputed to us is for a *title* thereto. "A malefactor, by pardon, is in a *capacity* to come into the presence of a prince and serve him at his table, but he is not in the *fitness* till his noisome garments, full of vermin be taken off" (S. Charnock). It is both a fatal delusion and wicked presumption for one who is living to please self to imagine that *his* sins have been forgiven by God. It is "the washing of regeneration" which gives evidence of our being justified by grace (Titus 3:5-7). When Christ saves, He *indwells* (Gal. 2:20), and it is impossible for Him to reside in a heart which yet remains spiritually cold, hard, and lifeless. The supreme pattern of holiness cannot be a Patron of licentiousness.

Justification and sanctification are inseparable: where one is absolved from the guilt of sin, he is also delivered from the dominion of sin, but neither the one nor the other can be until the soul is regenerated. Just as Christ's being made in the likeness of sin's flesh was indispensable for God to impute to Him His people's sins (Rom. 8:3), so it is equally necessary for us to be made new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) before we can be, legally, made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). The need of our being made "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4) is as real and as great as Christ's taking part in human nature, ere He could save us (Heb. 2:14-17). "Except God be born, He cannot come into the kingdom of sin. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of righteousness. And Divine power—the power of the Holy Spirit, the plenipotentary and executant of all the will of Godhead—achieves the incarnation of God and the regeneration of man. that the Son of God may be made sin, and the sons of God made righteous" (H. Martin).

How could one possibly enter a world of ineffable holiness who has spent all his time in sin, i.e., pleasing *self*? How could he possibly sing the song of the Lamb if his *heart* has never been tuned unto it? How could he endure to behold the awful majesty of God *face to face*, who never before so much as saw Him "through a glass darkly" by the eye of faith? And as it is excruciating torture for the eyes that have been long confined to dismal darkness, to suddenly gaze upon the bright -beams of the midday sun, so it will be when the unregenerate behold Him who is Light. Instead of welcoming such a sight "*all* kindreds of the earth shall *wail* because of Him" (Rev. 1:7); yea, so overwhelming will be their anguish, they will call to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us. and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:17). And, my reader, *that* will be *your* experience, unless God regenerates you!

When the Lord Jesus said "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6) He not only intimated that every man born into this world inherits a corrupt and fallen nature, and therefore is unfit for the kingdom of God; but also that this corrupt nature can never be anything else but corrupt, so that no culture can fit it for the kingdom of God. Its tendencies may be restricted, its manifestations modified by education and circumstances, but its sinful tendencies and affections are still there. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, prune and trim it as you may. For good fruit, you must have a good tree or graft from one. Therefore did our Lord go on to say, "And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This brings us to consider.

Chapter 2 Its Nature

We have now arrived at the most difficult part of our subject. Necessarily so, for we are about to contemplate the workings of *God*. These are ever mysterious, and nothing whatever can be really known about them, save what He Himself has revealed thereon in

His Word. In endeavoring to ponder what He *has* said on His work of regeneration two dangers need to be guarded against: first, *limiting* our thoughts to any isolated statement thereon or any single figure the Spirit has employed to describe it. Second, reasoning from what He has said by *carnalizing* the figures He has employed. When referring to spiritual things. God has used terms which were originally intended (by man) to express material objects, hence we need to be constantly on our guard against transferring to the former erroneous ideas carried over from the latter. From this we shall be preserved if we diligently compare *all* that has been said on each subject.

In treating of the nature of regeneration, much damage has been wrought, especially in recent years, by men confining their attention to a single figure, namely, that of the "new birth," which is only one out of many expressions used in the Scriptures to denote that mighty and miraculous work of God within His people which fits them for communion with Him. Thus, in Colossians 1:12, 13 the same vital experience is spoken of as God's having "*made us meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Regeneration is the commencement of a new experience, which is so real and revolutionizing that the one who is the subject of this Divine begetting is spoken of as a "new creature"; "old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). A new spiritual life has been imparted to the soul by God, so that the one receiving it is vitally implanted into Christ.

The nature of regeneration can, perhaps, be best perceived by comparing and contrasting it with what took place at the fall, for though the person who is renewed by the Spirit receives more than what Adam lost by his rebellion, yet, the one is, really, God's answer to the former. Now it is most important that we should clearly recognize that no faculty was lost by man when he fell. When man was created, God gave unto him a spirit and soul and body, Thus, man was a tri-partite being When man fell, the Divine threat "In the

day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely *die*" was duly executed, and man died spiritually. But that does not mean that either his Spirit or soul, or any part thereof, ceased to be, for in Scripture "death" never signifies annihilation, but is a state of separation. The prodigal son was "dead" while he was in the far country (Luke 15:24), because he was separated from his father. "*Alienated from the life of God*" (Eph. 4:18) describes the fearful state of one who is unregenerated, so does "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim 5:6), that which is dead spiritually is dead Godwards, while alive in sin the spirit and soul and body, each being active *against* God.

That which took place at the fall was not the destruction of either portion of man's threefold being, but the vitiating or corrupting of them. And that, by the introduction of a new principle within him, namely, *sin*, which is more of a quality than a substance. But let it be stated very emphatically that a "nature" is *not* a concrete entity but rather that which characterizes and impels an entity or creature. It is the nature of gravitation to attract, it is the nature of the wind to blow, it is the nature of fire to burn. A "nature" is not a tangible thing, but a *principle of operation*, a power impelling to action. Thus, when we say that fallen man possesses a "sinful nature," it must not be understood that something as substantial as his soul or spirit was added to his being, but instead, that the principle of evil *entered* into him, which polluted and defiled every part of his constitution, as frost entering fruit spoils it.

At the fall, man lost none of the faculties with which the Creator had originally endowed him, but he lost the power to *use* his faculties *Godwards*. All desire Godwards, all love for his Maker, and real knowledge of Him, was lost. Sin possessed him: sin as a principle of evil, as a power of operation, as a defiling influence, took complete charge of his spirit and soul and body, so that he became the "servant" or slave "of sin" (John 8:34). As such, man is no more capable of producing that which is good, spiritual, and acceptable to God, than frost can burn or fire freeze: "they that are in the flesh

(remain in their natural and fallen condition) *cannot* please God" (Rom. 8:8). They have no power to do so, for all their faculties, every part of their being, is completely under the dominion of sin. So completely is fallen man beneath the power of sin and spiritual death, that the things of the Spirit of God are "foolishness" unto him, "neither can he know them" (1 Cor. 2:14).

Now that which takes place at regeneration is the *reversing* of what happened at the fall.. The one born again is, through Christ, and by the Spirit's operation, *restored to* union and communion with God; the one who before was spiritually dead, is now spiritually alive: John 5:24. Just as spiritual death was brought about by the entrance into man's, being of the principle of evil, so spiritual life is the introduction of a principle of holiness. God communicates *a new principle*, as real and as potent as sin, Divine grace is now imparted. A holy disposition is wrought in the soul. A new temper of spirit is bestowed upon the inner man. But no new faculties are created within him, rather are his original faculties enriched, ennobled, and empowered. Just as man did not become less than a threefold being when he fell, so he does not become more than a threefold being when he is renewed. Nor will he in Heaven itself: his spirit and soul and body will simply be *glorified*, i.e., completely delivered from every taint of sin, and perfectly conformed to the image of God's Son.

At regeneration a new nature is imparted by God. But again we need to be closely on our guard lest we carnalize our conception of what is denoted by that expression. Much confusion has been caused through failure to recognize that it is a *person*, and not merely a "nature" which is born of the Spirit: "*ye* must be born again" (John 3:7), not merely something *in* you must be; "*he* which is born of God" (1 John 3:9). The *same* person who was spiritually dead—his whole being alienated from God—is now made spiritually alive: his whole being reconciled to God. This must be so, or otherwise there would be no preservation of the *identity* of the individual. It is the person, and not simply a nature which is born of God: "Of His own will begat He us" (James 1:18). It is a new birth of the individual himself, and

not of something *in* him. The nature is never changed, but the person is—relatively, not absolutely.

The *person* of the regenerate man is essentially the same as the person of the unregenerate: each having a spirit, and soul and body. But just as in fallen man there is *also* a principle of evil which has corrupted every part of his threefold being, which "principle" is his "sinful nature" (so-called because it expresses his evil disposition and character as it is the "nature" of swine to be filthy), so when a person is born again another and new "principle" is introduced into his being, a new "nature" or disposition, a disposition which propels him Godwards. Thus, in both cases, "nature" is a quality rather than a substance. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" must not be conceived of as something substantial, distinct from the soul of the regenerate, like one portion of matter added to another; rather is it that which *spiritualizes* all his inward faculties, as the "flesh" had carnalized them.

Again; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" is to be carefully distinguished from that "spirit" which every man has in addition to his soul and body: (see Num. 16:22; Eccl. 12:7; Zech. 12:1). That which is born of the Spirit is not something tangible, but that which is spiritual and holy, and that is a quality rather than a substance. In proof of this compare the usage of the word "spirit" in these passages: in James 4:5 the inclination and disposition to envy is called "the *spirit* that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." In Luke 9:55 Christ said to His disciples, "ye know not what manner of *spirit* ye are of," thereby signifying, ye are ignorant of what a fiery *disposition* is in your hearts. See also Numbers 5:14; Hosea 4:12, 2 Timothy 1:7. That which is born of the Spirit is a principle of spiritual life, which renovates all the faculties of the soul.

Some help upon this mysterious part of our subject is to be obtained by noting that in such passages as John 3:6, etc., "spirit" is contrasted from the "flesh." Now it should scarcely need saying that "the flesh" is not a concrete entity, being quite distinct from the

body. When the term "flesh" is used in a moral sense the reference is always to the *corruption* of fallen man's nature. In Galatians 5:19-21 the "works of the flesh" are described, among them being "hatred" and "envying," in connection with which the body (as distinguished from the mind) is *not* implicated—clear proof that the "flesh" and the "body" are not synonymous terms. In Galatians 5 the "flesh" is used to designate those evil tendencies and affections which result in the sins there mentioned. Thus, the "flesh" refers to the *degenerate state* of man's spirit and soul and body, as the "spirit" refers to the regenerate state of the spirit and soul—the regeneration of the body being yet future.

The privative (darkness is the privative of light) or negative side of regeneration, is that Divine grace gives a mortal wound to indwelling sin. Sin is not then eradicated nor totally slain in the believer, but it is divested of its *reigning* power over his faculties. The Christian is no longer the helpless slave of sin, for he resists it, fights against it, and to speak of a *helpless* victim "fighting," is a contradiction in terms. At the new birth sin receives its death-blow, though its dying struggles within us are yet powerful and acutely felt. Proof of what we have said is found in the fact that while sin's solicitations were once agreeable to us, they are now hated. *This aspect of regeneration* is presented in Scripture under a variety of figures, such as the taking away of the heart of stone (Ezek. 36:26), the binding of the strong man (Matt. 12:29), etc. The absolute dominion of sin over us is destroyed by God (Rom. 6:14).

The positive side of regeneration is that Divine grace effects a complete change in the state of the soul, by infusing a principle of spiritual life, which renovates all its faculties. It is this which constitutes its subject a "new creature," *not* in respect of his essence, but of his views, his desires, his aspirations, his habits. Regeneration or the new birth is the Divine communication of a powerful and revolutionizing principle in the soul and spirit, under the influence of which all their native faculties are exercised in a different manner from that in which they were formerly employed, and in *this* sense

"old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). His thoughts are "new," the objects of his choice are "new," his aims and motives are "new," and thereby the whole of his external deportment is changed.

"By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). The reference here is to *subjective* grace. There is an objective grace, inherent in God, which is His love, favour, goodwill for His elect. There is also a subjective grace which terminates on them, whereby a change is wrought in them. This is by the infusion of a principle of spiritual life, which is the spring of the Christian's actions. This "principle" is called "a new heart" and a "new spirit" (Ezek. 36:26). It is a supernatural habit, residing in every faculty and power of the soul, as a principle of holy and spiritual operation. Some have spoken of this supernatural experience as a "change of heart." If by this expression be meant that there is a change wrought in the fallen nature itself, as though that which is natural is transformed into that which is spiritual, as though that which was born of the flesh *ceased to be* "flesh," and became that which is born of the Spirit, then, the term is to be rejected. But if by this expression be meant, an acknowledgement of the reality of the Divine work, which is wrought in those whom God regenerates, it is quite permissible.

When treating of regeneration under the figure of the new birth, some writers have introduced analogies from natural birth which Scripture by no means warrants, in fact disallows. Physical birth is the bringing forth into this world of a creature, a complete personality, which before conception had no existence whatsoever. But the one who is regenerated *had* a complete personality before he was born again. To this statement it may be objected, Not a *spiritual* personality What is meant by this? Spirit and matter are opposites, and we only create confusion if we speak or think of that which is *spiritual* as being something concrete. Regeneration is not the creating of a person which hitherto had no existence, but the renewing and restoring of a person whom sin had unfitted for communion with God, and this by the communication of a nature or

principle of life, which gives a new and different bias to all his old faculties. It is altogether an erroneous view to regard a Christian as made up of two distinct personalities.

As "justification" describes the change in the Christian's *objective* relationship to God, so "regeneration" denotes that intrinsic *subjective* change which is wrought in the inclinations and tendencies of their souls Godwards. This saving work of God *within* His people is likened unto a "birth" because it is the gateway into a new world, the beginning of an entirely new experience, and also because as the natural birth is an issuing from a place of darkness and confinement (the womb) into a state of light and liberty, so is the experience of the soul when the Spirit quickens us. But the very fact that this revolutionizing experience is *also* likened unto a *resurrection* (1 John 3:14) should deliver us from forming a one-sided conception of what is meant by the "new birth" and the "new creature," for resurrection is not the absolute creation of a new body, but the restoration and glorification of the old body. Regeneration is also called a Divine "begetting" (1 Pet. 1:3), because the image or likeness of the Begetter is conveyed and stamped upon the soul. As the first Adam begat a son in his own image and likeness (Gen. 5:3), so the last Adam has an "image" (Rom. 8:29) to convey to His sons (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

It has often been said that in the Christian there are two distinct and diverse "natures," namely, the "flesh" and the "spirit" (Gal. 5:17). This is true, yet care must be taken to avoid regarding these two "natures" as anything more than two *principles* of action. Thus in Romans 7:23 the two "natures" or "principles" in the Christian are spoken of as "I see another *law* in my members, warring against the *law* of my mind." The flesh and the spirit in the believer must be conceived of as something very different from the "two natures" in the blessed person of our Redeemer, the God-man. Both the Deity and humanity *were* substantial entities in Him. Moreover, the "two natures" in the saint result in a necessary conflict (Gal. 5:17),

whereas in Christ there was not only complete harmony, but *one* Lord."

The faculties of the Christian's soul remain the same in their essence, substance, and natural powers as before he was "renewed," but these faculties *are* changed in their properties, qualities and inclinations. It may help us to obtain a clearer conception of this if we illustrate by a reference to the waters at Marah (Ex. 15:25, 26). Those "waters" were the same waters still, both before and after their cure. Of themselves in their own nature, they were "bitter," so as the people could not drink of them; but in the casting of a tree into them, they were made sweet and useful. So too with the waters at Jericho (2 Kings 19:20, 21), which were cured by the casting of salt (emblem of grace, Col. 4:6) into them. In like manner the Christian's affections continue the same as they were in their nature and essence, but they are cured or healed by grace, so that their properties, qualities and inclinations are "renewed" (Titus 3:5), the love of God now being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

What man lost by the fall was his original *relation to* God, which kept all his faculties and affections within proper exercise of that relation. At regeneration the Christian received a new life, which gave a new direction to his faculties, presenting new objects before them. Yet, let it be said emphatically, it is not merely the restoration of the life which Adam lost, but one of unspeakably higher relations: he received the life which the Son of God has in Himself, even "eternal life." But the old personality still remains. This is clear from Romans 6:13, "but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and *your* members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The members of the same individual are now to serve a new Master.

Regeneration is that which alone fits a fallen creature to fulfill his one great and chief duty, namely, to glorify his Maker. This is to be the aim and the end in view in all that we do: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor.

10:31). It is the motive actuating us and the purpose before us which gives value to each action: "When thine eye (figure of the soul looking outward) is single (having only one object in view—the glory of God), the whole body is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, the body is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34). If the intention be evil, as it certainly is when the glory of God is not before us, there is nothing but "darkness," *sin*, in the whole service.

Now fallen man has altogether departed from what ought to be his chief end, aim, or object, for instead of having before him the honour of God, *himself* is his chief concern; and instead of seeking to please God in all things, he lives only to please himself or his fellow-creatures. Even when, through religious training, the claims of God have been brought to his notice and pressed upon his attention, at best he only parcels out one part of his time, strength and substance to the One who gave him being and daily loadeth him with benefits, and another part for himself and the world. The natural man is utterly incapable of giving supreme respect unto God, until he becomes the recipient of a spiritual life. None will truly aim at the glory of God until they have an affection for Him. None will honour Him supremely whom they do not supremely love. And for this, the love of God must be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), and this only takes place at regeneration. Then it is, and not till then, that self is dethroned and God enthroned; then it is that the renewed creature is enabled to comply with God's imperative call, "My son, give *Me* thine heart" (Prov. 23:26).

The salient elements which comprise the *nature* of regeneration may, perhaps, be summed up in these three words: impartation, renovation, subjugation. God *communicates* something to the one who is born again, namely, a principle of faith and obedience, a holy nature, eternal life. This though real, palpable, and potent, is nothing material or tangible, nothing added to our essence, substance or person. Again: God *renews* every faculty of the soul and spirit of the one born again, not perfectly and finally, for we are "renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). but so as to enable those faculties to be exercised

upon spiritual objects. Again; God *subdues* the power of sin indwelling the one born again. He does not eradicate it, but He dethrones it, so that it no longer has dominion over the heart. Instead of sin ruling the Christian, and that by his own willing subjection, it is resisted and hated.

Regeneration is *not* the improvement or purification of the "*flesh*," which is that principle of evil still with the believer. The appetites and tendencies of the "*flesh*" are precisely the same after the new birth as they were before, only they no longer *reign* over him. For a time it may seem that the "*flesh*" is dead, yet in reality it is not so. Often its very stillness (as an army in ambush) is only awaiting its opportunity or a gathering up of its strength for a further attack. It is not long ere the renewed soul discovers that the "*flesh*" is yet very much alive, desiring to have its way. But grace will not suffer it to have its sway. On the one hand the Christian has to say, "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18). On the other hand, he is able to declare, "Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself "for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Some people find it very difficult to conceive of the *same* person bringing forth good works who before brought forth nothing but evil works, the more so when it be insisted upon that no new faculty is added to his being, that nothing substantial is either imparted or taken from his person. But if we rightly introduce the factor of *God's* mighty power into the equation, then the difficulty disappears. We may not be able to explain, in fact we are not, *how* God's power acts upon us, how He cleanses the unclean (Acts 10:15) and subdues the wolf so that it dwells with the lamb (Isa. 11:6), any more than we can thoroughly understand His working upon and within us without destroying our own personal agency; nevertheless, both Scripture and experience testify to each of these facts. It may help us a little at this point if we contemplate the working of God's power in the natural realm.

In the natural realm every creature is not only entirely dependent upon its Maker for its continued existence, but also for the *exercise* of all its faculties, for "in Him we live, and move (Greek, 'are moved') and have our being" (Acts 17:28) Again; as the various parts of creation are linked together, and afford each other mutual support—as the heavens fertilize the earth, the earth supplies its inhabitants with food, its inhabitants propagate their kind, rear their offspring, and cooperate for the purpose of society—so also the whole system is supported, sustained and governed by the directing providence of God. The influences of providence, the manner in which they operate on the creature, are profoundly mysterious: on the one hand, they are not destructive of our rational nature, reducing us to mere irresponsible automatons: on the other hand they are all made completely subservient to the Divine purpose.

Now the operation of God's power in regeneration is to be regarded as of the same kind with its operation in providence, although it be exercised with a different design. God's energy is one, though it is distinguished by the objects on which, and the ends for which, it is exerted. It is the same power that creates as upholds in existence: the same power that forms a stone, and a sunbeam, the same power that gives vegetable life to a tree, animal life to a brute, and rational life to a man. In like manner, it is the same power that assists us in the natural exercise of our faculties, as it is which enables us to exercise those faculties in a spiritual manner. Hence "grace" as a principle of Divine operation in the spiritual realm, is the same power of God as "nature" is His process of operation in the natural world.

The grace of God in the application of redemption to the hearts of His people is indeed *mighty* as is evident from the effects produced. It is a change of the whole man: of his views, motives, inclinations and pursuits. Such a change no human means are able to accomplish. When the thoughtless are made to think, and to think with a seriousness and intensity which they never formerly did; when the careless are, in a moment, affected with a deep sense of their most important interests: when lips which are accustomed to

blaspheme, learn to pray; when the proud are brought to assume the lowly attitude and language of the penitent; when those who were devoted to the world give evidence that the object of their desires and aims is a heavenly inheritance: and when this revolution, so wonderful has been affected by the simple Word of God, and by the very Word which the subject of this radical change had often heard unmoved, it is proof positive that a mighty influence has been exerted, and that that influence is nothing less than *Divine—God's* people have been made willing in the day of His *power* (Ps. 110:3).

Many figures are used in Scripture, various expressions are employed by the Spirit, to describe the saving work of God within His people. In 2 Peter 1:4 the regenerated are said to be "partakers of the Divine nature," which does *not* mean of the very essence or being of God, for *that* can neither be divided nor communicated—in Heaven itself there will still be an immeasurable distance between the Creator and the creature, otherwise the finite would become infinite. No, to be "partakers of the Divine nature" is to be made the recipients of inherent grace, to have the lineaments of the Divine image stamped upon the soul: as the remainder of that verse shows. being "partakers of the Divine nature" is the antithesis of "the *corruption* that is in the world through lust."

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 this transforming miracle of God's grace in His people is declared to be a "changing" into the image of Christ. The Greek word there for "change" is the one rendered "transfigured" in Matthew 17:2. At Christ's transfiguration no new features were added to the Saviour's face, but His whole countenance was irradiated by a new light; so in 2 Corinthians 4:6 regeneration is likened unto a "light" which God commands to shine in us—note the whole context of 2 Corinthians 3:18 is treating of the Spirit's work by the Gospel. In Ephesians 2:10 this product of God's grace is spoken of as His "workmanship," and is said to be "created," to show that He, and not man, is the Author of it. In Galatians 4:19 this same work of God in the soul is termed Christ's being "formed" in us—as

the parents' seed is formed or molded in the mother's womb, the "likeness" of the parent being stamped upon it.

We cannot here attempt a full list of the numerous figures and expressions which the Holy Spirit has employed to set forth this saving work of God in the soul. In John 6:44 it is spoken of as a being "drawn" to Christ. In Acts 16:14 as the heart being "opened" by the Lord to receive His Truth. In Acts 26:18 as the opening of our eyes, a turning us from darkness unto light, and the power of Satan unto God. In 2 Corinthians 10:5 as the "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." In Ephesians 5:8 as being "light in the Lord." In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 it is designated the "sanctification of the Spirit." In Hebrews 8:10 as God's putting His laws into our mind and writing them on our heart—contrast the figure in Jeremiah 17:1! Thus it should be most apparent that we lose much by limiting our attention to one figure of it. All we have given, and still others not mentioned, need to be taken into consideration if we are to obtain anything approaching an adequate conception of the nature of that miracle of grace which is wrought in the soul and spirit of the elect, enabling them to henceforth live unto God.

As man was changed in Adam from what he was by a state of creation, so man must be changed in Christ from what he is by a state of corruption. This change which fits him for communion with God, is a Divine work wrought in the inclinations of the soul. It is a being renewed in the spirit of our minds (Eph. 4:23). It is the infusion of a principle of holiness into all the faculties of our inner being. It is the spiritual renovation of our very persons, which will yet be consummated by the regeneration of our bodies. The whole soul is renewed, according to the image of God in knowledge, holiness and righteousness. A new light shines into the mind, a new power moves the will, a new object attracts the affections. The individual is the same, and yet not the same. How different the landscape when the sun is shining, than when the darkness of a

moonless night is upon it—the same landscape, and yet not the same. How different the condition of him who is restored to health and vigor after having been brought very low by sickness; yet it is the same person.

The very fact that the Holy Spirit has employed the figures of "begetting" and "birth" to the saving work of God in the soul, intimates that the reference is only to the *initial* experience of Divine grace: "He which hath begun a good work in you" (Phil. 1:6). As an infant has all the parts of a man, yet none of them come to maturity, so regeneration gives a perfection of parts, which yet have need to be developed. A new life has been received, but there needs to be growth of it: "grow in grace" (2 Pet. 3:18). As God was the Giver of this life, He only can feed and strengthen it. Thus, Titus 3:5 speaks of "the renewing" and not the "renewal" of the Holy Spirit. But it is our responsibility and bounden duty to *use* the Divinely-appointed means of grace which promote spiritual growth: "desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2); as it is our obligation to constantly avoid everything which would hinder our spiritual prosperity: "Make not provision for the flesh to the lusts" (Rom. 13:14), and cf. Matthew 5:29, 30; 2 Corinthians 7:1.

God's consummating of the initial work which we experience at the new birth, and which He renews throughout the course of our earthly lives, only takes place at the second coming of our Saviour, when we shall be perfectly and eternally conformed to His image, both inwardly and outwardly. First, regeneration; then our gradual sanctification; finally our glorification. But between the new birth and glorification, while we are left down here, the Christian has both the "flesh" and the "spirit," both a principle of sin and a principle of holiness, operating within him, the one opposing the other: see Galatians 5:16, 17. Hence his *inward* experience is such as that which is described in Romans 7:7-25. As life is opposed to death, purity to impurity, spirituality to carnality, so is now felt and experienced within the soul a severe conflict between sin and grace. This conflict is perpetual, as the "flesh" and "spirit" strive for mastery. From

hence proceeds the absolute necessity of the Christian being sober, and to "watch unto prayer."

Finally, let it be pointed out that the principle of life and obedience (the "new nature") which is received at regeneration, is not able to preserve the soul from sins, nevertheless, there is full provision for continual supplies of grace made for it and all its wants in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are treasures of relief in Him, whereunto the soul may at any time repair and find necessary succour against every incursion of sin. This new principle of holiness may say to the believer's soul, as David did unto Abiathar when he fled from Doeg: "Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard" (1 Sam. 22:23). Sin is the enemy of the new nature as truly as it is of the Christian's soul, and his only safety lies in heeding the requests of that new nature, and calling upon Christ for enablement. Thus we are exhorted in Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

If it ever be a time of need with the soul, it is so when it is under the assaults of provoking sins, when the "flesh" is lusting against the "spirit." But at that very time there is suitable and seasonable help in Christ for succour and relief. The new nature begs, with sighs and groans, for the believer *to* apply to Christ. To neglect Him, with all His provision of grace, whilst He stands calling on us, "*Open to Me . . . for My head is filled with dew and My locks with the drops of the night*" (Song of Sol. 5:2), is to despise the sighing of the poor prisoner, the new nature, which sin is seeking to destroy, and cannot but be a high provocation against the Lord.

At the beginning, God entrusted Adam and Eve with a stock of grace in themselves, but they cast it away, and themselves into the utmost misery thereby. That His children might not perish a second time, God, instead of imparting to them *personally* the power to overcome sin and Satan, has laid up their portion in Another, a safe Treasurer;

in Christ are their lives and comforts secured (Col. 3:3). And how must Christ regard us, if instead of applying to Him for relief, we allow sin to distress our conscience, destroy our peace, and mar our communion? Such is not a sin of infirmity which cannot be avoided, but a grievous affront of Christ. The means of preservation from it is to hand. Christ is always accessible. He is ever ready to "succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2: 18). O to betake ourselves to Him more and more, day by day, for *everything*. Then shall each one find "I *can* do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

All men are by nature the children of wrath, and do belong unto the world, which is the kingdom of Satan (1 John 5:19), and are under the power of darkness. In this state men are not the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and have no meetness for Heaven. From this terrible state they are unable to deliver themselves, being "without strength" (Rom. 5:6). Out of this state God's elect are supernaturally "called" (1 Pet. 2:9), which call effectually delivers them from the power of Satan and translates them into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). This Divine "call," or work of grace. is variously denominated in Scripture: sometimes by "regeneration" (Titus 3:5), or the new birth, sometimes by illumination (2 Cor. 4:6), by transformation (2 Cor. 3:18), by spiritual resurrection (John 5:24). This inward and invincible call is attended with justification and adoption (Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:5), and is carried on by sanctification in holiness. This leads us to consider its effects.

Chapter 3 Its Effects

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Though the wind be imperious in its action, man being unable to regulate it; though it be mysterious in its nature man knowing nothing of the cause which controls it; yet its presence is unmistakable, its effects are plainly

evidenced: so it is with *every one* that is born of the Spirit. His secret but powerful operations lie beyond the reach of our understanding. Why God has ordained that the Spirit should quicken this person and not that, we know not, but the transforming results of His working are plain and palpable. What there are, we shall now endeavor to describe.

1. *The illumination of the understanding.* As it was in the old creation, so it is in connection with the new. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). That was the original creation. Then came degeneration: "And the earth became without form and void (a desolate waste) and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Next came restoration: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, Let there be light: and there was light." So it is when God begins to restore fallen man: "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

The Divine illumination which the mind receives at the new birth is not by means of dreams or visions, nor does it consist in the revelation of things to the soul which have not been made known in the Scriptures. Not so, the only means or instrument which the Holy Spirit employs is the written Word: "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps. 119:130). Hitherto, God's Word may have been read attentively, and much of its teaching intellectually apprehended; but because there was a "vail" upon the heart (2 Cor. 3:15) and so no spiritual discernment (1 Cor. 2:14), the reader was not inwardly affected thereby. But now the Spirit removes the vail, opens the heart to receive the Word (Acts 16:14), and powerfully applies to the mind and conscience some portion of it. The result is that, the one renewed is able to say "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). To particularize:

The sinner is now enlightened in the knowledge of his own terrible condition. He may, before this, have received much scriptural instruction, subscribed to a sound creed, and believed intellectually in "the total depravity of man"; but now the solemn declarations of God's Word concerning the state of the fallen creature are brought home in piercing power to his own soul. No longer does he compare himself with his fellows, but measures himself by the rule of God. He now discovers that he is unclean, that his heart is "desperately wicked," and that he is altogether unfit for the presence of the thrice holy God. He is powerfully convicted of his own awful sins, feels that they are more in number than the hairs of his head, and that they are high provocations against Heaven, which call for Divine judgment on him. He now realizes that there is "*no soundness*" (Isa. 1:6) in him, and that all his best performances are only as "*filthy rags*" (Isa. 64:6), and that he is deserving of nought but the everlasting burnings.

By the spiritual light which God communicates in regeneration the soul now perceives the infinite demerits of sin, that its "*wages*" can be nothing less than eternal death, or the loss of Divine favor and a dreadful suffering under the wrath of God. The equity of God's law and the fact that sin righteously calls for such punishment is humbly acknowledged. Thus his mouth is "*stopped*" and he confesses himself to be guilty before God, and justly liable to His awful vengeance, both for the plague of his own heart and his numerous transgressions. He now realizes that his whole life has been lived in utter independence of God, having had no respect for His glory, no concern whether he pleased or displeased Him. He now perceives the exceeding sinfulness of sin, its awful malignity, as being in its nature contrary to the law of God. How to escape the due reward of his iniquity, he knows not. "*What must I do to be saved?*" is his agonizing cry. He is convinced of the absolute impossibility of contributing anything to his deliverance. He no longer has any confidence in the flesh; he has been brought to the end of himself.

By means of this illumination the renewed soul, under the guidance of the Spirit through the Word, now perceives how well-suited is

Christ to such a poor, worthless wretch as he feels himself to be. The prospect of obtaining deliverance from the wrath to come through the victorious life and death of the Lord Jesus, keeps his soul from being overwhelmed with grief and from sinking into complete despondency because of the sight of his sins. As the Spirit presents to him the infinite merits of Christ's obedience and righteousness, His tender compassion for sinners, His power to save, desires for an interest in Christ now possesses his heart, and he is resolved to look for salvation in no other. Under the benign influences of the Holy Spirit, the soul is drawn by some such words as, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavily laden, and if will give you rest," or "him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out," and he is led to apply to Him for pardon, cleansing, peace, righteousness, strength.

Other acts besides turning unto Christ flow from this new principle received at regeneration, such as *repentance*, which is a godly sorrow for sin, an abhorring of it as sin, and an earnest desire to forsake and be completely delivered from its pollution. In the light of God, the renewed soul now perceives the utter vanity of the world, and the worthlessness of these paltry toys and perishing trifles which the godless strive so hard to acquire. He has been awakened from the dream-sleep of death, and things are now seen in their true nature. Time is precious and not to be frittered away. God in His awesome Majesty is an object to be feared. His law is accepted as holy, just and good. All of these perceptions and actions are included in that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. In some these actions are more vigorous than in others, and consequently, are more perceptible to a man's self. But the fruits of them are visible to others in external acts.

2. *The elevation of the heart.* Rightly does the Lord claim the first place: "he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37). "My son, give Me thine heart" (Prov. 23:26) expresses God's claim: they "first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5) declares the response of the regenerate. But it is not until they are born again that any are spiritually capacitated to do this, for

by nature men are "lovers of their own selves" and "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:2, 4). When a sinner is renewed, his affections are taken off his idols and fixed on the Lord (1 Thess. 1:9). Hence it is written "with the heart (the affections) man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10). And hence, also, it is written, "if any man *love not* the Lord Jesus Christ let him be accursed" (1 Cor. 16:22).

"And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, *to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*" (Deut. 30:6). The "circumcising" of the heart is the "renewing" of it, severing its love from all illicit objects. None can truly love God supremely till this miracle of grace has been wrought within him. Then it is that the affections are refined and directed to their proper objects. He who once was despised by the soul, is now beheld as the "altogether lovely" One. He who was hated (John 15:18), is now loved above all others. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Ps. 73:25) is now their joyous confession.

The love of God has become the governing principle of the life (2 Cor. 5:13). What before was a drudgery is now a delight. The praise of man is no longer the motive which stimulates action; the approbation of the Saviour is the Christian's highest concern. Gratitude moves a hearty compliance with His will. "How precious also are *Thy* thoughts unto me, O God" (Ps. 139:17) is now his language. And again, "the desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee. With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early" (Isa. 26:8, 9). So too the heart is drawn out to all the members of His family, no matter what their nationality, social position, or church-connection: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

3. *The emancipation of the will.* By nature, the will of fallen man is free in only one direction: away from God. Sin has enslaved the will,

therefore do we need to be "made free" (John 8:36). The two states are contrasted in Romans 6: "free from righteousness" (v. 20), when dead in sin; "free from sin" (v. 18), now that we are alive unto God. At the new birth the will is liberated from the "bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8:21 and cf. 2 Pet. 2:19) and rendered conformable to the will of God (Ps. 119:97). In our degenerate state the will was naturally rebellious, and its practical language was, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?" (Ex. 5:2). But the Father promised the Son, "Thy people *shall* be willing in the day of Thy power" (Ps. 110:3), and this is accomplished when God "worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13 and cf. Heb. 13:21).

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall seek My judgments, and do them" (Ezek. 36:26, 27). This is a new covenant promise (Heb. 8:10), and is made good in each renewed soul. The will is so emancipated from the power of indwelling sin as to be enabled to answer to the Divine commands according to the tenor of the new covenant. The regenerated freely consent to and gladly choose to walk in subjection to Christ, being anxious now to obey Him in all things. His authority is their only rule, His love the constraining power: "If a man love Me, he *will* keep My words" (John 14:23).

4. *The rectification of the conduct.* A tree is known by its fruits. Faith is evidenced by works. The principle of holiness manifests itself in a godly walk. "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29). The deepest longing of every child of God is to please his heavenly Father in all things, and though this longing is never fully realized in this life—"Not as though I had *already* attained, either were already perfect" (Phil. 3:12)—nevertheless he continues "reaching forth unto those things which are before."

"Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine *whereto* ye were delivered" (Rom. 6:17 mar.). The Greek word for "form" here signifies "mold." Observe how this figure also presupposes the *same* faculties after the new birth as before. Metal which is molded remains the same metal it was previously, only the fashion or form of it is altered. That metal which before was a dish, is now turned into a cup, and thus a new name is given to it: cf. Revelation 3:12. By regeneration the faculties of the soul are made suitable to God and His precepts, just as the mould and the thing molded fit one another. As before the heart was at enmity against every commandment, it is now molded to them. Does God say, "Fear Me," the renewed heart answers, "I desire *to* fear Thy name" (Neh. 1:11). Does God say, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy," the heart answers, "the sabbath is my *delight*" (Isa. 58:13). Does God say, "love one another," the new creature finds an instinct begotten within him to do so, so that real Christians are said to be "taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9).

A change will take place in the deportment of the most moral unconverted man as soon as he is born from above. Not only will he be far less eager in his pursuit of the world, more scrupulous in the selection of his company, more cautious in avoiding the occasions to sin and the appearance of evil, but he realizes that the holy eye of God is ever upon him, marking not only his actions, but weighing his motives. He now bears the sacred name of Christ, and his deepest concern is to be kept from everything which would bring reproach upon it. His aim is to let his light so shine before men that they may see his good works and glorify his Father which is in Heaven. That which occasions him the deepest distress is not the sneers and taunts of the ungodly. but that he fails to measure up to the standard God has set before him and the conformity to it after which he so much yearns. Though Divine grace may preserve him from outward falls, yet he is painfully conscious of many sins within: the risings of unbelief, the swellings of pride, the oppositions of the "flesh" to the desires of the "spirit." These occasion him deep exercises of heart and lead to humble and sorrowful confessions unto God.

It is of great importance that the Christian should have clear and scriptural views of what he is *both* as the subject of sin and of grace. Though the regenerate are delivered from the absolute dominion of sin (Rom. 6:14), yet the principle of sin, the "flesh" is not eradicated. This is clear from Romans 6:12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof": that exhortation would be meaningless if there were no indwelling sin seeking *to* reign, and no lusts demanding obedience. Yet this is far from saying that a Christian *must* go on in a course of sinning: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9), the reference there being to the regular practice and habit of sinning. Nevertheless, prayerful heed needs to be constantly paid to this word, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:34).

The experiences of Paul, both as a subject of sin and of grace, are recorded in Romans 7. A careful reading of verses 14-24 reveals the fact that grace had neither removed nor purified the "flesh" in him. And as the Christian today compares his own inner conflicts, he finds that Romans 7 describes them most accurately and faithfully. He discovers that in his "flesh" is no good thing and he cries "O wretched man that I am." Though he longs for fuller conformity to the image of Christ, though he hungers and thirsts after righteousness, though he is under the influence and reign of grace, and though he enjoys real fellowship with God, yet, at seasons (some more acutely felt than others) he feels that though with the mind he serves the law of God, yet with the flesh the law of sin. Yea, every experience of reading the Word, prayer, meditation, proves to him that he is, in his fallen nature, "carnal, sold under sin," and that when he would do good, evil is present with him. This is a matter of great grief to him, and causes him to "groan" (Rom. 8:23) and yearn the more for release from this body of death.

But ought not the Christian to "grow in grace?" Yes, indeed. Yet let it be said emphatically that growing "in grace" most certainly does not mean an increasing satisfaction with myself. No, it is the very

opposite. The more I walk in the light of God, the more plainly can I see the wiliness of the "flesh" within me, and there will be an ever-deepening abhorrence of what I am by nature. "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18) is not the confession of an unbeliever, nor even of a babe in Christ, but of the most enlightened saint. The only relief from this distressing discovery and the only peace for the renewed heart is to look away from self to Christ and His perfect work for us. Faith empties of all self-complacency and gives an exalted estimate of God in Christ.

A growth "in grace" is defined, in part by the words that immediately follow: "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). It is the growing realization of the perfect suitability of Christ to a poor sinner, the deepening conviction of his fitness to be the Saviour of such a vile wretch as the Spirit daily shows me I am. It is the apprehension of how much I need His precious- blood to cleanse me, His righteousness to clothe me, His arm to support me, His advocacy to answer for me on High, His grace to deliver me from all my enemies both inward and outward. It is the Spirit revealing to me that there is *in Christ* everything that I need both for earth and Heaven, time and eternity. Thus, growing in grace is an increasing living *outside of* myself, living *upon* Christ. It is a looking to Him for the supply of *every* need.

The more the heart is occupied with Christ, the more the mind is stayed upon Him by trusting in Him (Isa. 26:3), the more will faith, hope, love, patience, meekness, and all spiritual graces be strengthened and drawn forth into exercise and act to the glory of God. The *manifestation* of growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ is another thing. The actual process of growing is not perceptible either in the natural or in the spiritual sphere; but the results of it are—mainly so to others. There are definite *seasons* of growth, and generally the Christian's spiritual graces are growing the most while the soul is in distress through manifold temptations, mourning on account of indwelling sin. It is when we are *enjoying*

God and are in conscious communion with Him, feasting upon the perfections of Christ, that the fruits of the Spirit in us are *ripened*. The chief *evidences* of spiritual growth in the Christian are a deepening hatred of sin and loathing of self, a higher valuation of spiritual things, and yearning after them, a fuller recognition of our deep need and dependency on God to supply it.

Regeneration is substantially the same in all who are the subjects of it: there is a spiritual transformation, the conforming of the soul unto the image of God: "that which is born of the Spirit is *spirit*" (John 3:6). But although every regenerated person is a new creature, has received a principle of faith and holiness which acts on every faculty of his being, and is indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit, yet God does not communicate the same measure of grace (Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 4:16) or the same number of talents to all alike. God's children differ from each other as children do at their natural birth, some of whom are more lively and vigorous than others. God, according to His sovereign pleasure, gives to some a fuller knowledge, to others stronger faith, to others warmer affections—natural temperament has much to do with the form and color which the *manifestation* of the "spirit" takes through us. But there is no difference in their state: the same work has been performed in all, which radically differentiates them from worldlings.

"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2). Does not this clearly denote, yea, require, that the "saints" shall exercise a distinguishing holiness and live quite otherwise than the world? Could one who now takes the Lord's name in vain be righteously appointed to sit in judgment upon those who profane it? Could one who lives to please self be a fit person to judge those who have loved pleasure more than God? Could one who has despised and ridiculed 'puritanic strictness of living,' sit with Christ as a judge on those who lived in rebellion against Him? Never: instead of being the judges of others, all such will find themselves condemned and executed as malefactors in that Day.

"The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11). "Grace and glory" are inseparably connected: they differ not in nature, but in degree. "Grace" is glory begun; "glory" is grace elevated to the acme of perfection. 1 John 3:2 tells us that the saints shall be "like Him," and this, because they will "see Him as He is." The immediate vision of the Lord of glory will be a transforming one, the bright reflections of God's purity and holiness cast upon the glorified will make them perfectly holy and blessed. But this resemblance to God, His saints do *here*, in measure, bear upon them: there are some outlines, some lineaments of God's image stamped upon them, and this too is through *beholding* Him. True, it is (comparatively speaking) through a glass darkly, yet "beholding" we *are* changed into the *same* image from glory to glory (from one degree of it to another) as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

In conclusion, let both writer and reader test and search himself in the presence of God, by these questions. How stands my heart affected toward sin? Is there a deep humiliation and godly sorrow after I have yielded thereto? Is there a genuine detestation of it? Is my conscience tender, so that my peace is disturbed by what the world calls "trifling faults" and "little things?" Am I humbled when conscious of the risings of pride and self-will? Do I loathe my inward corruption? What engages my mind in sea sons of recreation? Are my affections dead toward the world an alive toward God? Do I find spiritual exercises pleasant and joyous or irksome and burdensome? Can I truthfully say, "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth (Ps. 119:103)? Is communion with God my highest joy? Is the glory of God dearer to me than all the world contains?

The Holy Spirit's Work in Salvation

by Arthur W. Pink

In Acts 19 we learn that when the apostle Paul came to Ephesus he asked some disciples of John the Baptist "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" (v. 2) And we are told "They said unto him, We have not so much is heard whether there be any Holy Spirit." Sad to say, history has repeated itself. Without doubt, were the members of hundreds of so-called "churches" (in which modernism and worldliness rule) asked the same question, they would be obliged to return an identical answer. The reason why those disciples at Ephesus knew not about the Holy Spirit was, most probably, because they had been baptized in Judea by the forerunner of Christ and then had returned to Ephesus where they remained in ignorance of what had taken place on the day of Pentecost. But the reason why the members of the average "church" know nothing about the third Person of the Godhead is because the preachers they sit under are silent concerning Him.

Nor is it very much better with many of the churches still counted as orthodox. Though the Person of the Spirit may not be repudiated and though His name may occasionally be mentioned, yet, with only rare exceptions is there any definite scriptural teaching given out concerning the offices and operations of the divine Comforter. As to His work in salvation, this is very little understood even by professing Christians. In the majority of the places where the Lord Jesus is still formally acknowledged to be the only Savior for sinners, the current teaching of the day is that Christ has made it possible for men to be saved, but that they themselves must decide whether they shall be saved. The idea now so widely prevailing is that Christ is offered to man's acceptance, and that he must "accept Christ as his personal Savior," "give his heart to Jesus," "take his stand for Christ," etc., if the blood of the Cross is to avail for his sins. Thus, according to this conception, the finished work of Christ, the greatest work of all time and in all the universe is left contingent on the fickle will of man as to whether it shall be a success or a failure!

Entering now a much narrower circle in Christendom, in places where it is yet owned that the Holy Spirit has a mission and ministry in connection with the preaching of the Gospel, the general idea prevails even there that when the Gospel of Christ is faithfully preached, the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin and reveals to them their need of a Savior. But beyond this very few are prepared to go. The theory prevailing in these places is that the sinner has to cooperate with the Spirit, that he himself must yield to the Spirit's "striving" or he will not and cannot be saved. But this pernicious and God-insulting theory denies two things: to argue that the natural man is capable of cooperating with the Spirit is to deny that he is "dead in trespasses and sins" for a dead man is incapable of doing anything. And, to say that the operations of the Spirit in a man's heart and conscience may be resisted, withstood, is to deny His omnipotence!

Ere proceeding further, and in order to clear the way for what is to follow, a few words need to be said on "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," (Gen. 6:3) and "ye do always resist the Holy Spirit." (Acts 7:51) Now these passages refer to the external work of the Spirit, that is, to His testimony through the preached Word. 1 Peter 3:18-20 shows that it was the Spirit of Christ in Noah who "strove" with the antediluvians as the patriarch preached to them. (2 Peter 2:5) So in Acts 7 the very next words explain v. 51- "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" As Nehemiah said, "Many years didst Thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by Thy Spirit in Thy prophets." (Neh. 9:30)

The external work of the Spirit, His testimony through the Scriptures as it falls on the outward ear of the natural man, is always "resisted" and rejected, which only affords solemn and full demonstration of the awful fact that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." (Rom. 8:7) But what we would now point out is that Scripture reveals another work of the Holy Spirit, a work that is internal, imperceptible, invisible. This work is always EFFICACIOUS. It is the Spirit's work in salvation, begun in the heart at the new birth,

continued or sustained throughout the entire course of the Christian's life on earth, and concluded and consummated in Heaven. This is what is referred to in Phil. 1:6: "He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it." This is what is in view in Psa. 138:8: "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." This work is wrought by the Spirit in each of "God's elect," and in them alone.

It has been well said that "The part and office of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of God's elect consists in renewing them. He quickens the heirs of glory with a spiritual life, enlightens their minds to know Christ, reveals Him to them, forms Him in their hearts, and brings them to build all their hopes of eternal glory on Him alone. He sheds abroad the Father's love in their hearts, and gives them a real sense of it. In which experience of His gracious and effectual work in their souls, they are made to say with the Psalmist, "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causeth to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts" (Psa. 65:4)."

One of the delusions of the day is that an evangelical believing in Christ lies within the power of the unrenewed man, so that by performing what is naively called "a simple act of faith" he becomes a renewed man. In other words, it is supposed that man is the beginner of his own salvation. He takes the first step, and God does the rest; he "believes" and then God comes in and saves him. This is nothing but a bald and blank denial of the Spirit's work altogether. If there is one time more than another when the sinner lies in need of the Spirit's power it is at the beginning. "He who denies the need of the Spirit at the beginning, cannot believe in His work at the after stages--nay, cannot believe in the need of the Spirit's work at all. The mightiest and most insuperable difficulty lies at the beginning. If the sinner can get over that without the Spirit, he can easily get over the rest. If he does not need the Spirit to enable him to believe, he will not need Him to enable him to love." (H. Bonar)

They err greatly who think that after the Spirit has done His work in the conscience it still remains for man to say whether he shall be

regenerated or not, whether he shall believe or no. The Spirit of God does not wait for the sinner to exercise his will to believe; instead He works in the "elect" "both to will and to do." (Phil. 2:13) Therefore does Jehovah declare, "I am found of them that sought Me NOT." (Isa. 65:1. Quoted by Paul in Rom.10:20). To "believe" in Christ savingly is a supernatural act, the product of supernatural grace. There is no more power in fallen man to believe to the saving of his soul than he has any merits of his own entitling him to the favor of God; thus, he is as dependent on the Spirit for power as on Christ for worthiness. The Spirit's work is to apply the redemption which the Lord Jesus purchased for His people, and the children of God owe their salvation to the One equally as much as to the Other.

In Titus 3:5 the salvation of the redeemed is expressly attributed to God the Spirit: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." "If it be asked in what sense men can be said to be "saved" by the renewing of the Spirit, the answer is obvious: There is a series of truths to which no link can be wanting. We are saved by the divine purpose, for God hath chosen us to salvation: we are saved by the atonement as the meritorious ground of all; we are saved by faith as the bond of union to Christ; we are saved by grace as contrasted with works done; we are saved by the truth as conveying God's testimony; and, as here, we are saved by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, as producing faith in the heart." (Prof. Smeaton)

REGENERATION IS BY THE SPIRIT

"And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1) The quickening of those who are dead in trespasses is the work of the third Person of the Trinity: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6) The natural man is spiritually dead. He is alive sinward and worldward but dead Godward--"alienated from the life of God." (Eph. 4:18) If this solemn truth were really believed, there would be an end to controversy on our present subject. A dead

man cannot "cooperate" with the Spirit, nor can he "accept Christ." In 2 Cor. 3:5 we read, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything." That is said of Christians. If the regenerate have no capacity to "think" spiritually, still less are the unregenerate able to.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14) What could be plainer? The "natural man" is fallen in his unregenerate state. Unless he is born from above he is completely devoid of spiritual discernment. Our Lord expressly declared, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) The "natural man" cannot see himself, his ruin, his depravity, the filthiness of his own righteousness. No matter how plainly God's Truth is presented to him, being blind, he cannot discern either its meaning, spiritually, or suitedness to his need. A spiritual understanding of the Gospel is as truly due to the operation of the Holy Spirit as that He is the Author of the divine Revelation. Spiritual life must precede spiritual sight, and the Spirit Himself must enter the heart before there is "life": "And shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live." (Ezek. 37:14)

The work of the Spirit in regeneration is a divine miracle which is the result of His forthputting of supernatural power. It is quickening of a spiritual corpse; it is the bringing of a dead soul to life. The sinner himself can no more accomplish it by an act of his own will than he can create a universe. This miracle of grace is spoken of in Scripture as "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." (Eph. 1:19, 29) "The same power which was put forth to raise Christ from the dead is put forth in regeneration . . . Christ's resurrection is the exemplary pattern of our spiritual resurrection, according to which, as the Spirit wrought in Him, so He works in us a work conformed to His resurrection. As the resurrection of Christ was the great declaration of His being the Son of God, so in regeneration of our being the sons of God, being the evidence of our adoption, and also the first

discovery of our election. As Christ's resurrection is the first step to His eternal kingdom and glory, so regeneration is the first open introduction to all the blessings of that state of grace into which the child of God is now introduced." (S.E. Pierce)

MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN IS BY THE SPIRIT

Our title to the glory lies solely in the righteousness of Christ; our personal fitness for it lies in the Holy Spirit's regenerating of us. All our meetness for the heavenly state was wrought in us in regeneration. Writing to the regenerated Colossians the apostle said, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And then he shows wherein this "meetness" consists: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (v. 13) Their title is without them; their "meetness" within. The Holy Spirit has created in them a nature which is capacitated to know and enjoy the Triune God.

In our unregenerate state we were completely under the power of darkness, that is, of sin and Satan, and we were less able to deliver ourselves from this bondage than Jonah was able to escape from the belly of the whale. We "sat in darkness" and "in the region and shadow of death." (Matt. 4:16) We were "captives," "bound" and in "prison." (Isa. 61:1) We were those "having no hope, and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:12) From this dreadful state every renewed soul has been "delivered" by the gracious, sovereign and invincible power of the Holy Spirit, and has been "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Then let each renewed reader give equal homage, adoration and worship to Him as to the Father and to the Son.

JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION ARE BY THE SPIRIT

"And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit

of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11) This is a remarkable scripture, and little pondered. It would lead us too far away from our theme were we to attempt a full exposition of it. Two things here would we barely point out: the three saving blessings enumerated in this verse are referred, first, to the "name" or merits of Christ as His own procuring cause; and then to the Holy Spirit who makes the elect partakers of them by His own effectual application. He it is who enlightens their minds and opens their hearts to take in and be assured that they are "washed, sanctified and justified."

FAITH IS FROM THE SPIRIT

A deeply taught servant of God once wrote to a young preacher, "Never represent faith as being an act so "simple" that the work of the ispirit is not needed to produce it." Yet this is what has been commonly done. A great many of the evangelists of the past hundred years have displayed a zeal which was not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2), and manifested a far greater concern to see souls saved than to preach the truth of God in its purity. In their efforts to show the simplicity of the "way of salvation" they have lost sight of the difficulties of salvation (Luke 18:24; 1 Peter 4:18): in their pressing of the responsibility of man to believe, they have ignored the fact that none can believe till the Spirit imparts faith. To present Christ to the sinner and then throw him back on his own will, is to mock him in his helplessness; the work of the Spirit in the heart is as real and urgent a need as was the work of Christ on the Cross. For the heart to truly believe in and trust God is a spiritual act, a "good fruit," and if fallen man possesses inherent power to do good, then to present the Atonement to him is altogether needless.

There is no middle ground between life and death; no intermediate stage between conversion and non-conversion. The bestowal of eternal life is instantaneous; we are "created in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:10) It is a most serious error to suppose that after the Spirit of God has done His work in the sinner, it still remains for him to say whether he shall be regenerated or not, whether he shall believe or

no. All who are recipients of His supernatural operations are regenerated, effectually converted, and actually believe. It is not that the Spirit imparts the capacity to believe and then waits for the individual to exercise his will to believe: no, He works in the elect "both to will and to do." (Phil. 2:13) I may tell a man that in the next room there is a lighted lamp, and he may not believe me, but let me bring it into the room where he is, so, that he sees the light for himself, and he is irresistibly persuaded. So a servant of God may tell a man that Christ is sufficient for the chief of sinners, and he believes not; but when Christ is "revealed in him" (Gal. 1:16) he cannot but trust Him. See 2 Cor. 4:6.

How perversely man reverses the order of God's truth. They urge dead sinners to come to Christ, supposing they have the power or will to do so. Whereas Christ has plainly and emphatically stated that "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." (John 6:44) "Coming to Christ" is the affections of the heart being drawn out towards Him, and how can a person love one he knows not? See John 4:10. Ah, it is the Spirit who must bring Christ to me, reveal Him in me before I can truly know Him. "Coming to Christ" is an inward and spiritual act, not an outward and natural one. Truly, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14) We cannot so much as "see Christ" until we are born again. (John 3:3)

Saving grace is something more than an objective fact presented to us; it is a subjective operation wrought within us. As it is not by natural discernment that I discover my need of Christ, so it is not by my natural strength and will that I "come" to Him. There must be life and light (sight) before there can be motion. A babe has to be born, and have sight and strength, too, before it is able to "come" to its parent. Believing in Christ is a supernatural act, the product of supernatural power. One may, by means of grammatical phrases and scriptural propositions teach spiritual truth to another, but he cannot illumine his mind with respect thereto. He may tell a man that God is

holy, but he cannot impart to him a consciousness that God is holy. He may tell him that sin is infinitely heinous, but he cannot beget in him a feeling or heart-realization that it is so. To those who were well acquainted with them outwardly, Christ said, "Ye neither know Me nor My Father." (John 8:19) A man may "know" the way of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:21) theoretically, intellectually, but that is a vastly different matter (though very few are inwardly aware of it) from a spiritual experimental acquaintance with it. "We having the same Spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believe, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." (2 Cor. 4:13) Here the Spirit of God is spoken of according to the work that He performs. "The title 'Spirit of faith' intimates that the Holy Spirit is the Author of faith; for all men have not faith; that is, it is not given to all and does not belong to all. (2 Thess. 3:2) The designation means that the procuring cause of faith is the Holy Spirit who produces this effect by an invisible call, an invitation which accompanies, according to the good pleasure of His will, the external proclamation of the Gospel. The faith, therefore, of which He is the Author, is not affected by the hearer's own strength, or by the hearer's own effectual will . . . The special operation of the Spirit inclines the sinner, previously disinclined, to receive the invitations of the Gospel; for it is He alone, acting as the Spirit of faith, that removes the enmity of the carnal mind to those doctrines of the cross which, but for this, would seem to him unnecessary, or foolish or offensive." (Prof. Smeaton)

Writing to the Philippian saints the apostle declared, "Unto you it is given . . . to believe on Him." (1:29) Faith is God's "gift" as Eph. 2:8,9 positively affirms. It is not a gift offered for man's acceptance, but actually conferred upon God's children, breathed into them. It is imparted to each of "God's elect" at His appointed time by the Holy Spirit. It is not produced by the creature's will but is "faith of the operation of God." (Col. 2:12) It is the "work" of the Spirit, by His supernatural action. The Holy Spirit given by Christ to this end, that each of those for whom He died should be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth therefore we are told "Who by Him (not by

our wills) do believe in God." (1 Peter 1:21) In 1 Cor. 3:5 it is, said "by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man"; so in Eph. 6:23 it is declared, "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The very degree and strength of our faith is determined solely by God: "think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Rom.12:3) If by grace you are truly a "believer," let the reader give God the Spirit honor, glory, and praise for it.

SALVATION IS WHOLLY APPLIED BY THE SPIRIT

"We are bound always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2:13) The mission of the Spirit in the earth is to apply to God's elect the redemption proposed by God the Father and purchased by God the Son for them. The Holy Spirit is here to make good the souls of the heirs of glory the fruits of the travail of Christ's soul. This He does by means of the Gospel by the written and oral ministry of the Scripture, for the Word of God is the only instrument He employs or uses. The Word of God is "the word of life" (Phil. 2:16), but it only becomes such in the experience of the individual soul by the immediate operation and application of the Spirit of God. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonian saints, "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit." (1 Thess. 1:5) This is not to deny the efficacy of the Word itself, but it is to insist that the direct agency of the Spirit on the heart is absolutely necessary in order to the reception of the Word. The Word is a lamp unto our path, but there must be an opening of the eyes of our understandings by the Spirit before we can see its light.

The salvation of God's elect was purposed, planned, and provided by God the Father before the foundation of the world. It was procured and secured by the incarnation, obedience, death and resurrection of God the Son. It is made known, applied to and wrought in them by

God the Spirit. Thus, "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), and man has no part or hand in it at any point whatsoever. The child of God is not the earner but the recipient of it. Faith is not a condition which the elect sinner must perform in order to obtain salvation, but is the means and channel through which he personally enjoys the salvation of the Triune Jehovah.

Regeneration and Conversion

by Samuel Hopkins

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:13)

In the words preceding these, we are told in what way persons become the sons of God, viz., by receiving Christ, or believing on his name. It is by virtue of their union of heart to Christ the eternal Son of God, which consists in cleaving to him and trusting in him, in the character of Mediator between God and man, that they are received into the relation of sons, and made heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

In the text we are told by whom they who thus become the sons of God are brought into this state of union to Jesus Christ and made to exist in this relation, or who is the cause or author of their thus receiving Christ or believing in him, by which they become the sons of God, which is here called a *being born*. When a child is born into the world, there is some cause of this production, this living, perfect child; so, when any person becomes a new creature, and in a sense enters into a new world, even into the kingdom of God, by believing on the name of Jesus Christ, there is some agent which is the cause of this.

God hath made of one blood all nations of men, (Acts 17:26); that is, he hath produced all nations by natural descent from one man. The evangelist here tells us that the birth he speaks of is quite a different thing from this; it is not produced by natural generation or descent from father to son; it does not thus run in the blood, and is not transmitted from generation to generation in this way. Men do not become the sons of God, they are not regenerated, and do not become believers in Christ by any thing derived from their natural parents, by their descent from them, and near relation to them, by which the blood of the parents does, as it were, run in their veins.

The piety or holiness of the parents has no influence or hand in this production, as a cause; it does nothing towards regenerating, or producing faith in the child. The child of the most holy parent is by nature as corrupt and as far from this birth, and always will be so, without some other cause or influence, as are the children of the ungodly.

In this assertion there seems to be a particular design to contradict and oppose a then prevailing notion among the Jews that they were the sons of God by blood, as they were the children of Abraham. Of this they boast to our Savior, and say that they were Abrahams seed, and, therefore, that God was their father; as if by being the children of Abraham they were the sons of God. (John 8:33, 41; Rom. 8:1-9; Gal. 5:17) In opposition to this notion of theirs, John Baptist says to them, `Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. (Luke 3:8; I Cor. 2:14, 15)

Nor of the will of the flesh. By flesh is meant man in his natural, corrupt state, as he is antecedent to regeneration. This is the meaning of *flesh* as it is used in many places in Holy Scripture; which is evident, among other things, by its being frequently put in opposition to the Spirit; and to be in the flesh, and to walk after the flesh, or to be carnal, is spoken of as directly opposite to being spiritual, having the spirit of Christ, and walking after the Spirit, and as if there was no medium between them. (John 3:1, 6) What is here asserted then is, that persons are not regenerated by any inclinations, choice, or exertions of their own, while they were in a state of unregeneracy. They do not, by the exercise of their own wills, or by their endeavors, do any thing towards their being born again; nor do they cooperate in the least degree with the efficient cause. So far from this, that all their inclinations, and every act of will and exertion of theirs, is in direct opposition to it, for the flesh always lusteth against the Spirit.

It is, indeed, as great an absurdity as can be thought of, to suppose that the corrupt, vicious heart does any thing towards its becoming holy, or exercises any will or choice that has the least tendency to it; as absurd as to suppose that the exercise of perfect selfishness has a tendency to produce benevolence, or that the heart is made better and becomes holy by the constant exercise of lust and wickedness. For all the exercises and volitions of the corrupt, unregenerate heart are certainly the exercises of sin. It was, nevertheless, of importance that this should be particularly observed by the evangelist, when treating of this matter; seeing, however plain it is, and though the contrary is so very absurd, men are ready to imagine they may be born again by the will of the flesh, or, at least, that by the exertions of their own wills and endeavors they may do something towards it. In this delusion I suppose all men naturally are, and that no man heartily and really gives up this point until he is taught of God. And multitudes of professing Christians do persist in expressly opposing what is here asserted all their days. But of this more will be said, before I have done.

Nor of the will of man; that is, not by the power and influence of others. No one person is born again by the will and endeavors of others. However pious and wise they are, and how much soever they exert themselves to bring others to holiness, they do in no degree produce the effect. If all the angels and saints in heaven and all the godly on earth should join their wills and endeavors, and unitedly exert all their powers to regenerate one sinner, they could not effect it; yea, could do nothing towards it. It is an effect infinitely beyond the reach of finite wisdom and power. Paul planted, and Apollos watered; but God giveth the increase. So, then, neither he that planteth is any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. (I Cor. 3:6, 7)

St. John, having declared what is not the cause of the new birth, proceeds to say in one word what it *is but of God*. God is the only efficacious agent or efficient cause in this affair. It is all to be wholly ascribed to him.

What I propose now is, particularly to inquire into this change here spoken of and called *a being born*; to consider the nature of it, and wherein it consists, and especially how, and in what sense, God is the author of it.

And, for the more distinct and clear treating this matter, I would observe, that in this change, taken in its full extent, there is the agency both of God, the cause and author of it, and of man, who is the subject of the change. God, by his Spirit, is the efficient cause; by his agency and influence the change is produced. Mans agency in the affair is in consequence of the divine agency and influence, and is an effect and fruit of it, and consists in those views and exercises of heart in which the regenerate repent, turn to God, believe on Jesus Christ, which is comprised in true Christian holiness, or the new creature. The divine agency and operation, which is first, and lays the foundation for all right views and exercises in the person who is the subject, is called by divines *regeneration*. The holy views and exercises of the subject, in which he receives Christ, or believes on his name, is called *conversion*, and sometimes *active conversion*, to distinguish it from that previous operation and change wrought by the Spirit of God, in which God is the only agent, and man, the subject, does not act, but is perfectly passive.

This subject, I conceive, cannot be properly illustrated, and so as to be well understood, without a distinct and particular attention to each of these in their nature, dependence, and connection. This is, therefore, what I would now attempt.

Regeneration

First, then, let us consider the divine agency, the work of the Spirit of God, by which persons are regenerated or born of God, and which lays the only foundation for conversion or holy exercises in the subject.

Concerning this the following things may be observed:

I. The only ground and reason of regeneration, or of the necessity of the regenerating influences of the Spirit of God, in order to mens converting and embracing the gospel, is the total depravity and corruption of the heart of man in his natural, fallen state.

By total corruption of the heart, I mean its being wholly without any degree of right disposition or principles that should be a foundation for holy exercises, but altogether under the dominion of a contrary disposition and principle; so that there is no right exercise of heart, but every notion or act of the will is wrong, corrupt, and sinful. If this was not the case with man, there would be no need of his beginning a new kind of life, of his being created anew, and made quite a new creature, by having a new principle implanted in order to his salvation; there would be no necessity of that work of regeneration of which I am now speaking in order to mans believing on Jesus Christ. Was not man wholly corrupt, he would naturally, as I may say, believe on Christ, without any new, special operation on his heart by the Spirit of God, and would need nothing but to have the disposition and principles which are naturally in his heart strengthened and increased by exercise, in order to his salvation. But if this is really the case with man, if he is so far sunk into corruption that he has not naturally the least degree of disposition to that which is good, but his heart is wholly and perfectly opposite to it, then no possible means and external applications will be sufficient to bring him to the least degree of right disposition and exercise, or do any thing towards it. This can be effected only by the power and Spirit of God, which at first created all things out of nothing, and implanted a right disposition in man when he was first made. It is as absurd to suppose that in this case right disposition and exercises do take place in the heart without the all-creating influence of the Spirit of God, as it is to suppose that the whole world came into existence without creating power, or from no cause at all.

Therefore, since the ground of the necessity of the regenerating influences of the Spirit of God is the perfect corruption and

wickedness of the heart of man, he is wholly to blame for being and continuing unregenerate, or for that in which unregeneracy consists. If mankind are under any law at all, and are in the least to blame for any thing, they are required to love God with all their hearts, and their neighbor as themselves; and are wholly to blame for every degree in which they come short of this, for every defect in their hearts of this kind, and for every degree of contrary disposition. Therefore, to be perfectly indisposed to that which Gods law requires, and wholly inclined to that which is contrary to it, is altogether and most perfectly inexcusable, and man is wholly to blame for all this, and criminal in proportion to the degree in which it takes place, if there is any such thing as criminalness or blame in the universe. I desire this may be particularly observed and borne in mind through all the following discourse; for many, I perceive, are apt to make a mistake here, by which this matter is often set in a wrong and most absurd light. It is common for persons, who believe they must be born again in order to be saved to think themselves not at all to blame that their hearts are not holy, or for that in which their unregeneracy consists; for, say they, we cannot change our own hearts; this is the work of God. And it has been common to represent mans depravity and moral impotency in such a light as to be inconsistent with his being directly to blame for not being holy, or not believing on Christ, etc.; and, consequently, they have represented the whole duty of the unregenerate to consist in those endeavors and doings which are antecedent to regeneration, and do not imply any real holiness or conformity to the law of God.

The absurdity of this appears so clearly, even in stating the matter, that it seems needless further to expose it. This is to turn the tables indeed, and to make mans duty wholly to lie not in obedience to Gods law, but in something which is consistent with perfect obedience; and his sin to consist, not in want of love to God and opposition of heart to him, but in something else; so that a person may be perfectly sinlessyea, really and perfectly holy, for he does the whole of his dutywithout a spark of true holiness, or the least degree of real conformity to the law of God.

I would forewarn my hearers, that I am about to teach no regeneration but what consists in the removal of that from mans heart for which he is altogether to blame and criminal for having it there, and the implantation of the principles of that life and holiness which man is always under infinite obligations to have and exercise at all times. And the more need men stand in of this regeneration by the Spirit of God, the more criminal and blameworthy they are. I proceed to observe,

II. This regeneration of which I am speaking consists in a change of the will or heart.

The truth of this observation appears from the foregoing, as it is a plain consequence from it. If the depravity and corruption of the heart is the only ground of the necessity of regeneration, then regeneration consists in removing this depravity, and introducing opposite principles, and so laying a foundation for holy exercises. But depravity or sin lies wholly in the heart, and not in the intellect or faculty of understanding, considered as distinct from the will, and not including that. So far as the will is renewed or set right, the whole mind is right; for sin and holiness lie wholly in this. If moral depravity does not lie in, or properly belong to, the faculty of the understanding or the intellect, as distinguished from the will, or heart, then that operation of the Spirit of God, by which this is in some measure removed and moral rectitude introduced, does not immediately respect the understanding, but the will or heart, and immediately produces a change in the latter, not in the former. It is allowed by all, I suppose, that regeneration does not produce any new *natural* capacity or faculty in the soul. These remain the same after regeneration that they were before, so far as they are *natural*. The change produced is a moral change, and, therefore, the will or heart must be the immediate subject of this change, and of the operation that effects it; for every thing of a moral nature belongs to the will or heart.

As depravity or sin began in the will, and consists wholly in the irregularity and corruption of that, so regeneration, or a recovery from sin in the renovation of the mind, must begin here, and wholly consists in the change and renewal of the will. There is not, nor can there be, any need of any other change, in order to the complete renovation of the depraved mind, and its recovery to perfect holiness. Therefore, I think I have good grounds to assert, that in regeneration the will or heart is the immediate subject of the divine operation, and so of the moral change that is effected hereby. The Spirit of God in regeneration gives a new heart, an honest and good heart. He begets a right and good taste, temper, or disposition, and so lays a foundation for holy exercises of heart.

But let us go on to the next particular.

III. In this change of which I am now speaking the Spirit of God is the only agent; and man, the subject, is wholly passive, does not act, but is acted upon.

In conversion man is active, and it wholly consists in his act; but in regeneration the Spirit of God is the only active cause. What has been said already brings this truth into view. This change lays the only foundation for all right views and exercises of the heart, and is, therefore, antecedent to all such. To suppose that the person is not wholly positive in this change, therefore, is to make him active before he begins to act. The man who is the subject of this change is, indeed, active antecedent to it; but by the supposition all the exertions and exercises of his heart are corrupt and wrong, and in direct opposition to the Spirit of God. Before this change the heart is wholly sinful, a heart of stone, an impenitent, rebellious heart, and all the exercises of it are acts of rebellion, in opposition to God, his Spirit, and law. This change is, therefore, wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God, in direct opposition to all its biases, inclinations, and exertions, by which they are, in a measure, overcome and destroyed, and a new and opposite principle and inclination created or implanted. Man is, therefore, so far from being active in producing this change, or

having any hand in it by voluntarily falling in with, or submitting to, the divine operation, or cooperating with the Spirit of God, that the whole strength of his heart opposes it, until it is effected and actually takes place; he is, therefore, most perfectly passive. When Adam was created, and his mind formed, prepared, and disposed to right and holy action, it is easy to see he was altogether passive until he began first to act in consequence of his being thus formed, for which action a foundation was laid in his creation. This is a parallel with the case before us; only with this difference, that what is caused to take place in the mind in regeneration is in direct opposition to all that was in the heart before; whereas, in the formation of Adams heart to right exercises and action, there was nothing to be opposed or counteracted.

IV. This change is wrought by the Spirit of God *immediately*; that is, it is not effected by any medium or means whatsoever.

The operation of the Spirit of God in this case is as immediate, or as much without any means, as that by which Adams mind was at first formed. In that there was no medium, no means made use of in creating the mind formed and disposed to right action. God said, Let it be, and it was. The Almighty first produced it immediately, or without any cooperating means. So it is in this case; there is no conceivable medium by which this change is wrought any more than there is in creation out of nothing. The sinners own thoughts, exercises, and endeavors cannot be a means of this change; for they are all in direct opposition to it, as has been just observed.

I would particularly observe here, that light and truth, or the word of God, is not in any degree a means by which this change is effected. It is not wrought by light.

This change is most certainly not effected by light, because it is by this change that the mind is illuminated; by this the way is prepared for the light to have access to the mind, so as to become the means of

any effect. This operation of the Spirit of God by which a new heart is given is necessary in order to the illumination of the mind, and, indeed, is the very thing in which it consists, as it is the opening of the eyes of the blind. It is depravity or corruption of heart that holds the mind in darkness and shuts out the light. And this corruption of heart is that in which unregeneracy consists, as has been observed; and, in truth, spiritual darkness, or blindness of mind, consists in this, too. In order to the minds being enlightened, that must be removed in which blindness consists, or which shuts light out of the mind; but that in which unregeneracy consists does blind the mind, and shuts out the light, or, rather, is the blindness itself. Therefore, men must be regenerated, and the corruption of their hearts in some measure removed, in order to the removal of their darkness and the illumination of their mind; for this is nothing else than giving them eyes to see, and can be done in no other possible way. Consequently, men are not illuminated before regeneration; but they are first regenerated, in order to introduce light into the mind. Therefore, they are not regenerated by light, or the truths of Gods word. . . .

V. This change, which we are now considering, is instantaneous, wrought at once, and not gradually.

The heart does not grow more and more disposed to that which is good before regeneration, but remains the same corrupt, rebellious heart, a heart of stone, until God takes it in hand and speaks the powerful word; and it immediately, or at once, becomes a heart of flesh, a new, regenerate heart. There is no possible medium between these two opposites, a regenerate and unregenerate heart, as there can be none between death and life, or non-existence and existence. The unregenerate heart, therefore, is in no degree well disposed or has the least right inclination, but is as far from all right disposition, till the instant in which it is regenerated, as it ever was. And it exists a new heart as instantaneously as did the mind of Adam when God created him. Nothing that precedes regeneration does any thing towards it by altering the bent and bias of the heart so as to time it towards holiness in the least degree. But the heart continues to

oppose that to which it is brought in regeneration till that instant in which it becomes a new heart; and it takes no time to effect this change. The change is, indeed, imperfect at first, the heart is renewed but in part; and after this renovation is begun, it is carried on gradually to greater degrees, until the heart is perfectly renewed, in a work of sanctification. But this new life is first begun instantaneously.

VI. This operation of the Spirit of God, by which men are regenerated, is altogether unperceivable.

The subjects of this change know nothing what is done, or that any thing is done, with respect to their hearts, and are not sensible of any operation and change in any other way but by the effect and consequence of it. We are conscious or sensible of nothing in our own mind; we feel and perceive nothing but our own ideas, thoughts, and exercises; but, as has been observed, the active change or conversion consists in these, and they are the fruit and effect of regeneration, or that work of the Spirit of God, of which I am now speaking. That which takes place with respect to our minds antecedent to the views and exercises we have, as the foundation and cause of them, is, by the supposition, perfectly unexperienced; but this is true of the operation and change now under consideration. All the notice we can have of this operation and change, and all the evidence there can be that our minds are the subjects of it, is by perceiving that which is the fruit and consequence of it by our own views and exercises, which are new, and we find to be of such a nature and kind that we have ground to infer that they are the effect of the operation of the Spirit of God, or the fruits of the Spirit, by which we are become new creatures.

When Adam was created a living soul, the immediate divine operation was not perceived by him, for he had no perception of any thing until he actually existed and the work of his creation was finished: he did not begin to be conscious of any thing until this was over, and then he perceived nothing but what was the fruit and

consequence of the divine operation. So it is in the new creature, by which men are born of the Spirit of God.

I make this remark partly to detect and expose the delusion of those who think they feel the motions of the Spirit of God on their hearts, somewhat as one body is sensibly touched and impressed by another, antecedent to all exercises of their own and independent of them, and place great part of their religion in those feelings or impulses which they call the operation of the Spirit of God, and which immediately suggests to them what is truth, and what is duty, which they think is to be led by the Spirit. We have no way to determine what is the cause of the ideas and sensations of our hearts, whether we are influenced by the Spirit of God or by a wicked spirit, but by considering their nature and tendency, whether they are such as the Scripture tells us are the fruits of the Spirit.

VII. In the work of regeneration, by which men are born of the Spirit, God acts as a sovereign.

When I speak of Gods acting in a sovereign way, I do not mean that he acts above or without all reason and motive, or merely because he will, for God never acts so in any instance whatsoever. Such sovereignty and arbitrariness is in no case to be ascribed to God, for this would be to dishonor and reproach him as acting without any wisdom or holiness. The sovereignty of God consists in his being above all obligation to his creatures, and so infinitely above any direction, influence, and control from them in any thing that he does. In this sense, God is an infinite sovereign; he does just as he pleases, not being influenced by any obligation he is under to any one, any further than he has been pleased to oblige himself by promise or some other way.

Sovereignty is, therefore, in a peculiar manner, essential to all acts of grace, or grace in all cases is sovereign grace, and what is not so is no grace at all; for, whatever good is bestowed, if he that grants it is under any original obligation to do it, or is obliged to do it from the

reason and nature of things, and so owes it to him that receives it, it is only an act of justice, and the nature of paying a debt, and there is no grace in it; for grace is free, unobliged, undeserved favor, and that which is not so is not grace.

In the case before us, God acts in the highest sense and degree as a sovereign, he being not only under no obligation to grant such a favor to any one when he does it, but there is in the sinner something infinitely contrary to this, even infinite unworthiness of the favor granted, and desert of infinite evil. Therefore, whenever God changes and regenerates the heart of a sinner, he does what he was under no sort of obligation to the sinner to do, but might justly leave him to the hardness of his own heart to perish in his sins forever. So that God in determining to whom he will grant this infinite favor, and in giving it to some and withholding it from others, has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. What the sinner does before he is regenerated does not lay God under any degree of obligation to him by promise or any other way, for he complies with none of Gods commands or offers in the least degree. He is not so much as willing to accept of offered mercy, but opposes God and his grace with all his heart, however anxious he may be about his eternal interest, and how much soever he prays and cries for mercy and continues a perfect enemy to the just God and the Savior, until his heart is renewed, and the enmity slain by the regenerating influence of Gods Spirit.

I should now proceed to consider this change in which men are born of God, as it implies, and consists in, that in which they are active, in the views and exercises of their own hearts, for which that which I have been speaking of lays the foundation, were it not that a question may probably arise in the minds of some upon what has been said, which it may be proper to attend to and answer here.

QUESTION. If these things are so, if men are not active, but perfectly passive, in regeneration, and the work is wrought by the Spirit of God without means, and God in this acts as a sovereign,

having mercy on whom he will have mercy, and leaving whom he will to perish, whatever are the sinners circumstances, whatever means are used, and notwithstanding all the pains the sinner takes for his own salvation, then what encouragement and what reason is there for the sinners using any means, or for others to take any pains or use means with him for his salvation?

ANSWER. If what has been now said is agreeable to the truth, there is certainly no reasonable encouragement to the use of means from a view to lay God under any obligation hereby to sinners to regenerate and save them, for God will be under none, nor can he be; he is infinitely far from this.

Nor is there any reason and encouragement to use means with a view that they shall in any degree effect this change, or do any thing towards it, or properly be any means of changing the heart, for this change is wrought immediately.

Neither is there any encouragement to use means in order to make the sinners heart better antecedent to regeneration, or that his case may hereby be made less miserable, if he finally perishes in his sins. None, surely, will imagine that if the sinner continues impenitent, and dies in his sins, the means that have been used for his salvation will be of any advantage to him. It is certain they will not, but the contrary; for this, as well as every thing else, will, in this case, turn against him. The more means are used with the sinner, the greater advantages he enjoys, the more instruction is given him, and the more light and conviction he has in his own conscience, and the greater sense he has of the reality and importance of invisible things, of the worth of his soul, and of eternal happiness, and of the dreadfulfulness of eternal damnation, I say, the more there is of these things the more miserable he will be, if he continues impenitent and perishes after all; for all these things do greatly aggravate the crime of his continuing in sin, so are the occasion of his being more guilty than if they had not taken place. The preaching of the gospel, and so all means of salvation, are a savor of death unto death to them that

perish. (II Cor. 2:17) It is most unreasonable, therefore, to use any means with a sinner in order to his salvation, with a view that they shall be to his advantage, if he continues impenitent and abuses them; for to such they will have directly the contrary effect. (See Matt. 11:20-24.)

And the use of means is so far from making their hearts better, more inclined to obedience and holiness, or less obstinate, while they continue impenitent and unregenerate, that it is the occasion of the contrary to a very great degree. The heart, by resisting means and opposing light and truth, rather grows harder than softer. And the more means are used, and the more the mind is awakened to attention, and the greater light and conviction it has, while the heart continues perfectly impenitent and obstinate in opposition to all this, the more strong and vigorous, as well as more aggravated and criminal, are the sinful exertions of it; for the more the powers of the mind which is wholly corrupt are awakened and roused, the more strong and active are the sinful principles of the heart; and it requires a greater degree of opposition of heart to resist and continue impenitent under ten degrees of light and conviction than it does to continue so under but one degree of this.

Pharaoh, under all the rousing, softening, powerful means used with him to induce and persuade him to obey Jehovah and let the people of Israel go from under his oppressive hand, and all the attention he gave to that matter under all the conviction he had in his own mind, and the trouble and distress with which he was exercised, grew harder rather than more pliable; and the corruption of his heart was exercised in a much higher degree, and was much more aggravated and criminal, than if no means had been used with him, and he had remained without any light and conviction of conscience. But this instance of Pharaoh is very parallel with that of a sinner under conviction, with whom special means are used to bring him to a submission to God, who, notwithstanding, absolutely refuses, and continues in impenitence, as might easily be shown; and it was doubtless designed to be an image of this. All means used with

unregenerate sinners, if they live and die so, will have the same effect and consequence with respect to them that they had in Pharaoh. Therefore, if it was known concerning any one that he would certainly persist and perish in impenitence, there could be no reasonable inducement and motive to use any means with him in order to bring him to repentance, with a view and design of any benefits to him. They who continue impenitent and perish will have no good by any thing; but all their enjoyments and advantages of every kind, all the means used with them for their good, and all the light and conviction of their own consciences will turn against them, and be the occasion of their greater destruction.

Why, then, are means to be used? What reason and encouragement to do it? is still the question. I therefore proceed to a positive answer.

I. The use of means with sinners may answer great and important ends, even though they continue impenitent and perish more dreadfully than if no such means had been used; which might easily be proved, was there need. God answered his own wise and glorious ends in the means he used with Pharaoh, notwithstanding he continued obstinate. But,

II. Means are absolutely necessary in order to the conversion and salvation of men, as much so as if there was no other agent except the subject, and nothing done but what was effected by means. For,

FIRST. Means are necessary to be used in order to prepare persons for regeneration; for, consistent with all that has been said, a preparatory work is as important and necessary as on any plan whatsoever. God can, indeed, just as easily regenerate one as another; he has power to regenerate the most stupid, benighted heathen on earth, or the most ignorant, or deluded, erroneous person in the Christian world, at any moment he pleases, without the use of any means. But as this would not be wise and proper, in this sense it cannot be done, because God never did, and never will, do any thing which is not wise and proper to be done. The reason why it

is not wise and suitable to give a person a new heart in such circumstances and without the use of means is, that in such a case there is no foundation, provision, or opportunity for right views and exercises, if a new heart should be given, therefore no good end answered by it. This would be like creating a monster without any parts or capacity whereby he might live and act in any proper way, but so as to act monstrously, and even counteract and destroy itself; or as if a man should be made without feet or hands, or without any mouth to take the food necessary to support life; or as if an animal should be made in such a situation and circumstances as that it is impossible for him to come at the things necessary for the support of his existence and life.

When God causes this moral change in any man, it is in order to new life and action; therefore, he will not do it where there is no opportunity and means for the support and exercise of this new life; for, though men are not regenerated by means, yet means must be antecedently used, in order to persons being prepared to act properly when regenerated. For instance, the many errors and delusions that all adult, uninstructed persons, and even all careless sinners are in, must be, at least in a good degree, removed, and there must be some considerable degree of speculative knowledge about the things of religion, in order to the proper exercise of holiness or the new creature; and there must be more knowledge than a careless, secure sinner ever attains to, whatever instruction he has, and however much he is given to speculations on the things of religion. The things necessary to be known in order to the proper exercise of Christian holiness are never understood by a secure sinner as they may be by an unregenerate sinner, when, in the use of means, his attention and conscience are thoroughly awakened, and as they must be understood in order to the minds being properly prepared for the exercise of grace. Such an awakened sinner will commonly learn more of those truths that are most necessary to be known, in a very short time, than others will ever learn under the best instruction. . . .

SECONDLY. The use of means is absolutely necessary in order to any exercise of the new heart or of Christian holiness at any time. If we set aside the consideration of a preparatory work, and the necessity of that, in order to regeneration, in the view that has been given of it under the former particular, yet there will be a reason for the use of means, and a necessity of them, in order to salvation. If there is no truth set before the mind objectively, or by way of external exhibition, in any sense and degree, and if there is no attention of the mind and application in the use of any means whatever, the new heart must lie dormant, if there is one, and there can be no possible right exercise. For it is written, Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Therefore, means are necessary in order to conversion, or the exercise of faith and holiness, without which men cannot be saved. He, therefore, who lives and dies in the neglect of the use of means must perish. The use of means, then, is of as great importance to men as is their salvation; and the motives and encouragement to a constant attendance on them, in this view of the matter, are equal to the importance and worth of salvation.

Conversion

We come now to the second thing proposed, which is to consider the change that is included in being born of God, in which men are active, and consists in the views and exercises of heart, which are the genuine fruit and effect of the divine operation and change of which I have been speaking, and which is called active conversion.

We have been so lengthy on the other head, that we must be shorter here, and give only a general view of it, without descending into all those particulars that might be mentioned and enlarged upon.

When the mind is regenerated, and a new heart given, divine things will appear in a new light, and the heart will exercise itself in quite a new manner. The first thing that now presents itself to the mind is the omnipresent and glorious God, the sum of all being and

excellence. Now the heart sees and feels that there is a God with a conviction and assurance that it never had before, and is entertained and fixed in a calm, sweet view and sense of greatness, majesty, wisdom, justice, goodness, excellence, glory, with which it is captivated and charmed. Now the person finds himself surrounded with Deity, and sees God manifesting himself every where and in every thing. The sun, moon, and stars, the clouds, the mountains, the trees, the fields, the grass, and every creature and thing conspire in silent yet clear, powerful, and striking language to declare to him the being, perfections, and glory of God. Now he sees he never before really believed there was a God. He never had any idea and sense of such a Being before, nor received the abundant and all -convincing evidence of his being and perfections.

In this view he sinks into nothing, as it were, before this great and glorious Being, and his heart is tilled with a sense of the glorious greatness and excellence of God, and his infinite worthiness to be loved, obeyed, and honored by all intelligent creatures. Now, therefore, he sees the reasonableness and excellence of that law which requires all to love him with all their hearts; so the divine law comes into view, in all its justice, goodness, and glory. His heart approves of it as most worthy to be maintained and honored, while it requires perfect, persevering love and obedience, on pain of eternal damnation. He, therefore, now sees the infinite evil of sin, its infinite odiousness and ill desert, and, in this view, sees his own sinfulness and vileness, and sinks down, as it were, infinitely low, in a sense of his own infinite odiousness and guilt; and hates, judges, and condemns himself, heartily acknowledging the justice of his condemnation, feeling himself most righteously cast off forever into eternal misery, and, therefore, in himself, wholly lost and infinitely miserable.

And when he sees what he has done, how he has broken and dishonored the divine law, and despised and contemned God, and trampled on his most sacred authority, how infinitely unreasonable and injurious to the divine character he has been, he desires and

wishes with all his heart that the mighty breach could be made up, and the injury repaired and removed; that the blot he has cast on the glorious character of God might be wiped off, and full recompense and atonement made; and he has not the least wish that he might be pardoned and obtain the favor of God in any other way; and he immediately sees and feels that he is infinitely far from any possibility of doing this himself; that he is infinitely in debt, and has nothing to pay; has nothing but infinite vileness, unworthiness, and guilt to offer, which can only pull down divine vengeance on his head; that his repentance, however sincere, can do nothing towards making up the breach, or in the least degree atone for the least sin. He is, therefore, far from any disposition or thought to attempt to offer any thing of his own, by which he might obtain the forgiveness of his sins and the favor of God, which now appear infinitely important and desirable. Thus the law comes, sin revives, and he dies.

And now he is prepared to receive the good news reported in the gospel, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world! This is to him good tidings of great joy. Behold, the Son of God, who is equal with God, and is God, who himself made the world, has become a man; has been in the world, and, by his own obedience and sufferings unto death, has made full reparation and atonement for sin, is risen from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, to give repentance and remission of sins, and is ready to pardon and save all that come unto him, to which all, even the most guilty and vile, are freely excited. Now the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shines in his heart, and the character of the Mediator appears to him in all its fulness and glory; and the way of salvation by Christ appears wise, excellent, and glorious, and pleases, rejoices, and charms his heart; and in a sense of his own infinite unworthiness, vileness, and guilt, he puts his whole trust in him for pardon and salvation, deliverance from the guilt and power and pollution of sin, desiring to be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the

law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

And while he attends to the dignity and excellence of Christs person, and sees what he has done and suffered to obey and honor the divine law and make atonement for sin, and sees and tastes the wonderful, amazing goodness of God and the Redeemer, exercised and manifested in this redemption, his sense of the worthiness of the law of God and the infinite vileness of sin rises higher and higher; and his heart is more and more warmed with love to God and the Redeemer, and filled with hatred and abhorrence of sin, and is especially broken in repentance and self-abhorrence, in a sense of his amazing ingratitude and vileness in neglecting and opposing this way of salvation, and slighting and rejecting such a Savior.

And now, with all his heart he renounces the ways of sin, and with pleasure and strength of soul gives himself up to God through Jesus Christ, to serve and obey him forever, feeling it to be the happiest thing in the world, the greatest privilege he can imagine, to be wholly devoted to God in all the ways of strict and pure religion and holy obedience.

In these views and exercises of heart, active conversion from sin to God does consist; and all this is implied in faith in Jesus Christ, or receiving him, and believing on his name; and every one in whose mind these things do not take place, in the sum and substance of them, is not converted or born of God. Though I pretend not to say that the views and exercises of every one that is converted do sensibly take place exactly in the order and connection in which I have now placed them, so that every true convert shall be able to recollect that these things passed in his mind just so, and in this order, from step to step, yet he must be sensible that all this has taken place in his heart and abides with him; and it may be demonstrated that they do in fact take place in this connection and order, and that there is no other possible way, though all may be so much at once, as it were, and the exercises of the mind may be so quick as not to be

attended with any consciousness of their being in this particular arrangement.

But to proceed.

The person of whom I am speaking is now become a truly humble person, in a sense of his own meanness, vileness, and infinite unworthiness and guilt, and his absolute dependence on God for strength and righteousness. This lays him low before God, and he is disposed to walk humbly with him, working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, i.e., in a sense of his own nothingness, weakness, and insufficiency with respect to any good thing, and his perfect, continual, and, as it were, infinite dependence on God, who alone worketh in him to will and to do; and as he has a more full, clear, and constant view and sense of his own amazing vileness and misery than he can have of others, he is naturally disposed in lowliness of mind to prefer others to himself, and led to a meek and humble conduct and behavior among men.

And he has now a new view and sense of the truth, divinity, excellence, and sweetness of the Word of God; and he delights in the Holy Scriptures, and is disposed to meditate therein day and night. They are more precious to him than much fine gold, and sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb. He now becomes a devout and zealous worshipper of God. With pleasure he daily enters into his closet, and prays to and praises Him who sees in secret, and would not be deprived of this privilege for all the kingdoms of the world. He loves to join with Christians in social prayer and religious conversation; and his feet run with constancy and eagerness to the place of public worship, where he devoutly joins in prayer and praise, and with great attention hears the word preached, receives instruction, and is quickened thereby.

And as he has given himself up to God sincerely and without reserve, he is from hence naturally led to desire to do it publicly, by espousing the cause of God, and appearing on his side, as a disciple and

follower of Christ before the world, by a public profession of religion. And it appears to him to be a great privilege to be among the number of Gods visible people, to be united with them, and have the advantage of their Christian watch and care; and without delay he joins with them, and attends on all Christs holy institutions.

And in this change he becomes a friend to mankind, and his heart is filled with love to them. This effectually, and at once, cures him of all the ways of deceit, injustice, and injuriousness in his concerns and dealings with his neighbor, of which the world is so full, and which are so common among professing Christians; and he is immediately possessed with that harmlessness, honesty, sincerity, truth, integrity, and faithfulness of heart which is peculiar to a true Christian; and he is not only just and upright, but his heart is full of goodness, kind affection, tenderness, and mercy, which prompts him to do good to all as he has opportunity, especially to seek and promote, in all the ways he can, the welfare of their souls in their eternal salvation.

In a word, he heartily devotes himself to the service of God and his fellow-men, as his whole and only business, and to this end is faithful and diligent in his own proper station and calling; not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. And in these things he perseveres and makes progress to the end of life; for conversion is but the beginning of the same thing which is carried on and makes advances unto perfect holiness.

This is a short, imperfect sketch of the true convert, the new man, who is born of the Spirit of God. I will conclude with two or three reflections on the whole.

I. The view we have had of this matter may serve to teach us what **it** is to be led by the Spirit of God, which is spoken of as a privilege common to all Christians. (Born. 8:14; Gal. 5:18) It is not to be influenced and guided by any unaccountable impulses, or immediate suggestions to the mind of some new truth not contained in divine revelation, or of particular texts or passages of Scripture. But the

Christian is led by the Spirit of God, by the Spirits dwelling in him as a principle of new life and action, begetting, maintaining, and increasing a right taste and temper of mind, and thus preparing and disposing the heart to attend to, and discern, the truths revealed in Gods word, or exercise itself in a wise and holy manner, in a view and sense of the truths contained in divine revelation. This is all the leading and influence the Christian wants from the Spirit of God. If he has a right taste and disposition of heart to a sufficient degree, he will want nothing further from the immediate influences of the divine Spirit in order to be led into all truth, and know and do his duty in every branch of it.

II. We may hence learn what persons are to inquire after in order to determine whether they are born of God or not; viz., what are the views and exercises of their own hearts, and what influence and effect these have in practice. By this, my hearers, you are to determine whether you have the Spirit of God or not, even by considering and finding out whether you have the discerning and exercises in which conversion consists, even all those holy exercises by which men do first turn from sin to God, and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and in which they persevere in a holy life, which are in Scripture called the fruit of the Spirit.

Therefore, what has now been said in the description of conversion may be applied as matter of examination and trial by all those who are desirous to know what their state is, whether they are born of God or not. They who are in any good degree engaged to get satisfaction in this interesting point, have been hearing with self-application, in this view. And I recommend it to all seriously, and with impartiality, to apply what has been said so far as it appears to them to be agreeable to the Word of God to themselves, by way of self-examination. And may the Lord give us understanding and discerning to determine this important question according to truth.

And have any of you good and satisfying evidence that you are born of God; give all the glory to his sovereign grace, and remember that

this is but the beginning of something very great and glorious. Think not that ye have already attained, or are already perfect, but follow after, that you may apprehend that for which you are apprehended of Christ Jesus. Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

III. They who find themselves in an unregenerate state may most reasonably be concerned about themselves, in a view of the infinitely miserable condition they are in. Your case is shockingly dreadful. There is nothing good or right in your hearts; but you are perfectly corrupt and wicked, devoted to that which is your destruction. And you are wholly and perfectly to blame for all this, and, therefore, infinitely guilty and odious in Gods sight, and most unworthy of the least pity and mercy from him; so that you are eternally undone, unless God shall exercise that distinguishing sovereign grace towards you which you have been always refusing and opposing, and which he may most justly refuse to grant.

Say not within yourselves, We are utterly unable to help ourselves; we can do nothing towards our salvation; God must do all; why do you blame us? it signifies nothing for us to take any pains about the matter. If God is pleased to regenerate and save us, he will do **it** in his own time. Why, then, do you call upon us, and give us any trouble about the matter? As well may the man who has turned rebel against his sovereign, and by this means has undone himself, and is apprehended and condemned to the most cruel torture and death, and is exposed to be executed every hour; at the same time, the prince whom he has offended and injured offers to pardon him, and put him into most happy circumstances, if he will only make his submission to him and be willing to be his friend and servant, and is sending persons to treat with him about this matter, and urge him by all imaginable arguments and motives to accept of the kind and advantageous offer, so that all the difficulty of obtaining complete deliverance is his disposition to justify himself in his rebellion, and

unwillingness to comply with the most reasonable and kind proposals, I say, as well may such a one reply, I cannot help myself; unless the prince give me a new heart, and incline me to accept of his offer as well as make it to me, the proposal will do me no good. I am, therefore, not to blame; I will not give myself the least trouble about it, let come what will. And as reasonably might a man use this language who has set his own house on fire, which is burning down over his head, and he sits easy and secure in the midst of it, or is busy throwing oil into the flame, and increasing the fire, while he is called upon and urged to escape for his life.

It is your indispensable duty, your highest interest, immediately to repent, believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and give yourselves up to God. Nothing can possibly be the least excuse for your neglecting it one minute; you have all the opportunity and advantage you can desire; and motives are set before you which are, I may say, infinitely weighty and forcible. And if divine, eternal vengeance should fall on your heads immediately, for the hardness of your hearts and continued rebellion, in these circumstances, God will be just, and you most justly miserable forever. And how soon this will be your case, you know not.

It is certain this will come upon you soon, unless you wake up and attend to your case and fly to the only refuge. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of and he shall lift you up. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved.

Efficacious Grace

by Loraine Boettner

1. TEACHING OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION

THE Westminster Confession states the doctrine of Efficacious Grace thus: — “All those whom God has predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by His almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ, yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.

“This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed by it.”¹

And the Shorter Catechism, in answer to the question ‘What is effectual calling?’ says, “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel.”²

2. NECESSITY FOR THE CHANGE

The merits of Christ’s obedience and suffering are sufficient for, adapted to, and freely offered to all men. The question then arises, Why is one saved, and another lost? What causes some men to repent and believe, while others, with the same external privileges, reject the Gospel and continue in impenitence and unbelief? The

Calvinist says that it is God who makes this difference, that he efficaciously persuades some to come to Him; but the Arminian ascribes it to the men themselves.

As Calvinists we hold that the condition of men since the fall is such that if left to themselves they would continue in their state of rebellion and refuse all offers of salvation. Christ would then have died in vain. But since it was promised that He should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, the effects of that sacrifice have not been left suspended upon the whim of man's changeable and sinful will. Rather, the work of God in redemption has been rendered effective through the mission of the Holy Spirit who so operates on the chosen people that they are brought to repentance and faith, and thus made heirs of eternal life.

The teaching of the Scriptures is such that we must say that man in his natural state is radically corrupt, and that he can never become holy and happy through any power of his own. He is spiritually dead, and must be saved by Christ if at all. Common reason tells us that if a man is so fallen so to be at enmity with God, that enmity must be removed before he can have any desire to do God's will. If a sinner is to desire redemption through Christ, he must receive a new disposition. He must be born again, and from above (John 3:8). It is easy enough for us to see that the Devil and the demons would have to be thus sovereignly changed if they were ever to be saved; yet the innate sinful principles which actuate fallen man are of the same nature, although not yet so intense, as are those which actuate fallen angels. If man is dead in sin, then nothing short of this supernatural life-giving power of the Holy Spirit will ever cause him to do that which is spiritually good. If it were possible for him to enter heaven while still possessed of the old nature, then, for him, heaven would be as bad as hell; for he would be out of harmony with his environment. He would loathe its very atmosphere and would be in misery when in the presence of God. Hence the necessity for the inward work of the Holy Spirit.

In the nature of the case the first movement toward salvation can no more come from man than his body if dead could originate its own life. Regeneration is a sovereign gift of God, graciously bestowed on those whom He has chosen; and for this great recreative work God alone is competent. It cannot be granted on the foresight of anything good in the subjects of this saving change, for in their unrenewed nature they are incapable of acts with right motives toward God; hence none could possibly be foreseen. In his unregenerate state man never adequately realizes his utterly helpless condition. He imagines that he is able to reform himself and turn to God if he chooses. He even imagines that he is able to counteract the designs of infinite Wisdom, and to defeat the agency of Omnipotence itself. As Dr. Warfield says, "Sinful man stands in need, not of inducements or assistance to save himself, but precisely of saving; and Jesus Christ has come not to advise, or urge, or woo, or help him to save himself, but to save him."

3. AN INWARD CHANGE WROUGHT BY SUPERNATURAL POWER

In the Scriptures this change is called a regeneration (Titus 3:5), a spiritual resurrection which is wrought by the same mighty power with which God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead (Eph. 1:19,20), a calling out of darkness into God's marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9), a passing out of death into life (John 5:24), a new birth (John 3:3), a making alive (Col. 2:13), a taking away of the heart of stone and giving of a heart of flesh (Ezek. 11:19), and the subject of the change is said to be a new creature (II Cor. 5:17). Such descriptions completely refute the Arminian notion that regeneration is primarily man's act, Induced by moral persuasion or the mere Influence of the truth as presented in a general way by the Holy Spirit. And just because this change is produced by power from on high which is the living spring of a new and recreated life, it is irresistible and permanent.

The regeneration of the soul is something which is wrought in us, and not an act performed by us. It is an instantaneous change from spiritual death to spiritual life. It is not even a thing of which we are conscious at the moment it occurs, but rather something which lies lower than consciousness. At the moment of its occurrence the soul is as passive as was Lazarus when he was called back to life by Jesus. Concerning the soul in regeneration Charles Hodge says:

It is the subject, and not the agent of the change. The soul cooperates, or, is active in what precedes and in what follows the change, but the change itself is something experienced, and not something done. The blind and the lame, who came to Christ, may have undergone much labor in getting into His presence, and they joyfully exerted the new power imparted to them, but they were entirely passive in the moment of the healing. They in no way co-operated in the production of that effect. The same is true in regeneration.³

And again he says:

The same doctrine on this subject is taught in other words when regeneration is declared to be a new birth. At birth the child enters upon a new state of existence. Birth is not its own act. It is born. It comes from a state of darkness, in which the objects adapted to its nature cannot act on it or awaken its activities. As soon as it comes into the world all its faculties are awakened; it sees, feels, and hears, and gradually unfolds all its faculties as a rational and moral, as well as a physical being. The scriptures teach that it is thus in regeneration. The soul enters upon a new state. It is introduced into a new world. A whole class of objects before unknown or unappreciated are revealed to it, and exercise upon it their appropriate influence.⁴

Regeneration involves an essential change of character. It is a making the tree good in order that the fruit may be good. As a result of this change, the person passes from a state of unbelief to one of

saving faith, not by any process of research or argument, but of inward experience. And as we had nothing to do with our physical birth, but received it as a sovereign gift of God, we likewise have nothing to do with our spiritual birth but receive it also as a sovereign gift. Each occurred without any exercise of our own power, and even without our consent being asked. We no more resist the latter than we resist the former. And as we go ahead and live our own natural lives after being born, so we go ahead and work out our own salvation after being regenerated.

The Scriptures pointedly teach that the prerequisite for entrance into the Kingdom of God is a radical transformation wrought by the Spirit of God Himself. And since this work on the soul is sovereign and supernatural it may be granted or withheld according to the good pleasure of God. Consequently, salvation, to whomsoever it may be granted, is entirely of grace. The born-again Christian comes to see that God is in reality “the author and perfecter” of his faith (Heb. 12:2), and that in this respect He has done a work for him which He has not done for his unconverted neighbor. In answer to the question, “Who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (I Cor. 4:7), he replies that it is God who has put the difference between men, especially between the redeemed and the lost. If any person believes, it is because God has quickened him; and if any person fails to believe, it is because God has withheld that grace which He was under no obligation to bestow. Strictly speaking there is no such thing as a “self-made” man; the highest type of man is the one who can say with Paul, “By the grace of God I am what I am.”

When Jesus said, “Lazarus, come forth,” a mighty power went along with the command and gave effect to it. Lazarus, of course, was not conscious of any other than his own power working in him; but when he later understood the situation he undoubtedly saw that he had been called into life wholly by divine power. God’s power was primary, his was secondary, and would never have been exerted except in response to the divine. It is in this manner that every

redeemed soul is brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. And just as the dead Lazarus was first called back into life and then breathed and ate, so the soul dead in sin is first transferred to spiritual life and then exercises faith and repentance and does good works.

Paul emphasized this very point when he said that although Paul might plant and Apollos might water, it was God who gave the increase. Mere human efforts are unavailing. If a crop of wheat is to be raised, man can do only the most external and mechanical things toward that end. It is God who gives the increase through the sovereign control of forces which are entirely outside the sphere of man's influence. Likewise, in regard to the soul it matters not how eloquent the preacher may be, unless God opens the heart there will be no conversion. Here especially man does only the most external and mechanical things and it is the Holy Spirit who imparts the new principle of spiritual life.

The Scripture doctrine of the fall represents man as morally ruined, unable by nature to do any good thing. The truly converted Christian comes to see his inability and knows that he does not make himself eligible for heaven by his own good works and merits. He realizes that he cannot move spiritually but as he is moved; that like the branches of a tree, he can make no shoot, nor put forth leaves, nor bear fruit, except as he receives sap from the root. Or, as Calvin says, "No man makes himself a sheep, but is created such by divine grace." The elect hear the Gospel and believe — not always at the first hearing, but at the divinely appointed time — the non-elect hear but disbelieve, not because they lack sufficient evidence, but because their inward nature is opposed to holiness. The reason for the two kinds of response is to be traced to an external source. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh," Ezek. 36:26. The "heart" in Biblical language includes the whole inner man.

Under the terms of the eternal covenant which was made between the Father and the Son, Christ has been exalted to be the mediatorial Ruler over the whole earth in order that He may direct the developing kingdom. This is one of the rewards of His obedience and suffering. His directing power is exerted through the agency of the Holy Spirit, through whom His purchased redemption is applied to all for whom it was intended and under the precise conditions of time and circumstance predetermined in the covenant. We are told that it is by no ordinary providence of God that a man believes but by the same mighty power that was exerted when Christ was raised from the dead (Eph. 1:19, 20). As certainly as it was effective in the resurrection of Christ it will be effective when put forth in an individual, whether in a physical or a spiritual resurrection.

The physical and the spiritual worlds are each the creation of God. In the physical world the water is sovereignly changed into wine, and the leper is healed by a touch. The Arminian readily admits God's miraculous power in the physical world; why, then, does he deny it in the spiritual world, as if the spirits of men were beyond His control? We believe that God can change a bad man into a good man when He pleases. That is one form of authority which it is the right of the Creator to exercise over the creature. It is one of the means by which the world is governed; and when God sees that it is best for the welfare of the individual and for the development of His kingdom to thus work, it is not only permissible but right that He should do so. The effect follows immediately upon the volition, as when He said, Let there be light. "The Divine saving act," says Mozley, "is the bestowal of this irresistible grace. The subject of the Divine predetermination is rescued by an act of absolute power from the dominion of sin, dragged from it, as it were, by force, converted, filled with the love of God and his neighbor, and qualified infallibly for a state of ultimate reward."⁵

As the physical eye once blinded cannot be restored to sight by any amount or intensity of light falling upon it, so the soul dead in sin cannot acquire spiritual vision by any amount of Gospel truth

presented to it. Unless the surgeon's knife or a miracle restore the eye to its normal condition, sight is impossible; and unless the soul be set right through regeneration it will never comprehend and accept the Gospel truth. In regeneration God bids the sinner live; and immediately he is alive, filled with a new spiritual life. Lydia, the seller of purple in the city of Thyatira, gave heed to the things which were spoken by Paul, because the Lord had first opened her heart (Acts 16:14). Christ taught this same truth when in His intercessory prayer He said concerning Himself that God "gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given Him, He should give eternal life," John 17:2; and again, "For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom He will," John 5:21.

Under the covenant made with Adam, man's destiny depended on his own works. We know the results of that trial. Now if man could not work out his salvation when he was upright, what chance has he to do so since he is fallen? Happily for us, God has this time taken the matter into His own hand. And if God again gave man free will by which to work out his own salvation, what would He be doing but again instituting the dispensation which has already been tried and which ended in failure? Suppose a man is carried away by a torrent which he is unable to master, would it be reasonable or wise to take him out only to recruit his strength for a second trial? Would it not be a mockery to save him only to repeat the process? Since God does not repeat His dispensations it follows that the second time He would order salvation on a different plan. If further works are to be wrought, then God, and not man, will be the author; and the new dispensation, like the old, is adjusted to the state in which it finds man.

We are very sure that no property does, or can, attach to the will of man, whether fallen or unfallen, that can take it beyond the reach of God's sovereign control. Saul was called at the height of his persecuting zeal and was transformed into the saintly Paul. The poor dying thief on the cross was called in the last hour of his earthly life.

When Paul preached at Antioch “as many as were ordained to eternal life (and only they) believed,” Acts 13:48. If God purposed that all men should be saved He most certainly could bring all to salvation. But for reasons which have been only partly revealed, He leaves many impenitent. Through all of His works, however, God does nothing which is inconsistent with man’s nature as a rational and responsible being.

One of the great short-comings of Arminianism has been its failure to recognize the necessity for the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit on the heart. Instead, it has resolved regeneration into a more or less gradual change which is carried out by the individual person, a mere change of purpose in the sinner’s mind, which is a result of moral persuasion and the general force of truth. It has insisted upon “free will,” “the power of contrary choice,” etc., and has taught that ultimately the sinner determines his own destiny. In its more consistent forms it makes man a co-savior with Christ, as if the glory in redemption was to be divided between the grace of Christ and the will of man, the latter dividing the spoils with the former.

If, as Arminians say, God is earnestly trying to convert every person, He is making a great failure of His work; for among the adult population of the world up to the present time, where He has succeeded in saving one He has let perhaps twenty-five fall into hell. Such a view sheds little glory on the Divine Majesty. Concerning the Arminian doctrine of resistible grace Toplady says that it is:

a doctrine which represents Omnipotence itself as wishing and trying and striving to no purpose. According to this tenet, God, in endeavoring (for it seems that it is only an endeavor) to convert sinners, may, by sinners, be foiled, defeated, and disappointed; He may lay close and long siege to the soul, and that soul can, from the citadel of impregnable free will, hang out a flag of defiance to God Himself, and by a continued obstinancy of defence, and a few vigorous sallies of free will compel Him to raise the siege. In a word, the Holy Spirit, after having for years

perhaps, danced attendance on the free will of man, may at length, like a discomfited general, or an unsuccessful politician, be either put to ignominious flight, or contemptuously dismissed, *re infecta*, without accomplishing the end for which He was sent.

It is unreasonable to suppose that the sinner can thus defeat the creative power of Almighty God. "All authority hath been given to me in heaven and on earth," said the risen Lord. No limit is set to that authority. "Is anything too hard for Jehovah?" "He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and no one can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" In view of these passages and many others to the same effect it ill becomes us to imagine that God is struggling along with man as best He can, persuading, exhorting, pleading, but unable to accomplish His purpose if His will otherwise. If God does not effectually call, we may imagine Him saying, "I will that all men should be saved; nevertheless, it must finally be, not as I will but as they will." He is then put into the same extremity with Darius who would gladly have saved Daniel, but could not (Dan. 6:14). No Christian who is familiar with what the Scriptures teach about the sovereignty of God can believe that He is thus defeated in His creatures. Is it not necessary that a creature must have power to defy and thwart the purposes of Almighty God before his actions can be rewarded or punished. Furthermore, if God actually stood powerless before the majesty of man's lordly will, there would be but little use to pray for Him to convert any one. It would then be more reasonable for us to direct our petitions to the man himself.

4. THE EFFECT PRODUCED IN THE SOUL

The immediate and important effect of this inward, purifying change of nature is that the person loves righteousness and trusts in Christ for salvation. Whereas his natural element was sin, it now becomes holiness; sin becomes repulsive to him, and he loves to do good. This effective and irresistible grace converts the will itself and forms a

holy character in the person by a creative act. It removes a man's appetite for sinful things so that he refrains from sin, not as the dyspeptic refuses to eat the dainties for which he longs, lest his indulgence should be punished with the agonies of sickness, but rather because he hates sin for its own sake. The holy and thorough submission to God's will, which the convert before dreaded and resisted, he now loves and approves. Obedience has become not only the obligatory but the preferable good.

But so long as people remain in this world they are subject to temptations and they still have the remnants of the old nature clinging to them. Hence they are often deluded, and commit sin; yet these sins are only the death struggles and frenzied writhings of the old nature which has already received the death blow. The regenerate also suffer pain, disease, discouragement, and even death itself, although they are steadily advancing toward complete salvation.

At this point many people confuse regeneration and sanctification. Regeneration is exclusively God's work, and it is an act of His free grace in which He implants a new principle of spiritual life in the soul. It is performed by supernatural power and is complete in an instant. On the other hand sanctification is a process through which the remains of sin in the outward life are gradually removed, so that, as the Shorter Catechism says, we are enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. It is a joint work of God and man. It consists in the gradual triumph of the new nature implanted in regeneration over the evil that still remains after the heart has been renewed. Or, in other words, we may say that complete sanctification lags behind after the life has been in principle won to God. Perfect righteousness is the goal which is set before us all through this life and every Christian should make steady progress toward that goal. Sanctification, however, is not fully completed until death, at which time the Holy Spirit cleanses the soul of every vestige of sin, making it holy and raising it above even the possibility of sinning.

Strictly speaking, we may say that redemption is not fully complete until the saved have received their resurrection bodies. In one sense it was complete when Christ died on Calvary; yet it is applied only gradually by the Holy Spirit. And since the Holy Spirit does thus effectually apply to the elect the merits of Christ's sacrifice, their salvation is most infallibly certain and can by no means be prevented. Hence the certainty that the will of God for the salvation of his people is in no wise disappointed or made void by His creatures.

5. THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST'S WORK — EVANGELICALISM

We now come to discuss the sufficiency of Christ's work in the matter of redemption. We believe that by His vicarious suffering and death He fully paid the debt which His people owed to divine justice, thus releasing them from the consequences of sin, and that by keeping the law of perfect obedience and living a sinless life He vicariously earned for them the reward of eternal life. His work fully provided for their rescue from sin and for their establishment in heaven. These two phases of His work are sometimes referred to as His active and passive obedience. This doctrine of the sufficiency of His work is set forth in the Westminster Confession when we are told that by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself He "fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father had given Him."⁶ Had He only paid the penalty for sin without also earning the reward of eternal life, His people would then only have been raised up to the zero point. They would then have been on the same plane as was Adam before he fell, and would still have been under obligation to earn eternal life for themselves. To Paul's declaration that Christ is all in all in matters of salvation (Col. 3:11), we can add that man is nothing at all as to that work, and has not in himself anything which merits salvation. We should remember that the Gospel is not good advice, but good news. It does

not tell us what we are to do to earn salvation, but proclaims to us what Christ has done to save us.

To doubt that any for whom Christ died will be saved, or that righteousness will eventually triumph, is to doubt the sufficiency of Jesus Christ for the work which He undertook in our behalf. On the cross Jesus declared that He had finished the work of redemption which the Father gave Him to do. But as Toplady remarks, “the person with power to accept or reject as he pleases must say: “No, thou didst not finish the work of redemption which was given thee to do; thou didst indeed a part of it, but I myself must add something to it or the whole of thy performance will stand for naught.”

Only those views which ascribe to God all the power in the salvation of sinners are consistently evangelical, for the word “evangelical” means that it is God alone who saves. If faith and obedience must be added, depending upon the independent choice of man, we no longer have evangelicalism. Evangelicalism with a universal atonement leads to universal salvation; and in so far as Arminianism holds that Christ died for all men and that the Spirit strives to apply this redemption to all men but that only some are saved, it is not evangelical.

We may further illustrate this principle of evangelicalism by supposing a group of people who are stricken with a fatal disease. Then if a doctor administers to them a medicine which is a certain cure, all who get the medicine will recover. In the same manner, if the work of Christ is effective, and if it is applied to all men by the Spirit, all will be saved. Hence to become evangelical the Arminian must become a universalist. Calvinism alone, which holds to evangelicalism with a limited atonement and asserts that the work of Christ accomplishes what it was intended to accomplish, is consistent with the facts of Scripture and experience.

6. THE ARMINIAN VIEW OF UNIVERSAL GRACE

The universalistic note is always prominent in the Arminian system. A typical example of this is seen in the assertion of Prof. Henry C. Sheldon, who for a number of years was connected with Boston University. Says he: —“Our contention is for the universality of the opportunity of salvation, as against an exclusive and unconditional choice of individuals to eternal life.”⁷ Here we notice not only (1) the characteristic Arminian stress on universalism, but also (2) the recognition that, in the final analysis, all that God does for the salvation of men does not actually save anybody, but that it only opens up a way of salvation so that men can save themselves, —and then for all practical purposes we are back on the plane of pure naturalism!

Perhaps the strongest assertion of the Arminian construction is to be found in the creed of the Evangelical Union body, or so-called Morisonians, the very purpose of which was to protest against unconditional election. A summary of its “Three Universalities” is found in the creed thus: “The love of God the Father, in the gift and sacrifice of Jesus to all men everywhere without distinction, exception, or respect of persons; the love of God the Son, in the gift and sacrifice of Himself as a true propitiation for the sins of the whole world; the love of God the Holy Spirit, in His personal and continuous work of applying to the souls of all men the provisions of divine grace.”

Certainly, if God loves all men alike, and if Christ died for all men alike, and the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of that redemption to all men alike, one of two conclusions follows. (1) All men alike are saved (which is contradicted by Scripture), or, (2) all that God does for man does not save him, but leaves him to save himself! What then becomes of our evangelicalism, which means that it is God alone who saves sinners? If we assert that after God has done all His work it is still left for man to “accept” or “not resist,” we give man veto power over the work of Almighty God and salvation rests ultimately in the hand of man. In this system no matter how great a proportion of the work of salvation God may do, man is ultimately

the deciding factor. And the man who does come to salvation has some personal merit of his own; he has some grounds to boast over those who are lost. He can point the finger of scorn and say, "You had as good chance as I had. I accepted and you rejected the offer. Therefore you deserve to suffer." How different is this from Paul's declaration that it is "not of works, that no man should glory," and "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," Eph. 2:9; I Cor. 1:31.

The tendency in all these universalistic systems in which man proudly seizes the helm and proclaims himself the master of his destiny is to reduce Christianity to a religion of works. Luther had this very point in mind when he satirically remarked concerning the moralists of his day, "Here we are always wanting to turn the tables and do good of ourselves to that poor man, our Lord God, from whom we are rather to receive it."

Zanchius says that Arminianism gently whispers in the ear of man that even in his fallen state he has "both the will and the power to do what is good and acceptable to God: — that Christ's death is accepted by God as a universal atonement for all men; in order that every one may, if he will, save himself by his own free will and good works:— that in the exercise of our natural powers, we may arrive at perfection, even in the present state of life." "The issue," says Dr. Warfield,

is indeed a fundamental one and it is clearly drawn. Is it God the Lord who saves us, or is it we ourselves? And does God the Lord save us, or does He merely open up the way of salvation, and leave it, according to our choice, to walk in it or not? The parting of the ways is the old parting of the ways between Christianity and autosoterism. Certainly only he can claim to be evangelical who with full consciousness rests entirely and directly on God and on God alone for his salvation.⁹

**"Not the labors of my
hands**

**Can fulfill Thy law's
commands;
Could my zeal no
respite know,
Could my tears forever
flow,
All for sin could not
atone —
Thou must save, and
Thou alone. Nothing in
my hands I bring —
Simply to Thy cross I
cling;
Naked come to Thee
for dress —
Helpless look to Thee
for grace;
Foul, I to thy fountain
fly —
Wash me, Saviour, or I
die !”**

7. NO VIOLATION OF MAN'S FREE AGENCY

It is a common thing for opponents to represent this doctrine as implying that men are forced to believe and turn to God against their wills, or, that it reduces men to the level of machines in the matter of salvation. This is a misrepresentation. Calvinists hold no such opinion, and in fact the full statement of the doctrine excludes or contradicts it. The Westminster Confession, after stating that this efficacious grace which results in conversion is an exercise of omnipotence and cannot be defeated, adds, “Yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.” The power by which the work of regeneration is effected is not of an outward and compelling nature. Regeneration does no more violence to the soul than demonstration does to the intellect, or persuasion the heart. Man is not dealt with as if he were a stone or a log. Neither is he

treated as a slave, and driven against his own will to seek salvation. Rather the mind is illuminated, and the entire range of conceptions with regard to God, self, and sin, is changed. God sends His Spirit and, in a way which shall forever redound to the praise of His mercy and grace, sweetly constrains the person to yield. The regenerated man finds himself governed by new motives and desires, and things which were once hated are now loved and sought after. This change is not accomplished through any external compulsion but through a new principle of life which has been created within the soul and which seeks after the food which alone can satisfy it.

The spiritual law, like the civil law, is “not a terror to the good work, but to the evil”; and we find a good analogy for this in human affairs. Compare the law-abiding citizen and the criminal. The law-abiding citizen goes about his affairs day after day unconscious of most of the laws of the state and nation in which he lives. He looks to the government officials and to the police as his friends. They represent constituted authority which he respects and in which he delights. He is a free man. For him the law exists only as the protector of his life, his loved ones, and his property. But when we look at the criminal the whole picture is changed. He probably knows more about the statutes than does the law-abiding man. He studies them in order that he may evade them and defeat their purpose. He lives in fear. He defends his secret room with bullet-proof doors, and carries a revolver for fear of what the police or other people may do to him. He is under a constant bondage. His idea of liberty is to eliminate the police, corrupt the courts, and bring into general disrepute the laws and customs of society on which he tries to prey.

All of us have had experiences in our every day lives in which we refuse to do certain things, but upon the introduction of new factors we have changed our minds and have freely and gladly done what we before opposed. Certainly there is nothing in this doctrine to warrant the representation that, upon Calvinistic principles, men are forced to repent and believe whether or not they choose to do so.

But some may ask, Do not the many passages in the Bible such as, “If thou shalt obey,” “If thou turn unto Jehovah,” “If thou do that which is evil,” and so forth, at least imply that man has free will and ability? It does not follow, however, that merely because God commands man is able to obey. Oftentimes parents play with their children in telling them to do this or that when their very purpose is to show them their inability and to induce them to ask for the parents’ help. When men of the world hear such language they assume that they have sufficient power in themselves, and, like the selfconceited lawyer to whom Jesus said, “This do, and thou shalt live,” they go away believing that they are able to earn salvation by good works. But when the truly spiritual man hears such language he is led to see that he cannot fulfill the commandment, and so cries out to the Father to do the work for him. In these passages man is taught not what he can do, but what he ought to do; and woe to the one who is so blind that he cannot see this truth, for until he does see it he can never adequately appreciate the work of Christ. In answer to the despairing sinner’s cry the Scriptures reveal a salvation which is all of grace, the free gift of God’s love and mercy in Christ. And the one who sees himself thus saved by grace instinctively cries out with David, “Who am I, O Lord Jehovah, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me thus far?”

The special grace which we refer to as efficacious is sometimes called irresistible grace. This latter term, however, is somewhat misleading since it does suggest that a certain overwhelming power is exerted upon the person, in consequence of which he is compelled to act contrary to his desires, whereas the meaning intended, as we have stated before, is that the elect are so influenced by divine power that their coming is an act of voluntary choice.

8. COMMON GRACE

Apart from this special grace which issues in the salvation of its objects, there is what we may call “common grace,” or general influences of the Holy Spirit which to a greater or lesser degree are

shared by all men. God causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain upon the just and the unjust. He sends fruitful seasons and gives many things which make for the general happiness of mankind. Among the most common blessings which are to be traced to this source we may name health, material prosperity, general intelligence, talents for art, music, oratory, literature, architecture, commerce, inventions, etc. In many instances the non-elect receive these blessings in greater abundance than do the elect, for we often find that the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of light. Common grace is the source of all the order, refinement, culture, common virtue, etc., which we find in the world, and through it the moral power of the truth upon the heart and conscience is increased and the evil passions of men are restrained. It does not lead to salvation, but it keeps this earth from becoming a hell. It arrests the complete effectuation of sin, just as human insight arrests the fury of wild beasts. It prevents sin from being manifested in all its hideousness, and thus hinders the bursting forth of the flames from the smoking fire. Like the pressure of the atmosphere, it is universal and powerful though unfelt.

Common grace, however, does not kill the core of sin, and therefore it is not capable of producing a genuine conversion. Through the light of nature, the workings of conscience, and especially through the external presentation of the Gospel it makes known to man what he should do, but does not give that power which man stands in need of. Furthermore, all of these common influences of the Holy Spirit are capable of being resisted. The Scriptures constantly teach that the Gospel becomes effectual only when it is attended by the special illuminating power of the Spirit, and that without this power it is to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness. Hence the unregenerate man can never know God except in an outward way; and for this reason the external righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is declared to be just no righteousness at all. Jesus said to His disciples that the world could not receive the Spirit of truth, "for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him;" yet in the same breath He added, "Ye know Him; for He abideth with you, and shall be in

you,” John 14:17. The Arminian doctrine destroys the distinction between efficacious and common grace, or at best makes efficacious grace to be an assistance without which salvation is impossible, while the Calvinistic makes it to be an assistance by which salvation is made certain.

Concerning the reformations which are produced by common grace Dr. Charles Hodge says:

It not infrequently happens that men who have been immoral in their lives change their whole course of living. They become outwardly correct in their deportment, temperate, pure, honest, and benevolent. This is a great and praiseworthy change. It is in a high degree beneficial to the subject of it, and to all with whom he is connected. It may be produced by different causes, by the force of conscience, or by a regard for the authority of God and a dread of His disapprobation, or by a regard to the good opinion of men, or by the mere force of an enlightened regard to one's own interest. But whatever may be the proximate cause of such reformation, it falls very far short of sanctification. The two things differ in nature as much as a clean heart from clean clothes. Such external reformation may leave a man's inward character in the sight of God unchanged.. He may remain destitute of love to God, of faith in Christ, and of all holy exercises or affections.¹⁰

And says Dr. Hewlitt:

Can the corpse in the graveyard be aroused by the sweetest music that ever has been invented, or by the loudest thunder which seems to shake the poles? Just as soon shall the sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, be moved by the thunder of the law, or by the melody of the Gospel; can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil (Jer. 13:23)¹¹

The following paragraph by Dr. S. G. Craig very clearly sets forth the limitations of common grace:

Christianity realizes that education and culture, that leaves Jesus Christ out of consideration, while they may make men clever, polished, brilliant, have no power to change their characters. At the most these things of themselves only cleanse the outside of the cup; they do not affect the nature of its contents. Those who place their confidence in education, culture and such like assume that all that is needed to change the wild olive tree into a good olive tree is pruning, spraying, cultivation and such like, whereas what the tree needs first of all is that it be grafted with a scion from a good olive tree. And until this is done all labor that is spent on the tree is for the most part wasted. We do not underestimate the value of education and culture, and yet one might as well suppose that he could purify the waters of a river by improving the scenery along the banks as suppose that these things of themselves are capable of transforming the hearts of the children of men As an old Jewish proverb has it: Take the bitter tree and plant it in the garden of Eden and water it with the waters there; and let the angel Gabriel be the gardener and the tree will still bear bitter fruit.¹²

Notes

1. Chapter X, Section 1 and 2.
2. Question 31.
3. *Systematic Theology*, II, p. 688.
4. *Systematic Theology*, II, p. 35.
5. *The Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 8.
6. Chapter VIII. Section 5.
7. *System of Christian Doctrine*, p. 417.
8. *The Religious Controversies of Scotland*, p. 187.
9. *The Plan of Salvation*, p. 108.
10. *Systematic Theology*, III, p. 214.

11. *Sound Doctrine*, p. 21.

12. *Jesus as He Was and Is*, pp. 191, 199

The Necessity of the Spirit to Give Effect to the Preaching of the Gospel

by Thomas Chalmers

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

I CORINTHIANS II. 4, 5.

PAUL, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, has expressed himself to the same effect as in the text, in the following words: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit."

In both these passages, the apostle points to a speciality in the work of a Christian teacher, - a something essential to its success, and which is not essential to the proficiency of scholars in the ordinary branches of education, - an influence that is beyond the reach of human power and human wisdom; and to obtain which, immediate recourse must be had, in the way of prayer and dependence, the power of God. Without attempting a full exposition of these different verses, we shall first endeavour to direct your attention to that part of the work of a Christian teacher, which it has in common with any other kind of education; and, secondly, offer a few remarks on the speciality that is adverted to in the text.

I. And here it must be admitted, that, even in the ordinary branches of human learning, the success of the teacher, on the one hand, and the proficiency of the scholars, on the other, are still dependent on the will of God. It is true, that, in this case, we are not so ready to feel our dependence. God is apt to be overlooked in all those cases where He acts with uniformity. Wherever we see what we call the operation of a law of nature, we are apt to shut our eye against the operation of His hand; and faith in the constancy of this law is sure to beget, in the mind, a sentiment of independence on the power and will of the Deity.

Now, in the matters of human education, God acts with uniformity. Let there be zeal and ability on the part of the teacher, and an ordinary degree of aptitude, on the part of the taught, - and the result of their vigorous and well-sustained co-operation may in general be counted upon. Let the parent who witnesses his son's capacity, and his generous ambition for improvement, send him to a well-qualified instructor, and he will be filled with the hopeful sentiment of his future eminence, without any reference to God whatever, - without so much as ever thinking of His purpose or of His agency, in the matter, or its once occurring to him to make the proficiency of his son the subject of prayer. This is the way in which nature, by the constancy of her operations, is made to usurp the place of God: and it goes far to spread and to establish the delusion, when we attend to the obvious fact, that a man of the most splendid genius may be destitute of piety; that he may fill the office of an instructor, with the greatest talent and success, and yet be without reverence for God, and practically disown Him; and that thousands of our youth may issue every year warm from the schools of philosophy, stored with all her lessons, and adorned with all her accomplishments, and yet be utter strangers to the power of godliness, and be filled with an utter distaste and antipathy for its name.

All this helps on the practical conviction, that common education is a business, with which prayer and the exercise of dependence on God

have no concern. It is true, that a Christian parent will see through the vanity of this delusion. Instructed to make his requests known unto God in all things, he will not depose Him from the supremacy of His power and of His government over this one thing, - he will commit to God the progress of his son in every one branch of education he may put him to; and, knowing that the talent of every teacher, and the continuance of his zeal, and his powers of communication, and his faculty of interesting the attention of his pupils, - that all these are the gifts of God, and may be withdrawn by Him at pleasure, he will not suffer the regular march and movement of what is visible or created to cast him out of this dependence on the Creator. He will see that every one element which enters into the business of education, and conspires to the result of an accomplished and a well-informed scholar, is in the hand of the Deity; and he will pray for the continuation of these elements: and, while science is raising her wondrous monuments, and drawing the admiration of the world after her, it remains to be seen, on the day of the revelation of hidden things, whether the prayer of the humble and derided Christian, for a blessing on those to whom he has confided the object of his tenderness, have not sustained the vigour and the brilliancy of those very talents on which the world is lavishing the idolatry of her praise.

Let us now conceive the very ablest of these teachers, to bring all his powers and all his accomplishments to bear on the subject of Christianity. Has he skill in the languages? The very same process by which he gets at the meaning of any ancient author, carries him to a fair and a faithful rendering of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Has he a mind enlightened and exercised on questions of erudition? The very same principles which qualify him to decide on the genuineness of any old publication, enable him to demonstrate the genuineness of the Bible, and how fully sustained it is on the evidence of history. Has he that sagacity and comprehension of talent, by which he can seize on the Leading principles which run through the writings of some eminent philosopher? This very exercise may be gone through on the writings of Inspiration; and the

man, who, with the works of Aristotle before him, can present the world with the best system or summary of his principles, might transfer these very powers to the works of the Apostles and Evangelists, and present the world with a just and interesting survey of the doctrines of our faith.

And thus is, that the man who might stand the highest of his fellows in the field of ordinary scholarship, might turn his entire mind to the field of Christianity; and, by the very same kind of talent which would have made him the most eminent of all the philosophers, he might come to be counted the most eminent of all the theologians; and he who could have reared to his fame some monument of literary genius, might now, by the labours of his midnight oil, rear some beauteous and consistent fabric of orthodoxy, strengthened, in all its parts, by one unbroken chain of reasoning, and recommended throughout by the powers of a persuasive and captivating eloquence.

So much for the talents which a Christian teacher may employ, in common with other teachers; and even though they did make up all the qualifications necessary for his office, there would still be a call, as we said before, for the exercise of dependence upon God. Well do we know, that both he and his hearers would be apt to put their faith in the uniformity of nature; and, forgetting that it is the inspiration of the Almighty which giveth and preserveth the understanding of all His creatures, might be tempted to repose that confidence in man, which displaces God from the sovereignty that belongs to Him. But what we wish to prepare you for, by the preceding observations, is, that you may understand the altogether peculiar call that there is in dependence on God, in the case of a Christian teacher. We have made a short enumeration of those talents which a teacher of Christianity might possess, in common with other teachers; but it is for the purpose of proving that he might possess them all, and heightened to such a degree, if you will, as would have made him illustrious on any other field, and yet be utterly destitute of powers for acquiring himself, or of experience for teaching others, that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ which is life everlasting.

With the many brilliant and imposing things which he may have, there is one thing which he may not have; and the want of that one thing may form an invincible barrier to his usefulness in the vineyard of Christ. If, conscious that he wants it, he seek to obtain from God the sufficiency which is not in himself, then he is in a likely way of being put in possession of that power, which alone is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. But if he, on the one hand, proudly conceiving the sufficiency to be in himself, enter with aspiring confidence into the field of argument, and think that he is to carry all before him, by a series of invincible demonstrations; or if his people, on the other hand, ever ready to be set in motion by the idle impulse of novelty, or to be seduced by the glare of human accomplishments, come in trooping multitudes around him, and hang on the eloquence of his lips, or the wisdom of his able and profound understanding, a more unchristian attitude cannot be conceived, nor shall we venture to compute the weekly accumulation of guilt which may come upon the parties, when such a business as this is going on. How little must the presence of God be felt in that place, where the high functions of the pulpit are degraded into a stipulated exchange of entertainment, on the one side, and of admiration, on the other! and surely it were a sight to make angels weep, when a weak and vapouring mortal, surrounded by his fellow-sinners, and hastening to the grave and the judgment along with them, finds it a dearer object to his bosom, to regale his hearers by the exhibition of himself, - than to do, in plain earnest the work of his Master, and urge on the business of repentance and of faith, by the impressive simplicities of the gospel.

II. This brings us to the second head of discourse, under which we shall attempt to give you a clear view of what that is which constitutes a speciality in the work of a Christian teacher. And to carry you at once, by a few plain instances, to the matter we are aiming to impress upon you, let us suppose a man to take up his Bible, and, with the same powers of attention and understanding which enable him to comprehend the subject of any other book, there is much in this book also which he will be able to perceive and to talk of intelligently. Thus, for example, he may come, by the mere

exercise of his ordinary powers, to understand that it is the Holy Spirit which taketh of the things of Christ, and showeth them to the mind of man. But is not his understanding of this truth, as it is put down in the plain language of the New Testament, a very different thing from the Holy Spirit actually taking of these things and showing them unto him?

Again, he will be able to say, and to annex a plain meaning to what he says, that man is rescued from his natural darkness about the things of God, by God who created the light out of darkness shining in his heart, and giving him the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. But is not his saying this, and understanding this, by taking up these words in the same obvious way in which any man of plain and honest understanding would do, a very different thing from God actually putting forth His creative energy upon him, and actually shining upon his heart, and giving him that light and that knowledge which are expressed in the passage here alluded to? Again, by the very same exercise wherewith he renders the sentence of an old author into his own language, and perceives the meaning of that sentence, will he annex a meaning to the following sentence of the Bible : - "*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" By the mere dint of that shrewdness and sagacity with which nature has endowed him, he will perceive a meaning here which you will readily acknowledge could not be perceived by a man in a state of idiotism. In the case of the idiot, there is a complete barrier against his ever acquiring that conception of the meaning of this passage, which is quite competent to a man of a strong and accomplished understanding. For the sake of illustration, we may conceive this poor outcast from the common light of humanity, in some unaccountable fit of attention, listening to the sound of these words, and making some strenuous but abortive attempts to arrive at the same comprehension of them with a man whose reason is entire. But he cannot shake off the fetters which the hand of nature has laid upon his understanding; and he goes back again to the dimness and delirium of his unhappy situation; and his

mind locks itself up in the prison-hold of its confined and darkened faculties; and if, in his mysterious state of existence, he formed any conception whatever of the words now uttered in your hearing, we may rest assured, that it stands distinguished by a wide and impassable chasm, from the conception of him who has all the common powers, and perceptions of the species.

Now, we would ask what kind of conception is that which a man of entire faculties may form? Only grant us the undeniable truth, that he may understand how he cannot discern the things of the Spirit, unless the Spirit reveal them to him; and yet, with this understanding, he may not be one of those in behalf of whom the Spirit hath actually interposed with his peculiar office of revelation - and then there comes into view another barrier, no less insurmountable than that which fixes an immutable distinction between the conceptions of an idiot and of a man of sense - even that wonderful barrier which separates the natural from the spiritual man. We can conceive him struggling, with every power which nature hath given him, to work his way through this barrier. We can conceive him vainly attempting, by some energies of his own, to force an entrance into that field of light, where every object of faith has the bright colouring of reality thrown over it - where he can command a clear view of the things of eternity - where spiritual truth comes home with effect upon his every feeling, and his every conviction - where he can expatiate at freedom over a scene of manifestation, which the world knoweth not - and breathe such a peace, and such a joy, and such a holiness, and such a superiority to time, and such a devotedness of all his affections to the things which are above, as no man of the highest natural wisdom can ever reach, with all his attention to the Bible, and all the efforts of his sagacity, however painful, to unravel, and to compare, and to comprehend its passages.

And it is indeed a deeply interesting object, to see a man of powerful understanding thus visited with an earnest desire after the light of the gospel; and toiling, at the entrance, with all the energies which belong to him - pressing into the service all the resources of

argument and philosophy - mustering, to the high enterprise, his attention, and his conception, and his reason, and his imagination, and the whole host of his other faculties, on which science has conferred her imposing names, and laid before us in such a pompous catalogue, as might tempt us to believe, that man, by one mighty grasp of his creative mind, can make all truth his own, and range at pleasure over the wide variety of her dominions. How natural to think, that the same powers and habits of investigation which carried him to so respectable a height in the natural sciences, will enable him to clear his way through all the darkness of theology! It is well that he is seeking, for if he persevere and be in earnest, he will obtain an interest in the promise, and will at length find : - but not till he find, in the progress of those inquiries on which he entered with so much alacrity, and prosecuted with so much confidence, that there is a barrier between him and the spiritual discernment of his Bible, which all the powers of philosophy cannot scale, not till he find that he must cast down his lofty imaginations and put the pride of all his powers and all his pretensions away from him, - not till he find that, divested of those fancies which deluded his heart into a feeling of its own sufficiency, he must become like a little child, or one of those babes to whom God reveals the things which He hides from the wise and from the prudent, not till he find that the attitude of self-dependence must be broken down, and he be brought to acknowledge, that the light he is aspiring after is not created by himself, but must be made to shine upon him at the pleasure of another, - not, in short, till, humbled by the mortifying experience, that many a simple cottager, who reads his Bible and loves his Saviour, has got before him, he puts himself on a level with the most illiterate of them all, and prays that light and truth may beam on his darkened understanding from the sanctuary of God.

We read of the letter, and we read also of the spirit, of the New Testament. It would require a volume, rather than a single paragraph of a single sermon, to draw the line between the one and the other. But you will readily acknowledge, that there are many things of this book, which a man, though untaught by the Spirit of God, may be

made to know. One of the simplest instances is, he may learn the number of chapters in every book, and the number of verses in every chapter. - But is this all? No; for by the natural exercise of his memory, he may be able to master all its historical information. And is this all? No; for by the natural exercise of his judgment he may compare scripture with scripture, - he may learn what its doctrines are, - he may demonstrate the orthodoxy of every one article in our national confession, - he may rank among the ablest and most judicious of the commentators, - he may read, and with understanding too, many a ponderous volume, - he may store himself with the learning of many generations, - he maybe familiar with all the systems, and have mingled with all the controversies, - and yet, with a mind supporting as it does the burden of the erudition of whole libraries, he may have gotten to himself no other wisdom than the wisdom of the letter of the New Testament. The man's creed, with all its arranged and its well-weighed articles, may be no better than the dry bones in the vision of Ezekiel, put together into a skeleton, and fastened with sinews, and covered with flesh and skin, and exhibiting to the eye of the spectators, the aspect and the lineaments of a man, but without breath, and remaining so, till the Spirit of God breathed into it, and it lived.

And it is, in truth, a sight of wonder, to behold a man who has carried his knowledge of Scripture as far as the wisdom of man can carry it, - to see him blessed with all the light which nature can give, but labouring under all the darkness which no power of nature can dispel, - to see this man of many accomplishments, who can bring his every power of demonstration to bear upon the Bible, carrying in his bosom a heart uncheered by any one of its consolations, unmoved by the influence of any one of its truths, unshaken out of any one attachment to the world, and an utter stranger to those high resolves, and the power of those great and animating prospects, which shed a glory over the daily walk of a believer, and give to every one of his doings the high character of a candidate for eternity.

We are quite aware of the doubts which this is calculated to excite in the mind of the hearer, - nor is it possible, within the compass of an

hour, to stop and satisfy them all; or to come to a timely conclusion, without leaving a number of unresolved questions behind us. There is one, however, which we cannot pass without observation. Does not this doctrine of a revelation of the Spirit, it may be asked, additional to the revelation of the Word, open a door to the most unbridled variety? May it not give a sanction to any conceptions of any visionary pretenders, and clothe, in all the authority of inspiration, a set of doctrines not to be found within the compass of the written record? Does it not set aside the usefulness of the Bible, and break in upon the unity and consistency of revealed truth, by letting loose upon the world a succession of fancies, as endless and as variable as are the caprices of the human imagination? All very true, did we ever pretend that the office of the Spirit was to reveal any thing additional to the information, whether in the way of doctrine or of duty, which the Bible sets before us. But His office, as defined by the Bible itself, is not to make known to us any truths which are not contained in the Bible; but to make clear to our understandings the truths which are contained in it. He opens our understandings to understand the Scriptures. The Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. It is the instrument by which the Spirit worketh. He does not tell us any thing that is out of the record; but all that is within it he sends home, with clearness and effect, upon the mind. He does not make us wise above that which is written; but he makes us wise up to that which is written.

When a telescope is directed to some distant landscape, it enables us to see what we could not otherwise have seen; but it does not enable us to see any thing which has not a real existence in the prospect before us. It does not present to the eye any delusive imagery, - neither is that a fanciful and fictitious scene which it throws open to our contemplation. The natural eye saw nothing but blue land stretching along the distant horizon. By the aid of the glass, there bursts upon it a charming variety of fields, and woods, and spires, and villages. Yet who would say that the glass added one feature to this assemblage? It discovers nothing to us which is not there; nor, out of that portion of the book of nature which we are employed in

contemplating, does it bring into view a single character, which is not really and previously inscribed upon it. And so of the Spirit. He does not add a single truth, or a single character, to the Book of Revelation. He enables the spiritual man, to see what the natural man cannot see; but the spectacle which he lays open is uniform and immutable. It is the Word of God, which is ever the same ; - and he whom the Spirit of God has enabled to look to the Bible with a clear and affecting discernment, sees no phantom passing before him; but, amid all the visionary extravagance with which he is charged, can, for every one article of his faith, and every one duty of his practice, make his triumphant appeal to the law and to the testimony.

We trust that this may be made clear by one example. We have not to travel out of the record for the purpose of having this truth made known to us, - that God is everywhere present. It meets the observation of the natural man in his reading of the Bible; and he understands, or thinks he understands, the terms in which it is delivered; and he can speak of it with consistency; and he ranks it with the other attributes of God; and he gives it an avowed and a formal admission among the articles of his creed; and yet, with all this parade of light and of knowledge, he, upon the subject of the all-seeing and the ever-present Deity, labours under all the obstinacy of an habitual blindness. Carry him abroad, and you will find that the light which beams upon his senses, from the objects of sight, completely overpowers that light which ought to beam upon his spirit, from this object of faith. He may occasionally think of it as he does of other things; but for every one practical purpose the thought abandons him, so soon as he goes into the next company, or takes a part in the next worldly concern, which, in the course of his business comes round to him. It completely disappears as an element of conduct, and he talks, and thinks, and reasons, just as he would have done, had his mind, in reference to God, been in a state of entire darkness. If any thing like a right conception of the matter ever exist in his heart, the din and the day light of the world drive it all away from him. Now, to rectify this case, it is surely not necessary that the Spirit add any thing to the truth of God's omnipresence, as it is put

down in the written record. It will be enough, that He gives to the mind on which He operates a steady and enduring impression of this truth.

Now, this is one part of His office; and accordingly it is said of the unction of the Spirit, that it is an unction which remaineth. Neither is it necessary that the light which He communicates should consist in any vision which He gives to the eye, or in any bright impression upon the fancy, of any one thing not to be found within the pages of the Bible. It will be enough, if He give a clear and vigorous apprehension of the truth, just as it is written, to the understanding. Though the Spirit should do no more than give vivacity and effect to the truth of the constancy of God's presence, just as it stands in the written record - this will be quite enough to make the man who is under its influence, carry an habitual sense of God about with him, think of Him in the shop and in the market place, walk with Him all the day long, and feel the same moral restraint upon his doings, as if some visible superior, whose virtues he revered, and whose approbation he longed after, haunted his every footstep, and kept an attentive eye fastened upon the whole course of his history. The natural man may have sense, and he may have sagacity, and a readiness withal to admit the constancy of God's presence, as an undeniable doctrine of the Bible. But to the power of this truth he is dead; and it is only to the power of this world's interests and pleasures that he is alive.

The spiritual man is the reverse of all this, and that without carrying his conceptions a single hairbreadth beyond the communications of the written message. He makes no pretensions to wisdom, by one jot or one tittle, beyond the testimony of Scripture; and yet, after all, he lives under a revelation to which the other is a stranger. It does not carry him, by a single footstep, without the field of the written revelation; but it throws a radiance over every object within it. It furnishes him with a constant light, which enables him to withstand the domineering influence of sight and of sense. He dies unto the world, he lives unto God, - and the reason is, that there rests upon

him a peculiar manifestation, by which the truth is made visible to the eye of his mind, and a peculiar energy, by which it comes home upon his conscience. And if we come to inquire into the cause of this peculiarity, it is the language of the Bible, confirmed, as we believe it to be, by the soundest experience, that every power which nature has conferred upon man, exalted to its highest measure, and called forth to its most strenuous exercise, is not able to accomplish it; that it is due to a power above nature, and beyond it; that it is due to what the apostle calls the demonstration of the Spirit, - a demonstration withheld from the self-sufficient exertions of man, and given to his believing prayers.

And here we are reminded of an instructive passage, in the life of one of our earliest and most eminent reformers. When the light of divine truth broke in upon his heart, it was so new and so delightful to one formerly darkened by the errors of Popery - he saw such a power, and saw an evidence along with it - he was so ravished by its beauties, and so carried along by its resistless arguments, that he felt as if he had nothing to do, but to brandish those mighty weapons, that he might gain all hearts, and carry every thing before him. But he did not calculate on the stubborn resistance of corrupt human nature, to him and to his reasonings. He preached, and he argued, and he put forth all his powers of eloquence amongst them. But, mortified that so many hearts remained hardened, that so many hearers resisted him, that the doors of so many hearts were kept shut, in spite of all his loud and repeated warnings, that so many souls remained unsubdued, and dead in trespasses and sins, he was heard to exclaim, that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon.

There is the malignity of the fall which adheres to us. There is a power of corruption and of blindness along with it, which it is beyond the compass of human means to overthrow. There is a dark and settled depravity in the human character, which maintains its gloomy and obstinate resistance to all our warnings, and all our arguments. There is a spirit working in the children of disobedience, which no power of human eloquence can lay. There is a covering of

thick darkness upon the face of all people, a mighty influence abroad upon the world, with which the Prince of the power of the air keeps his thousands and his tens of thousands under him. The minister who enters into this field of conflict, may have zeal, and talents, and influence. His heart may be smitten with the love of the truth, and his mind be fully fraught with its arguments. Thus armed, he may come forth among his people, flushed with the mighty enterprise of turning souls from the dominion of Satan unto God. In all the hope of victory, he may discharge the weapons of his warfare among them. Week after week; he may reason with them out of the Scriptures. Sabbath after Sabbath, he may declaim, he may demonstrate, he may put forth every expedient; he may, at one time, set in array before them the terrors of the law, at another, he may try to win them by the free offer of the gospel; and, in the proud confidence of success, he may think that nothing can withstand him, and that the heart of every hearer must give way before the ardour of his zeal, and the power of his invincible arguments.

Yes; they may admire him, and they may follow him, but the question we have to ask is, Will they be converted by him? They may even go so far as to allow that it is all very true he says. He may be their favourite preacher; and when he opens his exhortations upon them, there may be a deep and a solemn attention in every countenance. But how is the heart coming on all the while? How do these people live; and what evidence are they giving of being born again, under the power of his ministry? It is not enough to be told of those momentary convictions which flash from the pulpit, and carry a thrilling influence along with them through the hearts of listening admirers. Have these hearers of the word become the doers of the word? Have they sunk down into the character of humble, and sanctified, and penitent, and painstaking Christians? Where, where is the fruit? And while the preaching of Christ is all their joy, has the will of Christ become all their direction? Alas! he may look around him, and, at the end of the year, after all the tumults of a sounding popularity, he may find the great bulk of them just where they were, - as listless and unconcerned about the things of eternity, as

obstinately alienated from God, - as firmly devoted to selfish and transitory interests, - as exclusively set upon the farm, and the money, and the merchandise, - and, with the covering of many external decencies to make them as fair and plausible as their neighbours around them, proving, by a heart given, with the whole tide of its affections, to the vanities of the world, that they have their full share of the wickedness which abounds in it. After all his sermons, and all his loud and passionate addresses, he finds that the power of darkness still keeps its ground among them. He is grieved to learn, that all he has said has had no more effect than the foolish and the feeble lispings of infancy.

He is overwhelmed by a sense of his own helplessness, and the lesson is a wholesome one. It makes him feel that the sufficiency is not in him, but in God; it makes him understand that another power must be brought to bear upon the mass of resistance which is before him; and let the man of confident and aspiring genius, who thought he was to assail the dark, seats of human corruption, and to carry them by storm, let him be reduced in mortified and dependent humbleness to the expedient of the apostle. And let him crave the intercessions of his people, and throw himself upon their prayers.

Let us now bring the whole matter to a practical conclusion. For the acquirement of a saving and spiritual knowledge of the gospel, you are, on the one hand, to put forth all your ordinary powers, in the very same way that you do for the acquirement of knowledge in any of the ordinary branches of human learning. But in the act of doing so, you, on the other hand, are to proceed on a profound impression of the utter fruitlessness of all your endeavours, unless God meet them by the manifestations of His Spirit. In other words, you are to read your Bible, and to bring your faculties of attention, and understanding, and memory, to the exercise, just as strenuously as if these, and these alone, could conduct you to the light after which you are aspiring. But you are, at the same time, to pray as earnestly for this object, as if God accomplished it without your exertions at all, instead of accomplishing it in the way he actually does, by your

exertions.

It is when your eyes are turned toward the Book of God's testimony, and not when your eyes are turned away from it, that He fulfils upon you the petition of the Psalmist, - "*Lord, do thou open mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things contained in thy law.*" You are not to exercise your faculties in searching after truth without prayer, else God will withhold from you His illuminating influences. And you are not to pray for truth, without exercising your faculties, else God will reject your prayers, as the mockery of a hypocrite. But you are to do both; and this is in harmony with the whole style of a Christian's obedience, who is as strenuous in doing as if his doings were to accomplish all, and as fervent in prayer, as if, without the inspiring energy of God, all his doings were vanity and feebleness.

And the great apostle may be quoted as the best example of this observation. There never existed a man more active than Paul, in the work of the Christian ministry. How great the weight and the variety of his labours! What preaching, what travelling, what writing of letters, what daily struggling with difficulties, what constant exercise of thought, in watching over the churches, what a world of perplexity in his dealings with men, and in the hard dealings of men with him! And were they friends, or were they enemies, how his mind hehoved to be ever on the alert, in counselling the one, and in warding off the hostility of the other! Look to all that is visible in the life of this apostle, and you see nothing but bustle, and enterprise, and variety. You see a man intent on the furtherance of some great object; and in the prosecution of it, as ever diligent, and as ever doing, as if the whole burden of it lay upon himself, or as if it were reserved for the strength of his solitary arm to accomplish it. To this object he copsecrated every moment of his time; and even when he set him down to the work of a tent-maker, for the sake of vindicating the purity of his intentions, and holding forth an example of honest independence to the poorer brethran - even here, we just see another display of the one principle which possessed his whole heart, and gave such a character of wondrous activity to all the days of his earthly pilgrimage. There are some who are so far misled, by a kind

of perverse theology which they have adopted, as to hesitate about the lawfulness of being diligent and doing in the use of means. While they are slumbering over their speculation, and proving how honestly they put faith in it, by doing nothing, let us be guided by the example of the painstaking and industrious Paul, and remember, that never since the days of this apostle, who calls upon us to be followers of him, even as he was of Christ, - never were the labours of human exertion more faithfully rendered, - never were the workings of a human instrument put forth with greater energy.

But it forms a still more striking part of the example of Paul, that, while he did as much toward the extension of the Christian faith, as if the whole success of the cause depended upon his doing; he prayed as much, and as fervently, for this object, as if all his doings were of no consequence. A fine testimony to the supremacy of God, from the man, who, in labours, was more abundant than any who ever came after him, that he counted all as nothing, unless God would interfere to put His blessing upon all, and to give His efficiency to all! He who looked so busy, and whose hand was so constantly engaged, in the work that was before him, looked for all his success to that help which cometh from the sanctuary of God. There was his eye directed. Thence alone did he expect a blessing upon his endeavours. He wrought, and that with diligence, too, because God bade him; but he also prayed, and that with equal diligence, because God had revealed to him, that plant as he may, and water as he may, God alone giveth the increase.

He did homage to the will of God, by the labours of the ever working minister, - and he did homage to the power of God by the devotions of the ever-praying minister. He did not say, what signifies my working, for God alone can work with effect? This is very true, but God chooses to work by instruments, - and Paul, by the question, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?*" expressed his readiness to be an instrument in His hand. Neither did he say, what signifies my praying, for I have got a work here to do, and it is enough that I be diligent in the performance of it. No - for the power of God must be

acknowledged, and a sense of His power must mingle with all our performances: and therefore it is that the apostle kept both working and praying; and with him they formed two distinct emanations of the same principle: and while there are many who make these Christian graces to neutralize each other, the judicious and the clear-sighted Paul, who had received the spirit of a sound mind, could give his unembarrassed vigour to both these exercises, and combine, in his own example, the utmost diligence in doing, with the utmost dependence on Him who can alone give to that doing all its fruits and all its efficacy.

The union of these two graces has, at times, been finely exemplified in the later and uninspired ages of the christian church; and the case of the missionary, Elliot, is the first, and the most impressive that occurs to us. His labours, like those of the great apostle, were directed to the extension of the vineyard of Christ, - and he was among the very first who put forth his hand to the breaking up of the American wilderness. For this purpose did he set himself down to the acquirement of a harsh and barbarous language; and he became qualified to confer with savages; and he grappled for years with their untractable humours; and he collected these wanderers into villages; and while other reformers have ennobled their names by the formation of a new set of public laws, did he take upon him the far more arduous task of creating, for his untamed Indians, a new set of domestic habits; and such was the power of his influence, that he carried his Christianizing system into the very bosom of their families; and he spread art, and learning, and civilization amongst them; and to his visible labours among his people he added the labours of the closet; and he translated the whole Bible into their tongue; and he set up a regular provision for the education of their children; and, lest the spectator who saw his fourteen towns risen as by enchantment in the desert, and peopled by the rudest of its tribes, should ask in vain for the mighty power by which such wondrous things had been brought to pass, this venerable priest left his testimony behind him; and neither overlooking the agency of God, nor the agency of man as the instrument of God, he tells us, in one

memorable sentence written by himself at the end of his Indian grammar, that "prayers and pains, through faith in Christ Jesus, can do any thing."

The last inference we shall draw from this topic, is the duty and importance of prayer among Christians, for the success of the ministry of the gospel. Paul had a high sense of the efficacy of prayer. Not according to that refined view of it, which, making all its influence to consist in its improving and moralizing effect upon the mind, fritters down to nothing the plain import and significance of this ordinance. With him it was a matter of asking and of receiving. And just as when, in pursuit of some earthly benefit which is at the giving of another, you think yourselves surer of your object the more you multiply the number of askers and the number of applications, - in this very way did he, if we may be allowed the expression, contrive to strengthen and extend his interest in the court of heaven. He craved the intercessions of his people. There were many believers formed under his ministry, and each of these could bring the prayer of faith to bear upon the counsels of God, and bring down a larger portion of strength and of fitness to rest on the apostle for making more believers.

It was a kind of creative or accumulating process. After he had travailed in birth with his new converts till Christ was formed in them, this was the use he put them to. It is an expedient which harmonizes with the methods of Providence and the will of God, who orders intercessions, and on the very principle, too, that he willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The intercession of Christians, who are already formed, is the leaven which is to leaven the whole earth with Christianity. It is one of the destined instruments, in the hand of God, for hastening the glory of the latter days. Take the world at large, and the doctrine of intercession, as an engine of mighty power, is derided as one of the reveries of fanaticism. This is a subject on which the men of the world are in a deep slumber; but there are watchmen who never hold their peace, day nor night, and to them God addresses these remarkable words: "*Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not*

silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

A Discourse of the Word, the Instrument of Regeneration

by Stephen Charnock

Of his own will begot he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.—James 1:18.

I have chosen this text to treat of the instrument of the new birth.

The apostle having advised them (verse 13, 'But let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted to evil, neither tempts he any man') not to charge God as the author of any temptation to evil, showing it to be contrary to the nature of God, who is infinite goodness and righteousness; for as he cannot be tempted with evil, so neither can he tempt any man; and declaring the true cause and spring of all evil to be inherent in ourselves, even that lust which is riveted in our nature, which he calls our own lust, - verse 14, 'But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,' - he takes occasion from thence to show the order of sin's working. Sin is first conceived by that original corruption in our nature, and formed and brought forth into action; and when it is finished, and grows into a habit, it 'brings forth death,' verse 15. To remove this error, which some in those days had sucked in out of a natural self-love that man has to excuse himself, and remove the cause of sin far from him, the apostle shows that God is the author and fountain of all the good we have: ver. 17, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of change.' God being the infinite Father of lights, who has no eclipses or decreases, no shadows or mixtures of darkness, but always shines with a constant and settled brightness, of this goodness has given a

great evidence, in conferring the choicest mercy upon us, even a new begetting through the gospel, and thereby the relation of children to him, that we might be consecrated to him as the first fruits and a peculiar portion. Of his own will, "bouletheis; by his mere motion, induced by no cause but the goodness in his own breast. (1.) To distinguish it from the generation of the Son, which is natural, this voluntary; of his own will, not naturally, as he begot his Son from eternity. (2.) Not necessarily, by a necessity of nature, as the sun, to which he had compared God before, does enlighten, and enliven, when matter is prepared to receive his quickening beams; but by an arbitrariness of grace. (3.) Not by any obligation from the creature; the will of God is opposed to the merit of man. The new creation answers to election; the first purpose was free, the bringing that purpose to execution is free whatsoever obligation there is, results not from the creature, but from himself, his own immutable nature, which has no variableness, nor shadow of change. "Begot us," "apekuesen", or brought us forth, for the same word "apokuei", ver. 15, is translated 'brings forth.' 'By the word of truth', a title given to the gospel both in the Old and New Testament: in the Old, Ps. xiv. 4, 'And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth,' or 'upon thy word of truth,' in the New Testament, Eph. i. 13, 'In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' So 2 Cor. vi. 7, and 2 Tim. ii. 15. And it is called truth by way of excellency, as paramount to all other truth. (1.) Either, by an Hebraism, the word of truth; that is, the true word. (2.) Or rather, by way of eminency, as containing a higher truth, more excellent in itself, more advantageous for the creature, than any other divine truth; wherein the highest glory of God, the sure and everlasting happiness of the creature, is set forth; a word which he has 'magnified above all his name,' Ps. cxxxviii. 2.

And called the word of truth.

1. In regard of the author, truth itself; and the publisher, he who was 'the way, the truth, and the life.'

2. In opposition to all false doctrines, which can never be the instruments of conversion; for error to convert to truth, is the same thing as for darkness to diffuse light, or water to kindle fire.

3. In opposition to the windy and flashy conceits of men, which can no more be instrumental in the begetting a Christian, than mere wind can beget a man.

4. In opposition to the legal shadows; the gospel declares the truth of those types. Both the law and prophecy were but as a dim candle 'in a dark place,' 2 Peter i. 19, but this as a sun shining out at noonday. All other discourses did stream to this as their great ocean, wherein they were to be swallowed up. The law was the word of truth, but referred to the gospel as the great end of it. This contains the whole and ultimate purpose of God, for saving men by Jesus Christ, and in him enriching them with all spiritual blessings, and not by the works of the law, and thus the Spirit, which enlightens and seals instruction upon our souls, is called 'the Spirit of truth,' John xiv. 17, as it is called a Spirit of holiness, as it makes us holy, a Spirit of grace, as it makes us gracious, or as it declares the grace of God. Some by *the word of truth* understand Christ, the essential and uncreated "logos", Word, as it is understood by some in 1 Peter i. 23, 25, 'By the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever; and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached to you.' Possibly it may be meant of Christ, who by the gospel is declared and preached to be the mediator between God and man, appointed to raise up those that are given to him. Others by *the word* there, mean the will of God of giving grace in Christ, which is manifest in, and expressed by, the gospel. But here it is evidently meant of the gospel, because of the inference the apostle makes: ver. 19, 'Be swift to hear;' that is, prize the word, wait upon the means with all readiness; 'slow to speak,' to utter your judgment of it, or be wise in your own conceit, whereof a readiness to speak peremptorily in divine truth is sometimes an evidence; 'slow to wrath' and passion, which hinder any profit by the word. 'That we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures;' the chief among his creatures. The first fruits were the best of every kind to be offered to

God, whereby they acknowledged God's gift of them, and desired his blessing upon them, and were given as God's peculiar right and portion. It was commanded in the law, Deut. xviii. 4. It was a custom among many of the heathens. To offer them was a token of thankfulness; not to offer them, was accounted a sign of atheism and profaneness. The new creature is God's peculiar portion taken out of mankind; and it bespeaks duty too: being consecrated to God by a new begetting, they should serve God with a new spirit, new thankfulness, new frames.

We see here,

1. The efficient of regeneration, God; 'he,' the Father of lights.
2. The impulsive or moving cause, 'his own will.'
3. The instrumental cause 'with the word of truth.'
4. The final cause, 'that we may be a kind of first fruits.'

The doctrine I am to handle is,

Doctrine. That the gospel is the instrument whereby God brings the soul forth in a new birth.

The Scripture does distinguish the efficient and instrumental cause by the prepositions "ek", or, "eks", and "dia". When we are said to be 'born of the Spirit,' it is, John iii. 5, "ek pneumatos"; 1 John iii. 9, v. 1, "ek Theou"; never "dia pneumatos", or "dia Theou:" but we are nowhere said to be born *of* the word, or begotten *of* the word, but "dia logou", *by* or *with* the word, 1 Peter i. 23; and "dia euangeliou", 1 Cor. iv. 15, I have begotten you 'through the gospel.' The preposition "ek" or "eks", usually notes the efficient or material cause; "dia", the instrumental or means by which a thing is wrought. Sin entered into the heart of Eve by the word of the devil, grace enters into the heart by the word of God; that entered by a word of error, this by a word of truth: 'Ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you, John xv.

3, whereby our Saviour means the word outwardly preached by him, for it is the word spoken by him. Not that it had this efficacy of itself, but as an instrument of their sanctification, rendering them ready to every good work. The holiness, therefore, which it begets, is called the holiness of truth, Eph. iv. 24, opposed to the "epithumiai tes apates", 'lusts of deceit,' ver. 22. Lusts grow up from error and deceit, and holiness of the new man grows up from truth. The gospel administration, in regard of the effects of it, is called 'the kingdom of God,' Mark i. 14; it erects the kingdom of God in the world and in the hearts of men, and called the regeneration: Mat. xix. 28, 'Ye which have followed me in the regeneration;' the gospel administration being a creating of 'new heavens and a new earth,' Isa. lxv. 17. This is the triumphal chariot, wherein Christ rides majestically to the conquest of hearts: Ps. xiv. 4, 'And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth,' "'al dvar 'emut", a psalm the Jews themselves understand of the Messiah. The word of his truth is the support of his kingdom, whereby he awes sinners into submission. Peace from heaven, and the health of our nature, is 'the fruit of the lips,' though of God's creation, Isa. lvii. 19. It is like the dew or mist which watered the ground, and prepared the earth for the formation of Adam's body, into which God breathed afterwards a living soul, Gen. ii. 6. 7.

I. For explication, take some propositions:

1. It is not the law that is this instrument. The law, taken in general for the legal administration prescribed to the Jews, was instrumental for renewing, because there was a typical gospel in that Judaic administration: Heb. iv. 2, 'For to us was the gospel preached as well as unto them.' They were evangelised, "Euangelismenoi", as the word signifies. The Judaic administration was composed of law and gospel: the moral law, as a covenant of works; the ceremonial law, representing the covenant of grace. The law of God, or gospel among them, is said to convert the soul, Ps. xix. 7. But the law, taken as a covenant of works, was not appointed for renewing the soul, otherwise what need had there been of enacting another law for that work? And those that say the law is instrumental in conversion, or

inflaming our affections to obedience, say that all the benefits by it are to be ascribed to the covenant of grace in Christ. It is true, the law considered in itself is preparatory to cast men down, and show them their distance from God and contrariety to his command; but the law without the gospel never brought any man to Christ. Whatsoever it does in this case is not of itself, but by the mingling the gospel with it, which spirits it to such an end. Though the law did not encourage sin, yet it gave no help against it, but felt the soul under the dominion of it, which is evident by the apostle's inference: Rom. vi. 14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace.' Hence the property of the law, which is meant by 'the letter,' 2 Cor. iii. 6, is to kill, but 'the Spirit' gives life; that leaves under the severity of justice, after sin had entered; but the spiritual administration, wherein the Spirit works, is to quicken and renew the soul, and make it able to get above the guilt and power of sin. The apostle, therefore, wholly excludes the law: Gal. iii. 2, 'Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' that is, the word of faith, as the gospel is called, Rom. x. 8. By Spirit is meant, says Calvin, the grace of regeneration, as by faith is meant the doctrine of faith. I might have preached (as if the apostle had said) the works of the law till my lungs had been worn out, and the renewing Spirit would never have entered into you by that fire, but it descended upon you in the sweet gospel dew. The gospel is therefore called the 'ministration of the Spirit,' and the 'ministration of righteousness,' 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9. It is the chariot or *vehiculum* wherein the Spirit rides, the proclamation by which it is declared, the channel through which it is conveyed. The law discovers the righteousness of God as well as the gospel; but that demands a righteousness from the creature, the gospel confers a righteousness upon the creature; the law shows us God's righteousness in his nature, the gospel shows us God's righteousness in his nature and grace. The law is a hammer to break us, the gospel God's oil to cure us; the law makes sin live and our souls die,—Rom. vii. 9, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,—the gospel makes sin die and our souls live; the law awakens the lion, the gospel lets out his blood. At the best, the terrors of the law do chain up our furious

affections, but the sweetness of gospel mercy changes them. The law prepares the matter, the gospel brings the new form. That was appointed for the rule of our walk, not for the restoration of our life. And they are the promises of mercy which are the motives to return; rebels will not submit to their prince as long as they know they shall have no quarter. Hue and cry makes the thief fly away the faster. By the 'great and precious promises;' we 'are made partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4. The promises of the law being conditional, belong not to us without fulfilling the condition, of which we are incapable of ourselves. The law, therefore, since the fall, is destructive, the gospel restorative, and the promises of it the cords whereby God draws us.

2. The gospel is this instrument. It is an instrument to unlock the prison doors, and take them off the hinges, strike off the fetters, and draw out the soul to a glorious liberty. It is by the voice of the archangel men shall rise in their bodies; it is by the voice of the Son of God in the word that men rise in their souls. Nothing else ever wrought such miraculous changes. To make lions become lambs, Isa. vi. 6, Hosea iv. 13; beloved idols to be cast away with indignation; to make its entrance like fire, and consume old lusts in a short time: these have been undeniable realities, which have created affection and astonishment in some enemies as well as friends. It has a more excellent instrumentality in it than other providences of God, because it is a higher manifestation. Every creature conducts us to the knowledge of God, by giving us notice of his power, wisdom, and goodness, Rom. i. 20. The declaration of his works in the world is instrumental to make men seek him, Acts xvii. 27. Every day's providence declares his patience, every shower of rain his merciful provision for mankind, Acts xiv. 17, every day's preservation of the world under a load of sin manifests his mercy. The heavens have a tongue, and the rod has a voice; the design of all is to lead men to repentance, Rom. ii. 4. If these, therefore, be some kind of instruments upon the hearts of considering men, the gospel being a discovery superior to all these, in manifesting not only a God of nature, but a God of grace, must be designed to a choicer and nobler

work. The heavens and providence are instruments to instruct us, this to renew us.

It is an instrument; but,

(1.) It is not a natural instrument, to work by any natural efficacy, as food does nourish, the sun shines, or the air and water cools, or as a sharp knife cuts if it be applied to fit matter. If it were thus natural, it would not be of grace. Though the shining of the sun, or the healing by a plaster, are acts of the goodness and mercy of God, yet the Scripture calls them not by that higher title of acts of grace. If the operation were natural, the gospel would never be without its effect wherever it were preached; as the sun, wherever it shines in any land, does both enlighten and warm. Our Saviour then would have had more success, since the gospel could not have greater natural efficacy than from his lips; yet the number of his converts were probably not much above five hundred, for so many he appeared to after his resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 6, when many thousands in that land heard his voice, and saw his miracles. Christ, who was always able to give himself success, would not, perhaps for this among many other reasons, to advance his spiritual above his corporal presence, and to prevent any thoughts of any natural virtue in the word, without the power of the Spirit working by it. Every day teaches us, that though many see the glass of the gospel, yet few see the glory of God in that gospel. Were it natural, then, that all that hear it were not renewed, would be more miraculous than that any are; as it was more a miracle that the sun should stand still in Joshua's time, against its natural course of motion, than that it moves every day in the heavens. If it were a natural instrument, it must then have life in itself, but how can the voice of a man, or the words and syllables in a book, be capable of receiving spiritual life, which they must have before they can naturally convey it to others? Were it a natural instrument, it would have the same effect upon the soul at one time as at another. But does not daily experience witness, that the word shines at some particular times upon the soul with a clearer ray than at other times, that such a soul has thought itself in another world

(as it were), and that too when it has been much clouded by the weakness of the instrument declaring it? Lastly were it natural, the wisest men, men of the sharpest understandings, could not resist it, no man can hinder the sun's shining upon him, when he is under the beams of it, it would warm him whether he would or no, yet have not such been the most desperate opposers of it in all ages of the world, as well as in the times of the apostles? It is not then a natural, but a moral instrument, which will follow afterwards, when we come to consider how it works.

(2.) It is the only instrument appointed by God to this end in an ordinary way. God has made a combination between hearing and believing, Rom. x. 14, 17, so that believing comes not without hearing. The waters of the sanctuary run only through the channels of the gospel; the mines of grace are found only in the climates of the word. Why does not air nourish? Because God did not set that, but meat, apart for each an end. Though God could by his almighty power bless air to this end, yet in an ordinary way he has fixed his blessing on these natural causes of his own ordaining. God has appointed second causes for natural operations; if we would be warm, God has appointed fire and sun to warm us; he could do it immediately, by spreading a lively heat in every member, as well as he gave at first a power to fire to burn; but he uses natural instruments in natural effects, and likewise spiritual instruments in spiritual productions. God may bow in an extraordinary way upon the soul by a divine breath without any instrument, as he did immediately upon the prophets, or as he gave light to the world the three first days of the creation without a sun, but since only by the sun and stars. But God seems here to have fixed his power: Rom. i. 16, the gospel is 'the power of God to salvation;' not that his power shall always attend it, but that he will exert his power, at least ordinarily, only by it; no other organ through which the wind of the Spirit shall blow, no other sword which the Spirit shall manage but this, Eph. vi. 13. Though our Saviour prayed upon the cross for some of his greatest enemies, who had their hands embrued in his precious blood, though he was heard, yet his prayer was not answered but

through Peter's ministry, to grace the first spiritual discovery of the gospel. Nothing else can have that efficacy. Had every man in Israel made a brazen serpent, and looked upon it when they had been stung, they might have looked till they had groaned their last, before they had met with any cure, because only one was of God's appointing. To a cast of an eye upon that, he had only promised his healing virtue, in that only then he had lodged his power.

(3.) It is therefore a necessary instrument.

[1.] In regard of the reasonable creature there must be some declaration. God does not ordinarily work but by means, and does not produce anything without them which may be done with them. God does not maintain the creatures by a daily creation, but by generation; he maintains that faculty of generation in them by the means of health and nourishment, and that by the means of the fruits of the earth, and does all this according to the ordinance he fixed at the creation, when he appointed every kind of creatures their proper food, and bestowed his blessing upon them, 'Increase and multiply.' So according to the method God has set of men's actions, it is necessary that this regeneration should be by some word as an instrument, for God has given understanding and will to man. We cannot understand anything, or will anything, but what is proposed to us by some external object; as our eye can see nothing but what is without us, our hand take nothing but what is without us, so it is necessary that God by the word should set before us those things which our understandings may apprehend, and our wills embrace. Now we believe things as we conceive them true, or not believe them as we conceive them false. We love, desire, delight in things, as we conceive them honest or profitable; we hate, we refuse, or grieve, as we conceive them dishonest, or troublesome, or hurtful to us; whatever we are changed by in our understandings, wills, and affections, is represented to us under some of these considerations. To make an alteration in us according to our nature of understanding, will, and affection, it is necessary there should be some declaration of things under those considerations of true, good,

delightful, &c., in the highest manner, to make a choice change in every faculty of the soul, and without this a man cannot be changed as a rational creature; he will otherwise have a change he knows not why, nor to what end, nor upon what consideration, which is an inconceivable change in a rational creature.

[2.] It is necessary the revelation of this gospel we have should be made. There is a necessity of some revelation, for no man can see that which is not visible, or hear that which has no sound, or know that which is not declared. There is also a necessity of the revelation of this gospel, since faith is a great part of this work. How can any man believe that God is good in Christ, without knowing that he has so declared himself? Since the Spirit takes of Christ's, and shows it to us, there must be a revelation of Christ, and the goodness of God in Christ, before we can believe. Though the manner of this revelation may be different, and the Spirit may renew in an extraordinary manner, yet this is the instrument whereby all spiritual begettings are wrought; the manner may be by visions, dreams, by reading or hearing, yet still it is the gospel which is revealed; the matter revealed is the same, though the formal revelation or manner may be different. Paul's regeneration was by a vision, for at that vision of the light, and that voice of Christ, I suppose him to be renewed, because of that full resignation of his will to Christ, Acts ix. 6, yet the matter of the revelation was the same, that Christ was the Messiah, for so Paul understands it, in giving him the title of Lord. Though God may communicate himself without the written word to some that have it not, yet according to his appointment, not without a revelation of what is in that word.

[3.] This necessity will further appear, if we consider that it always was so. Adam and Eve were the first after the fall wherein God did constitute his church, whose regeneration and conversion were wrought by that promise of the seed of the woman made to them in paradise; God surely putting an enmity in the heart of those to whom this first promise of an enmity was made, upon which promise a sacrifice followed, which some ground on Gen. iii. 21, 'God made

them coats of skins' of beasts, which the word "'od" signifies, and is never taken in Scripture otherwise than for the outward skin of a beast. And, indeed, it is not likely that 129 years should be between the promise and the first sacrifice, for some think Abel was killed by Cain in the 129th year after the creation, for it is certain 130 years after the creation Seth was born, Gen. v. 3. And this is confirmed, Heb. ix. 32, 'Neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.' The first testament was of more ancient date than the Jewish service ordained by Moses; and some ceremonies, as sacrifices, and distinction of clean and unclean beasts, were in use before, Gen. viii. 20, so that there seems to be a sacrifice representing the Messiah for the dedication of the first testament, which Adam had received from God and transmitted to Abel, whom he taught the way of sacrificing. What regeneration Adam had was by this word of the gospel. Had not Adam believed it, he would not have delivered it to Abel; and Abel had not sacrificed, unless he had been taught so by his father, or immediately by God; but most likely by his father, because God does not use extraordinary means, when ordinary will serve. And Abel was regenerate, for it is said 'by faith he offered' this sacrifice, Heb. xi. 4: and it was faith in Christ, faith in the promised seed, for all of them in that catalogue, Heb. xi., did eye Christ by faith, as well as Moses. of whom it is particularly expressed, ver. 26, that 'he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.' Considering all this, it is evident, that the ancient restoration was by the revelation of Christ and the gospel as the only necessary means. Abraham, it is likely, had some external word in his father Terah's family, by tradition from the patriarchs, and had the revelation of the promise made to him by God, Gen. xviii. 19. And it was wrought then in an ordinary way by instruction, for, for that Abraham is commended, and no doubt but Isaac and Jacob did the same, so that all along this change of the heart was wrought by a declaration of the word of the gospel.

(4.) It seems to be the standing instrument of it to the end of the world. Some indeed think the conversion of the Jews shall not be by the declarations of the word in a way of preaching and instruction, as

the Gentiles were brought in, but by a visible appearance of Christ, which they ground upon Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced,' they shall see Christ in the clouds as pierced by them, and understand Paul's conversion by an extraordinary light shining round about him, and a voice from heaven, to be a type and pattern of God's manner of the future conversion of the Jews, which is intimated, 1 Tim. i. 16, that the mercy he obtained was 'a pattern for them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting'. Whether this be so or no, yet however the conversion is by a revelation of that which is the matter and substance of the gospel, it is the revelation of Christ himself; and if, like Paul's conversion, by a voice, as well as by sight, by instruction as well as apparition; but it seems to me to be the perpetual standing means of regeneration. The fruits of our Saviour's ascension shall endure to the end of the world, and the enduing men with gifts for the building him a spiritual house is a great end of his ascension, Ps. lxxviii. 18, compared with Eph. iv. 8, 9, 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord might dwell among them.' He receives gifts upon his ascension, for the subduing and charging the hearts of the rebellious, that they may be a fit habitation for God, who dwells in them by his Spirit; these gifts being the fruit of so glorious an ascension, and a rich donative to him for the accomplishment of his undertaking in the world, and being given for the smoothing, polishing, and fitting rude stones to combine together for a temple for the Lord to dwell in (which is the reason why he keeps up the world). As long therefore as God has a temple, and any stone to polish, these gifts will remain in the ministry of the word, and be exercised in order to so great a building; and we may infer also by the way, that it is not likely that God does dwell in any, but such who are so subdued and formed by the ministry of the word, which is the fruit of Christ's ascension. It seems also to have an more ancient date, and founded upon the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son. All that prayer in the 17th of John seems to me to run upon those articles agreed on between them. Those that were given to Christ were given to keep his word: John

xvii. 6, 'Thou gave them me, and they have kept thy word.' Which word was given to Christ by God in order to be given to them: ver. 8, 'I have given them the word which thou gave me.' And in his prayer for their sanctification, her. 17, he seems to intimate that this was the ordinary method then subscribed to by both, and the settled means of sanctification; he does not only propose his desire for their sanctification, but the means, 'through thy truth,' and specifies what he means by truth, 'thy word is truth.' And what he did here pray for, for them that were then with him, he did for all that should hereafter believe, ver. 20; and though this be meant of a further sanctification of those that were already regenerate, yet it will, I think, evidently follow that if the word by agreement between the Father and the Son be the instrument of every degree of sanctification, it must be also of the first; since there can be no faith, but refers to the object believed, and the ground why it is believed, whence 'belief of the truth' is joined with the 'sanctification of the Spirit,' 2 Thes. ii. 13; besides, ver. 20, all belief for the future was to be through the word, 'through their word.' Let me add another inference from this; what an excellent argument is this to plead in prayer, before you go to hear or read the word; Lord, was not this an article of agreement between thee and thy Son? Was not this the desire of our Saviour, who knew the best means of sanctifying?

[5.] It is necessary, by God's appointment, for all the degrees of the new birth, and all the appendixes to it. When God shows his own glory for a further change, he represents the species of it in the glass of the gospel: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.' It is the ministration of the Spirit in all the acts of the spirit. If the Spirit quicken, it is by some gospel precept; if it comforts, it is by some gospel promise; if it startles, it is by some threatening in the word. Whatsoever working there is in a Christian's heart, it is by some word or other dropping upon it. If any temptation which assaults us be baffled, it is by the word, which is the sword of the Spirit. The life of a Christian is made up of increasing light, refreshing comforts, choicer inclinations of the heart towards God. By the same law whereby the

soul is converted the heart is rejoiced, and the eyes further enlightened: Ps. xix. 7, 8, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes.' The Spirit makes the word not only the fire to kindle the soul, but the bellows to blow; it is first life, then liveliness to the soul. It is through the word he begets us, and through the word he quickens us: Thy word has quickened me,' Ps. cxix. 50, 93. It is by the word God gathers a church in the world; by the same word he sanctifies it to greater degrees, Eph. v. 26. It is the seed whereby we are born, the dew whereby we are refreshed. As it is the seed of our birth, so it is the milk of our growth, 1 Peter ii. 2. Faith comes by hearing, and salvation after faith by the 'foolishness of preaching,' 1 Cor. i. 21. It helps us after we have believed through grace, Acts xviii. 27. Our fruitfulness depends upon our plantation by this river's side. The influence of other ordinances depends upon it. Sacraments that nourish and increase, are not efficacious, but by virtue of the word; they have their dependence on the word, as seals upon the covenant. The word is operative without sacraments; sacraments are not operative without the influence of the word, they are only assistants to it. This quickens and increases habitual grace, as well as it was the instrument first to usher it into the heart: Eph. v. 26 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' As God will have the mediation of his Son honoured in the whole progress and perfection of grace as the meritorious cause, the efficacy of the Spirit as the efficient cause, so he will have the word in every step to heaven honoured as the instrumental cause; that as Jesus Christ is all in all, as the chief, so the word may be all in all as the means. As God created the world by the word of his power, and by the word of his providence bid the creatures increase and multiply, so by the word of the gospel he lays the foundation, and rears the building, of his spiritual house.

4. As it is not a natural instrument, but the only instrument appointed by God, and therefore, upon these and upon other accounts, a necessary instrument, so it is an instrument which makes mightily for God's glory. The meaner the appearance of the

instrument, the more evident the power and skill of the workman. It would be miraculous for a man to raise up another from death, by a composition of medicines syringed down the throat, but a greater miracle to raise him by speaking a word. In the new birth there is nothing sensible to man but the word, the other causes are secret; like the wind, you know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes. The instrument being weak in itself, none can claim any share with God in the glory of the work. But were there a natural strength in the means, much of the honour would be pared from God, and assumed by the creature. It is like the trumpet in the right hand of Gideon's soldiers, and a pitcher with a lamp in the left. Upon the blowing of the trumpet and the breaking of the pitcher, the enemies fled; and God would have the means but small, but three hundred of thirty-two thousand, that Israel might not vaunt, and say, Mine own arm has saved me, Judges vii. 2. It had not been so admirable for Samson to have killed so many with a sword or spear, or if the walls of Jericho had fallen flat by the force of some battering engine; but it was wonderful to see them tumble at the blast of ram's horns. Is it not the same to see strong-holds, high thoughts, Goliath-like corruptions, and spiritual death itself, fly before the voice of the word? To see a man like the Babel-builders, swelling and rearing up his own confidences against God, to have all the former language of his soul confounded by a word; to think of other objects, speak in another strain, descend from self to dust, deny pleasure, embrace a crucified Christ; that carnal reason should be silenced, legions of devils driven out, a messy Dagon fall before an ark of wood, that has nothing in it but the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna: in such weak means is the power of God exalted, and no other cry can reasonably be heard but 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' So it was more glorious for our Saviour to turn many of the Jews to him after his death than in his life, to bring them to believe by a Word, upon a person they had crucified as a malefactor, than if he had brought them to believe while he was attended with a train of miracles. The power of his miracles might seem in their eyes to be extinct with his death, since he that delivered others did not deliver himself from the hands of his murderers. He now honours

both his own words and their faith, in bringing them to believe by the preaching of men, who did not believe by the Word from his lips, attended with the seals of so many glorious miracles.

5. Consider, as it is an instrument, so but an instrument. God begets by the word; the chief operation depends upon the Spirit of God. No sword can cut without a hand to manage it, no engine batter without a force to drive it. The Word is objective in itself, operative by the power of the Spirit; instrumental in itself, efficacious by the Holy Ghost. The Word of Christ is first spirit and then life. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,' John vi. 63. The word is the chariot of the Spirit, the Spirit the guider of the word; there is a gospel comes in word, and there is a gospel comes in power, 1 Thes. i. 5. There is a publishing of the gospel, and there is the 'fullness of the blessing of the gospel,' Rom. xv. 29. 'There was the truth of God spoken by Peter and Paul, and God in that truth working in the heart: Gal. ii. 8, 'He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles.' The gospel in itself is like Christ's voice; the gospel with the Spirit is like Christ's power raising Lazarus; other men might have spoken the same words, but the power of rising must come from above. It is then successful when an inward unction drops with the outward dew, when the veil is taken from the heart, and the curtain from the word, and both meet together, both word and heart; when Christ kisses with the kisses of his mouth, and the man embraces it with the affections of his heart. The light in the air is the instrument by which we read, but the principle of that light is in the sun in the heavens. The word is a rod, a breath, but efficacious in smiting and slaying the old man, as it is the rod of Christ's mouth, the breath of his lips, Isa. xi. 3; a rod like that of Moses to charm us, but as it is the rod of his strength, Ps. cx. 2; a weapon, but only 'mighty through God,' 2 Cor. x. 4; a seed, but brings not forth a plant but by the influence of the sun. The word has this efficacy from the bleeding wounds and dying groans of Christ. It is by making his soul an offering for sin that he sees the travail of his soul in his new born creatures. By his blood are all the promises of grace confirmed; by

his blood they are operative. The word whereby we are begotten was appointed by God, confirmed by Christ, and the Spirit which begets us was purchased by the same blood. To conclude: the word declares Christ, and the Spirit excites the heart to accept him; the word shows his excellency, and the Spirit stirs up strong cries after him; the word declares the promises, and the Spirit helps us to plead them; the word administers reasons against our reasonings, and the Spirit edges them, the word shows the way, and the Spirit enables to walk in it; the word is the seed of the Spirit, and the Spirit the quickener of the word; the word is the graft, and the Spirit the engrafter; the word is the pool of water, and the Spirit stirs it to make it healing.

II. Quest. How does the word work?

1. Objectively, as it is a declaration of God's will, as it does propose to the understanding what is to be known, in order to salvation hereafter and practice here, as it does declare the purpose of God to save only by Jesus Christ the Mediator, and by him to deliver us from sin, Satan, and whatsoever is contrary to everlasting happiness; and thus is significative of something to our minds and understandings. The Spirit gave us an eye to see, and the word is the light which discovers the object to the eye. The Spirit gives us an organ, but something must be proposed for that organ to exercise itself about, otherwise there is no use of the understanding in any rational operation; which certainly there is, for though the object is supernatural, and the inward work upon the mind supernatural, yet the proposal of the object to the mind is made in a rational manner. The word does objectively propose life and death in a way suitable to the nature of man, that he may rationally choose life: 'I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life,' Deut. xxx. 19. Both the blessings of the gospel and the curses of the law are presented in the word, that the one may be chosen, the other avoided. The word is proposed under various notions: as *true*, and so it is the object of the speculative understanding; as *good*, so it is the object of the practical understanding and will; as *profitable*, so it is the object of the appetite and affections. When it is received into the

speculative understanding, it is a preparation to the new birth; when it is received into the practical understanding and will, it is the new birth. It discovers the wonders in God's own heart, his Son, and his promise; the Spirit demonstrates it, and gives power to embrace it. It first presents the promise and then answers the pleas the stubborn heart makes against it, yet by the same gospel, it fetches demonstrative arguments from that quiver to satisfy a cavilling understanding, and motives from thence to overcome a resisting will, it silences the fears, points to the way, excites the soul to an acceptance of Christ, all by this gospel, and so draws us, as a man draws a child, by presenting some alluring object to him. The Spirit immediately himself touches the soul, but by the word, as an instrument proposing the object, and drawing out the soul into an actual believing. The two chief parts of the word are,

(1.) The discovery of our misery by nature. The heart is ripped open, our putrefied condition in our blood evidenced, our deplorable state unfolded, and thereby the conscience awakened to sensible reflections. It dissects the heart, discovers the secret reserves, unravels the thoughts, pursues sin to its fastnesses, and pulls and brings it out, as Joshua the kings to execution: 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 'And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' It opens sin to the very bowels, discovers the inward filth, takes off its beautiful disguise, its silken covering, and shows the running ulcer under it. It discovers the forlorn estate by nature, and the insufficiency of flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of God. Let the word be whispered by the Spirit in the ears of a ruffling sinner, and the curtains which obscured his sin from his eye drawn open, that he may see what a nest of devils he has, what astonishment will it raise in him! How will he stand amazed at his own folly! How will he loathe that self which before he so vehemently loved!

(2.) A second discovery is of the necessity and existence of another bottom. It discovers our misery by nature, and our remedy by Christ,

the plague brought upon the world by the first Adam, the cure brought to the world by the second. It proclaims a peace, concluded between God and the humbled sinner, by his Son, the great ambassador, confirmed by his blood, assured by his resurrection. It shows him the fountain of death in his sin, the fountain of life in Christ, the free streams and gracious communications of it. The promise discovers the gracious nature of God, his kindness to man, the openness of his arms to receive him, and thus bring the soul off from itself to the foot of God and the bottom of the cross. When the word like fire and the heart like tinder come close together, the heart catches the spark and burns. From the word reconciliation and peace step out and meet the soul, it finds the kisses of Christ's mouth inspiring it with life, the box of the gospel promises broke open, the window of the gospel ark opened, and the dove flying out of it into the desert heart. The word proposes things as they are in reality, and the soul knows things as it ought to know, 1 Cor. viii. 2. It understands the unavoidable necessity and the infallible excellency of the things proposed; it sees the rocks and shelves wherein the danger lies, and a compass whereby to steer, a road wherein to lie safe at anchor; whereupon he relents for his sin, is astonished at divine kindness, rejoices at the promise as before he trembled at the threatening, and has far other thoughts of God than he had before, in which act divine life is breathed into the soul.

2. The word seems to have an active force upon the will, though the manner of it be very hard to conceive. It is operative in the hand of God for sanctification. The petition of our Saviour, John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth,' seems to intimate more than a bare objective relation to this work; it both shows us our spots and cleanses them. It is a seed. Seed, though small, is active, no part of the plant retains a greater efficacy; all the glory and strength of the plant, in its buds, blossoms, and fruit, are hidden in it. The word is this seed, which being settled in the heart by the power of the Spirit, brings forth this new creature. It is a glass that not only represents the image of God, but by the Spirit changes us into it, 2 Cor. iii. 18. A word that pierces the heart, Heb. iv. 12, ye,

'sharper than a two-edged sword, dividing asunder the soul and spirit.' It is a fire to burn. The Spirit does so edge the word that it cuts the quick, discerns the very thoughts, insinuates into the depths of the heart, and rakes up the small sands from the bottom, as a fierce wind does from the bowels of the sea. It is God's ordinance to batter down strongholds. Though it be not a natural instrument to work necessarily, yet it is likened to natural instruments, which are active under the efficiency of the agent which manages them; and this also, in the hands of the Spirit, works mighty effects. The 'sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth ' are joined together, one subordinate to another, 2 Thes. ii. 13. The Spirit efficiently infusing holy habits; the word objectively and actively—objectively, as outwardly proposed; actively, as inwardly engrafted;—it at least excites the new infused gracious principle, and produces our actual conversion and believing. As the pronouncing excommunication in the primitive times filled the person with terror; and no question but upon the same account the authoritative pronouncing the pardon of sin by the apostles, though only declarative, might have a mighty operation upon the soul in filling it with joy; yet both, as managed by the Spirit, concurring with his own ordinance. So that the word is mighty in operation as well as clear in representation; for an activity seems to be ascribed to it by the Scripture metaphors. The chief activity of it is seen in that likeness which it produces in the soul to itself. Seeds have an efficacious virtue to produce plants of the same kind with that whose seeds they are; so the word produces qualities in the heart like itself. The law in the heart is the law in the word transcribed in the soul; a graft which changes a crabbed stock into a sweet tree, James i. 21; like a seal it leaves a likeness and impression of itself; it works a likeness to God as he is revealed in the gospel, for we are changed into the same image. What image? The same image which we behold in that glass, 2 Cor. iii. 18; not his essential image, but the image of his glory represented in the gospel for our imitation. The word is the glory of God in a glass, and imprints the image of the glory of God in the heart. It is a softening word, and produces a mollified heart; an enlightening word, and causes an enlightened soul; a divine word,

and engenders a divine nature; it is a spiritual word, and produces a spiritual frame; as it is God's will, it subdues our will; it is a sanctifying truth, and so makes a sink of sin to become the habitation of Christ. To conclude: this is certain: the promise in the word breeds principles in the heart suitable to itself; it shows God a father, and raises up principles of love and reverence; it shows Christ a mediator, and raises up principles of faith and desire. Christ in the word conceives Christ in the heart; Christ in the word, the beginning of grace, conceives Christ in the soul, the hope of glory.

III. The Use. 1. Information.

1. How admirable, then, is the pourer of the gospel! It is a quickening word, not a dead; a powerful word, not a weak; a sharp-edged word, not dull; a piercing word, not cutting only skin deep, Heb. iv. 12. That welcome work does it make, when a door of utterance and a door of entrance are both opened together! It has a mighty power to outwrestle the principalities of hell, and demolish the strongholds of sin in the heart. It is a word of which it may be said, as the psalmist of the sun, Ps. xix. 6, 'His circuit is to the ends of the earth, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.' To part of the soul is hidden from a new birth by the warm beams of it, when directed by God to the soul. What a powerful breath is that which can make a dead man stand upon his feet and walk! If you should find your faces, by looking in a glass, transformed into an angelical beauty, would you not imagine some strange and secret virtue in that glass? How powerful is this gospel word, which changes a beast into a man, a devil into an angel, a clod of earth into a star of heaven!

(1.) It is above the power of all moral philosophy The wisdom of the heathens never equalled the gospel in such miracles; the political government of the best states never made such alterations in the hearts of men. How excellent is that gospel which has done that for the renewing of millions of souls, which all the wit and wisdom of the choicest philosophers could never effect upon one heart! All other lectures can do no more than allay the passions, not change them;

bring them into an order fit for human society, not beget them for a divine fellowship; not draw them forth out of a principle of love to God, and fix them upon so high an end as the glory of God that is invisible. This is the glorious begetting by the gospel, which enables not only to moral actions, but inspires with divine principles and ends, and makes men highly delight in the ways they formerly abhorred. What are a few sprinklings of changes moral philosophy has wrought in the lives of men, to the innumerable ones the gospel has wrought, which were such undeniable realities, that they were never openly contradicted by any of the most violent persecutors of the Christian religion, and were always the most urged argument for the truth of the gospel in the ancient apologies for it? How long may we read and hear mere moral discourses, and arrive no higher than some reformation of life, with unchanged hearts: have sin beaten from the outworks, yet retain the great fort, the heart!

(2.) Above the power of the law. The natural law sees not Christ, the Mosaical law dimly shows him afar off; the gospel brings him near, to be embraced by us, and us to be divinely changed by him. The natural law makes the model and frame of a man, the Mosaical adds some colours and preparations, and the gospel conveys spirit into them. The natural law begets us for the world, the Mosaical kills us for God, and the gospel raises up to life. The natural law makes us serve God by reason, the Mosaical by fear, and the gospel by love. It is by this, and not by the law, those three graces which are the main evidences of life are settled in the soul. It begets faith, whereby we are taken off from the stock of Adam, and inserted in Christ; hope, whereby we flourish; and love, whereby we fructify. By faith, we have life; by hope, strength; by love, liveliness and activity. All these are the fruits of the gospel administration.

(3.) Its power appears in the subjects it has been instrumental to change. Souls bemired in the filthiest lusts, have been made miraculously clean; it has changed the hands of rapine into instruments of charity, hearts full of filth into vessels of purity; it has brought down proud reason to the obedience of faith, and made

active lusts to die at the foot of the cross; it has struck off Satan's chains, and snatched away his captives into the liberty of God's service; it has changed the most stubborn hearts. The conversion of a great company of those Jewish priests that were most violent against it and the author of it, is ascribed to the power of the word: Acts vi. 7, 'And the word of God increased, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.' How many were raised to life by Peter's sermon! More souls turned than words spoken upon record. It subdues the will, which cannot be conquered but by its own consent. Light can dart in upon the understanding whether a man will or no, and flash in his face though he keep it in unrighteousness. Conscience will awaken and rouse them, though men use all the arts they can to still it. The will cannot be forced to any submission against its own consent; the power of the gospel is seen in the conquest of the will, and putting new inclinations into that.

(4.) The power of it is seen in the suddenness of its operation. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, like the change at the last resurrection: 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, 'We shall all be changed, in a moment, at the last trumpet.' How have troops of unmastered lusts fled at the voice of the gospel trumpet, like a flock of frightened birds, and left their long-possessed mansion! How have the affections, which have sheltered so many enemies against God, been on the sudden weary of their residence, and abhorred what they loved, and loved what the moment before they abhorred! How have welcome temptations been upon this sudden change rejected, a despised Saviour dearly embraced, a furious soul tamed, a darling self crucified, and a soul open to every temptation strongly fortified against it! How frequent are the examples, in the first times of Christianity, of men that have been almost as bad as devils one day, one hour, and joyful martyrs the next; and as soon as ever they have been begotten by it, asserted the power of it in another new birth by flames!

(5.) And this has been done many times by one part, one particle of the word. One word of the gospel, a single sentence, has erected a heavenly trophy in a soul, which all the volumes of the choicest mere

reason could never erect; one plain scripture has turned a face to heaven that never looked that way before, and made a man fix his eye there against his carnal interest. One plain scripture has killed a man's sins, and quickened his heart with eternal life; one word of Christ, remembered by Peter, made him weep bitterly, and two or three scriptures, pressed by the same Peter upon his hearers, pricked their hearts to the quick. How has hell flashed in the face of a sinner, out of a small cloud of a threatening, and heaven shot into the soul from one little diamond spark of a promise! A little seed of the word, like a grain of mustard seed, changed the soul from a dwarfish to a tall stature! This the experience of every are can testify.

(6.) And this power appears in the simplicity of it. Savonarola observes, that when he neglected the preaching of the Scripture, and applied himself to discourses of philosophy, he gained little upon the hearts of people; but when he came to illustrate and explain the Scripture, the minds of people were wonderfully inflamed and excited to a serious flame; and that when he discoursed in a philosophical manner, there was a non-attention, not only of the more ignorant, but the more learned sort too; but when he preached Scripture truths, he found the minds of men mightily delighted, sting with divine truth, brought to compunction, and a reformation of their lives, which shows, says he, the power of the word, acting more vigorously than all human reason in the world. And indeed Scripture, and Scripture reason, is the wisdom of God; all other reason is the wisdom of man. God will depress man's wisdom and advance his own. It works as it is 'the word of God which lives and abides for ever', 1 Peter i. 23. To wrap a fine piece of silk about a sword, or gild a diamond, is to hinder the edge of the one, and the lustre of the other.

2. Information. The gospel is then certainly of divine authority, since in this 'God has set a tabernacle for the Sun of righteousness to move in, as the heavens are the tabernacle for the material sun, Ps. xix. 4. That word that raises the dead, must needs be the word of no less than God. Our Saviour's discovery of men's thoughts argued his

deity. The word's discovery of the inward workings of the heart, and the alteration it makes there, evidences a divine stamp upon it. God would never have made a lie so successful in the world, or blessed it in making those alterations in men, so comely in the eye of moral nature, so advantageous to human society, as the principles it instils into the minds of men are. A lie would never have been blessed to be an instrument of so much virtue and truth; it would not consist with the righteousness of God's government, or his goodness and truth as governor, to bring the hearts of men into so beautiful an order by a deceitful gospel. What word ever had such trophies! What engine ever battered so many strongholds! If the lame walk by the strength of it, if the dead are raised by the power of it, if lepers are cleansed by the virtue of it, if impure souls are sanctified, dead souls enlivened, are we to question its divine authority? Should a word work such wonderful effects for so many ages, that had no stamp of divine authority upon it? Would all those witnesses be given by God to a mere imposture? Let the victories it has gained evidence the arm that wields it. What sword was used at the first conquest of the world through grace, but this of the Spirit? How soon was the devil, with all his heap of idols, fain to fly before it! How soon was the devil, with all his pack of lusts, forced to leave his habitation in the hearts of men! Is not that of divine authority that so routs the enemies of God, puts sin to flight, expels spiritual death, breaking the bands of that worst king of terrors; that had skill to find out sin in its lurking holes, and power to dispossess that, and introduce spiritual life into the soul? Can that be a thing less than divine, that restores man to his due place as a creature respecting his Creator, referring all things to his glory; that implants the love, fear, hope of God in the mind; that makes man, of a miserable corrupt creature, to become divine; that roots out the vices of hell, and stores the soul with the virtues of heaven? Can such a gospel be termed less than a divine word of truth? If there be any word that can so change the nature, and transform wolves into lambs, let it have the honour and due praise when it is found out; but whatsoever the atheism of the world is, that never felt the powerful efficacy of it, you surely that have felt it a mighty weapon to conquer the devils that once possessed you, and an

instrument to new beget you when you lay in your blood, should entertain no whisper against the divine authority of it, but count it the power and wisdom of God as, indeed, it is in itself, and in its effects upon souls, Rom. i. 16. It is said there to be 'the power of God to salvation.' Upon that account the apostle was not ashamed of it; neither should we, but conclude as the same apostle says, 'If I be not an apostle, yet to you I am an apostle.' So if the gospel be not in itself the gospel of God, surely it is so to you who have been renewed.

3. Information. It shows us the reason why the gospel is so much opposed by Satan in the world. It begets those for heaven whom he had begotten for hell. It pulls down his image and sets up God's; it pulls the crown off his head, the sceptre from his hand, snatches subjects from his empire, straitens his territories, and demolishes his forts, breaks his engines, outwits his subtilty, makes his captives his conquerors, and himself, the conqueror, a captive; it pulls men 'out of the kingdom of darkness, and translates them into a kingdom of light,' Col. i. 13. And all this, as it is a word of truth, opposed to his word of deceit, whereby he has cheated mankind and deceived the nations; that we may well say of him, as the apostle of death, 'O death, where is thy sting?' 1 Cor. xv. 55. O hell, where is thy sting? O Satan, where is thy victory? This slays Satan and revives the soul.

4. We see then how injurious they are to God, who would obstruct the progress of the gospel in the world; that, as the papists, would hinder the reading and the preaching of the word. Whose seed are they, but the seed of that dragon, that would as well hinder the new birth as devour a divine-begotten babe 'as soon as ever it were born,' Rev. xii. 4. Such would hinder the greatest and most excellent work of God upon the souls of men, would have no spiritual generations for God in the world. Such envy Christ a seed, and God a family, they would despoil him of a family on earth, though they cannot of a family in heaven. In banishing the word, they would banish the grace of God out of the world, and leave no place in a world drowned with ignorance, where this dove should set her foot. Those that would take away the seed, would not have a spiritual harvest, but reduce souls to

a deplorable famine, lock them up in the grave, and keep them under the bands of a spiritual death.

5. It informs us, that the gospel shall then endure in the world, as long as God has any to beget. Men may puff at it, but they cannot extinguish it, it is a word of truth, and truth is mighty, and will prevail. It was a mighty wind wherein the Spirit came upon the apostles, to show not only the quick and speedy progress of the gospel, as upon the wings of the wind, but the mighty force of it, that men can no more silence the sound of the gospel than they can the blustering of the wind. It shall prevail in all places, where God has a seed to bring in, a people to beget. Those given to Christ shall come from far: 'from the east,' Isa. xlix. 12, 'and from the west, and from the land of Sinim' (now, I think, called Damiata, in Egypt). The word, being the instrument, shall sound everywhere, where he has sons and daughters to beget for Christ. As long as Christ does retain his royalty, 'his mouth shall be a sharp sword,' Isa. xlix. 2. That is the first thing concluded on between God and Christ, before they come to any further treaty, which is expressed in that chapter. As Christ shall be his salvation to the ends of the earth, so shall the word be the instrument of it to the end of the world: the 'polished shaft' is 'hid in his quiver.' As he is a light to the Gentiles, so the golden candlestick of this gospel wherein this light is set, shall endure in spite of men and devils. Since his promise of a seed to Christ stands sure, the word, whereby he begets a generation for him, is as sure as the promise, and shall not return void: Isa. lv. 11, 'but it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and it shall prosper in the things whereto he sent it.' Never fear then the removal of the gospel out of the world, though it be removed out of a particular place, since it is a word of truth, and an instrument ordained to so glorious an end.

6. It is a sign, then, God has some to beget, when he brings his gospel to any place. He has a pleasure to accomplish, and it shall not return unto him void. Prosperity is entailed upon it for the doing the work whereto he sent it. Since then it is appointed an instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, for a new begetting, it will be efficacious upon

some souls where it comes, for the wise God would not send it, but to attain its main end upon some hearts. God never sends his word to any place, but it is received and relished by some as the savour of life. It looses the bands of spiritual death in some, and binds them harder upon obstinate sinners, to them that perish it is the savour of death. In every place the gospel was savoury to some: 2 Cor. ii. 14, 15, 'God made manifest the savour of his knowledge,' by the apostles, 'in every place.' Wherever this seed is sown, the harvest has been reaped, either more or less. It is fruitful at Corinth, for there God had much people, Acts xviii. 10. It is not fruitless at Athens, though the harvest was less; most mocked, but some believed, and but one man of learning and worldly wisdom, Acts xvii. 32, 34. When God sends John in a way of righteousness, if the Pharisees believe not, God will make a conquest of publicans and harlots: Mat. xxi. 32, 'John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you believed not: but the publicans and harlots believed him.' The net of the gospel is not cast wholly in vain, but from the time of its coming, to the time of its removal, some souls have been caught, though not of the most delicious fish, yet of the worst sort.

7. It informs us, what an excellent thing is a new birth! The end is more desirable than the means, this is the chief end of all the ordinances of God in the world. The gospel had never been revealed but for this intent, this is the 'design of the Spirit's operation in any gospel administration. All the lines of the word are to draw the lineaments of grace in the heart. This must be a noble and excellent thing, for which chiefly the oracles of God sound in the world, for which so great a light is set up in the gospel. All the love of Christ breathes in the gospel; the whole Testament is sealed by his blood; the perpetual workings of the Holy Ghost, the preaching of the word, the celebration of the sacraments, are in subservience to this end, the one to make us live, the other to make us grow. How inconceivably excellent is that, how valuable in the eye of God, how advantageous to the happiness of men, that is, the design wherein so many divine operations meet!

8. What a lamentable thing is it, that so few should be new begotten by the word of truth! How many are there among us that understand not what a new begetting and birth is, no more than Nicodemus when he discoursed with our Saviour! What a deplorable thing is it that the word should be preached, and so little regarded! that not only an hour's, but many years' discourses should pass away (as the Psalmist speaks of our lives) 'like a tale that is told!' Ps. xc. 9. How miserable is that man that has the objective cause of the new birth, without the effective! It is the word of truth. What will become of you, if you prefer a word of error before it; if you prefer the devil's killing suggestions before God's reviving, oracles? What does the word of truth move you to, but to a new birth? Why will any man struggle against it? Every resistance of the word is a resistance of God himself. It is God hews by the prophets, Hos. vi. 5; it is God offers to beget by the word; every reluctance then against the word is a reluctance against God. The word will either bring in a new form of grace, or a new form of torment. If the working of the one be rejected, the in-working of the other cannot be avoided; it will either cut the bands of a spiritual death, or cut the sinews of our souls. That piece of timber that has not its knots cut off for the building, shall be cut in pieces for the fire. A new life waits for them that obey the gospel; an endless death for them that reject it; they that obey not the gospel, know not God, 2 Thess. i 8. And what is reserved for such, but revenging flames in another world? It would be happy for such, that they had never heard of a renewing gospel. Every gospel discourse that might have been the cause of a spiritual life, and a divine cordial, if sucked in, rejected, will be a bitter drug in that potion which shall be drunk in an eternal fever.

9. Hereby you may examine whether you are new begotten. It is the word of truth whereby God befits. In this word he opens the glory of his grace, and through this he conveys the power of his grace. The conquests of Christ were to be made by the word, and it was so settled at the first constitution of him as Mediator and Redeemer: Isa. xlix. 2, 'He has made my mouth like a sharp sword.' It was by this the hearts of men were to be conquered. And what heart is not

subdued by the sword of his mouth, is not subdued by the power of his arms. Some word or other was the instrument to beget you (I speak of people grown up). The apostle's interrogation is a strong negative. There is no believing without hearing, Rom. x. 14. Hearing goes before believing; he lays it down as a certain conclusion from his former arguing: 'So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' If you conclude yourselves new begotten, how came you by it? Is it by the word, or no? That is God's ordinary means. If you be not renewed by this, it is not likely you are renewed at all; no other instrument has God ordinarily appointed to this end. Afflictions may plough men for it, but the word is the only seed that renews the face of the earth. All false notions or presumptions of the new birth must be brought to this touchstone; it is a misshapen and monstrous birth, that is not by a seed of the same kind; the law in the heart has no seed of the same nature with it to engender it, but the law in the word, that word which we properly call gospel; the word of truth, not the word of philosophy, which is a word of uncertainty; God's word, not Plato's word. If a thousand beasts had been consumed by common fire, not one of them had been an holocaust, a grateful sacrifice, unless consumed by the fire of the altar which came down from heaven. Moral wisdom is not that fire, has not that eminent descent from heaven; it is not that speech from heaven whereby our Saviour is said yet to speak, Heb. sit. 26. A little spark kindled by the voice of Christ from heaven, from whence he yet speaks in the gospel, is more worth than all the bonfires in the world, kindled by the sparks of moral wisdom. Those qualifications which grow of their own accord, without the word, are like the herbs which sprout in wild places without any tillage, which are of a different kind than what are planted and watered in a garden, and overlooked by the care of man. If your dispositions you boast of were not planted by the word, how fair soever they may look, they are but a wild kind of fruit; therefore, it concerns you to look back upon yourselves, think what word it was whereby you were begotten. If no particular word can be remembered, if your regeneration were wrought insensibly in your younger years, examine what suitableness there is between the word and your souls, whether your hearts are turned into the nature

of it. The measures of grace are according to the measures of the word. If you cannot remember the first glorious entrance of it, you must see for the rich dwelling of it. An inhabitant may enter into our houses unseen, but he cannot dwell there without our knowledge; the lines of the word will be seen in the heart, though the particular pencil whereby they were wrought may not be remembered.

10. It instructs ministers how to preach. It is the word of truth, the gospel, that must be the main matter of our preaching; and those things in the gospel that have the greatest tendency to the new begetting men, and working this great change in them, and driving it on to greater maturity. The instrument of conversion is not barely the letter of the word, but the sense and meaning of it, rationally impressed upon the understanding, and closely applied to the conscience. The opening the word is the life of it, and the true means of regeneration. If any man would turn his servant or child from a course of sin, would he discourse to them of the nature of the sun and stars, their magnitude, motions, numbers, and qualities? This would be nothing to the purpose; his way would be to show them the deformity and danger of their sin. The word of truth is God's instrument, and it should be ours; what is the end of the word, should be the end of our preaching. It was through the gospel the apostle begot the Corinthians; not that the preaching of the law is excluded, but it must be preached in order to the gospel as a preparation to it. Whatsoever in the word of truth does prepare for the new birth, produce it, cherish it, preserve it, centre in one and the same end. How careful and industrious should we be to beget children to God, that we may present them, and say, 'Here am I, and the children, which thou hast given me.' The new birth will be your joy, and crown and you will be ours, 1 Thess. ii. 19,20. Aaron's sons are called the generations of Moses, as well as Aaron, Num. iii. 1, though none of his natural sons are reckoned; Aaron's by natural generation, Moses' perhaps by a spiritual regeneration and instruction.

Use 2. Of exhortation.

1. Highly glorify God for the word of truth, which is so great an instrument. How thankful should we be for an intention, to secure our estates from consuming, houses from burning. bodies from dying! The gospel, the word of truth, does much more than this: it is an instrument to beget a soul for God; an instrument whereby God makes himself our Father, and us his children. It is but an instrument; let not the glory be given to the instrument, but to the agent. As it is an instrument, let it have part of your affections, but nothing of the glory that belongs to God; love the truth, but glorify and bless the God of truth, that has ordained it to be so excellent an instrument.

(1.) Bless God in your hearts. [1.] That ever you had the word of truth made known to you. How many millions sit in a spiritual darkness, without so much as the means of a new begetting! Millions never heard the sound of it, nor ever will. [2.] Much more that it has been successful to any of you. Have you any thing in your spirits that bears witness to the truth of it? When you read or hear it, do you find something of kin to it in your souls, and feel something within you rise up and call it blessed? How should you read and hear it, with eruptions of thankfulness to God for it, hearty embraces for it, and fervent ejaculations to God to work more in you by the power of it! Why has the word grappled with any of our souls, and not with others; arrested any of you in a course of sin, and left others to walk in their own ways, to run down silently like the streams of a river, till swallowed up in an ocean of death? The apostle Paul heard the voice, others with him only a sound of words, Acts ix. 9, 7, xxii. 9; some have heard a sound of words, without the voice of God in it, while others have heard a divine voice in a human sound. The wind has blown upon many, God in that wind only upon few; some have received air, whilst others have received Spirit and life; some have only the body of the word, while others feel the spirit and power of it in their hearts. Shall not God be glorified for this? Had it not been for him, and his Spirit, words had been only words and wind to all as well as to some.

(2.) Glorify God in your lives. As you feel the power of it in your hearts, let others see the brightness and efficacy of it in your actions. The new born creature should principally aim at the glory of God, since the instrument whereby he is begotten was first published for the 'glory of God in the highest,' Luke ii. 14. What is produced by the efficacy of such an instrument must have the same end, viz. the glory of God in the practice of holiness. A holy gospel imprinted can never leave the heart and life unholy. A gospel coined for the glory of God, when wrought in the heart, can never suffer the soul to aim chiefly at self; but at the great end for which the gospel was first discovered. The gospel of holiness and truth in the heart will engender sincerity and holiness in the life.

2. Prize the word of truth, which works such great effects in the soul. Value that as long as you live, which is the cord whereby God has drawn any of you out of the dungeon of death. Never count that foolishness by which God has inspired you with the choicest wisdom, and never count that weakness which has made any of you of death, living; and of darkness, light; and of miserable, happy by grace. If a soul be worth a world, and therefore to be prized, how precious ought that to be which is an instrument to let a soul for the felicity of another world! How should the law of God's mouth be better to us than thousands of gold and silver! Ps. cxix. 72. How should we prize that word whereby any of us have seen the glory of God in his sanctuary, the glory of God in our souls! When corruptions are strong, it is an engine to batter them; when our hearts are hard, it is a hammer to break them; when our spirits are impostumated, it is a sword to cut them; when our hearts are cold, it is a fire to inflame them; when our souls are faint, it is a cordial to refresh them, it begins a new birth and maintains it. It is the seed from whence we spring, 1 Peter i. 23, the glass wherein we see the glory of God, 2 Cor. iii. 18. By the waters of the sanctuary, we have both meat for nourishment, and medicines for cure, from the tree that grows by its streams: Ezek. xlvi. 12, 'The fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf for medicine.' Have a great regard to it, keep it in the midst of your hearts, for it is life, Prov. iv. 21, 22.

3. Pray and endeavour for the preservation and success of the word of truth. Were there a medicine that could preserve life, how chary should we be in preserving that? The gospel is the tree, whose leaves cure the nations, Rev. xxii. 2. It was a blessing God endued the creatures with, when he bid them increase and multiply, Gen. i. 22. It was an evidence that he intended to preserve the world. If the gospel get ground in the hearts of men, it is an evidence it shall continue in spite of the oppositions of men or devils.

4. Wait upon God in the word. Where there is a revelation on God's part, there must be a hearing on ours. Sit down therefore at the feet of God, and receive of his words, Dent. xxxiii. 3. (1.) Despise it not; he that contemns it never intends to be new begotten, since he slights the means of God's appointment; he that intends an end, will use all means proportionately to his desires for that end; he that contemns it never was renewed. Habitual grace being wrought by it, cannot, but in its own nature, have a great affection to it. He that loves Christ cannot but love all the methods of his operations. (2.) Despise it not because it is but an instrument: say not, because God is the chief agent, therefore you need not come to the word. Our Saviour knew that 'man did not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God,' Mat. iv. 4. Did he therefore neglect means for preserving his life? Because God gives the increase, should not the husbandman plough and sow? If God does not work upon you by the means, you can have no rational hopes he will do it any other way. What though ministers can only speak to the ear? John Baptist could do no more, whose ministry was notwithstanding glorious, in being the forerunner of Christ. To neglect it, therefore, is to double-bar your hearts against the entrance of grace, and slight the truth which Christ brought down from the bosom of God.

(1.) Never did God appoint any other way but this. Miracles were never appointed but as attendants upon this. Miracles come after teachings in the great gifts to the church, 1 Cor. xii. 7-10. First, the 'manifestation of the Spirit,' the word of wisdom and the word of

knowledge,' then 'gifts of healing and miracles.' Miracles are ceased, as being not absolutely necessary; but the ministry of the word will last to the end of the world. By the prophets God brings souls out of a state of bondage, and by the prophets he preserves them in a state of grace: Hosea xii. 13, 'By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.' Miracles and the resurrection of one from the dead, was never appointed under the legal administration, but Moses and the prophets, Luke xvi. 13. These were the ordinary means, and if these did not work, miracles were inefficacious.

(2.) God never made any promise but in this way. God promised to circumcise their hearts to love him with all their soul, but in the way of hearing his voice, and observing his statutes, Deut. xxx 6, 10, 11. He meets souls only that remember him in his way, Isa. lxiv. 5. And to the preaching of the gospel only, our Saviour promised his presence to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20; the promise is perpetually and immovably throughout all ages of the world fixed to this command. The promising his presence to the preaching of the gospel, implies that his presence shall be enjoyed only by attendance on the gospel. The gracious workings of the Spirit are by this, they are the words of Christ brought to remembrance by him, whereby he does so mightily operate.

(3.) No other way did God apparently work by formerly. In the time when God did especially manifest himself to his people by visions, dreams, and apparitions of angels, and in those days made revelations to them, he converted not any either from a state of nature, or from a particular fall, but by the word. Manasseh's conversion was by the word of the seers, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 18; nor was David reclaimed after his fall by an immediate vision, but by the ministry of Nathan; Peter by a look, which revived the word spoken to him, Luke xxii. 61. The angel that attended the eunuch, Acts viii. 26, made no impressions upon him, but was ordered to direct Philip thither to explain to him the mystery of the gospel; and the Spirit particularly orders him to go near the chariot, ver. 29, but makes no

impression upon him but by the ministry of the word. An angel is sent to direct Philip, but Philip is sent to discover Christ. An angel is sent to Cornelius, not to preach the gospel, but to direct him where to send for a teacher, Acts x.3, 5, 6, the Spirit prepares Peter to go, verse 19, 20, and likewise prepares Cornelius for his reception; God prepares the jailer by an earthquake, but renews him not but by the ministry of Paul, Acts xvi. 26, 32. In the times of the gospel there was first to be a teaching of God's law, before a walking in his paths, Isa. iii. 3. The arm that made heaven and earth makes the new heart and new spirit, but by a word as well as them. The net of the gospel is only appointed to catch the fish, though the fish that had the tribute-money in its mouth was immediately for the service of Christ, yet he would not use his power to bring it to the shore, without Peter's casting out the net. Christ first brings souls to the net, and by the net to himself.

(4.) God has always blessed this more or less. Moses' rod in Moses his hand has brought miracles, Christ's rod in the Spirit's hand has wrought greater; the new creations have been always by it, and the after-breathings of the Spirit through it. By this he makes men righteous, holy, sincere, in a way of eminency, as the morning light which increases to a perfect day, and no longer as a morning cloud which quickly vanishes, Hosea vi. 5, which some understand of a gospel promise mixed with that discourse. How has the light of the beauty and excellency of God, flashing upon the understanding from the glass of the gospel, filled the will and affections of many with desire and love to that glory it represents, and that state it offers! The very leaves of it, the profession has healed nations, and brought human societies into order, and the fruit of it has been the cure of many a soul. Wait therefore for the falling of this fruit. Grace is a beam from the Sun of righteousness, but darted through the medium of gospel air; a pearl engendered by the blood of Christ, but only in the gospel sea. It has not been without its blessing to others, it has raised men from death to life. Is the virtue of the seed expired? or the strength of the Lord grown feeble? If ever therefore you could have the image of God in inward impressions of grace, and outward

expressions of holiness, you must look for your transformation in and by the gospel. All the other knowledge in the world cannot give a man a right notion of the new birth, much less produce it. Look not after enthusiasms, nor expect it in new ways, 'to the law and to the testimony,' ways of God's appointment. The Jews could not expect an angel to bring them soundness of limbs, but by the pool; nor we the Spirit to infuse grace into us, but by the word. It is from the mercy-seat only God speaks to Israel; wisdom's gates are the places where to expect her alms, Prov. viii. 34. Wait therefore upon the word, Herein the Spirit of God travails with souls.

Quest. How shall we wait upon the Lord, so as that we may be new begotten by it?

1. Wait upon the word frequently. Be often in reading and hearing, and meditating on it. Men set upon these works as if they were afraid they should be new born too soon, or prejudiced in their concerns and contentments in the world, as if they feared the mighty wind of the Spirit should blow away their beloved dross too fast, as if it were a matter of indifference to be dike their Maker. If you had gold not thoroughly refined, would you not cast it again and again into the fire? If filth not wholly purged, would you not use the fountain again and again? Those that are in the sun are coloured and heated by it, and have things more visible; those that are much in the word, see more of the wonders, feel more of the warmth, receive deeper impressions, are endued with the grace and holiness of truth, have a purer flame in their affections for heaven. How do you know but an opportunity missed, might have been the best market? How do you know but the Spirit might have joined himself to the word, as Philip to the eunuch's chariot, while he was reading? 'While Peter yet spake those words (it is said), the Holy Ghost fell upon all them which heard the word,' Acts x. 44. What words? Even the marrow of the gospel, ver. 43, 'that through his name, whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.' God may have a portion ready for us, and we go without it, because we are not ready to receive it. We must not expect a raven to bring us food upon a bed of sluggishness. Do it

the rather, because you may live to see such times, wherein Bibles may be as much shut as they are now open, wherein (as in former times) you may be willing to give a large parcel of your goods for one chapter of it. We read of some that have given a load of hay for one chapter of St James. Be frequent in waiting upon the word.

2. Let your hearts be fixed upon that which is the great end of the word. New begettings are the end of the gospel. Come, then, with minds fixed upon this end, and desires for it. Regard it not as a mere sound of words, but as an instrument of the noblest operations in the soul. If this be the great work of the gospel, we ought to read and hear it, with desires to be enlivened where we are dead, quickened where we are dull, be made new creatures where we are yet but old, taller creatures where we are yet but of a low stature; not only to have our understandings instructed, but our hearts changed; to inquire after God to behold the beauty of the Lord, Ps. xxvii. 4, that we may be transformed into it; to look for God, who is in the word of a truth, for the kingdom of God comes nigh to you in the gospel. That was that word that Christ, when he sent his disciples out first to preach, bid them speak unto men, Luke xii. Men usually get more than they come to seek. He that goes to market, intending only to lay out his money upon some trifle, returns for the most part with no better commodity. Zacchaeus got upon the tree to meet with Christ, and so noble an end wanted not an excellent success: that day came salvation into his house, Luke xix. 9. When the Jews did not mind the end of sacrifices, and regarded not the things God principally looked for in them, God slighted them, and they went without any divine operations upon their souls by them, Isa. i. 11, 18, 14. When our ends suit the gospel, then are we like to feel gospel influences. We come with wrong ends, and, therefore, return with unchanged hearts; we come for a sound, and go away with no more. One end therefore in coming should be to gain this new begetting, or increase the growth of the new creature; our ends are not else conformable to the ends of God in it; therefore, as the earth sucks in the rain, and the roots in the earth attract it unto themselves that they may bring forth fruit, so should we open our hearts to receive the showers of the

word with an aim at a new birth, or a further growth. As this is *finis operis*, so it should be *finis operantis*.

3. Mind the word in the simplicity of it, and that in it which tends to that end. Some men are more taken with colours than truth, more enamoured with words than matter, fill themselves only with air, and neglect the substance. Such are like those that are pleased with the colours of the rainbow, more than with the light reflected, or the covenant of God represented by it. No man is renewed by phrases and fancies; those are only as the oil to make the nails of the sanctuary drive in the easier: in Eccles. xii. 11, 'Acceptable words,' joined with 'words of truth,' are as the 'fastening of the nails,' both 'given by one shepherd.' Words there must be to make things intelligible; illustrations to make things delightfully intelligible, but the seminal virtue lies not in the husk and skin, but in the kernel; the rest dies, but the substance of the seed lives, and brings forth fruit; separate, therefore, between the husk and the seed. The word does not work as it is elegant, but as it is divine, as it is a word of truth. Illustrations are but the ornaments of the temple, the glory of it is in the ark and mercy-seat. It is not the engraving upon the sword cuts, but the edge; nor the key, as it is gilded, opens, but as fitted to the wards. Your faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, 1 Cor. ii. 5. It is the juice of the meat, and not the garnishings of the dish, that nourishes. Was it the word as a pleasant song, or as a divine seed, that changed the souls of old, made martyrs smile in the midst of flames? It was the knowledge of the excellency of the promise, and not worldly eloquence, made them with so much courage slight gibbets, stakes, executioners; they had learned the truth as it is in Jesus.

4. Mind the word as the word of truth. Take it not upon the account of persons, value it for its own sake, as it is a word of truth. It is neither Paul nor Apollos, but God that gives the increase. Value it not by men; it is no matter what the pipe is, whether gold or lead, so the water be the water of life; the word has an edge, because it is the word of God, not because it is whetted upon this or that grindstone.

Some will scarce receive a truth, but from one they fancy; as if a man should be so foolish as to refuse a medicine which will preserve his life, because it is not presented to him in a glass which he has a particular esteem of. To receive or refuse any truth upon the account of the person, is a sign of carnality, and the way to remain carnal; upon this account the apostle pronounces the Corinthians again and again carnal, 1 Cor. iii. 4. Despise not the meanest instrument. Our Saviour in his agony was comforted by an angel, much more inferior to him who was the Lord of angels, than any minister can be to a hearer. Mr Peacock, being fellow of a college, in great despair, when some minister had been discoursing with him, and prevailing nothing, offering to pray with him, No, says he; dishonour not God so much, as to pray for such a reprobate. A young scholar of his standing by, answered, Surely a reprobate could not be so tender of God's honour; which words prevailed more to the bringing him to believe than all that the other had spoken. When men turn their backs upon the word, because the mouth does not please them, they turn their backs upon God, John xiii. 20, and perhaps upon their own mercy. When any have respect to the man more than the word, God will leave them to the operation of the man, and withdraw his own.

5. Attend upon the word with an eye to God. Look not for the new birth only from the word. It was the folly of the Jews to think to find life in the Scriptures without Christ; life in the letter, without the original of life, John v. 39, 40. 'Except the Lord build the house' (that is the temple), 'they labour in vain that build it,' Ps. cxxvii. 1. Without God all our endeavours to build a spiritual temple are like the strivings to wash a blackamore white. No believing the word, though preached a thousand times, without God's revealing his arm, Isa. liii. 1. It is not the file that makes the watch, but the artist by it. No instrument can act without the virtue of some superior agent. It is the altar that sanctifies the gold, and Christ that sanctifies the ordinances. Paul may plant by his doctrine and miracles; Apollos may water by his affectionate eloquence; but God alone can give the increase by his almighty breath. Man sows the seed, but God only

can make it fructify. The richest showers cannot make the ground fruitful, but as instruments under God's blessing. It is not said the prophets did hew them, but God by his prophets, Hosea vi. 5. Then have your eyes fixed upon God. It is the word of his lips, not of man's, whereby any are snatched out of the paths of the destroyer, as well as kept from them. Man's teachings direct us to Christ; God's teachings bright us to Christ; man brings the gospel, at most, to the heart, the Spirit only brings the gospel into the heart, man puts the key in the lock, God only turns it, and opens the heart by it, man brings the word of truth, and God the truth of the word into the soul, man brings the objective word of grace, God alone the attractive grace of the word. If where there is already the new birth, the soul must be fixed on God for further openings, much more where it is not yet wrought. David had an excellent knowledge, yet cries out for the opening of his eyes to see the wonders in God's law. It is God only can knock off the fetters of a spiritual death, and open the iron gates, that the King of glory may enter with spiritual life. If any, therefore, will regard the word more than as an instrument, as a partner with God in his operation, he may justly leave you to the weakness of that, and deny the influx of his own strength.

Therefore let the word be attended with prayer.

(1.) Before you wait upon God in any ordinance, plead with him as Moses did in another case, 'To what purpose should I go, unless thy presence go with me?' What can the letter do without the Spirit, or words without that powerful wind to blow them into my heart? None can have life by the bread of the word, without the blessing of God. As man brings the graft, desire God to insert it. As God has promised gifts to his church, so he promised his own teachings: Heb. viii. 11, 'All shall know me, from the least to the greatest.' Urge God with his own promise, desire him to open his mouth, and to open your hearts; his mouth to breathe, and your hearts to receive. When men overlook God, he makes a separation between the word and his own quickening presence. The end does not necessarily arise from the means; and, therefore, in the use of them, there must be a fiduciary

recourse to the grace of God. In the time, too, of waiting upon God, let there be ejaculations; let your hearts be continually lifted up to God; let your expectations be from him. We should be like Jacob's ladder; though the feet stand in Bethel, the house of God, our heads should reach to heaven in all our attendances.

(2.) After you have been at the word. God is the great seer, Christ the great prophet; we should go to him for the repetition of things upon our hearts; we may have that wind afterwards by prayer, which we felt not so stiff at hearing. The operations of truth, as well as the knowledge of it, are best fetched out upon our knees by earnest prayer. How do you know but, while you are praying, the fire may descend from heaven, and transform you into a divine likeness? Thus you will make God the *Alpha* and *Omega* of his own ordinances, in your acknowledgement of him, as well as he is so in himself.

(3.) Rest not in bare hearing. Look for God in the ordinances as he is the living God, who lives in himself and gives life to men and means: Ps. xxxiv. 2, 'My soul longs for the living God,' there is a strength and glory of God to be longed for in the sanctuary; no means are to be rested in or used, but as to lead to such an end for which they are fitted. To rest in the word heard, or read, is to make that our end, which God has appointed only as the means. The word is sweet, but as it is the pipe through which God and his image, God and his grace, which is sweeter and higher than all ordinances, stream to the soul. Rejoice in the word, but only as the wise men did in the star, as it led them to Christ. The word of Christ is precious; but nothing more precious than himself, and his formation in the soul. Rest not in the word, but look through it to Christ.

6. Attend upon the word submissively. It is not the hearer, but the humble hearer, shall find the power of the word working in him; as it is not the speaking a prayer, but the wrestling and struggling of the heart with God in prayer, receives a gracious answer. The humble are the fittest subjects for grace, those that lie upon the ground with their mouth close to the pipe. 'He gives grace to the humble.' Resign

yourselves up to the word, struggle not against the battery it makes, nor the wind that blows; receive every stroke till you see the frame of the new creature. Let a silence be imposed upon the flesh, and self bowed down to the dust, while Christ the great prophet speaks. Be not peevish, not expostulate with God's sovereignty, as they did: Isa. lviii. 3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takes no knowledge?' Acknowledge God a free agent, submit to his sovereign pleasure. A truly humble bow to God will prevail more than all the saucy expostulations of proud flesh. In hearing the word, pick not here a part, and there a part, as suits your humour, but consider what really is God's will, and submit to it. Cornelius was of this resigning temper when the Spirit descended upon him: Acts x. 33, 'We are here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' An humble soul, says Kempis, by the grace of God, understands more the reasons of eternal truth in a trice, than a man that has studied many years in the schools, because he has the operations of them in his heart.

7. Receive the word with faith. I mean, not the faith which is a part of the new creature, but an assent. There is a rational belief that it is the word of truth, which is in many men that have no justifying faith. Actuate this. The believing the word to be so, to be the word of God, is the first step to the receiving advantage by it. No man will ever comply with that which he believes not to be true, or believes not himself to be concerned in. It is said by the apostle, Heb. iv. 1, 2, 'The word profited not, because it was not mixed with faith.' There was truth in the word, but no firm assent to it in their hearts. There can never be a full compliance with Christ, in order to a new birth, if there be not first an assent to the word. Where there is a defect in the first concoction, there will also be a defect in the second and third. If you do not believe with Naaman, that the waters of Jordan are appointed by God for this end, and not those of Abana and Pharpar, you will never be rid of the spiritual death, no more than he would have been of his leprosy. You never see God in his sanctuary, nor feel God in his power for want of this. Surely as this made our Saviour

suspend the power of his miracles, by the same reason it makes him suspend the power of his word: Mat. xiii. 58, 'He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.' If men did believe there were a place where they might enjoy all earthly delights in a higher measure, at an easier rate, how ambitious would they be of putting themselves into a state to enjoy them? If men did believe the report of the gospel, would they not be full of great undertakings for the enjoyment of the proffers of it? But the gospel, more is the pity, has not naturally that credit with men that a fiction has.

8. Observe much the motions upon your hearts while you are attending upon God. If the sails be not skilfully ordered to catch and hold, and make the best improvement of the wind that blows, much of the wind will pass beside it, and the ship lag many leagues behind, or lie wind-bound a long time before it receive a like gale. God has particular seasons: Heb. iv. 7, 'Today if you will hear his voice.' Sometimes the Spirit is more urging than at another time, and sends his motions thicker upon the heart; let those times be observed, and when there are motions on the Spirit's part, let there be compliance on yours. Catch a promise when the Spirit opens; bind yourselves to an observance of the precept when the Spirit shows it; let God's drawing be answered with the soul's running; observe what precious oil is dropped through the golden pipes upon the heart, and spill it not; take notice of what sparks light upon you, and lose not the warmth they may convey to your hearts; what beam of light breaks in, let it not be puffed out by a temptation or diversion; observe what is afforded to make your hearts burn, and your corruptions and sinful inclinations cool. Regard not so much your affections, as what touches are upon your wills. Affections may arise from a natural constitution of the body, some tempers being more easily excited to exert affections than others, yet they are not always, nor altogether, to be disregarded, nor are they always to be looked upon as ciphers; but, especially, see what influence the word has upon the understanding and will chiefly, as well as upon the affections. Judge of yourselves by the inward power and might, by the breakings in of the light, and the sprightly strain of your wills. The might of the

Spirit works in the inner man, Eph. iii. 16; not in a part of the inner man, but in every faculty. See what compunction there is in your souls, what strong desires in the will. Bare affections are but like a sponge, which will by a light compression let out that water which it so easily sucked up. Men may 'receive the word with gladness' without having any root of spiritual grace, Mark iv. 16, 17. When men regard only particular affections, they usually sit down in those sparks of their own kindling, and look not after a thorough change. Or if you find such affections see whether those affections are raised rather by the truth than the dress; whether they be kindled by the consideration of those attributes of God, his mercy, goodness, wisdom, holiness, which have a great hand in the new birth, whether by the deep consideration of our Saviour's death and resurrection, the great designs of the gospel; whether the motion be orderly, first, understanding, then will, and afterwards affections. This is a genuine flame kindled by a fire which comes down from heaven, working upon all the parts of the soul. A bare work upon the affections is rather a strange and carnal fire. Observe, therefore, what tender blades bud and shoot forth in the higher faculties of your souls.

9. Press the word much upon your hearts after hearing. How great is the neglect of this application of the word of truth! Men will spend hours in hearing, and not one minute in serious reflections, as if the word in their ears, or a receipt in their pockets, could cure the disease in the heart. This is the worm at the root of all our spiritual advantages. What is only dashed upon the fancy, or lightly coloured, may soon be washed off. The soil must be made tenacious of the seed by the harrow of meditation, which hides it in the heart, and covers it with earth; for want of being laid deep, and branded by serious meditation, the seed takes no root, because there is not much earth about it, Mark iv. 5, 6, 16. How can food nourish your body, unless it be concocted by natural heat? or spiritual food enliven you, unless concocted by meditation? The shepherds, after they had heard the news of Christ's incarnation from the mouth of the angel, reflected upon their duty, Luke ii. 14,15. Words must be kept some time upon the mind, and rolled over and over again, before they can work any

sensible change, because the heart naturally has an averseness to God and his word; as the strongest physic must be in the body some time, and be wrought upon by the stomach, before it can work upon the humours. How do you know, but while you are musing, a divine fire may sparkle in your souls, and Christ rise in your hearts? Grapes must be pressed to get out the wine that will cheer the heart. Put the question to your soul, in every part you can remember, as our Saviour did to Martha, John xi. 25, 26, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Believes thou this?' There is such a thing as the new birth: believes thou this? It is necessary to be had: believes thou this? God only can work it: believes thou this? And so for every divine truth. Leave not thy soul to its vagaries, hold it on to the work, press it to give a positive answer whether it believe this or that truth. Put not yourselves off with a slight answer to the question, but examine the reasons of your belief of it. Look upon yourselves as really concerned in the word you hear, otherwise it will no more affect you than if you should tell an ambitious man, gaping after preferment in England, of a wealthy place fallen in Spain, which will not engage his thoughts, as being out of his sphere and at too great a distance. To have a listlessness to such duties, or any spiritual duty, after hearing the word, which is the food of the soul, shows a great corruption within, as the heaviness in the body, and corrupt vapours in the mouth, show the badness of concoction.

10. Labour to have the savour of truth upon your spirits, as well as the notions of it in your heads. The kingdom of God consists not in word, but in power: the new birth consists not in a bare notion but in spiritual savour. The highest notional knowledge comes far short of experimental; the knowledge a blind man has of light and colours, by hearing a lecture upon it, is but mere ignorance to the knowledge he would have if his eyes were opened. Endeavour to have the savour of Christ's ointments, Cant. i. 8, and inward sense exercised, Heb. v. 14. The apostle distinguishes knowledge and judgement, Philip. i. 9. Knowledge is a notion in the head, judgement, or "aisthesis", is the sense or savour of it in the heart. What a miserable thing is it to spend our lives without a taste! Knowledge is but as a cloud that

intercepts the beams of the sun and does not advantage the earth, unless melted into drops, and falling down into the bosom of it; let the knowledge of the word of truth drop down in a kindly shower upon your hearts, let it be a knowledge of the word heated with love.

I might have added more; bring plain hearts to the word, put off all disguises. Moses took off his veil when he went into the presence of God. Bring not flesh and blood as your counsellors; these are no friends to a new birth. And come with love; love makes the strongest impressions upon the soul.

It might here be also worth the inquiry, why so few are renewed by the word of truth in this age; why the gospel has no more powerful effect among us, as in former ages? It is a wonder to see a man begotten by the word, as it was a wonder for the woman to bring forth a man-child, Rev. xii. When our Saviour was brought into the temple, not a man but Simeon knew him; no question but many pharisees, doctors, and gentlemen were walking there, but none but Simeon knew him, to whom he was revealed, Luke ii. 22, 25, the rest looked upon him as an ordinary child. Formerly men flocked to Christ as the doves to the windows. The sword of the Spirit was never unsheathed, but it cut some hearts, the word seems now to have lost its edge and efficacy, which ought to be considered and laid to heart.

Many causes may be rendered; I will only hint a few.

(1.) Taking religion upon trust. Old customs are hardly to be parted with: 'Every man will walk in the name of his God,' Micah iv. 5. To root out false conceptions in religion, which either education, fancy, or humour have rooted, is very difficult.

(2.) A conceit of the meanness of the word, whereby there is a secret contempt of it, and so a formal and customary use of it.

(3.) A conceit of men, that they are new born already. Many think their condition good, because of their civil honesty. Though that be a very comely and commendable thing, yet security in it kills its

thousands. Many, because they are free from the common pollutions of the world, and possessed with many amiable virtues, never consider how much their hearts are stored with an enmity against God. Such count their righteousness their gain, and think it a sufficient bribe for God's mercy.

(4.) A conceit that to be new born is but to change an opinion. A change of opinion may look like faith, as presumption does, but it is not faith. The devil holds some men in the chain of sublimated speculations, which hinder the working of the most spiritual and influential truths.

(5.) Pride of reason, frequency of disputes. It is a rational age, an age overgrown with reason, and the Scripture tells us, 'not many wise,' &c. The truths of God are very much turned into scepticism.

(6.) The common atheism that so much prevails among us. How should men regard a discourse of the new birth, a begetting to God, when they scarce believe there is a God at all, but their own lusts, to be like unto? How should they be wrought upon by the word of God, that scarce believe there is any God to reveal a word, and that there is no word of God?

(7.) Hardness of heart, occasioned (through the just judgment of God) by the frequency and unprofitable hearing of the word. The word is most operative when it comes first into a nation or town. When the heart is not broken by hearing the word of truth, it becomes more hardened and compact in sin. Many other reasons might be rendered, but I have held you too long upon this subject.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in our Salvation

by Thomas Goodwin

How the Holy Ghost is the author of regeneration, or the first application of salvation to us, in a more peculiar manner, comparatively to the other two persons.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

— Titus III. 5, 6.

Regeneration, you see, is attributed to the Spirit as the author, it is termed the 'renewing of the Holy Ghost' and likewise the 'shedding forth the Holy Ghost' is magnified as the rich gift and blessing of the New Testament.

I have in a former discourse shewn how all the three persons have shared and distributed the whole work of our salvation amongst them, unto three several parts. 1. Election is appropriated to the Father. 2. Redemption to the Son. 3. Application of both to the Holy Ghost; who accordingly doth bear several offices suited to these three works.

That which now I have to do, is more particularly to demonstrate both the *óti* and *díoti* of this point of great moment; both that and why this last part of salvation, viz., application, and so principally this of regeneration, is attributed to the Holy Ghost.

I. I shall produce scriptures to demonstrate this point.

1. The first Scripture is John iii. 5, 'Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' This scripture shews not only the necessity of being born again, but withal that it must be the Spirit, who must do it, or it will not be done. 'For no man can so much as say, Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit,' 1 Cor. xii. 3.

2. The near kindred and dependence the new creature hath with and upon the Spirit, as the child begotten hath of and with its proper father, doth evidence the same truth.

(1.) The new creature is in the same third of John, ver. 6, styled spirit (as elsewhere it is called a spiritual man, 1 Cor. ii.), That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' It is therefore professedly baptized into the same name, because the father of this new birth and baptism is the Spirit. With men the begotten bears the name of the most immediate parent; and so this case, though this work of the Spirit be in common termed the divine nature (2 Peter i. 4) because it is the image of the Godhead, of which all three persons are partakers, yet to show that in a more peculiar manner it is the child of the Spirit, it is called spirit.

(2.) For the very same reason this Spirit of God, the author, relatively beam the name of Holy in the New Testament, where it is (though not first) yet more frequently used as his special title, to be called 'The Holy Ghost, as our old English hath rendered it to us. Is not the Father holy, and the Son holy, and both equally holy with this Holy Spirit? Yes, essentially and personally also in themselves; 'Holy, holy, holy,' they are all proclaimed, Isa. vi. How came these other two to bear it, that he, the third person, should have the peculiar style of Holy? It is not neither in a peculiar, neither in a personal or essential respect, but relatively unto that which is his proper and peculiar work, because he sanctifies and makes us holy, and so merits that name; as Christ doth of our *Saviour*, and the Father of God the Father and *Maker*. And here let me return to the necessity of this person's making us holy. As it is necessary for Christ to redeem us,

there is an absolute necessity that we all be a sanctified holy sacrifice offered up to God, if we look to be saved, or otherwise we must be made a sacrifice of his wrath, as Christ hath told us, Mark ix. 49. Where he having threatened, if lust be not killed, men shall be cast into the fire that is unquenchable (ver. 47, 48), he adds this as a reason, that every man is to be a sacrifice to God one way or other. According to the old law some sacrifices were consumed with fire, as the burnt-offerings; some seasoned with salt, to sink up the corrupt moisture in them, Lev. ii. 18. One sort of these sacrifices all men must become; if not sanctified by the Spirit, so as to have salt in them, then with hell-fire, which also is a sacrifice to God. Now Christ for our redemption offered up himself a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour, Eph. v. 2; and it was necessary he should be so. And to that end he sacrificed himself, as in his sacrificial prayer he speaks, John xvii. 19. And it is as necessary, if we be saved, that our persons be offered up unto God as a sacrifice also, Rom. xii. 1, even a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God It was necessary, therefore, we should have a sanctifier of us to be an offering unto God, as well as a redeemer, that offered up himself for us. And who is that? You are directed to him *in* Rom. xv., 'This is the issue of my ministry,' (says Paul, speaking of. his converting the nations, ver. 18, 19) 'that the Gentiles' (being converted) 'might be an offering acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.' Else never to be acceptable to God. Christ was sanctified immediately by himself, by the personal union with the Son of God— 'I sanctify myself' —even as he also 'offered up himself by the eternal Spirit,' or Godhead dwelling in him, Heb. ix.; but we by the Holy Ghost. And as in that other speech, 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit,' the new creature bears his name; so here, he is called the Holy Spirit, or bears the name of *holy*, because the sanctifier of us: 'Being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.'

3. The work of conversion, not only in the whole, but in every part thereof, is attributed to him, John xvi. 8, 9, 10. It is (as I hinted afore, and shall shew hereafter) divided into three parts. 1. Conviction of sin. 2. Of righteousness for justification. 3. Of judgment, holiness,

and reformation; and the Spirit is there made the author of these three. And according to this division of the parts thereof, he hath titles also given him, as *in* relation to his immediate working of these three.

(1.) He condescends to be termed 'the Spirit of bondage;' I say, he condescends but to the work and name; for otherwise, and in himself, he is 'the free Spirit,' (Ps. li. 11, 12), and delights *in* comforting us, not in grieving us. And he is therefore also called 'the Comforter;' but yet to affect our salvation, and the effectual application of it to us, he (contrary to his nature) becomes our jailor, takes the keys of death and damnation into his custody, and shuts up our spirits under the law, as it is a schoolmaster to Christ, rattles the chains, lets us see the sin and punishment we deserve. He convinceth of sin, John xvi., and becomes a 'Spirit of bondage,' Born. viii. 15.

(2.) But then, secondly, *in* regard of the revealing God's love to us, and Christ and his righteousness, by whom we are adopted, and by which justified, he is called *in* the same place 'the Spirit of adoption,' 'the Spirit of faith,' as some interpret, 2 Cor. iv. 13. Barnabas was 'full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith,' Acts xi. 24.

(3.) In regard of sanctifying us, and convincing of judgment, he is in the Old Testament enstiled the 'Spirit of judgment,' Isa. iv. 4, *in* respect of washing away the filth of sin: 'When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of Zion, by the Spirit of judgment,' &c. And in the New he is entitled 'the Spirit of grace:' Heb. x. 29 'Have done despite to the Spirit of grace,' that is, to him as going about to work grace and holiness *in* the heart. The sin against the Holy Ghost, which is there described, not being against the person of the Spirit, so much as against him in his workings; and that *in* his working grace and sanctifying, as in the words afore you have it. And as to grace in the general, as he is the author of every particular grace, so *in* the head himself, therefore much more *in* the members. The prophet, speaking of the Messiah *in* Isa. xi. 1, 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,' and shall be in him, *in* respect of his effects

upon him, 'the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.' There is the like reason he should be denominated from every other grace. He is in one chapter, John xiv., termed 'The Spirit of truth,' ver. 17, who reveals all truth to the understanding; 'The Holy Spirit,' who sanctifies the will, the chief subject of holiness; 'The Comforter,' who fills the heart with joy and peace in believing; which is therefore usually styled 'joy in the Holy Ghost,' in multitudes of places; that phrase speaking him not so much the object of it (which is rather Christ, 1 Peter i. 8, 'In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious;' and God, Rom. v. 11) as the author of it: Rom. xv. 18, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *in* believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.'

II. I shall now, secondly, give the reasons why this work is committed to him, and is his lot. These reasons are not of logical demonstration, but harmonious, by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and by the suiting of one thing with another, in which the strength of divine reason lies; for divinity is a wisdom, not an art.

1. This operation of the Spirit is *in* a correspondency to the creation of the first man, who was a type of what was to come: Job xxxiii. 4, 'The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.' It is evident he speaks of the new creation, in allusion to the old: ver. 1-3, 'My word shall be of the uprightness of my heart, and my lips shall utter knowledge thereby;' and then adds, 'The Spirit of God hath made me,' that is, hath given me a sincere heart, an illuminated mind, put the words of life into me. To have spoken of his first creation only, he being a man fallen from it, had been a poor argument to persuade Job of the truth of his heart, and the truths he went about to utter. And yet, too, he as evidently alludes to the first creation: Gen. ii. 7, 'The Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.' Now, in this new creation, we being dead *in* sins and trespasses, it is the Spirit of God that giveth life, 2 Cor. in. 6; who, as in respect of giving us this new life, is called 'the

Spirit of the living God,' ver. 3; and in the Old Testament, Ezek. xxxvii. 13, 14, 'I will bring you out of your graves, I will put my Spirit in you, and you shall live,' which you find *in* the 36th chapter, ver. 27. And it is observable that the first visible giving the Holy Ghost, which was after Christ's resurrection, to enable them to be 'ministers, not of the letter, but of the Spirit,' which should give life to them, and to others by them, was the ceremony of breathing on them: 'And he said, Receive the Holy Ghost,' John xx. 22. We had his blood that ran in his veins first, and it is efficacious to wash away the guilt of sin. We have his breath next, which comes out of the inwards of him, which conveys his Spirit, which conveys himself into our inwards, as it is in the prophet, and gives us life. And as life comes with the breath of God breathed at first, and goes away with it, so doth spiritual life upon the going or coming of the Holy Ghost upon us.

2. It is the Spirit that converts and regenerates us, and forms the new creature in us, in a conformity to our head Christ. The Holy Ghost was, 1. The immediate former of the human nature of Christ in the womb; 2. The uniter of that nature to the Son of God; 3. The sanctifier thereof, with all graces dwelling therein above all measure.

(1.) He was the former of the human nature of Christ in the womb: Mat. i. 18, 'She was found with child of the Holy Ghost;' and ver. 20, 'that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost;' which was in his forming and fitting that matter into a man, which the prolific virtue useth to do.

(2.) He was the uniter of it to the divine, and sanctifier of it with all graces, both which you have expressed in another place: Luke i. 35, 'And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' Now, we being to be made as conformable to Christ as is possible, it was correspondent that the same person who was designed to form Christ's body for the Godhead to dwell in all its fulness should form Christ in us, that God and Christ may dwell in

us: 1 Cor. iii. 16, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' That same person that made that happy match, the personal union between Christ's human nature and the divine, the same person makes the union between Christ and our souls; and so we become one spirit with the Lord, 1 Cor. vi. 17. The same person that made the man Christ partaker of the divine nature maketh us also. There is a higher correspondency yet. The Holy Ghost is *vinculum Trinitatus*, the union of the Father and the Son, as proceeding from both by way of love; and who so meet to be the union of God and man in Christ, of Christ and men in us, as he that was the bond of union among themselves?

(3.) In respect of sanctifying that human nature of Christ, it was the Holy Ghost who made him Christ, that anointed him with himself, and all his graces: Isa. xi.2, 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.' The graces of Christ, as man, are attributed to this Spirit, as the immediate author of them; for although the Son of God dwelt personally in the human nature, and so advanced that nature above the ordinary rank of creatures, and raised it up to that dignity and worth, yet all his habitual graces, which even his soul was full of, were from the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit is therefore said to be 'given him without measure.' And this inhabitation of the Holy Ghost did in some sense and degree concur to constitute him Christ, which, as you know, is the anointed one of God: Acts iv. 27, 'Thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed.' Anointed with what? Acts x. 38, 'God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost.' Now, then, if the Spirit made him Christ, and concurred in this respect to make him the anointed of God, much more is the that make us Christians.

3 Consider what this application of salvation unto us is. It is the revelation of the mind and love of God and Christ unto us, and the things of both. He that dote this must 'take of mine,' says Christ; and in doing so he must take of my Father's also, for all the Father hath or doth is Christ's. You have both in one place: John xvi. 14, 15, 'He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shew it to you. All

things that the Father hath are mine.' Great persons woo not by themselves, but employ ambassadors and ministers of state; and so doth Christ. Now, who should do this but the Spirit, who knows the heart and mind of God? 1 Cor. ii., 'We have received the Spirit who is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God;' that is, by our having him from God, who knows all that is in God, which is the reason there given; ver. 10, 'God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;' which he confirms and illustrates by a similitude fetched from our own bosoms: ver. 11, 'For what man,' that is, what other man, 'knows the things of a man' (that are in his own breast), 'save the spirit of a man that is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man,' or angel, 'but the Spirit of God;' who being the Spirit of counsel (Isa. xi. 2) even to Christ himself, helped him to all God's secrets; and he also being privy and overhearing (as John xvi. 13), all that the Father and Christ have intended to us, and spoken about us, was only fit to reveal them unto us. And thus by him we come to have the very mind of God and Christ. The grace of Christ, and the love of God the Father, are revealed to us by the communion of the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

We have seen, in a short but comprehensive view, the operations of the Holy Ghost in the great work of our salvation. The next prospect of him is, as he is the gift of God, conferred on us for this end and purpose. To open this to our sight, I offer these following considerations.

1. That it is God the Father who is the donor, or the bestower of him on us. This is plainly expressed by the words of the text, which declares that he sheds the Spirit on us.
2. This gift of the Spirit is in and through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and mediator.
3. This gift of the Spirit is bestowed, not according to the covenant of works, but of grace and free love. For those words, "not according to works," and the other words of the text, which speak of the appearance of the love and kindness of God, refer as well to this rich shedding forth the Holy Ghost upon us as unto saving us through regeneration, and

renewing us. 4. The condition of the persons to whom he is given is altogether unworthy. When we were in our disobedience, serving our lusts, the Holy Ghost was poured out, and renewed us.

1. The donor or bestower of the Holy Ghost is God the Father through Christ. As the Father is the original of the persons in the Trinity, so of this great gift. Therefore Christ (John xv. 26) when he speaks of "sending the Spirit from the Father," adds, as the reason why he should be sent from the Father, that "he proceeds from the Father" (his subsistence doth), naming him as the fountain both of himself and the Spirit also. He is termed the Spirit of God, *tau Qeou* 1 Cor. ii. 11, in the same sense that we say the spirit of a man (as in the same verse); for as God is a Spirit, Isa. xlviii. 16, "The Lord God and his Spirit," says the prophet there; but the apostle further adds, ver. 12, the Spirit, *ek tou Qeou*, who personally is from God, whom therefore we have and receive from God: 1 Cor. vi. 19, "The Holy Ghost which we have," *apo Qeou*. This gift is therefore especially attributed to the Father, and termed by Christ "the promise of the Father," Acts iv., Luke xxiv. 49, "the Spirit of the Father," Mat. x. 20, from whom Christ, as God-man, received the Spirit first. The Holy Ghost was sent down by the Father upon Christ as a dove in his baptism: "God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost," Acts x. 38. And when Christ ascended into heaven he received him from the Father, Acts ii. 38, and so he shed him forth on us. And therefore Christ also, as mediator, was to pray the Father to give the Spirit, John xiv. 16: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter," &c.

Yet so as, 2dly, even the Father himself sends him not, but in and through Christ: John xiv. 26, "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name." "Through Christ our Saviour," says the apostle, Tit. iii. 6. Which imports not barely the Son's concurrence, as second person, in sending him as well as the Father, even as his person proceeded from both (as John xv. 26, "whom I will send unto you"); but further, that Christ, as a redeemer, had a virtual meritorious influence or hand herein; so as for his sake, and through his purchase and intercession, the rather sends him. Christ purchased

not only all the graces of the Spirit for us, but the Spirit himself (whom we had forfeited) to dwell in us. We have an express scripture, Gal. iii. 13, 14, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we may receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Where there are two ends adequately and alike made of Christ's being made a curse for us: 1. That we might receive the blessing of Abraham; 2. That we might receive the promise of the Spirit. And, forasmuch as the gift of the Spirit comes under a promise, as well as other blessings, it must needs come under the purchase of Christ's blood, which confirmed all the promises; and this, as all the rest of the promises are, "yea and amen in him." And to this end it is observable, that he breathed not the Spirit until after his resurrection; but then he did, John xx. 22, "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." He had not shed his blood until now, and therefore breathed not the Holy Ghost until now. But Christ having died, and having, as the Lamb slain, purchased the Spirit, and being ascended up to the throne of God, he, as the Lamb, now sheds forth the Spirit: John vii. 38, 39, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." He compares the Spirit, as communicated to us, to a spring of living water. But not as then broke forth, as afterwards it should, because Christ had not died, and so entered into glory. Now compare with it Rev. xxii. 1: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." This water of life issues, you see, from the throne of the Lamb, who in the 5th chap., ver. 6, appeared at the throne of God as the Lamb slain, and redeeming us with his blood, and as such doth shed forth the Spirit upon us; and is even there also said to have all the fulness of the Spirit on him, "who hath the seven Spirits;" that is, the Holy Ghost in all the varieties of his gifts and graces, called seven from perfection. For that the seven

Spirits are taken metonymically for the Holy Ghost, is evident by chap. i., ver. 4: "John to the seven churches of Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne." Hence also when we receive the cup in the Lord's supper, which is termed the communion of Christ's blood, 1 Cor. x., we are yet said to "drink into one Spirit;" for that blood is *vehiculum Spiritus*, the Spirit runs in and with this blood. We therefore know whom we are beholden unto for the Spirit; and whom to go unto for the Spirit, even to the Father, and to Christ, and to his blood; and to the Father through Christ, who gives commission to the Spirit to work such and such measures of grace, at such times to fall upon us, and at such and such times to withdraw.

Hence, 3dly, the Spirit is given us from mere grace and love, and not according to works; so in the text those words, "who not according to works, but mercy," &c., refer as well to this shedding forth the Holy Ghost, as to his saving us by regeneration. You may therefore observe, 2 Cor. xiii. 14, that the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the love of God the Father, are put before communion of the Holy Ghost, as that which proceeds from both. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." Therefore, in scriptures, both the law, the preaching of it, and the works of it, are in express words excluded and shut out from having any influence to convey the Spirit to us, that we may never so much as think to obtain the Spirit thereby: Jer. xxxi. 32, "I will make a new covenant, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers; but this shall be my covenant, I will write my law in their inward parts." Which, compared with Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, is renewed with this addition, "I will give you a new heart, and put my Spirit within you." And you may compare with both, 2 Cor. iii. 3: "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart;" which clears both. Yea, so far forth as they in the Old Testament had the Spirit (as they had, Neh. ix. 20, "Thou gavest them thy good Spirit to instruct

them;" and Hag. ii. 5, "According to the word I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth with you"); so much gospel was even then mingled with it, and running in the veins of it. It was *fœdus mixtum*, and so in the virtue thereof the Spirit was (though in a lesser measure) given. Therefore, when the gospel came to take place, then the preaching of the law, or ceremonies of it, did not convey the Spirit: to show that it was purely upon the covenant of grace that the Spirit is given, 2 Cor. iii. 6-8, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stone, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?" You see that the old covenant is the ministration of the letter, and of death; and the New Testament, in exclusion of that Old, hath alone obtained this more excellent name, "the ministration of the Spirit."

As not the preaching of the law gave the Spirit, so, nor can any works of the law obtain the Spirit at God's hands. The text is as express for this as for the other: Gal. iii. 2, "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Paul useth that as *argumentum palmarium* against the law, as alone sufficient evidence. "This one thing" (says he) "I would learn of you," and let that decide it, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" By *Spirit* he here means the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification; for, ver. 5, he speaks of extraordinary gifts afterwards, and ver. 2, he speaks of that receiving which was general to all believing Galatians, even common to all saints, to whose universal experience he appeals, if ever any one of them had received him upon their doing. Now extraordinary gifts were not common to all saints, no, not in those days. And by "the hearing of faith," he means the doctrine of faith, the gospel; and ver 14-17, he asserts the Spirit to be given freely by the covenant of grace, which God afore the law did establish with Abraham, and in him together with Isaac (as the type) with Christ: Gal. iii. 14-17, "That the

blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." Yea (to end this), he makes it an evidence of not being under the law, if a man hath received the Spirit, and be led by him: Gal. v. 18, "But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." And for this also it is, that he is called "the Spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29, because given freely. He is "the gift of grace," Eph. iii. 7, and so given upon the terms of the covenant of grace.

Hence, from both these, appears the difference between Adam's having the Spirit in that estate of holiness, and the saints under the state of grace. Adam had the Spirit as well as we, and the Holy Ghost was at the making of him, and wrote the image of God upon his heart: for where holiness was, we may be sure the Spirit was too. The Holy Ghost was at that consultation,— "Let us make man,"—and one of the *us* spoken unto. Yea, and that Spirit that "moved upon the waters," who also is sent forth to "renew the face of the earth" (Ps. civ.), the same Spirit was in Adam's heart to assist his graces, and cause them to flow and bring forth, and to move him to live according to those principles of life given him. But there is this difference between that his having the Spirit, and ours, apparent from what hath already been said.

1. That he concurred with Adam, merely as the third person, who joined in all works, and so upon no further account than as he concurred in assisting all creatures else in their kind, to cause the earth to bring forth fruits according to their kind; and, indeed, he must necessarily have a hand in all works of creation and providence. Whereas we have the Spirit upon Christ's account, in his name,

purchased by him, as whom he had first received, also purchased as the head of his church. And there fore it is ordinary in Scripture to term this Spirit as now dwelling in us, "the Spirit of Christ," Rom.. viii. 9; "the Spirit of the Son," Gal. iv. 6.

And, 2. Hence Adam retained the Spirit according to the tenor of the covenant of works (which is but that equal law of creation between God and the creature), whereby he held a continuance of the privileges given him at the creation, even as he did live in God's sight, upon works of obedience: "Do this and live."

And as by one act of disobedience he forfeited life ("Cursed is he that continueth not in all things"), and so in like manner the Spirit was forfeitable by him upon the same terms. Even as in a man that comes from Adam, one mortal stab causeth the soul to depart, so here, one act of sinning caused the soul to depart; for the bond of the union ceased. But as it would not be so in a man risen from the dead, and by the power of the second Adam, made a quickening Spirit; no wounds would be mortal to such an one; so here the gift of the Spirit to us is by promise, as Gal. iii. 14-17, the apostle argues. The gift of the Spirit, to a truly converted soul, is an absolute gift, and not upon conditions on our parts, but to work and maintain in us what God requires of us. The gift of the Spirit is not founded upon qualifications in us, to continue so long as we preserve grace in our souls, and do not sin it away. I will give you my Spirit to preserve you, and prevent your departing from me, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. "I will give you a new heart," but you would soon make it an old one, as bad as ever; to prevent this, it follows, "And I will put my Spirit Within you. and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, sad do them." And so it is said in Jer. xxxii. 40, "Ye shall not depart from me." He comes by virtue of election on us, as he did on Christ, Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my elect in whom my soul delights, I have put my Spirit upon him." Gal. iv. 6, "Because ye are Sons" (by election, namely, as it is said, Eph. i. 5, God "having predestinated us to the adoption of children"), "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." And Mat. x. 20, "The Spirit of your Father is in

you;" that is, God having taken on him the relation of your Father, thereupon bestoweth his Spirit on you. And therefore it is that so few of many that hear the same sermons receive the Holy Ghost; for he comes on men by the grace of election, and so the Spirit picks and chooses (as God hath done), and rests on this soul, and not on that; and so (as Isaiah says, Isa. xxvii. 12) they are gathered one by one. It goes as it were by lot, as it is (Acts viii. 21), spoken to Simon Magus, in relation to the Holy Ghost, v. 19. It hath the appearance of chance, because this man is taken, and not that; when yet it is the eternal good pleasure of God that puts the difference. And the Spirit, that knows God's mind, seizeth on men accordingly; and is said to be as the wind, that "blows where it lists," which is spoken of regeneration, John iii. 8.

Hence it is that he is given to us for ever, and not to depart from us; the reason is, because his person is given without conditions, and to work all conditions, he is so in us as to be with us for ever; John xiv. 16, 17, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." He came in Christ the head, to make his abode in him: John i. 33, "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Which was a fulfilling of that piece of the prophecy, Isa. xi. 2, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." To which Peter alludes, speaking also of us, 1 Peter iv. 14, "The Spirit of God resteth on you;" and to signify this, when visibly he came upon the apostles, Acts ii. 3, "it sat upon each of them." Christ's abode among us is compared to the dwelling in a tabernacle: John xiv., *eskanwsen*, "He dwelt as in a tabernacle amongst us," for he soon removed to heaven. But the Spirit dwells in us as in the temple, which was, instead of that moveable habitation, a more fixed settled abode: 1 Cor. vi. 19, "Ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost." I go and come, says Christ, John xiv. 18, 19, but he shall be with you, and in

you, v. 17, forever. And therefore he is not only given as the earnest of our inheritance (Eph. i. 14, and 2 Cor. v. 5), a certain pawn that we shall have heaven; but he becomes also from that time a spring in us never to be dammed up, a living fountain of water, springing up into eternal life, as Christ himself speaks, comparing John iv. 14 with John vii. 38, 39. Now we do not say the spring shall continue whilst water is in the stream; but water shall continue in the stream, and bubble up whilst there is a spring. If indeed the spring could fail, the waters might fail. Now the Holy Ghost is given to become a perpetual spring, both of grace and glory. And accordingly also, 1 Peter i. 23, the Holy Ghost is said to be "the incorruptible seed, of which we are begotten," which some have understood to be meant of the word; but that is put in besides, as the instrumental cause, in the words following, "by the word of God." Nor is it the new creature which is there meant, for that is the thing begotten in us. But the principal cause of whom we are begotten is the Holy Spirit, John iii. 6, "That which is begotten of the Spirit." Now he is called the "incorruptible seed," because he is cast into the soul with the word, as the prolific virtue in the word; which is the seed *materially*, but the Spirit *virtually*. And this also chews the difference between this giving the Spirit by virtue of election, and that communication of him to temporary believers that fall away, who are said, Heb. vi., to be "partakers of the Holy Ghost;" as Saul— "The Spirit of the Lord came on Saul," 1 Sam. x. 10,—but so as to depart away again, 1 Sam. xvi. 14; thus on Balaam he did, Num. xxiv. 2, 2., and opened his eyes. The fundamental difference lies in the differing terms of the gift of the Spirit, insinuated here in the text: that many receive the Spirit, not from God as a Father, by virtue of election, or through Christ as a Saviour; they receive not, as children, the Spirit of God as from a Father; as Rom. viii. 14, 15; as also Mat. x. 20; and as Christ's speech also (in John 14th and 15th chapters, "I will pray the Father," &c.), doth import; but they receive him from God out of dominion and sovereignty, and from Christ as a Lord, who hath brought (*bought?*) even wicked men to serve him, 2 Peter ii. 1. This distinction of this double receiving the Spirit, the apostle insinuates both in that Born. viii. and Gal. vi. 7, 8. In that Rom. viii. 15, he speaks of a "Spirit of

bondage," which, as servants, they in some measure or other had formerly received from God. Look in what state men stand to God, they answerably more or less have a portion of his Spirit on them. If they are only in the state of servants, they have a "Spirit of bondage" working legally that fear of death which is in all men: Heb. ii. 15, "And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The one place interprets the other. Those stirrings of guilt and condemnations which are in all men's hearts, are from workings of the Spirit in all men. The same Spirit that moved upon the waters, Gen. i., moves upon all men's hearts. Now if men live under the preaching of the law and gospel, then the same Spirit falls with higher works upon the spirits of men unrenewed, yet still but upon the same account that is mentioned: Gen. vi. 3, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is but flesh." He had spoken of the sons of God (ver. 2), that were the professors of that age, who lived under Noah's ministry, "a preacher of righteousness," Heb. xi. 7. And he went with his ministry in a way of striving with and opposing men's corruptions in their hearts; of which Peter, (1 Peter iii. 18), having said that Christ was "quickened or raised by the Spirit," he adds (ver. 19), "by which Spirit also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, when few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water." These men were corrupt, and remained flesh, and yet received the Spirit, striving with them from God, as the Lord and Judge of the world, who to men fallen gives his Spirit, as at first he did to Adam, with a new stock of gifts and motions, but deals with them therein but upon a covenant of works. It is a favour indeed to give him, as all outward gifts of the Spirit are, but their persons being under the covenant of works, and servants, their retaining this Spirit is according to the terms thereof; and so it proves in the issue, and their improving that gift is managed according to the dispensation of such a covenant. And so they, by opposing and resisting such strivings of the Spirit, God withdraws him. For he says, "My Spirit shall not always strive." He deals with them as with servants that are untoward and rebellious: John viii. 35, "The servant abides not in the

house for ever;" but as Hagar was turned out of doors, and inherited not, so it is here. "But" (says Christ) "a son abides for ever in the house," and therefore they, as children, receive "the Spirit of adoption to cry, Abba, Father." And the Spirit of Christ, as their head, remains in them, and they are overcome and led by the Spirit of God. These are sons; and that they may abide in the house for ever, this Spirit abides in them for ever. You have the very same distinction of men receiving the Spirit as servants and as sons: Gal. iv. 6, 7, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a Son, an heir of God through Christ." The meaning is, they receive the Spirit as sons, not as servants, as others do. To which add ver. 22, 23, &c., where Hagar and Ishmael, and Sarah and Isaac, are made the types of these two conditions of men living in the church, as they did in Abraham's family; and Christ, John viii., alluded evidently unto in that speech fore-quoted, verses 33, 34, 35, "They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." Both these, living under the means, had dealings with God: Gen. xxi. verses 17-20, "And the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad, where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God was with the lad," &c. But yet this was but according to the covenant of works, whereof they were types. And their spirits used all gifts, motions, visions, &c., in such a way, and so at last the Spirit was withdrawn from them.

And therefore let not that deceive you, that men that fall away are said to be "partakers of the Holy Ghost," &c., for they may be so when yet they are not sons. The Holy Ghost comes to some as a wayfaring man, for a night. But do you not feel that though he may withdraw many effects, yet still his person is in you, and works, even amidst your sinnings, to reduce you again to God, and suffers you

not to be finally overcome, but frames your hearts so as you give yourselves up to be led by him, and you treat with God of his abode in you, and of your salvation, not upon a covenant of works, but grace. Look to your tenure, by which God guides your hearts to seek the Spirit and salvation. Every man's heart and spirit (as a pen in his hand) is guided to write his own deeds and terms he holds salvation on. Dost thou treat with God, as a son, upon mere terms of free grace, renouncing Ishmael's covenant and tenure, not daring to treat with God upon these terms, If I walk thus and thus, God will give and continue his Spirit to me? No; but thou sayest as David, "Lord, give me thy constant Spirit," to work all in me, to cause me to walk in thy statutes. Ps. li. 10, 11, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." In the margin it is, "a constant spirit within me;" and if this is thy dependence and thy salvation, and if upon these terms thou holdest and retainest the Spirit, thou art a son. You esteem it in lands as a matter of great moment the tenure, whether it be freehold or copyhold. My brethren, know there is a freehold of the Spirit, and a copyhold; and go over but thy prayers and the workings of thy spirit with God, and thou wilt easily see thy tenure.

The Nature, Causes and Means of Regeneration

by John Owen

Description of the state of nature necessary unto a right understanding of the work of the Spirit in regeneration—No possibility of salvation unto persons living and dying in a state of sin—Deliverance from it by regeneration only—The Holy Ghost the peculiar author of this work—Differences about the manner and nature of it—Way of the ancients in explaining the doctrine of grace—The present method proposed—Conversion not

wrought by moral suasion only—The nature and efficacy of moral suasion, wherein they consist—Illumination preparatory unto conversion—The nature of grace morally effective only, opened; not sufficient for conversion—The first argument, disproving the working of grace in conversion to be by moral suasion only—The second—The third—The fourth—Wherein the work of the Spirit in regeneration positively doth consist—The use and end of outward means—Real internal efficiency of the Spirit in this work—Grace victorious and irresistible—The nature of it explained; proved—The manner of God’s working by grace on our wills farther explained—Testimonies concerning the actual collation of faith by the power of God—Victorious efficacy of internal grace proved by sundry testimonies of Scripture—From the nature of the work wrought by it, in vivification and regeneration—Regeneration considered with respect unto the distinct faculties of the soul; the mind, the will, the affections.

UNTO the description we are to give of the *work of regeneration*, the precedent account of the *subject* of it, or the state and condition of them that are to be regenerated, was necessarily to be premised; for upon the knowledge thereof doth a due apprehension of the nature of that work depend. And the occasion of all the mistakes and errors that have been about it, either of old or of late, hath been a misunderstanding of the true state of men in their *lapsed condition*, or of nature as depraved. Yea, and those by whom this whole work is derided do now countenance themselves therein by their ignorance of that state, which they will not learn either from the Scripture or experience; for, “*natura sic apparet vitiata ut hoc majoris vitii sit non videre,*” as Austin speaks. It is an evidence of the corruption of nature, that it disenables the minds of men to discern their own corruption. We have previously discharged this work so far as it is necessary unto our present purpose. Many other things might be added in the explication of it, were that our direct design. Particularly, having confined myself to treat only concerning the depravation of the mind and will, I have not insisted on that of the

affections, which yet is effectual to retain unregenerate men under the power of sin; though it be far enough from truth that the whole corruption of nature consists therein, as some weakly and atheologically have imagined. Much less have I treated concerning that increase and heightening of the depravation of nature which is contracted by a custom of sinning, as unto all the perverse ends of it. Yet this also the Scripture much insists upon, as that which naturally and necessarily ensues in all in whom it is not prevented by the effectual transforming grace of the Spirit of God; and it is that which seals up the impossibility of their turning themselves to God, Jer. xiii. 23; Rom. iii. 10-19. But that the whole difficulty of conversion should arise from men's contracting a habit or custom of sinning is false, and openly contradictory to the Scripture. These things are personal evils, and befall individuals, through their own default, in various degrees. And we see that amongst men, under the same use of means, some are converted unto God who have been deeply immersed in an habitual course of open sins, whilst others, kept from them by the influence of their education upon their inclinations and affections, remain unconverted. So was it of old between the publicans and harlots on the one hand, and the Pharisees on the other. But my design was only to mention that which is common unto all, or wherein all men universally are equally concerned, who are partakers of the same human nature in its lapsed condition. And what we have herein declared from the Scriptures will guide us in our inquiry after the work of the Holy Spirit of grace in our deliverance from it.

It is evident, and needs no farther confirmation, that persons living and dying in this estate cannot be saved. This hitherto hath been allowed by all that are called Christians; nor are we to be moved that some who call themselves so do begin to laugh at the disease, and despise the remedy of our nature. Among those who lay any serious and real claim unto Christianity, there is nothing more certain nor more acknowledged than that there is no deliverance from a state of misery for those who are not delivered from a state of sin. And he who denies the necessary perishing of all that live and die in the state

of corrupted nature, denies all the use of the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God: for if we may be saved without the renovation of our natures, there was no need nor use of the new creation of all things by Jesus Christ, which principally consists therein; and if men may be saved under all the evils that came upon us by the fall, then did Christ die in vain. Besides, it is frequently expressed that men in that state are “enemies to God,” “alienated from him,” “children of wrath,” “under the curse;” and if such may be saved, so may devils also. In brief, it is not consistent with the nature of God, his holiness, righteousness, or truth, with the law or gospel, nor possible in the nature of the thing itself, that such persons should enter into or be made possessors of glory and rest with God. A deliverance, therefore, out of and from this condition is indispensably necessary to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

This deliverance must be and is by regeneration. The determination of our Saviour is positive, both in this and the necessity of it, before asserted: John iii. 3, “Except a man be born again,” or from above, “he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Whatever sense the “kingdom of God” is taken in, either for that of grace here or of glory hereafter, it is all the same as unto our present purpose. There is no interest in it to be obtained, no participation of the benefits of it, unless a man be born again, unless he be regenerate. And this determination of our Saviour, as it is absolute and decretory, so it is applicable unto and equally compriseth every individual of mankind. And the work intended by their regeneration, or in being born again, which is the spiritual conversion and quickening of the souls of men, is everywhere ascribed unto them that shall be saved. And although men may have, through their ignorance and prejudices, false apprehensions about regeneration and the nature of it, or wherein it doth consist, yet, so far as I know, all Christians are agreed that it is the way and means of our deliverance from the state of sin or corrupted nature, or rather our deliverance itself; for this both express testimonies of Scripture and the nature of the thing itself put beyond contradiction, Tit. iii. 3-5. And those by whom it is exposed

unto scorn, who esteem it a ridiculous thing for any one to inquire whether he be regenerate or no, will one day understand the necessity of it, although, it may be, not before it is too late to obtain any advantage thereby.

The Holy Ghost is the *immediate author* and cause of this work of regeneration. And herein again, as I suppose, we have in general the consent of all. Nothing is more in words acknowledged than that all the elect of God are sanctified by the Holy Ghost. And this regeneration is the head, fountain, or beginning of our sanctification, virtually comprising the whole in itself, as will afterward appear. However, that it is a part thereof is not to be denied. Besides, as I suppose, it is equally confessed to be an effect or work of grace, the actual dispensation whereof is solely in the hand of the Holy Spirit. This, I say, is in words acknowledged by all, although I know not how some can reconcile this profession unto other notions and sentiments which they declare concerning it; for setting aside what men do herein themselves, and others do towards them in the ministry of the word, I cannot see what remains, as they express their loose imaginations, to be ascribed unto the Spirit of God. But at present we shall make use of this general concession, that regeneration is the work of the Holy Ghost, or an effect of his grace. Not that we have any need so to do, but that we may avoid contesting about those things wherein men may shroud their false opinions under general, ambiguous expressions; which was the constant practice of Pelagius and those who followed him of old. But the Scripture is express in testimonies to our purpose. What our Saviour calls being “born again,” John iii. 3, he calls being “born of the Spirit,” verses 5,6, because he is the sole, principal, efficient cause of this new birth; for “it is the Spirit that quickeneth,” John vi. 63; Rom. viii. 11. And God saveth us “according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,” Tit. iii. 5. Whereas, therefore, we are said to be “born of God,” or to be “begotten again of his own will,” John i. 13, James i. 18, 1 John iii. 9, it is with respect unto the especial and peculiar operation of the Holy Spirit.

These things are thus far confessed, even by the Pelagians themselves, both those of old and those at present, at least in general; nor hath any as yet been so hardy as to deny regeneration to be the work of the Holy Spirit in us, unless we must except those deluded souls who deny both him and his work. Our sole inquiry, therefore, must be after the *manner* and *nature* of this work; for the nature of it depends on the manner of the working of the Spirit of God herein. This, I acknowledge, was variously contended about of old; and the truth concerning it hath scarce escaped an open opposition in any age of the church. And at present this is the great ball of contention between the Jesuits and the Jansenists; the latter keeping close to the doctrine of the principal ancient writers of the church; the former, under new notions, expressions, and distinctions, endeavouring the reenforcement of Pelagianism, whereunto some of the elder schoolmen led the way, of whom our Bradwardine so long ago complained. But never was it with so much impudence and ignorance traduced and reviled as it is by some among ourselves; for a sort of men we have who, by stories of wandering Jews, rhetorical declamations, pert cavillings, and proud revilings of those who dissent from them, think to scorn and banish truth out of the world, though they never yet durst attempt to deal openly and plainly with any one argument that is pleaded in its defence and confirmation.

The ancient writers of the church, who looked into these things with most diligence, and laboured in them with most success, as Austin, Hilary, Prosper, and Fulgentius, do represent the whole work of the Spirit of God towards the souls of men under certain heads or distinctions of grace; and herein were they followed by many of the more sober schoolmen, and others of late without number. Frequent mention we find in them of grace, as “preparing, preventing, working, co-working, and confirming.” Under these heads do they handle the whole work of our regeneration or conversion unto God. And although there may be some alteration in method and ways of expression,—which may be varied as they are found to be of advantage unto them that are to be instructed,—yet, for the

substance of the doctrine, they taught the same which hath been preached amongst us since the Reformation, which some have ignorantly traduced as novel. And the whole of it is nobly and elegantly exemplified by Austin in his Confessions; wherein he gives us the experience of the truth he had taught in his own soul. And I might follow their footsteps herein, and perhaps should for some reasons have chosen so to have done, but that there have been so many differences raised about the explication and application of these terms and distinctions, and the declaration of the nature of the acts and effects of the spirit of grace intended in them, as that to carry the truth through the intricate perplexities which under these notions have been cast upon it, would be a longer work than I shall here engage into, and too much divert me from my principal intention. I shall, therefore, in general, refer the whole work of the Spirit of God with respect unto the regeneration of sinners unto two heads:— First, That which is *preparatory* for it; and, secondly, That which is *effective* of it. That which is preparatory for it is the *conviction* of sin; this is the work of the Holy Spirit, John xvi. 8. And this also may be distinctly referred unto three heads:— 1. A discovery of the *true nature* of sin by the ministry of the law, Rom. vii. 7. 2. An *application* of that discovery made in the mind or understanding unto the conscience of the sinner. 3. The *excitation* of affections suitable unto that discovery and application, Acts ii. 37. But these things, so far as they belong unto our present design, have been before insisted on. Our principal inquiry at present is after the work itself, or the nature and manner of the working of the Spirit of God in and on the souls of men in their *regeneration*; and this must be both negatively and positively declared:— FIRST, The work of the Spirit of God in the regeneration of sinners, or the quickening of them who are dead in trespasses and sins, or in their first saving conversion to God, doth not consist in a *moral suasion* only. By *suasion* we intend such a persuasion as may or may not be effectual; so absolutely we call that only *persuasion* whereby a man is actually persuaded. Concerning this we must consider,—

1. What it is that is intended by that expression, and wherein its efficacy doth consist; and, 2. Prove that the whole work of the Spirit of God in the conversion of sinners doth not consist therein. And I shall handle this matter under this notion, as that which is known unto those who are conversant in these things from the writings of the ancient and modern divines; for it is to no purpose to endeavour the reducing of the extravagant, confused discourses of some present writers unto a certain and determinate stating of the things in difference among us. That which they seem to aim at and conclude may be reduced unto these heads:— (1.) That God administers grace unto all in the declaration of the doctrine of the law and gospel. (2.) That the reception of this doctrine, the belief and practice of it, is enforced by promises and threatenings. (3.) That the things revealed, taught, and commanded, are not only good in themselves, but so suited unto the reason and interest of mankind as that the mind cannot but be disposed and inclined to receive and obey them, unless overpowered by prejudices and a course of sin. (4.) That the consideration of the promises and threatenings of the gospel is sufficient to remove these prejudices and reform that course. (5.) That upon a compliance with the doctrine of the gospel and obedience thereunto, men are made partakers of the Spirit, with other privileges of the New Testament, and have a right unto all the promises of the present and future life. Now, this being a perfect system of Pelagianism, condemned in the ancient church as absolutely exclusive of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be fully removed out of our way in our present discourse, though the loose, confused expressions of some be not considered in particular; for if the work of our regeneration do not consist in a moral suasion, —which, as we shall see, contains all that these men will allow to grace,—their whole fabric falls to the ground of its own accord:—

1. As to the nature of this *moral suasion*, two things may be considered:— (1.) The *means*, instrument, and matter of it, and this is the word of God; the word of God, or the Scripture, in the doctrinal instructions, precepts, promises, and threatenings of it. This is that, and this is that alone, whereby we are commanded, pressed,

persuaded, to turn ourselves and live to God. And herein we comprise the whole, both the law and the gospel, with all the divine truths contained in them, as severally respecting the especial ends where-unto they are designed; for although they are distinctly and peculiarly suited to produce distinct effects on the minds of men, yet they all jointly tend unto the general end of guiding men how to live unto God, and to obtain the enjoyment of him. As for those documents and instructions which men have concerning the will of God, and the obedience which he requires of them from the light of nature, with the works of creation and providence, I shall not here take them into consideration: for either they are solitary, or without any superaddition of instructive light by revelation, and then I utterly deny them to be a sufficient outward means of the conversion of any one soul; or they may be considered as improved by the written word as dispensed unto men, and so they are comprised under it, and need not to be considered apart. We will, therefore, suppose that those unto whom the word is declared have antecedaneously there-unto all the help which the light of nature will afford.

(2.) The *principal way* of the *application* of this means to produce its effect on the souls of men is the *ministry of the church*. God hath appointed the ministry for the application of the word unto the minds and consciences of men for their instruction and conversion. And concerning this we may observe two things:— [1.] That the word of God, thus dispensed by the ministry of the church, is the only ordinary outward means which the Holy Ghost maketh use of in the regeneration of the adult unto whom it is preached. [2.] That it is every way sufficient in its own kind,—that is, as an outward means; for the revelation which is made of God and his mind thereby is sufficient to teach men all that is needful for them to believe and do that they may be converted unto God, and yield him the obedience that he requires. Hence two things do ensue:— 1st. That the *use of those means* unto men in the state of sin, if they are not complied withal, is sufficient, on the grounds before laid down, to leave them by whom they are rejected inexcusable: so Isa. v. 3-5; Prov. xxix. 1; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14-16.

2d. That the effect of regeneration or conversion unto God is assigned unto the *preaching of the word*, because of its efficacy there-unto in its own kind and way, as the outward means thereof, 1 Cor. iv. 15; James i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23.

2. We may consider what is the nature and wherein the efficacy of this *moral work* doth consist. To which purpose we may observe,—(1.) That in the use of this means for the *conversion of men*, there is, *preparatory* unto that wherein this *moral persuasion* doth consist, an *instruction* of the mind in the knowledge of the will of God and its duty towards him. The first regard unto men in the dispensation of the word unto them is their darkness and ignorance, whereby they are alienated from the life of God. This, therefore, is the first end of divine revelation,—namely, to make known the counsel and will of God unto us: see Matt. iv. 15, 16; Luke iv. 18, 19; Acts xxvi. 16-18, xx. 20, 21, 26, 27. By the preaching of the law and the gospel, men are instructed in the whole counsel of God and what he requires of them; and in their apprehension hereof doth the illumination of their minds consist, whereof we must treat distinctly afterward. Without a supposition of this illumination there is no use of the persuasive power of the word; for it consists in affecting the mind with its concernment in the things that it knows, or wherein it is instructed. Wherefore we suppose in this case that a man is taught by the word both the necessity of regeneration, and what is required of himself thereunto.

(2.) On this supposition, that a man is instructed in the *knowledge* of the will of God, as revealed in the law and the gospel, there is accompanying the word of God, in the dispensation of it, a *powerful persuasive efficacy* unto a compliance with it and observance of it. For instance, suppose a man to be convinced by the word of God of the nature of sin; of his own sinful condition, of his danger from thence with respect unto the sin of nature, on which account he is a child of wrath; and of his actual sin, which farther renders him obnoxious unto the curse of the law and the indignation of God; of his duty hereon to turn unto God, and the way whereby he may so

do,—there are in the precepts, exhortations, expostulations, promises, and threatenings of the word, especially as dispensed in the ministry of the church, powerful motives to affect, and arguments to prevail with, the mind and will of such a man to endeavour his own regeneration or conversion unto God, rational and cogent above all that can be objected unto the contrary. On some it is acknowledged that these things have no effect; they are not moved by them, they care not. for them, they do despise them, and live and die in rebellion against the light of them, “having their eyes blinded by the god of this world.” But this is no argument that they are not powerful *in themselves*, although, indeed, it is that they are not so towards us *of themselves*, but only as the Holy Spirit is pleased to act them towards us. But in these motives, reasons, and arguments, whereby men are, in and from the word and the ministry of it, urged and pressed unto conversion to God, doth this moral persuasion whereof we speak consist. And the efficacy of it unto the end proposed ariseth from the things ensuing, which are all resolved into God himself:— [1.] From an evidence of the *truth* of the things from whence these motives and arguments were taken. The foundation of all the efficacy of the dispensation of the gospel lies in an evidence that the things proposed in it are not “cunningly-devised fables,” 2 Pet. i. 16. Where this is not admitted, where it is not firmly assented unto, there can be no persuasive efficacy in it; but where there is, namely, a prevalent persuasion of the truth of the things proposed, there the mind is under a disposition unto the things whereunto it is persuaded. And hereon the whole efficacy of the word in and upon the souls of men is resolved into the truth and veracity of God; for the things contained in the Scripture are not proposed unto us merely as true, but as divine truths, as immediate revelations from God, which require not only a rational but a sacred religious respect unto them. They are things that the “mouth of the LORD hath spoken.”

[2.] There is a proposal unto the *wills and affections* of men in the things so assented unto, on the one hand as good, amiable, and excellent, wherein the chiefest good, happiness, and utmost end of

our natures are comprised, to be pursued and attained; and on the other of things evil and terrible, the utmost evil that our nature is obnoxious unto, to be avoided: for this is urged on them, that to comply with the will of God in the proposals of the gospel, to conform thereunto, to do what he requires, to turn from sin unto him, is good unto men, best for them,—assuredly attended with present satisfaction and future glory. And therein is also proposed the most noble object for our affections, even God himself, as a friend, as reconciled unto us in Christ; and that in a way suited unto his holiness, righteousness, wisdom, and goodness, which we have nothing to oppose unto nor to lay in the balance against. The way, also, of the reconciliation of sinners unto God by Jesus Christ is set out as that which hath such an impress of divine wisdom and goodness upon it, as that it can be refused by none but out of a direct enmity against God himself. Unto the enforcing of these things on the minds of men, the Scripture abounds with reasons, motives, and arguments; the rendering whereof effectual is the principal end of the ministry. On the other hand, it is declared and evidenced that sin is the great debasement of our natures,—the ruin of our souls, the only evil in the world, in its guilt and punishment; and that a continuance in a state of it, with a rejection of the invitation of the gospel unto conversion to God, is a thing foolish, unworthy of a rational creature, and that which will be everlastingly pernicious. Whereas, therefore, in the judgment of every rational creature, spiritual things are to be preferred before natural, eternal things before temporal, and these things are thus disposed of in infinite goodness, love, and wisdom, they must needs be apt to affect the wills and take the affections of men. And herein the efficacy of the word on the minds and consciences of men is resolved into the authority of God. These precepts, these promises, these threatenings are his, who hath right to give them and power to execute them. And with his authority, his glorious greatness and his infinite power come under consideration; so also doth his goodness and love in an especial manner, with many other things, even all the known properties of his holy nature ;—all which concur in giving weight, power, and efficacy unto these motives and arguments.

(3.) Great power and efficacy is added hereunto from the management of these motives in the *preaching* of the word. Herein with some the rhetorical faculty of them by whom it is dispensed is of great consideration; for hereby are they able to prevail very much on the minds of men. Being acquainted with the inclinations and dispositions of all sorts of persons, the nature of their affections and prejudices, with the topics or kinds and heads of arguments meet to affect them and prevail with them, as also the ways of insinuating persuasive motives into their minds, they express the whole in words elegant, proper, expressive, and suited to allure, draw, and engage them unto the ways and duties proposed unto them. Herein do some place the principal use and efficacy of the ministry in the dispensation of the word; with me it is of no consideration, for our apostle rejects it utterly from any place in his ministry: 1 Cor. ii. 4. “My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Some of late have put in faint and weak exceptions unto the latter clause, as though not an evidence of the powerful presence of the Spirit of God in the dispensation of the gospel were intended therein, but the power of working miracles, contrary to the whole scope of the place and consent of the best expositors; but that, by the first clause, the persuasive art of human oratory is excluded from use and efficacy in the preaching of the gospel, none as yet hath had the impudence to deny. But let this also be esteemed to be as useful and efficacious in this work, as to the end of preaching in the conversion of the souls of men, as any can imagine, it shall be granted; only I shall take leave to resolve the efficacy of preaching into two other causes:—

[1.] The *institution of God*. He hath appointed the preaching of the word to be the means, the only outward ordinary means, for the conversion of the souls of men, I Cor. i. 17-20; Mark xvi. 15, 16; Rom. i. 16. And the power or efficacy of any thing that is used unto an end in spiritual matters depends solely on its divine appointment unto that end.

[2.] The *especial gifts* that the Spirit of God doth furnish the preachers of the gospel withal, to enable them unto an effectual discharge of their work, Eph. iv. 11-13, whereof we shall treat afterward. All the power, therefore, that these things are accompanied withal is resolved into the sovereignty of God; for he hath chosen this way of preaching for this end, and he bestows these gifts on whom he pleaseth. From these things it is that the persuasive motives which the word abounds withal unto conversion, or turning to God from sin, have that peculiar efficacy on the minds of men which is proper unto them.

(4.) We do not therefore, in this case, suppose that the *motives of the word* are left unto a mere *natural operation*, with respect unto the ability of them by whom it is dispensed, but, moreover, that it is blessed of God, and *accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit*, for the producing of its effect and end upon the souls of men. Only, the operation of the Holy Ghost on the minds and wills of men in and by these means is supposed to extend no farther but unto motives, arguments, reasons, and considerations, proposed unto the mind, so to influence the will and the affections. Hence his operation is herein moral, and so metaphorical, not real, proper, and physical.

Now, concerning this whole work I affirm these two things :—

1. That the Holy Spirit doth make use of it in the *regeneration* or conversion of all that are *adult*, and that either immediately in and by the preaching of it, or by some other application of light and truth unto the mind derived from the word; for by the reasons, motives, and persuasive arguments which the word affords are our minds affected, and our souls wrought upon in our conversion unto God, whence it becomes our *reasonable* obedience. And there are none ordinarily converted, but they are able to give some account by what considerations they were prevailed on thereunto. But,—

2. We say that the whole work, or the *whole of the work* of the Holy Ghost in our *conversion*, doth not consist herein; but there is a real

physical work, whereby he infuseth a gracious principle of *spiritual life* into all that are effectually converted and really regenerated, and without which there is no deliverance from the state of sin and death which we have described; which, among others, may be proved by the ensuing arguments.

The principal arguments in this case will ensue in our proofs from the Scriptures that there is a *real physical work* of the Spirit on the souls of men in their regeneration. That all he doth consisteth not in this *moral suasion*, the ensuing reasons do sufficiently evince:—

First, If the Holy Spirit work no otherwise on men, in their regeneration or conversion, but by proposing unto them and urging upon them *reasons, arguments, and motives* to that purpose, then after his whole work, and notwithstanding it, the will of man remains absolutely indifferent whether it will admit of them or no, or whether it will *convert itself* unto God upon them or no; for the *whole* of this work consists in proposing *objects* unto the will, with respect whereunto it is left *undetermined* whether it will choose and close with them or no. And, indeed, this is that which some plead for: for they say that “in all men, at least all unto whom the gospel is preached, there is that grace present or with them that they are able to comply with the word if they please, and so believe, repent, or do any act of obedience unto God according to his will; and if they will, they can refuse to make use of this assistance, aid, power, or grace, and so continue in their sins.” What this grace is, or whence men have this power and ability, by some is not declared. Neither is it much to be doubted but that many do imagine that it is purely natural; only they will allow it to be called grace, because it is from God who made us. Others acknowledge it to be the work or effect of grace internal, wherein part of the difference lay between the Pelagians and semi-Pelagians of old. But they all agree that it is absolutely in the power of the will of man to make use of it or not,—that is, of the whole effect on them, or product in them, of this grace communicated in the way described; for notwithstanding any thing wrought in us or upon us thereby, the will is still left various, flexible,

and undetermined. It is true, that notwithstanding the grace thus administered, the will hath power to refuse it and to abide in sin; but that there is no more grace wrought in us but what may he so refused, or that the will can make use of that grace for conversion which it can refuse, is false.

For,— 1. This ascribes the whole glory of our regeneration and conversion unto ourselves, and not to the grace of God; for that act of our wills, on this supposition, whereby we convert unto God, is merely an act of our own, and not of the grace of God. This is evident; for if the act itself were of grace, then would it not be in the power of the will to hinder it. 2. This would leave it absolutely uncertain, notwithstanding the purpose of God and the purchase of Christ, whether ever any one in the world should be converted unto God or no; for when the whole work of grace is over, it is absolutely in the power of the will of man whether it shall be effectual or no, and so absolutely uncertain: which is contrary to the covenant, promise, and oath of God unto and with Jesus Christ. 3. It is contrary to express testimonies of Scripture innumerable, wherein actual conversion unto God is ascribed unto his grace, as the immediate effect thereof. This will farther appear afterward. “God worketh in us both to will and to do,” Phil. ii. 13. The act, therefore, itself of willing in our conversion is of God’s operation; and although we will ourselves, yet it is he who causeth us to will, by working in us to will and to do. And if the act of our will, in believing and obedience, in our conversion to God, be not the effect of his grace in us, he doth not “work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Secondly, This *moral persuasion*, however advanced or improved, and supposed to be effectual, yet confers no new *real supernatural strength* unto the soul; for whereas it worketh, yea, the Spirit or grace of God therein and thereby, by reasons, motives, arguments, and objective considerations, and no otherwise, it is able only to excite and draw out the strength which we have, delivering the mind and affections from prejudices and other moral impediments. Real aid, and internal spiritual strength, neither are nor can be conferred

thereby. And he who will acknowledge that there is any such internal spiritual strength communicated unto us must also acknowledge that there is another work of the Spirit of God in us and upon us than can be effected by these persuasions. But thus it is in this case, as some suppose: “The mind of man is affected with much ignorance, and usually under the power of many prejudices, which, by the corrupt course of things in the world, possess it from its first actings in the state of infancy. The will and the affections likewise are vitiated with depraved habits, which by the same means are contracted. But when the gospel is proposed and preached unto them, the thinks contained in it, the duties it requires, the promises it gives, are so rational, or so suited unto the principles of our reason, and the subject-matter of them is so good, desirable, and beautiful, unto an intellectual appetite, that, being well conveyed unto the mind, they are able to discard all the prejudices and disadvantages of a corrupt course under which it hath suffered, and prevail with the soul to desist from sin,—that is, a course of sinning,—and to become a new man in all virtuous conversation.” And that this is in the liberty and power of the will is “irrefragably proved” by that sophism of Biel out of Scotus and Occam, which contains the substance of what they plead in this cause. Yea, “thus to do is so suitable unto the rational principles of a well-disposed mind, that to do otherwise is the greatest folly and madness in the world.” “Especially will this work of conversion be unquestionably wrought if the application of these means of it be so disposed, in the providence of God, as that they may be seasonable with respect unto the frame and condition of the mind whereunto they are applied. And as sundry things are necessary to render the means of grace thus seasonable and congruous unto the present frame, temper, and disposition of the mind, so in such a congruity much of its efficacy doth consist. “And this,” as it is said, “is the work of the Holy Ghost, and an effect of the grace of God; for if the Spirit of God did not by the word prevent, excite, stir up, and provoke the minds of men, did he not help and assist them, when endeavouring to turn to God, in the removal of prejudices and all sorts of moral impediments, men would continue and abide, as it were, dead in

trespasses and sins, at least their endeavours after deliverance would be weak and fruitless.”

This is all the grace, all the work of the Spirit of God, in our regeneration and conversion, which some will acknowledge, so far as I can learn from their writings and discourses. But that there is more required thereunto I have before declared; as also, it hath been manifested what is the true and proper use and efficacy of these means in this work. But to place the whole of it herein is that which Pelagius contended for of old; yea, he granted a greater use and efficacy of grace than I can find to be allowed in the present confused discourses of some on this subject. Wherefore it is somewhat preposterous to endeavour an imposition of such rotten errors upon the minds of men, and that by crude assertions, without any pretence of proof, as is the way of many. And that the sole foundation of all their harangues,—namely, the suitableness of gospel principles and promises unto our wisdom and reason, antecedently unto any saving work of the Spirit on our minds,—is directly contradictory to the doctrine of our apostle, shall afterward be declared. But, it may be, it will be said that it is not so much what is Pelagian and what is not, as what is truth and what is not, that is to be inquired after; and it is granted that this is, and ought to be, our first and principal inquiry; but it is not unuseful to know in whose steps they tread who at this day oppose the doctrine of the effectual grace of Christ, and what judgment the ancient church made of their principles and opinions.

It is pretended yet farther, that “grace in the dispensation of the word doth work *really and efficiently*, especially by *illumination*, internal excitations of the mind and affections; and if thereon the will do put forth its act, and thereby determine itself in the choice of that which is good, in believing and repenting, then the grace thus administered concurs with it, helps and aids it in the perfecting of its act; so that the whole work is of grace.” So pleaded the semi-Pelagians, and so do others continue to do. But all this while the way whereby grace, or the Spirit of God, worketh this illumination, excites the affections, and aids the will, is by moral persuasion only,

no real strength being communicated or infused but what the will is at perfect liberty to make use of or to refuse at pleasure. Now this, in effect, is no less than to overthrow the whole grace of Jesus Christ, and to render it useless; for it ascribes unto man the honour of his conversion, his will being the principal cause of it. It makes a man to beget himself anew, or to be born again of himself—to make himself differ from others by that which he hath not in an especial manner received. It takes away the analogy that there is between *the forming of the natural body of Christ in the womb, and the forming of his mystical body in regeneration*. It makes the act of living unto God by faith and obedience to be a mere natural act, no fruit of the mediation or purchase of Christ; and allows the Spirit of God no more power or efficacy in or towards our regeneration than is in a minister who preacheth the word, or in an orator who eloquently and pathetically persuades to virtue and dehorts from vice. And all these consequences, it may be, will be granted by some amongst us, and allowed to be true; to that pass are things come in the world, through the confident pride and ignorance of men. But not only it may be, but plainly and directly, the whole gospel and grace of Christ are renounced where they are admitted.

Thirdly, This is not *all that we pray for*, either for ourselves or others, when we beg effectual grace for them or ourselves. There was no argument that the ancients more pressed the Pelagians withal than that the grace which they acknowledged did not answer the prayers of the church, or what we are taught in the Scripture to pray for. We are to pray only for what God hath promised, and for the communication of it unto us in that way whereby he will work it and effect it. Now, he is at a great indifferency in this matter who only prays that God would persuade him or others to believe and to obey, to be converted or to convert himself. The church of God hath always prayed that God would work these things in us; and those who have a real concernment in them do pray continually that God would effectually work them in their hearts. They pray that he would convert them; that he would create a clean heart and renew a right spirit in them; that he would give them faith for Christ's sake, and

increase it in them; and that in all these things he would work in them by the exceeding greatness of his power both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. And there is not a Pelagian in the world who ever once prayed for grace, or gracious assistance against sin and temptation, with a sense of his want of it, but that his prayers contradicted his profession. To think that by all these petitions, with others innumerable dictated unto us in the Scripture, and which a spiritual sense of our wants will engage into, we desire nothing but only that God would persuade, excite, and stir us up to put forth a power and ability of our own in the performance of what we desire, is contrary unto all Christian experience. Yea, for a man to lie praying with importunity, earnestness, and fervency, for that which is in his own power, and can never be effected but by his own power, is fond and ridiculous; and they do but mock God who pray unto him to do that for them which they can do for themselves, and which God cannot do for them but only when and as they do it themselves. Suppose a man to have a power in himself to believe and repent; suppose these to be such acts of his will as God doth not, indeed cannot, by his grace work in him, but only persuade him thereunto, and show him sufficient reason why he should so do,—to what purpose should this man, or with what congruity could he, pray that God would give him faith and repentance? This some of late, as it seems, wisely observing, do begin to scoff at and reproach the prayers of Christians; for whereas, in all their supplications for grace, they lay the foundation of them in an humble acknowledgment of their own vileness and impotency unto any thing that is spiritually good, yea, and a natural aversion from it, and a sense of the power and working of the remainder of indwelling sin in them, hereby exciting themselves unto that earnestness and importunity in their requests for grace which their condition makes necessary (which hath been the constant practice of Christians since there was one in the world), this is by them derided and exposed to contempt. In the room, therefore, of such despised prayers, I shall supply them with an ancient form that is better suited unto their principles. The preface unto it is, “*Ille ad Deum digne elevat manus, ille orationem bonâ conscientîâ effundit qui potest dicere.*” The prayer followeth:

—“Tu nosti Domine quam sanctæ et puræ et mundæ sint ab omni malitia, et iniquitate, et rapina quas ad te extendo manus: quemadmodum justa et munda labia et ab omni mendacio libera quibus offero tibi deprecationes, ut mihi miserearis.” This prayer Pelagius taught a widow to make, as it was objected unto him in the Diospolitan synod, that is at Lydda in Palestine, cap. vi.; only he taught her not to say that she had no deceit in her heart, as one among us doth wisely and humbly vaunt that he knoweth of none in his, so every way perfect is the man! Only to balance this of Pelagius, I shall give these men another prayer, but in the margin, not declaring whose it is, lest they should censure him to the gallows. Whereas, therefore, it seems to be the doctrine of some that we have no grace from Christ but only that of the gospel teaching us our duty, and proposing a reward, I know not what they have to pray for, unless it be riches, wealth, and preferments, with those things that depend thereon.

Fourthly, This kind of the *operation of grace*, where it is *solitary*,—that is, where it is asserted exclusively to an internal *physical work* of the Holy Spirit,—is not suited to effect and produce the work of *regeneration* or conversion unto God in persons who are really in that state of nature which we have before described. The most effectual persuasions cannot prevail with such men to *convert themselves*, any more than arguments can prevail with a blind man *to see*, or with a dead man to rise from the grave, or with a lame man to walk steadily. Wherefore, the whole description before given from the Scripture of the state of lapsed nature must be disproved and removed out of the way before this grace can be thought to be sufficient for the regeneration and conversion of men in that estate. But some proceed on other principles. “Men,” they say, “have by nature certain notions and principles concerning God and the obedience due unto him, which are demonstrable by the light of reason; and certain abilities of mind to make use of them unto their proper end.” But they grant, at least some of them do, that “however these principles may be improved and acted by those abilities, yet they are not sufficient, or will not eventually be effectual, to bring

men unto the life of God, or to enable them so to believe in him, love him, and obey him, as that they may come at length unto the enjoyment of him; at least, they will not do this safely and easily, but through much danger and confusion: wherefore God, out of his goodness and love to mankind, hath made a farther revelation of himself by Jesus Christ in the gospel, with the especial way whereby his anger against sin is averted, and peace made for sinners; which men had before only a confused apprehension and hope about. Now, the things received, proposed, and prescribed in the gospel, are so good, so rational, so every way suited unto the principles of our being, the nature of our intellectual constitutions, or the reason of men, and those fortified with such rational and powerful motives, in the promises and threatenings of it, representing unto us on the one hand the chiefest good which our nature is capable of, and on the other the highest evil to be avoided that we are obnoxious unto, that they can be refused or rejected by none but out of a brutish love of sin, or the efficacy of depraved habits, contracted by a vicious course of living. And herein consists the grace of God towards men, especially as the Holy Ghost is pleased to make use of these things in the dispensation of the gospel by the ministry of the church; for when the reason of men is by these means excited so far as to cast off prejudices, and enabled thereby to make a right judgment of what is proposed unto it, it prevails with them to convert to God, to change their lives, and yield obedience according to the rule of the gospel, that they may be saved.”

And no doubt this were a notable system of Christian doctrine especially as it is by some rhetorically blended or theatrically represented in feigned stories and apologues, were it not defective in one or two things: for, first, it is exclusive of a supposition of the fall of man, at least as unto the depravation of our nature which ensued thereon, and, secondly, of all real effective grace dispensed by Jesus Christ; which render it a fantastic dream, alien from the design and doctrine of the gospel. But it is a fond thing to discourse with men about either regeneration or conversion unto God by whom these things are denied.

Such a work of the Holy Spirit we must, therefore, inquire after as whereby the mind is effectually renewed, the heart changed, the affections sanctified, all actually and effectually, or no deliverance will be wrought, obtained, or ensue, out of the estate described; for notwithstanding the utmost improvement of our minds and reasons that can be imagined, and the most eminent proposal of the truths of the gospel, accompanied with the most powerful enforcements of duty and obedience that the nature of the things themselves will afford, yet the mind of man in the state of nature, without a supernatural elevation by grace, is not able so to apprehend them as that its apprehension should be spiritual, saving, or proper unto the things apprehended. And notwithstanding the perception which the mind may attain unto in the truth of gospel proposals, and the conviction it may have of the necessity of obedience, yet is not the will able to apply itself unto any spiritual act thereof, without an ability wrought immediately in it by the power of the Spirit of God; or rather, unless the Spirit of God by his grace do effect the act of willing in it. Wherefore, not to multiply arguments, we conclude that the most effectual use of outward means alone is not all the grace that is necessary unto, nor all that is actually put forth in, the regeneration of the souls of men.

Having thus evidenced wherein the work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of the souls of men doth *not* consist,—namely, in a supposed congruous persuasion of their minds, where it is alone,—

SECONDLY, I shall proceed to show wherein it *doth* consist, and what is the true nature of it. And to this purpose I say,—

1. Whatever efficacy that *moral operation* which accompanies, or is the effect of; the preaching of the word, as blessed and used by the Holy Spirit, is of, or may be supposed to be of, or is possible that it should be of, in and towards them that are *unregenerate*, we do willingly ascribe unto it. We grant that in the work of regeneration, the Holy Spirit, towards those that are adult, doth make use of the word, both the law and the gospel, and the ministry of the church in

the dispensation of it, as the ordinary means thereof; yea, this is ordinarily the whole external means that is made use of in this work, and an efficacy proper unto it it is accompanied withal. Whereas, therefore, some contend that there is no more needful to the conversion of sinners but the preaching of the word unto them who are congruously disposed to receive it, and that the whole of the grace of God consists in the effectual application of it unto the minds and affections of men, whereby they are enabled to comply with it, and turn unto God by faith and repentance, they do not ascribe a greater power unto the word than we do, by whom this administration of it is denied to be the total cause of conversion; for we assign the same power to the word as they do, and more also, only we affirm that there is an effect to be wrought in this work which all this power, if alone, is insufficient for. But in its own kind it is sufficient and effectual, so far as that the effect of regeneration or conversion unto God is ascribed thereunto. This we have declared before.

2. There is not only a *moral* but a *physical* immediate operation of the Spirit, by his power and grace, or his powerful grace, upon the minds or souls of men in their regeneration.' This is that which we must cleave to, or all the glory of God's grace is lost, and the grace administered by Christ neglected. So is it asserted, Eph. i. 18-20, "That ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." The power here mentioned hath an "exceeding greatness" ascribed unto it, with respect unto the effect produced by it. The power of God in itself is, as unto all acts, equally infinite,—he is omnipotent; but some effects are greater than others, and carry in them more than ordinary impressions of it. Such is that here intended, whereby God makes men to be believers, and preserves them when they are so. And unto this power of God there is an actual operation or efficiency ascribed,—the "working of his mighty power." And the nature of this operation or efficiency is declared to be of the same kind with that which was exerted in the raising of Christ from the dead; and this

was by a real physical efficiency of divine power. This, therefore, is here testified, that the work of God towards believers, either to make them so or preserve them such,— for all is one as unto our present purpose,—consists in the acting of his divine power by a real internal efficiency. So God is said to “fulfil in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power,” 2 Thess. i. 11; 2 Pet. i. 3. And hence the work of grace in conversion is constantly expressed by words denoting a real internal efficiency; such as creating, quickening, forming, giving a new heart, whereof afterward. Wherever this word is spoken with respect unto an active efficiency, it is ascribed unto God; he *creates* us anew, he *quickens* us, he *begets* us of his own will. But where it is spoken with respect unto us, there it is passively expressed; we *are created* in Christ Jesus, we are *new creatures*, we are *born again*, and the like; which one observation is sufficient to evert the whole hypothesis of Arminian grace. Unless a work wrought by power, and that real and immediate, be intended herein, such a work may neither be supposed possible, nor can be expressed. Wherefore, it is plain in the Scripture that the Spirit of God works internally, immediately, efficiently, in and upon the minds of men in their regeneration. The new birth is the effect of an act of his power and grace; or, no man is born again but it is by the inward efficiency of the Spirit.

3. This *internal efficiency* of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, as to the event, is *infallible*, victorious, irresistible, or always efficacious. But in this assertion we suppose that the measure of the efficacy of grace and the end to be attained are fixed by the will of God. As to that end whereunto of God it is designed, it is always prevalent or effectual, and cannot be resisted, or it will effectually work what God designs it to work: for wherein he “will work, none shall let him;” and “who hath resisted his will?” There are many motions of grace, even in the hearts of believers, which are thus far resisted, as that they attain not that effect which in their own nature they have a tendency unto. Were it otherwise, all believers would be perfect. But it is manifest in experience that we do not always answer the inclinations of grace, at least as unto the degree which it moves

towards. But yet even such motions also, if they are of and from saving grace, are effectual so far, and for all those ends which they are designed unto in the purpose of God; for his will shall not be frustrated in any instance. And where any work of grace is not effectual, God never intended it should be so, nor did put forth that power of grace which was necessary to make it so. Wherefore, in or towards whomsoever the Holy Spirit puts forth his power, or acts his grace for their regeneration, he removes all obstacles, overcomes all oppositions, and infallibly produceth the effect intended. This proposition being of great importance to the glory of God's grace, and most signally opposed by the patrons of corrupted nature and man's free-will in the state thereof, must be both explained and confirmed. We say, therefore,—

(1.) The power which the Holy Ghost puts forth in our regeneration is such, in its acting or exercise, as our minds, wills, and affections, are suited to be wrought upon, and to be affected by it, according to their natures and natural operations: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; draw me, and I shall run after thee." He doth not act in them any otherwise than they themselves are meet to be moved and move, to be acted and act, according to their own nature, power, and ability. He draws us with "the cords of a man." And the work itself is expressed by *persuading*,—"God shall persuade Japheth;" and *alluring*,—"I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her:" for as it is certainly effectual, so it carries no more repugnancy unto our faculties than a prevalent persuasion doth. So that,—

(2.) He doth not, in our regeneration, possess the mind with any enthusiastical impressions, nor act absolutely upon us as he did in extraordinary prophetic inspirations of old, where the minds and organs of the bodies of men were merely passive instruments, moved by him above their own natural capacity and activity, not only as to the principle of working, but as to the manner of operation; but he works on the minds of men in and by their own natural actings, through an immediate influence and impression of his power:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God.” He “worketh both to will and to do.”

(3.) He therefore offers no violence or compulsion unto the will. This that faculty is not naturally capable to give admission unto. If it be compelled, it is destroyed. And the mention that is made in the Scripture of compelling (“Compel them to come in”) respects the certainty of the event, not the manner of the operation on them. But whereas the will, in the depraved condition of fallen nature, is not only habitually filled and possessed with an aversion from that which is good spiritually (“Alienated from the life of God”), but also continually acts an opposition unto it, as being under the power of the “carnal mind,” which is “enmity against God; and whereas this grace of the Spirit in conversion doth prevail against all this opposition, and is effectual and victorious over it,—it will be inquired how this can any otherwise be done but by a kind of violence and compulsion, seeing we have evinced already that moral persuasion and objective allurements is not sufficient thereunto? *Ans.* It is acknowledged that in the work of conversion unto God, though not in the very act of it, there is a reaction between grace and the will, their acts being contrary; and that grace is therein victorious, and yet no violence or compulsion is offered unto the will; for,—

[1.] The opposition is not *ad idem*. The *enmity and opposition* that is acted by the will against grace is against it as *objectively proposed* unto it. So do men “resist the Holy Ghost,”—that is, in the external dispensation of grace by the word. And if that be alone, they may always resist it; the enmity that is in them will prevail against it: “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.” The will, therefore, is not forced by any power put forth in grace, in that way wherein it is capable of making opposition unto it, but the prevalency of grace is of it as it is internal, working really and physically; which is not the object of the will’s opposition, for it is not proposed unto it as that which it may accept or refuse, but worketh effectually in it.

[2.] The will, in the first *act* of conversion (as even sundry of the schoolmen acknowledge), *acts* not but as it is *acted*, moves not but as it is moved; and therefore is *passive* therein, in the sense immediately to be explained. And if this be not so, it cannot be avoided but that the *act* of our turning unto God is a mere *natural act*, and not spiritual or gracious; for it is an act of the will, not enabled thereunto antecedently by grace. Wherefore it must be granted, and it shall be proved, that, in order of nature, the acting of grace in the will in our conversion is antecedent unto its own acting; though in the same instant of time wherein the will is moved it moves, and when it is acted it acts itself, and preserves its own liberty in its exercise. There is, therefore, herein an inward almighty *secret act* of the power of the Holy Ghost, producing or effecting in us the will of conversion unto God, so acting our wills as that they also act themselves, and that freely. So Austin, cont. Duas Epistol. Pelag. lib. i. cap. 19: “Trahitur [homo] miris modis ut velit, ab illo qui novit intus in ipsis cordibus hominum operari; non ut homines, quod fieri non potest, nolentes credant, sed ut volentes ex nolentibus fiant.” The Holy Spirit, who in his power and operation is more intimate, as it were, unto the principles of our souls than they are to themselves, doth, with the preservation and in the exercise of the liberty of our wills, effectually work our regeneration and conversion unto God.

This is the substance of what we plead for in this cause, and which declares the nature of this work of regeneration, as it is an inward spiritual work. I shall, therefore, confirm the truth proposed with evident testimonies of Scripture, and reasons contained in them or deduced from them.

First, The *work of conversion* itself, and in especial the *act of believing*, or *faith itself*, is expressly said to be of God, to be wrought in us by him, to be given unto us from him. The Scripture says not that God gives us ability or power to believe only,—namely, such a power as we may make use of if we will, or do otherwise; but faith, repentance, and conversion themselves are said to be the work and effect of God. Indeed, there is nothing mentioned in the Scriptures

concerning the communicating of power, remote or next unto the mind of man, to enable him to believe antecedently unto actual believing. A “remote power,” if it may be so called, in the capacities of the faculties of the soul, the reason of the mind, and liberty of the will, we have given an account concerning; but for that which some call a “next power,” or an ability to believe in order of nature antecedent unto believing itself, wrought in us by the grace of God, the Scripture is silent. The apostle Paul saith of himself, *panta iscuw en tw endunamounti me christw* Phil. iv. 13,—“I can do all things,” or prevail in all things, “through Christ who enableth me;” where a power or ability seems to be spoken of antecedent unto acting: but this is not a power for the, first act of faith, but a power in them that believe. Such a power I acknowledge, which is acted in the co-operation of the Spirit and grace of Christ with the grace which believers have received, unto the performance of all acts of holy obedience; whereof I must treat elsewhere. Believers have a stock of habitual grace; which may be called indwelling grace in the same sense wherein original corruption is called indwelling sin. And this grace, as it is necessary unto every act of spiritual obedience, so of itself, without the renewed co-working of the Spirit of Christ, it is not able or sufficient to produce any spiritual act. This working of Christ upon and with the grace we have received is called *enabling of us*; but with persons unregenerate, and as to the first act of faith, it is not so.

But it will be objected, “That every thing which is actually accomplished was *in potentia* before; there must, therefore, be in us a power to believe before we do so actually.” *Ans.* The act of God working faith in us is a *creating act*: “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus,” Eph. ii. 10; and he that is in Christ Jesus “is a new creature,” 2 Cor. v. 17. Now, the effects of creating acts are not *in potentia* anywhere but in the active power of God; so was the world itself before its actual existence. This is termed *potentia logica*, which is no more but a negation of any contradiction to existence; not *potentia physica*, which includes a disposition unto actual existence. Notwithstanding, therefore, all these preparatory

works of the Spirit of God which we allow in this matter, there is not by them wrought in the minds and wills of men such a *next power*, as they call it, as should enable them to believe without farther actual grace working faith itself. Wherefore, with respect to believing, the first act of God is to work in us “to will:” Phil. ii. 13, “He worketh in us to will.” Now, to will to believe is to believe. This God works in us by that grace which Austin and the schoolmen call *gratia operans*, because it worketh in us without us, the will being merely moved and passive therein. That there is a power or faculty of believing given unto all men unto whom the gospel is preached, or who are called by the outward dispensation of it, some do pretend; and that “because those unto whom the word is so preached, if they do not actually believe, shall perish eternally, as is positively declared in the gospel, Mark xvi. 16; but this they could not justly do if they had not received a power or faculty of believing.”

Ans. 1. Those who believe not upon the proposal of Christ in the gospel are left without remedy in the guilt of those other sins, for which they must perish eternally. “If ye believe not,” saith Christ, “that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,” John viii. 24.

2. The impotency that is in men, as to the act of believing, is contracted by their own fault, both as it ariseth from the original depravation of nature, and as it is increased by corrupt prejudices and contracted habits of sin: wherefore, they justly perished of whom yet it is said that “they could not believe,” John xii. 39.

3. There is none by whom the gospel is refused, but they put forth an act of the will in its rejection, which all men are free unto and able for: “I would have gathered you, but ye would not,” Matt. xxiii. 37. “Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life,” [John v. 40.]

But the Scripture positively affirms of some to whom the gospel was preached that “they could not believe,” John xii. 39; and of all natural men, that “they cannot receive the things of God,” 1 Cor. ii. 14. Neither is it “given” unto all to “know the mysteries of the

kingdom of heaven,” but to some only, Matt. xi. 25, xiii. 11; and those to whom it is not so given have not the power intended. Besides, faith is not of all, or “all have not faith,” 2 Thess. iii. 2, but it is peculiar to the “elect of God,” Tit. i. 1; Acts xiii. 48; and these elect are but some of those that are called, Matt. xx. 16.

Yet farther to clear this, it may be observed, that this first act of willing may be considered two ways:— 1. As it is wrought in the will *subjectively*, and so it is formally only in that faculty; and in this sense the will is merely passive, and only the subject moved or acted. And in this respect the act of God’s grace in the will is an act of the will. But, 2. It may be considered as it is *efficiently* also in the will, as, being *acted*, it *acts* itself. So it is from the will as its principle, and is a vital act thereof, which gives it the nature of obedience. Thus the will in its own nature is *mobilis*, fit and meet to be wrought upon by the grace of the Spirit to faith and obedience; with respect unto the creating act of grace working faith in us, it is *mota*, moved and acted thereby; and in respect of its own elicit act, as it so acted and moved, it is *movens*, the next efficient cause thereof.

These things being premised for the clearing of the nature of the operation of the Spirit in the first communication of grace unto us, and the will’s compliance therewithal, we return unto our arguments or testimonies given unto the actual collation of faith’ upon us by the Spirit and grace of God, which must needs be effectual and irresistible; for the contrary implies a contradiction,—namely, that God should “work what is not wrought:”—Phil. i. 29, “To you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,” To “believe on Christ” expresseth saving faith itself. This is “given” unto us. And how is it given us? Even by the power of God “working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” chap. ii. 13. Our faith is our coming to Christ. “And no man,” saith he, “can come unto me, except it be given unto him of my Father,” John vi. 65. All power in ourselves for this end is utterly taken away: “No man can come unto me.”² However we may suppose men to be prepared or disposed, whatever arguments may

be proposed unto them, and in what season soever, to render things congruous and agreeable unto their inclinations, yet no man of himself can believe, can come to Christ, unless faith itself be “given unto him,”—that is, be wrought in him by the grace of the Father, Phil. i. 29. So it is again asserted, and that both negatively and positively, Eph. ii. 8, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Our own ability, be it what it will, however assisted and excited, and God’s gift, are contradistinguished. If it be “of ourselves,” it is not “the gift of God;” if it be “the gift of God,” it is not “of ourselves.” And the manner how God bestows this gift upon us is declared, verse 10, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Good works, or gospel obedience, are the things designed. These must proceed from faith, or they are not acceptable with God, Heb. xi. 6. And the way whereby this is wrought in us, or a principle of obedience, is by a creating act of God: “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.” In like manner God is said to “give us repentance,” 2 Tim. ii. 25; Acts xi. 18. This is the whole of what we plead: God in our conversion, by the exceeding greatness of his power, as he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, actually worketh faith and repentance in us, gives them unto us, bestows them on us; so that they are mere effects of his grace in us. And his working in us infallibly produceth the effect intended, because it is actual faith that he works, and not only a power to believe, which we may either put forth and make use of or suffer to be fruitless, according to the pleasure of our own wills.

Secondly, As God giveth and worketh in us faith and repentance, so the *way* whereby he doth it, or the *manner* how he is said to effect them in us, makes it evident that he doth it by a power *infallibly efficacious*, and which the will of man doth never resist; for this way is such as that he thereby takes away all repugnancy, all resistance, all opposition, every thing that lieth in the way of the effect intended: Deut. xxx. 6, “The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” A denial of the work here

intended is expressed chap. xxix. 4, “The LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.” What it is to have the heart circumcised the apostle declares, Col. ii. 11. It is the “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ,”—that is, by our conversion to God. It is the giving “an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear,”—that is, spiritual light and obedience,—by the removal of all obstacles and hinderances. This is the immediate work of the Spirit of God himself. No man ever circumcised his own heart. No man can say he began to do it by the power of his own will, and then God only helped him by his grace. As the act of outward circumcision on the body of a child was the act of another, and not of the child, who was only passive therein, but the effect was in the body of the child only, so is it in this spiritual circumcision,— it is the act of God, whereof our hearts are the subject. And whereas it is the blindness, obstinacy, and stubbornness in sin that is in us by nature, with the prejudices which possess our minds and affections, which hinder us from conversion unto God, by this circumcision they are taken away; for by it the “body of the sins of the flesh is put off.” And how should the heart resist the work of grace, when that whereby it should resist is effectually taken away?

Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” To which may be added, Jer. xxiv. 7, “I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: so they shall return unto me with their whole heart.” As also, Isa. xlv. 3-5, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the LORD’s,” etc. So Jer. xxxi. 33, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” I shall first inquire two things about these concurrent testimonies: —

1. Is it lawful for us, is it our duty, to *pray* that God would do and effect what he hath promised to do, and that both for ourselves and others?—[We may pray] for ourselves, that the work of our conversion may be renewed, carried on, and consummated in the way and by the means whereby it was begun, that so “he which hath begun the good work in us may perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ,” Phil. i. 6; for those who are converted and regenerated, and are persuaded on good and infallible grounds that so they are, may yet pray for those things which God promiseth to work in their first conversion. And this is because the *same work* is to be preserved and carried on in them by the same means, the same power, the same grace, wherewith it was begun. And the reason is, though this work, as it is merely the work of conversion, is immediately perfected and completed as to the being of it; yet as it is *the beginning of a work of sanctification*, it is continually to be renewed and gone over again, because of the remainder of sin in us and the imperfection of our grace. [And we may pray] for others, that it may be both begun and finished in them. And do we not in such prayers desire that God would really, powerfully, effectually, by the internal efficiency of his Spirit, take away all hinderances, oppositions, and repugnancy in our minds and wills, and actually collate upon us, give unto us, and work in us, a new principle of obedience, that we may assuredly love, fear, and trust in God always? or do we only desire that God would so help us as to leave us absolutely undetermined whether we will make use of his help or no? Did ever any pious soul couch such an intention in his supplications? He knows not how to pray who prays not that God would, by his own immediate power, work those things in him which he thus prayeth for. And unto this prayer, also, grace effectual is antecedently required. Wherefore, I inquire, —

2. Whether God doth *really effect* and work in any the things which he here promiseth that he will work and effect? If he do not, where is his truth and faithfulness? It is said that “he doth so, and will so do, provided that men do not refuse his tender of grace nor resist his operations, but comply with them.” But this yields no relief, —

For, (1.) What is it *not to refuse* the grace of conversion, but to comply with it? Is it not to believe, to obey,—to convert ourselves? So, then, God promiseth to convert us, on condition that we convert ourselves; to work faith in us, on condition that we do believe; and a new heart, on condition that we make our hearts new ourselves! To this are all the adversaries of the grace of God brought by those conditions which they feign of its efficacy to preserve the sovereignty of free-will in our conversion,—that is, unto plain and open contradictions, which have been charged sufficiently upon them by others, and from which they could never extricate themselves. (2.) Where God promiseth¹ thus to *work*, as these testimonies do witness, and doth not effectually do so, it must be either because he *cannot* or because he *will not*. If it be said that he doth it not because he *will not*, then this is that which is ascribed unto God,—that he promiseth indeed to take *away our stony heart*, and to give us a *new heart* with his law written in it, but he will not do so; which is to overthrow his faithfulness, and to make him a liar. If they say it is because he *cannot*, seeing that men oppose and resist the grace whereby he would work this effect, then where is the wisdom of promising to work that in us which he knew he *could not* effect without our compliance, and which he knew that we would not comply withal? But it will be said that God promiseth to work and effect these things, but in such a way as he hath appointed,—that is, by giving such supplies of grace as may enable us thereunto,—which if we refuse to make use of, the fault is merely our own. *Ans.* It is *the things themselves* that are promised, and not such a communication of means to effect them as may produce them or may not, as the consideration of the place will manifest; whereof observe, —

[1.] The *subject* spoken of in these promises is the *heart*. And the heart in the Scripture is taken for the whole rational soul, not absolutely, but as all the faculties of the soul are one common principle of all our moral operations. Hence it hath such properties assigned unto it as are peculiar to the mind or understanding, as to see, perceive, to be wise, and to understand; and, on the contrary, to be blind and foolish; and sometimes such as belong properly to the

will and affections, as to obey, to love, to fear, to trust in God. Wherefore, the principle of all our spiritual and moral operations is intended hereby.

[2.] There is a description of this heart, as it is in us *antecedent* unto the effectual working of the grace of God in us: it is said to be *stony*, —“The heart of stone.” It is not absolutely that it is said so to be, but with respect unto some certain end.. This end is declared to be our walking in the ways of God, or our fearing of him. Wherefore, our hearts by nature, as unto living to God or his fear, are a stone, or stony; and who hath not experience hereof from the remainders of it still abiding in them? And two things are included in this expression: — *1st*. An ineptitude unto any actings towards that end. Whatever else the heart can do of itself, in things natural or civil, in outward things, as to the end of living unto God it can of itself, without his grace, do no more than a stone can do of itself unto any end whereunto it may be applied. *2dly*. An obstinate, stubborn opposition unto all things conducing unto that end. Its hardness or obstinacy, in opposition to the pliability of a heart of flesh, is principally intended in this expression. And in this stubbornness of the heart consists all that repugnancy to the grace of God which is in us by nature, and hence all that resistance doth arise, which some say is always sufficient to render any operation of the Spirit of God by his grace fruitless.

[3.] This heart,—that is, this *impotency* and *enmity* which is in our natures unto conversion and spiritual obedience,—God says *he will take away*; that is, he will do so in them who are to be converted according to the purpose of his will, and whom he will turn unto himself. He doth not say that he will *endeavour* to take it away, nor that he will use *such or such means* for the taking of it away, but absolutely that he *will take it away*. He doth not say that he will persuade men to remove it or do it away, that he will aid and help them in their so doing, and that so far as that it shall *wholly* be their own fault if it be not done,—which no doubt it is where it is not removed; but positively that he himself will take it away. Wherefore,

the act of taking it away is the act of God by his grace, and not the act of our wills but as they are acted thereby; and that such an act as whose effect is necessary. It is impossible that God should take away the stony heart, and yet the stony heart not be taken away. What, therefore, God promiseth herein, in the removal of our natural corruption, is as unto the event *infallible*, and as to the manner of operation *irresistible*.

[4.] As what God *taketh from us* in the cure of our original disease, so what he *bestoweth on us* or works in us is here also expressed; and this is, a *new heart* and a *new spirit*: “I will give you a new heart.” And withal it is declared what benefit we do receive thereby: for those who have this new heart bestowed on them or wrought in them, they do actually, by virtue thereof, “fear the LORD and walk in his ways;” for so it is affirmed in the testimonies produced: and no more is required thereunto, as nothing less will effect it. There must, therefore, be in this new heart thus given us a principle of all holy obedience unto God: the creating of which principle in us is our conversion to him; for God doth convert us, and we are converted. And how is this new heart communicated unto us? “I will,” saith God, “give them a new heart.” “That is, it may be, he will do what is to be done on his part that they may have it; but we may refuse his assistance, and go without it.” No; saith he, “I will put a new spirit within them;” which expression is capable of no such limitation or condition. And to make it more plain yet, he affirms that he “will write his law in our hearts.” It is confessed that this is spoken with respect unto his writing of the law of old in the tables of stone. As, then, he wrote the letter of the law in the tables of stone, so that thereon and thereby they were actually engraven therein; so by writing the law, that is, the matter and substance of it, in our hearts, it is as really fixed therein as the letter of it was of old in the tables of stone. And this can be no otherwise but in *a principle of obedience* and love unto it, which is actually wrought of God in us. And the aids or assistances which some men grant that are left unto the power of our own wills to use or not to use, have no analogy with the writing of the law in tables of stone. And the end of the work of God described

is not a power to obey, which may be exerted or not; but it is actual obedience in conversion, and all the fruits of it. And if God do not in these promises declare a real efficiency of internal grace, taking away all repugnancy of nature unto conversion, curing its depravation actually and effectually, and communicating infallibly a principle of scriptural obedience, I know not in what words such a work may be expressed. And whatever is excepted as to the suspending of the efficacy of this work upon conditions in ourselves, it falls immediately into gross and sensible contradictions. An especial instance of this work we have, Acts xvi. 14.

A third argument is taken from the state and condition of men by nature, before described; for it is such as that no man can be delivered from it, but by that powerful, internal, effectual grace which we plead for, such as wherein the mind and will of man can act nothing in or towards conversion to God but as they are acted by grace. The reason why some despise, some oppose, some deride the work of the Spirit of God in our regeneration or conversion, or fancy it to be only an outward ceremony, or a moral change of life and conversation, is, their ignorance of the corrupted and depraved estate of the souls of men, in their minds, wills, and affections, by nature; for if it be such as we have described,—that is, such as in the Scripture it is represented to be,—they cannot be so brutish as once to imagine that it may be cured, or that men may be delivered from it, without any other aid but that of those rational considerations which some would have to be the only means of our conversion to God. We shall, therefore, inquire what that grace is, and what it must be, whereby we are delivered from it: —

1. It is called a *vivification* or quickening. We are by nature “dead in trespasses and sins,” as hath been proved, and the nature of that death at large explained. In our deliverance from thence, we are said to be “quickened,” Eph. ii. 5. Though dead, we “hear the voice of the Son of God, and live,” John v. 25; being made “alive unto God through Jesus Christ,” Rom. vi. 11. Now, no such work can be wrought in us but by an effectual communication of a principle of

spiritual life; and nothing else will deliver us. Some think to evade the power of this argument by saying that “all these expressions are metaphorical, and arguings from them are but fulsome metaphors:” and it is well if the whole gospel be not a metaphor unto them. But if there be not an impotency in us by nature unto all acts of spiritual life, like that which is in a dead man unto the acts of life natural; if there be not an alike power of God required unto our deliverance from that condition, and the working in us a principle of spiritual obedience, as is required unto the raising of him that is dead,—they may as well say that the Scripture speaks not truly as that it speaks metaphorically. And that it is almighty power, the “exceeding greatness of God’s, power,” that is put forth and exercised herein; we have proved from Eph. i. 19, 20; Col. ii. 12, 13; 2 Thess. i. 11; 2 Pet. i. 3. And what do these men intend by this quickening, this raising us from the dead by the power of God? A persuasion of our minds by rational motives taken from the word, and the things contained in it! But was there ever heard such a monstrous expression, if there be nothing else in it? What could the holy writers intend by calling such a work as this by a “quickenings of them who were dead in trespasses and sins through the mighty power of God,” unless it were, by a noise of insignificant words, to draw us off from a right understanding of what is intended? And it is well if some are not of that mind.

2. The work itself wrought is our *regeneration*. I have proved before that this consists in a new, spiritual, supernatural, vital principle or habit of grace, infused into the soul, the mind, will, and affections, by the power of the Holy Spirit, disposing and enabling them in whom it is unto spiritual, supernatural, vital acts of faith and obedience. Some men seem to be inclined to deny all habits of grace. And on such a supposition, a man is no longer a believer than he is in the actual exercise of faith; for there is nothing in him from whence he should be so denominated. But this would plainly overthrow the covenant of God, and all the grace of it. Others expressly deny all gracious, supernatural, infused habits, though they may grant such as are or may be acquired by the frequent acts of those graces or virtues whereof they are the habits. But the Scripture giveth us

another description of this work of regeneration, for it consists in the renovation of the image of God in us: Eph. iv. 23, 24, “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” That Adam in innocency had a supernatural ability of living unto God habitually residing in him is generally acknowledged; and although it were easy for us to prove that whereas he was made for a super-natural end,—namely, to live to God, and to come to the enjoyment of him,—it was utterly impossible that he should answer it or comply with it by the mere strength of his natural faculties, had they not been endued with a supernatural ability, which, with respect unto that end, was created with them and in them, yet we will not contend about terms. Let it be granted that he was created in the image of God, and that he had an ability to fulfil all God’s commands, and that in himself, and no more shall be desired. This was lost by the fall. When this is by any denied, it shall be proved. In our regeneration, there is a renovation of this image of God in us: “Renewed in the spirit of your mind.” And it is renewed in us by a creating act of almighty power: “Which after God,” or according to his likeness, “is created in righteousness and true holiness.” There is, therefore, in it an implantation of a new principle of spiritual life, of a life unto God in repentance, faith, and obedience, or universal holiness, according to gospel truth, or the truth which came by Jesus Christ, John i. 17. And the effect of this work is called “spirit:” John iii. 6, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” It is the Spirit of God of whom we are born; that is, our new life is wrought in us by his efficiency. And that which in us is so born of him is spirit; not the natural faculties of our souls,—they are once created, once born, and no more,—but a new principle of spiritual obedience, whereby we live unto God. And this is the product of the internal immediate efficiency of grace.

This will the better appear if we consider the faculties of the soul distinctly, and what is the especial work of the Holy Spirit upon them in our regeneration or conversion to God:— (1.) The leading, conducting faculty of the soul is the *mind* or understanding. Now, this is corrupted and vitiated by the fall; and how it continues

depraved in the state of nature hath been declared before. The sum is, that it is not able to discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner; for it is possessed with spiritual blindness or darkness, and is filled with enmity against God and his law, esteeming the things of the gospel to be foolishness; because it is alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in it. We must, therefore, inquire what is the work of the Holy Spirit on our minds in turning of us to God, whereby this depravation is removed and this vicious state cured, whereby we come to see and discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, that we may savingly know God and his mind as revealed in and by Jesus Christ. And this is several ways declared in the Scripture: —

[1.] He is said to give us an understanding: 1 John v. 20, “The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true;” which he doth by his Spirit. Man by sin is become like the “beasts that perish, which have no understanding,” Ps. xlix. 12, 20. Men have not lost their natural intellective faculty or reason absolutely. It is continued unto them, with the free though impaired use of it, in things natural and civil. And it hath an advance in sin; men are “wise to do evil:” but it is lost as to the especial use of it in the saving knowledge of God and his will, “To do good they have no knowledge,” Jer. iv. 22; for naturally, “there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God,” Rom. iii. 11. It is corrupted not so much in the root and principle of its actings, as with respect unto their proper object, term, and end. Wherefore, although this giving of an understanding be not the creating in us anew of that natural faculty, yet it is that gracious work in it without which that faculty in us, as depraved, will no more enable us to know God savingly than if we had none at all. The grace, therefore, here asserted in the giving of an understanding is the causing of our natural understandings to understand savingly. This David prays for: Ps. cxix. 34, “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law.” The whole work is expressed by the apostle, Eph. i. 17, 18, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of

your understanding being opened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling,” etc. That “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” is the Spirit of God working those effects in us, we have before evinced. And it is plain that the “revelation” here intended is *subjective*, in enabling us to apprehend what is revealed, and not *objective*, in new revelations, which the apostle prayed not that they might receive. And this is farther evidenced by the ensuing description of it: “The eyes of your understanding being opened.” There is an eye in the understanding of man,—that is, the natural power and ability that is in it to discern spiritual things. But this eye is sometimes said to be “blind,” sometimes to be “darkness,” sometimes to be “shut” or closed; and nothing but the impotency of our minds to know God savingly, or discern things spiritually when proposed unto us, can be intended thereby. It is the work of the Spirit of grace to open this eye, Luke iv. 18; Acts xxvi. 18; and this is by the powerful, effectual removal of that depravation of our minds, with all its effects, which we before described. And how are we made partakers thereof? It is of the gift of God, freely and effectually working it: for, first, he “giveth us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” to that end; and, secondly, works the thing itself in us. He “giveth us a heart to know him,” Jer. xxiv. 7, without which we cannot so do, or he would not himself undertake to work it in us for that end. There is, therefore, an effectual, powerful, creating act of the Holy Spirit put forth in the minds of men in their conversion unto God, enabling them spiritually to discern Spiritual things; wherein the seed and substance of divine faith is contained.

[2.] This is called the *renovation of our minds*: “Renewed in the spirit of your mind,” Eph. iv. 23; which is the same with being “renewed in knowledge,” Col. iii. 10. And this renovation of our minds hath in it a transforming power to change the whole soul into an obediential frame towards God, Rom. xii. 2. And the work of renewing our minds is peculiarly ascribed unto the Holy Spirit: Tit. iii. 5, “The renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Some men seem to fancy, yea, do declare, that there is no such depravation in or of the mind of man, but that he is able, by the use of his reason, to apprehend,

receive, and discern those truths of the gospel which are objectively proposed unto it. But of the use of reason in these matters, and its ability to discern and judge of the sense of propositions and force of inferences in things of religion, we shall treat afterward. At present, I only inquire whether men unregenerate be of themselves able spiritually to discern spiritual things when they are proposed unto them in the dispensation of the gospel, so as their knowledge may be saving in and unto themselves, and acceptable unto God in Christ, and that without any especial, internal, effectual work of the Holy Spirit of grace in them and upon them? If they say they are, as they plainly plead them to be, and will not content themselves with an ascription unto them of that notional, doctrinal knowledge which none deny them to be capable of, I desire to know to what purpose are they said to be “renewed by the Holy Ghost?” to what purpose are all those gracious actings of God in them before recounted? He that shall consider what, on the one band, the Scripture teacheth us concerning the blindness, darkness, impotency of our minds, with respect unto spiritual things, when proposed unto us, as in the state of nature; and, on the other, what it affirms concerning the work of the Holy Ghost in their renovation and change, in giving them new power, new ability, a new, active understanding,—will not be much moved with the groundless, confident, unproved dictates of some concerning the power of reason in itself to apprehend and discern religious things, so far as we are required in a way of duty. This is all one as if they should say, that if the sun shine clear and bright, every blind man is able to see.

God herein is said to communicate a *light* unto our minds, and that so as that we shall see by it, or perceive by it, the things proposed unto us in the gospel usefully and savingly: 2 Cor. iv. 6, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Did God no otherwise work on the minds of men but by an *external, objective proposal* of truth unto them, to what purpose doth the apostle mention the almighty act of creating power which he put forth and exercised in the first production of

natural light out of darkness? What allusion is there between that work and the doctrinal proposal of truth to the minds of men? It is, therefore, a confidence not to be contended with, if any will deny that the act of God in *the spiritual illumination of our minds* be of the same nature, as to efficacy and efficiency, with that whereby he created light at the beginning of all things. And because the effect produced in us is called “light,” the act itself is described by “shining:” “God hath shined in our hearts,”—that is, our minds. So he conveys light unto them by an act of omnipotent efficiency. And as that which is so wrought in our minds is called “light,” so the apostle, leaving his metaphor, plainly declares what he intends thereby,—namely, the actual “knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;” that is, as God is revealed in Christ by the gospel, as he declares, verse 4. Having, therefore, first, compared the mind of man by nature, with respect unto a power of discerning spiritual things, to the state of all things under darkness before the creation of light; and, secondly, the powerful working of God in illumination unto the act of his omnipotency in the production or creation of light natural,—he ascribes our ability to know, and our actual knowledge of God in Christ, unto his real efficiency and operation. And these things in part direct us towards an apprehension of that work of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of men in their conversion unto God whereby their depravation is cured, and without which it will not so be. By this means, and no otherwise, do we who were “darkness” become “light in the Lord,” or come to know God in Christ savingly, looking into and discerning spiritual things with a proper intuitive sight, whereby all the other faculties of our souls are guided and influenced unto the obedience of faith.

(2.) It is principally with respect unto the *will* and its *depravation* by nature that we are said to be *dead in sin*. And herein is seated that peculiar obstinacy, whence it is that no unregenerate person doth or can answer his own convictions, or walk up unto his light in obedience. For the will may be considered two ways:— first, As a rational, vital faculty of our souls; secondly, As a free principle, freedom being of its essence or nature. This, therefore, in our

conversion to God, is renewed by the Holy Ghost, and that by an effectual implantation in it of a principle of spiritual life and holiness in the room of that original righteousness which it lost by the fall. That he doth so is proved by all the testimonies before insisted on:— First, This is its renovation as it is a rational, vital faculty; and of this vivification see before. Secondly, As it is a free principle, it is determined unto its acts in this case by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, without the least impeachment of its liberty or freedom; as hath been declared. And that this is so might be fully evinced, as by others so by the ensuing arguments; for if the Holy Ghost do not work immediately and effectually upon the will, producing and creating in it a principle of faith and obedience, infallibly determining it in its free acts, then is all the glory of our conversion to be ascribed unto ourselves, and we make ourselves therein, by the obediencial actings of our own free will, to differ from others who do not so comply with the grace of God; which is denied by the apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 7. Neither can any purpose of God concerning the conversion of any one soul be certain and determinate, seeing after he hath done all that is to be done, or can be done towards it, the will, remaining undetermined, may not be converted, contrary to those testimonies of our Saviour, Matt. xi. 25, 26; John vi. 37; Rom. viii. 29. Neither can there be an original infallibility in the promises of God made to Jesus Christ concerning the multitudes that should believe in him, seeing it is possible no one may so do, if it depend on the undetermined liberty of their wills whether they will or no. And then, also, must salvation of necessity be “of him that willeth, and of him that runneth,” and not “of God, that showeth mercy on whom he will have mercy,” contrary to the apostle, Rom. ix. 15, 16. And the whole efficacy of the grace of God is made thereby to depend on the wills of men; which is not consistent with our being the “workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” Eph. ii. 10. Nor, on this supposition, do men know what they pray for, when they pray for their own or other men’s conversion to God; as hath been before declared. There is, therefore, necessary such a work of the Holy Spirit upon our wills as may cure and take away the depravation of them before described, freeing us from the state of spiritual death, causing

us to live unto God, and determining them in and unto the acts of faith and obedience. And this he doth whilst and as he makes us new creatures, quickens us who are dead in trespasses and sins, gives us a new heart and puts a new spirit within us, writes his law in our hearts, that we may do the mind of God and walk in his ways, worketh in us to will and to do, making them who were unwilling and obstinate to become willing and obedient, and that freely and of choice.

(3.) In like manner a prevailing *love* is implanted upon the affections by the Spirit of grace, causing the soul with delight and complacency to cleave to God and his ways. This removes and takes away the enmity before described, with the effects of it: Deut. xxx. 6, “The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” This circumcision of the heart consists in the “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,” as the apostle speaks, Col. ii. 11. He “crucifies the flesh, with the affections and lusts” thereof. Some men are inclined to think that all the depravation of our nature consists in that of the sensitive part of the soul, or our affections; the vanity and folly of which opinion hath been before discovered. Yet it is not denied but that *the affections are signally depraved*, so that by them principally the mind and will do act those lusts that are peculiarly seated in them, or by them do act according to their perverse and corrupt inclinations, Gal. v. 24; James i. 14, 15. Wherefore, in the circumcision of our hearts, wherein the flesh, with the lusts, affections, and deeds thereof, is crucified by the Spirit, he takes from them their enmity, carnal prejudices, and depraved inclinations, really though not absolutely and perfectly; and instead of them he fills us with *holy spiritual love, joy, fear, and delight*, not changing the being of our affections, but sanctifying and guiding them by the principle of saving light and knowledge before described, and uniting them unto their proper object in a due manner.

From what hath been spoken in this third argument, it is evident that the Holy Spirit, designing the regeneration or conversion of the souls of men, worketh therein effectually, powerfully, and irresistibly; which was proposed unto confirmation.

From the whole it appears that our *regeneration* is a work of the Spirit of God, and that not any *act of our own*, which is only so, is intended thereby. I say it is not *so our own* as by outward helps and assistance to be educed out of the principles of our natures. And herein is the Scripture express; for, mentioning this work directly with respect unto its cause, and the manner of its operation in the effecting of it, it assigns it positively unto God or his Spirit 1 Pet. i. 3, "God, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again." James i. 18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." John iii. 5, 6, 8, "Born of the Spirit." 1 John iii. 9, "Born of God." And, on the other hand, it excludes the will of man from any *active interest* herein; I mean, as to the first beginning of it: 1 Pet. i. 23, "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." John i. 13, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." See Matt. xvi. 17; Tit. iii. 5; Eph. ii. 9, 10. It is, therefore, incumbent on them who plead for the active interest of the will of man in regeneration to produce some testimonies of Scripture where it is assigned unto it, as the effect unto its proper cause. Where is it said that a man is born again or begotten anew by himself? And if it be granted,—as it must be so, unless violence be offered not only to the Scripture but to reason and common sense,—that whatever be our duty and power herein, yet these expressions must denote an act of God, and not ours, the substance of what we contend for is granted, as we shall be ready at any time to demonstrate. It is true, God doth command us to circumcise our hearts and to make them new: but he doth therein declare our *duty*, not our *power*; for himself promiseth to work in us what he requireth of us. And that power which we have and do exercise in the progress of this work, in sanctification and holiness, proceeds from the *infused principle*

which we receive in our regeneration; for all which ends we ought to pray for Him, according to the example of holy men of old.

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The Necessity of Word and Spirit in Regeneration

by John Calvin

Commenting on Acts 16:14-15, “14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”¹ Now when in fact only one hears attentively and effectively, could it not have appeared that the way was blocked for Christ to make an entry? But afterwards from that frail shoot a famous church sprang up, whose praises Paul sings in splendid terms. Yet it is possible that Lydia had some companions, of whom no mention is made, because she herself far surpassed them. Yet Luke does not attribute the cause for this one woman having shown herself docile, to the fact that she was sharperwitted than the others, or that she had some preparation by herself, but says that the Lord opened her heart, so that she gave heed to Paul’s words. He had just praised her piety; and yet he shows that she could not understand the teaching of the Gospel without the illumination of the Spirit. Accordingly we see that not only faith, but also all understanding of spiritual things, is a special gift of God, and that ministers do not accomplish anything by speaking, unless the inward calling of God is added at the same time.

By the word heart Scripture sometimes means the mind, as when Moses says (Deut. 29:4), ‘until now the Lord has not given you a

heart to understand.’ So also in this verse Luke means not only that Lydia was moved by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to embrace the Gospel with a feeling of the heart, but that her mind was illuminated to understand. We may learn from this that such is the dullness, such the blindness of men, that in hearing they do not hear, or seeing they do not see, until God forms new ears and new eyes for them.

But we must note the expression that the heart of Lydia was opened so that she paid attention to the external voice of a teacher. For as preaching on its own is nothing else but a dead letter, so, on the other hand, we must beware lest a false imagination, or the semblance of secret illumination, leads us away from the Word upon which faith depends, and on which it rests. For in order to increase the grace

of the Spirit, many invent for themselves vague inspirations so that no use is left for the external Word. But the Scripture does not allow such a separation to be made, for it unites the ministry of men with the secret inspiration of the Spirit. If the mind of Lydia had not been opened, the preaching of Paul would have been mere words; yet God inspires her not only with the mere revelations but with reverence for His Word, so that the voice of a man, which otherwise would have vanished into thin air, penetrates a mind that has received the gift of heavenly light.

Therefore let us hear no more of the fanatics who make the excuse of the Spirit to reject external teaching. For we must preserve the balance which Luke established here, that we obtain nothing from the hearing of the Word alone, without the grace of the Spirit, and that the Spirit is conferred on us not that He may produce contempt of the Word, but rather to instill confidence in it in our minds and write it on our hearts.

1 From Calvin, John. *The Acts of the Apostles*. 2 vols. Trans. by John W. Fraser and W.J.G. McDonald. Ed. by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965.

Of Regeneration

by John Gill

from A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, Book VI, Chapter XI.

Regeneration follows adoption, being the evidence of it; regeneration describes the persons who have received the power to become the sons of God, Joh 1:12,13 and though these are distinct things, yet they are closely connected together; where the one is, the other is also, as to enjoyment and experience; and they bear a similarity to each other. Regeneration may be considered either more largely, and then it includes with it effectual calling, conversion, and sanctification: or more strictly, and then it designs the first principle of grace infused into the soul; which makes it a fit object of the effectual calling, a proper subject of conversion, and is the source and spring of that holiness which is gradually carried on in sanctification, and perfected in heaven. Concerning regeneration, the following things may be enquired into:

1. What regeneration is, or what is meant by it, the nature of it; which is so mysterious, unknown, and unaccountable to a natural man, as it was to Nicodemus, though a master in Israel; now it may be the better understood by observing the phrases and terms by which it is expressed.

- 1a. It is expressed by being "born again", which regeneration properly signifies; see Joh 3:3,7 1Pe 1:3,23 and this supposes a prior birth, a first birth, to which regeneration is the second; and which may receive some light by observing the contrast between the two births, they being the reverse of each other: the first birth is of sinful parents, and in their image; the second birth is of God, and in his image; the first birth is of corruptible, the second birth of

incorruptible seed; the first birth is in sin, the second birth is in holiness and righteousness; by the first birth men are polluted and unclean, by the second birth they become holy and commence to be saints; the first birth is of the flesh and is carnal, the second birth is of the Spirit and is spiritual, and makes men spiritual men; by the first birth men are foolish and unwise, being born like a wild ass's colt; by the second birth they become knowing and wise unto salvation: by the first birth they are slaves to sin and the lusts of the flesh, are home born slaves; by the second birth they become Christ's free men: from their first birth they are transgressors, and go on in a course of sin, till stopped by grace; in the second birth they cease to commit sin, to go on in a course of sinning, but live a life of holiness, yea he that is born of God cannot sin; by the first birth men are children of wrath, and under tokens of divine displeasure; at the second birth they appear to be the objects of the love of God; regeneration being the fruit and effect of it, and gives evidence of it; a time of life is a time of open love.

1b. It is called a being "born from above", for so the phrase in Joh 3:3,7 may be rendered; the apostle James says in general, that "every good and every perfect gift is from above"; and regeneration being such a gift, must be from above; and indeed he particularly instances in it, for it follows, "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth", Jas 1:17,18. The author of this birth is from above; those that are born again are born of God their Father who is in heaven; the grace given in regeneration is from above, Joh 3:27 truth in the inward part, and wisdom in the hidden part, or the grace of God in the heart produced in regeneration, is that "wisdom that is from above", Jas 3:17 such that are born again, as they are of high and noble birth, they are partakers of the heavenly and high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and shall most certainly possess it, 1Pe 1:3,4, Heb 3:1, Php 3:14.

1c. It is commonly called the new birth, and with great propriety; since the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, are joined together as meaning the same thing; and what is

produced in regeneration is called the new creature, and the new man; and those who are born again are said to be new born babes, Tit 3:5 2Co 5:17 Eph 4:24 1Pe 2:2 it is a new man, in distinction from the old man, or the principle of corrupt nature, which is as old as a man is; but the principle of grace infused in regeneration is quite new; it is something "de novo", anew implanted in the heart, which never was before in human nature, no not in Adam in his state of innocence; it is not a working upon the old principles of nature, nor a working them up to an higher pitch: it is not an improvement of them, nor a repairing of the broken, ruined image of God in man. But it is altogether a new work; it is called a creature, being a work of almighty power; and a new creature, and a new man, consisting of various parts, and these all new: there are in it a "new heart", and a "new spirit", a new understanding, to know and understand things, never known nor understood before: a new heart, to know God; not as the God of nature and providence; but as the God of Grace, God in Christ, God in a Mediator; the love of God in him, the covenant of grace, and the blessings of it made with him; Christ, and the fulness of grace in him, pardon of sin through his blood, justification by his righteousness, atonement by his sacrifice, and acceptance with God through him, and complete salvation by him; things which Adam knew nothing of in Paradise: in this new heart are new desires after these objects, to know more of them, new affections, which are placed upon them, new delights in them, and new joys, which arise from them, Eze 36:26 1Jo 5:20 1Co 2:9. In this new man, are "new eyes" to see with; to some God does not give eyes to see divine and spiritual things; but to regenerated ones he does; they have a seeing eye, made by the Lord, De 29:4 Pr 20:12 by which they see their lost state and condition by nature, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, their own ability to make atonement by anything that can be done by them; the insufficiency of their own righteousness; their impotence to every good work, and want of strength to help themselves out of the state and condition in which they are, and the need they are in of the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, and of salvation by him. They have the eye of faith, by which they behold the glories of Christ's Person, the fulness of his grace, the excellency of his

righteousness, the virtue of his blood and sacrifice, and the suitableness and completeness of his salvation: and regeneration, in this view of it, is no other than spiritual light in the understanding. Moreover, in the new man are new ears to hear with; all have not ears to hear; some have, and they have them from the Lord, and blessed are they! Re 2:11 De 29:4 Pr 20:12 Mt 13:16, 17 they hear the word in a manner they never heard before; they hear it as to understand it, and receive the love of it; so as to distinguish the voice of Christ in it, from the voice of a stranger; so as to feel it work effectually in them, and become the power of God unto salvation to them; they know the joyful sound, and rejoice to hear it. The new man has also "new hands", to handle and to work with; the hand of faith, to receive Christ as the Saviour and Redeemer, to lay hold on him for life and salvation, to embrace him, hold him fast, and not let him go; to handle him, the Word of life, and receive from him grace for grace: and they have hands to work with, and do work from better principles, and to better purposes than before. And they have "new feet" to walk with, to flee to Christ, the City of refuge; to walk by faith in him; and to walk on in him, as they have received him; to run with cheerfulness the ways of his commandments; to follow hard after him, and to follow on to know him; and even to run, and not be weary, and to walk, and not faint.

1d. Regeneration is expressed by being quickened. As there is a quickening time in natural generation; so there is in regeneration; "You hath he quickened", Eph 2:1. Previous to regeneration, men are dead while they live; though corporally alive, are morally dead, dead in a moral sense, as to spiritual things, in all the powers and faculties of their souls; they have no more knowledge of them, affection for them, will to them, or power to perform them, than a dead man has with respect to things natural; but in regeneration, a principle of spiritual life is infused; that is a time of life when the Lord speaks life into them, and produces it in them. Christ is the resurrection and life unto them, or raises them from a death of sin to a life of grace; and the spirit of life, from Christ, enters into them. Regeneration is a passing from death to life; it is a principle of spiritual life implanted

in the heart; in consequence of which, a man breathes, in a spiritual sense; where there is breath, there is life. God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he became a living soul, or a living person, and breathed again: so the Spirit of God breathes on dry bones, and they live, and breathe again. Prayer is the spiritual breath of a regenerate man; "Behold, he prayeth!" is observed of Saul when regenerated; who, just before, had been breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ. A regenerate man breathes in prayer to God, and pants after him; after more knowledge of him in Christ, after communion with him, after the discoveries of his love; particularly after pardoning grace and mercy: and sometimes these breathings and desires are only expressed by sighs and groans, yet these are a sign of life; if a man groans, it is plain he is alive. There are, in a regenerated man, which shows that he is made alive, cravings after spiritual food: as soon as an infant is born, it shows motions for its mother's milk, after the breast: so newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. They have their spiritual senses exercised about spiritual objects; they have what answer to the senses in animal life, their seeing and hearing, as before observed, and also their feeling; they feel the burden of sin on their consciences; the workings of the Spirit of God in their hearts; as well as handle Christ, the Word of life; which makes it a plain case that they are alive; a dead man feels nothing. They have a spiritual taste, a gust for spiritual things; the word of Christ is sweeter to their taste than honey, or the honeycomb; they sit under his shadow with pleasure, and his fruit, the blessings of his grace, are sweet unto their taste; they taste that the Lord is gracious, and invite others to taste and see also how good he is; they savour the things which be of God, and not of men; Christ, and his grace, are savoury to them; his robe of righteousness, and garments of salvation, smell delightfully as myrrh, &c. So 1:3 Ps 45:8 and these spiritual senses, and the exercise of them in them, show them to be alive, or born again; such persons live a life of faith; they live by faith; not upon it, but on Christ, the object of it; and they grow up into him their Head, from whom they receive nourishment; and so increase with the increase of God; which is an evidence of life. In a word, they

live a new and another life than they did before; not to themselves, nor to the lusts of men; but to God, and to Christ who died for them, and rose again; they walk in newness of life.

1e. Regeneration is signified by "Christ being formed in the heart", Ga 4:19 his image is stamped in regeneration; not the image of the first Adam, but of the second Adam; for the new man is after the image of him who has anew created it, which is the image of Christ; to be conformed to which God's elect are predestinated, and which takes place in regeneration, Ro 8:29 Col 3:10. The graces of Christ, as faith, and hope, and love, are wrought in the hearts of regenerate persons, and soon appear there; yea, Christ himself lives in them; "Not I", says the apostle, "but Christ lives in me"; he dwells by faith there; Christ, and the believer, mutually dwell in each other.

1f. Regeneration is said to be "a partaking of the divine nature", 2Pe 1:4 not of the nature of God essentially considered: a creature cannot partake of the divine essence, or have that communicated to it; this would be to deify men: the divine perfections, many of them, are utterly incommunicable, as eternity, immensity, &c. nor of the divine nature, or of it in such sense as Christ is a partaker of it, by the personal, or hypostatical union of the two natures in him; so that the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him. But in regeneration there is that wrought in the soul, which bears a resemblance to the divine nature, in spirituality, holiness, goodness, kindness, &c. and therefore is so called.

1g. There are also several terms, or words, by which the grace of regeneration is expressed; as by grace itself; not as that signifies the love and favour of God towards his people, or the blessings of grace bestowed upon them; but internal grace, the work of grace in the heart; and which consists of the various graces of the Spirit implanted there; as faith, hope, and love: such as are begotten again, are begotten to a lively hope, and have it, and believe in the Son of God; and love him that begot, and him that is begotten, 1Pe 1:3 1Jo 5:1. It is called "spirit", Joh 3:6 from its author, the Spirit of God; and

from its seat, the spirit of man; and from its nature, which is spiritual, and denominates men spiritual men. It is also signified by "seed", 1Jo 3:9. "Whosoever is born of God----his seed remaineth in him"; which is the principle of grace infused in regeneration; and as seed contains in it virtually, all that after proceeds from it, the blade, stalk, ear, and full corn in the ear; so the first principle of grace implanted in the heart, seminally contains all the grace which afterwards appears, and all the fruits, effects, acts, and exercises of it.

2. The springs and causes of regeneration; efficient, moving, meritorious, and instrumental.

2a. First, The efficient cause of it; who is not man, but God.

2a1. First, Not man; he cannot regenerate himself; his case, and the nature of the thing itself, show it; and it is indeed denied of him.

2a1a. The case in which men before regeneration are, plainly shows that it is not, and cannot be of themselves; they are quite ignorant of the thing itself. Regeneration is one, and a principal one, of the things of the Spirit of God, and which a natural man cannot discern and understand; let him have what share he may of natural knowledge; as Nicodemus, a master in Israel, and yet said, how can these things be? and a man cannot be the author of that of which he has no knowledge: nor do men, previous to regeneration, see any need of it; as those who think themselves whole, see no need of a physician, nor make use of any; and who reckon themselves rich, and stand in need of nothing; as not of righteousness, so not of repentance; and if not of repentance, then not of regeneration. And whatsoever notion they may have of it, from what others say concerning it; they have no inclination, nor desire, nor will to it, till God works in them both to will and to do; the bias of their minds is another way; yea, their carnal minds are enmity to it; they mock at it, and count it all dream and enthusiasm. And had they any disposition of mind to it, which they have not, they have no power to effect it; they can do nothing, not the least thing of a spiritual kind; and much

less perform such a work as this: this is not by might or power of men, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts; to all which may be added, and which makes it impracticable, is, that men are dead in trespasses and sins; and can no more quicken themselves than a dead man can; as soon might Lazarus have raised himself from the dead, and the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision, have quickened themselves and lived.

2a1b. The nature of the work clearly shows that it is not in the power of men to do it; it is represented as a creation; it is called a new creature, the workmanship of God created in Christ, the new man after God, created in righteousness. Now creation is a work of almighty Power; a creature cannot create the least thing, not a fly, as soon might he create a world; and as soon may a man create a world out of nothing, as create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him. It is spoken of as a "resurrection" from the dead; and as soon might dead bodies quicken themselves, as men, dead in sin, raise themselves up to a spiritual life; this requires a power equal to that which raised Christ from the dead; and is done by the same. Its very name, "regeneration", shows the nature of it; and clearly suggests, that it is out of the power of man to effect it: as men contribute nothing to their first birth, so neither to the second; as no man generates himself, so neither can he regenerate himself; as an infant is passive in its natural generation, and has no concern in it; so passive is a man in his spiritual generation, and is no more assisting in it. It is an "implantation" of that grace in the hearts of men which was not there before; faith is one part of it, said to be "not of ourselves", but the gift of God; and hope is another, without which men are, while in a state of unregeneracy; and love is of such a nature, that if a man would give all he has for it, it would utterly be contemned; it is a maxim that will hold, "nil dat quod non habet", nothing can give that which it has not: a man destitute of grace, cannot give grace, neither to himself nor to another. This work lies in taking away "the heart of stone", and giving an "heart of flesh"; even "a new heart" and "a new spirit": and none can do this but he who sits upon the throne, and says, "Behold, I make all things new". To

say no more, it is a "transforming" of men by the renewing of their minds, making them other men than they were before, as Saul was, and more so; the change of an Ethiopian's skin, and of the leopard's spots, is not greater, nor so great, as the change of a man's heart and nature; and which, indeed, is not a change of the old man, or corruption of nature, which remains the same; but the production of the new man, or of a new principle, which was not before.

2a1c. Regeneration is expressly denied to be of men; it is said to be "not of blood", the blood of circumcision, "which availeth not anything; but a new creature" is of avail, when that is not; nor of the blood of ancestors, of the best of men, the most holy and most eminent for grace; the blood of such may run in the veins of men, and yet they be destitute of regenerating grace; as was the case of the Jews, of multitudes of them, who boasted of being of Abraham's seed, and of his blood: none need value themselves upon their blood on any account, and much less on a religious one; since all nations of the earth are made of one man's blood, and that is tainted with sin, and conveys corruption; sin is propagated that way, but not grace: nor are men born "of the will of the flesh", which is carnal and corrupt; impotent to that which is good, and enmity to it: regeneration is not of him that willeth; God, of his own will, begets men again, and not of theirs: nor are they born of "the will of men", of the greatest and best of men, who are regenerated persons themselves; these, of their will, cannot convey regenerating grace to others; if they could, a good master would regenerate every servant in his family; a good parent would regenerate every child of his; and a minister of the gospel would regenerate all that sit under his ministry; they can only pray and use the means; God only can do the work. Wherefore,

2a2. Secondly, the efficient cause of regeneration is God only; hence we so often read, "which were born of God", and "whosoever and whatsoever is born of God", Joh 1:13 1Jo 3:9 1Jo 5:1,4 and this is true of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, who have each a concern in regeneration.

2a2a. God the Father, who is the Father of Christ; he as such begets men again according to his abundant mercy, 1Pe 1:3 and as the Father of lights, of his own sovereign will and pleasure, regenerates with the word of truth; and as light was one of the first things in the old creation, so in the new creation, or regeneration, light is the first thing sprung in the heart by the Father and fountain of light, Jas 1:17,18 and as the Father of men by adoption he regenerates; it is of him they are born again, who is their covenant God and Father in Christ; he has chose them unto holiness, of which regeneration is the root, seed, and principle; he has predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son, which is done in regeneration; and it is by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheds abundantly through Christ the Saviour, that he saves his elect ones.

2a2b. God the Son has also a concern in regeneration, and so great a concern, that they who am born again are said to be "born of him", that is, Christ; for no other is spoken of in the context, 1Jo 2:29 he is the "resurrection and the life"; the author of the spiritual resurrection to a spiritual life, which is no other than regeneration; he quickens whom he will, as the Father does; and it is through his powerful voice in the gospel, that the dead in sin hear and live; it is his Spirit which is sent down into the hearts of his people, as to bear witness to their adoption, so to regenerate them; his grace is given to them, yea he himself is formed in them; his image is stamped upon them; and it is by virtue of his resurrection that "they are begotten" to a lively hope of the heavenly inheritance, Joh 11:25 5:21,25 Ga 4:6,19 1Pe 1:3,4.

2a2c. The Holy Spirit of God is the author of regeneration, and to him it is ascribed by our Lord; "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit", Joh 3:5 by "water", is not meant the ordinance of water baptism, that is never expressed by water only, without some other word with it in the text or context which determines the sense; nor is regeneration by it; Simon Magus was baptized, but not regenerated: regeneration ought to precede baptism; faith and repentance, which

are graces given in regeneration, are required previous to baptism; nor is water baptism absolutely necessary to salvation; whereas without regeneration no man can neither see nor enter into the kingdom of heaven; but the grace of the Spirit is meant by water, so called from its cleansing and purifying use, as it has to do with the blood of Jesus, hence called the washing of regeneration; of this grace the Spirit is the author, whence it bears his name, is called "Spirit"; it is the renewing of the Holy Ghost, or the new creature is his workmanship; quickening grace is from him; it is the Spirit that quickens and gives life, and frees from the law of sin and death, Tit 3:5 Joh 3:6 6:63.

2b. Secondly, The impulsive, or moving cause, is the free grace, love and mercy of God; "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us", Eph 2:4, 5. Regeneration, as it is a time of life when men are quickened, it is a time of love, of open love; it springs from love, which moves mercy to exert itself in this way; it is "according to his abundant mercy God hath begotten us again unto a lively hope", 1Pe 1:3 and this was sovereign grace and mercy, not excited by any motives or conditions in men, or by any preparatory works in them; what were there in the three thousand, some of whom had been concerned in the death of Christ, converted under Peter's sermon? what were in the jailor, who had just before used the apostles in a cruel manner? what were there in Saul, the blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious person, between these characters and his obtaining mercy? no, it is not according to the will and works, of men that they are regenerated, but God, "of his own will begat he us", Jas 1:18 his own sovereign will and pleasure; and this grace and mercy is abundant; it is richly and plentifully displayed; it is "exceeding abundant", it flows and overflows; there is a pleonasm, a redundancy of it, 1Ti 1:14 and to this, as a moving cause, regeneration is owing.

2c. Thirdly, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the virtual or procuring cause of it; there is a power or virtue in Christ's resurrection, which has an influence on many things; as on our

justification, for which he rose again, so on our regeneration; for men are said to be "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead", 1Pe 1:3 and which also may be considered as the exemplary cause of it; for as there is a planting together "in the likeness of his death, so in the likeness of his resurrection from the dead"; as Christ's resurrection was a declaration of his being the Son of God, so regeneration is an evidence of interest in the adoption of children; and as the resurrection of Christ was by the mighty power of God, so is the regeneration and quickening of a dead sinner; and as Christ's resurrection was his first step to his glorification, so is regeneration to seeing and entering into the kingdom of God.

2d. Fourthly, The instrumental cause of regeneration, if it may be so called, are the word of God, and the ministers of it; hence regenerate persons are said to be "born again by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever", 1Pe 1:23 and again, "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth", Jas 1:18 unless by the Word in these passages should be meant the Eternal Logos, or essential Word of God, Christ Jesus, since *logoj* is used in both places; though ministers of the gospel are not only represented as ministers and instruments by whom others believe, but as spiritual fathers; "though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ", says the apostle to the Corinthians, 1Co 4:15 "yet have ye not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel"; so he speaks of his son Onesimus, whom he had "begotten in his bonds", Phm 1:10 yet this instrumentality of the word in regeneration seems not so agreeable to the principle of grace implanted in the soul in regeneration, and to be understood with respect to that; since that is done by immediate infusion, and is represented as a creation; and now as God made no use of any instrument in the first and old creation, so neither does it seem so agreeable that he should use any in the new creation: wherefore this is rather to be understood of the exertion of the principle of grace, and the drawing it forth into act and exercise; which is excited and encouraged by the ministry of the word, by which it appears that a man is born again; so the three thousand first converts, and the jailor, were first regenerated, or had

the principle of grace wrought in their souls by the Spirit of God, and then were directed and encouraged by the ministry of the apostles to repent and believe in Christ: whereby it became manifest that they were born again. Though after all it seems plain, that the ministry of the word is the vehicle in which the Spirit of God conveys himself and his grace into the hearts of men; which is done when the word comes not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost; and works effectually, and is the power of God unto salvation; then faith comes by hearing, and ministers are instruments by whom, at least, men are encouraged to believe: "received ye the Spirit", says the apostle, "by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith": Ga 3:2 that is, by the preaching of the law, or by the preaching of the gospel? by the latter, no doubt.

3. The subjects of regeneration are next to be inquired into, or who they are God is pleased to bestow this grace upon. These are men, and not angels; good angels have no need of regeneration; they are holy angels, and continue in that state of holiness in which they were created, and are confirmed therein; they have no need of it to make them meet for heaven, they are there already; they are the angels of heaven, and always behold the face of our heavenly Father there: as for the evil angels, none of them ever had, nor never will have any share in regenerating grace; they believe indeed, but they have not the faith of regenerate ones, or that faith which worketh by love; they believe there is a God, but they do not, nor can they love him; they believe he is, and tremble at his wrath; they have no hope as regenerate ones have, but live in black despair, and ever will. They are men God regenerates, and not brutes, nor stocks nor stones; these are not subjects capable of regeneration; God could raise up children out of these, but it is not his way and work; they are rational creatures he thus operates upon, and he treats them as such in the ministry of his word; though he is represented as dealing otherwise by the adversaries of the grace of God: but though they are men, and men only, whom God regenerates, yet not all men; all men have not faith, and hope, and love; they are a kind of first fruits of his creatures, whom of his own will he begets with the word of truth;

they are such who are called out and separated from the rest of the world; they are such who are the peculiar objects of his love; for regeneration is the fruit and effect of love, and the evidence of it; they are such whom God has predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, in which image they are created in regeneration; those whom the apostle speaks of as "begotten again unto a lively hope, are first described as elect according to the foreknowledge of God", 1Pe 1:2,3 and they are such who are redeemed by Christ, for they that are chosen in him, have redemption through his blood; and those are quickened by his Spirit and grace, when dead in trespasses and sins, for such is their state and condition before they are born again; they are such who are the sons of God by adopting grace, who because they are sons the Spirit of God is sent into them, as to witness their adoption, so to regenerate them, which gives evidence of it; and thus they become openly the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Let it be further observed, that though the chief and principal seat of regeneration is the spirit or soul of man, yet it extends its influence to the body and the member's thereof; whereby they are restrained from the lusts of the flesh, as to yield a ready, constant, and universal obedience to them; or so as to "yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin"; but, on the contrary, are so under the power of the reigning principle of grace, implanted in them in regeneration, that they, "through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, and live", Ro 6:12,13 8:13.

4. The effects of regeneration, or the ends to be answered, and which are answered by it, and which show the importance and necessity of it.

4a. A principal effect of it; or, if you will, a concomitant of it, is a participation of every grace of the Spirit. Regenerate ones have not only the promise of life made to them, but they have the grace of life given them; they live a new life, and walk in newness of life: they partake of the grace of spiritual light; before, their understandings were darkened; but now they are enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of divine things; they were before,

darkness itself; but now are made light in the Lord. In regeneration is laid the beginning of sanctification, which is carried on till completed, without which no man shall see the Lord; for the new man is created in righteousness and true holiness; the principle of holiness is then formed, from whence holy actions spring. The grace of repentance then appears; the stony, hard, obdurate, and impenitent heart being taken away, and an heart of flesh, susceptible of divine impressions, being given; on which follow, a sense of sin, sorrow for it after a godly sort, and repentance unto life and unto salvation, which is not to be repented of: faith in Christ, which is not of a man's self, but the gift of God, and the operation of the Spirit of God, is now given and brought into exercise; which being an effect, is an evidence of regeneration; for "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ", and especially that believes in Christ, as his Saviour and Redeemer, "is born of God", 1Jo 5:1 and such have hope of eternal life by Christ; while unregenerate men are without hope, without a true, solid, and well grounded hope; but in regeneration, they are begotten to a "lively hope", and have it; a good hope, through grace, founded upon the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, which is of use to them both in life and death. Regenerated persons have their "hearts circumcised", which is but another phrase for regenerating grace, "to love the Lord their God with all their heart and soul", De 30:6 and though before, their carnal minds were enmity to God, and all that is good; now they love him, and all that belong to him, his word, worship, ordinances, and people; and by this it is known, that they "have passed from death to life", which is no other than regeneration, "because they love the brethren", 1Jo 3:14. In short, regenerate persons are partakers of all the fruits of the Spirit; of all other graces, besides those mentioned; as humility, patience, self-denial, and resignation to the will of God. And they are blessed with such measures of grace and spiritual strength, as to be able to resist sin and Satan, and to overcome the world, and every spiritual enemy; "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world", the god of it, the men in it, and the lusts thereof; "Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not", does not live in sin, nor is he overcome by it; "but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself" from Satan,

and his temptations, from being overcome with them; "and that wicked one toucheth him not": being clothed with the whole armour of God, which he has skill to wield; he keeps him off, and at bay, so that he cannot come in with him; he holds up the shield of faith to him, whereby he quenches all his fiery darts, 1Jo 5:4,18.

4b. Knowledge, and actual enjoyment of the several blessings of grace, follow upon regeneration. The covenant of grace is "ordered in all things", and is full of all spiritual blessings; and a grant of all the blessings of grace was made to Christ, and to the elect in him, before the world began, and they were secretly blessed with them in him as early; but then till the Spirit of God is sent down into their hearts in regeneration, to make known unto them the things which God has freely given them, they are strangers to them, and have no knowledge of them, cannot claim their interest in them, nor are they actually possessed of them. They are loved of God with an everlasting love; but then the first open display of it to them is in regeneration, when God draws them with lovingkindness to himself, as a fruit and effect, and so an evidence of his ancient love to them. They are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; but this is not known by them till the gospel comes, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost; working powerfully in them, regenerating, quickening, and sanctifying them; when that holiness to which they are chosen, is implanted, and that image of Christ, to which they are predestinated, is stamped: there is an union with Christ, which election in him gives; and there is a legal union between him and the elect, as between a surety and debtor, in virtue of suretyship engagements for them; and there is a mystical union, as between head and members; and a conjugal one, as between man and wife: but before regeneration there is no vital union, or such an union as between vine and branches, by which they actually receive life, and grace, and nourishment, and bear, and bring forth fruit. They are the sons of God by predestination; and in covenant, the adoption of children belongs, unto them; but this does not appear till regeneration takes place, when they receive in person the power and privilege of it, and are manifestly the sons of God by faith in Christ. Justification was a

sentence conceived in the mind of God from eternity; was pronounced on Christ, and his people in him, when he rose from the dead; but is not known to those interested in it, till the Spirit of God reveals the righteousness of Christ from faith to faith, and pronounces upon it the sentence of justification in the conscience of the believer; until he is born again, he has no knowledge of this blessing, no comfortable perception of it; nor can he claim his interest in it, nor have that peace and joy which flow from it. And now it is that an awakened sinner has the application of pardoning grace and mercy; for though pardon of sin is provided in covenant, and the blood of Christ is shed for it, and he is exalted to give it; yet it is not actually given, applied, and enjoyed, until repentance is given also; for they are both in Christ's gift together; and when also it is that God blesses his people with peace, with peace of conscience, flowing from the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ.

4c. Another effect of regeneration is, a fitness and capacity for the performance of good works. In regeneration men are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works"; and by their new creation, become fit for, and capable of, performing them; the new man is formed in them "unto righteousness and true holiness", to the acts and exercises of righteousness and holiness, Eph 2:10 Eph 4:24 such who are born again, are "sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work", 2Ti 2:21 whereas, an unregenerate man is "to every good work reprobate"; he has neither will nor power to perform that which is good, till God "works in him both to will and to do". The principal ingredients in good works are wanting in them, wherefore they cannot be acceptable to God: and, indeed, "without faith", as these are without it, "it is impossible to please God"; nor can they that are "in the flesh", who are carnal and unregenerate, "please God"; that is, do those things which are pleasing to him, Heb 11:6 Ro 8:8 without the Spirit of God, and the grace and strength of Christ, nothing of this kind can he performed; wherefore God has promised to put his "Spirit" in his people, which he does in regeneration, to "cause them to walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments, and do them": so though they can do nothing of

themselves, yet, through the Spirit, grace, and strength of Christ, they can do all things, Eze 36:27 Php 4:13 to which they must be referred; even a very heathen could say, Whatever good thing thou dost, ascribe it to God.

4d. Regeneration gives a meetness for the kingdom of God; without this, no man can see, nor enter into it, Joh 3:3,5 whether by "the kingdom of God" is meant, a gospel church state, and a participation of the privileges and ordinances of it, or the ultimate state of glory and happiness: the former may be meant, into which publicans and harlots went before the Pharisees; and which they would neither enter into themselves, nor suffer others to go in who were entering; and a removal of which from them, Christ threatens them with, Mt 23:13 21:31,43. Unregenerate men may indeed, in a sense, see and enter into this kingdom of God; they may attend the word, and embrace the truths of it, make a profession of faith, submit to gospel ordinances, and become members of a gospel church; this they may do in fact, but not of right; they are such as do not come in at the right door, Christ, and true faith in him; but climb up another way, and are thieves and robbers; hypocrites in Zion, tares in Christ's field, and foolish virgins among the wise; to whom the kingdom of God is compared. Unregenerate men have not the proper qualifications for the church of God, and the ordinances of it; these particularly, are faith and repentance; these are required to a person's admission to baptism, Mt 3:2,8 Ac 2:38 8:12,37 and so to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat", 1Co 11:28 whether he has true repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and if such a man, devoid of these, which attend or flow from regeneration, gets admitted to these ordinances, and into a church state, of what avail is it to him here or hereafter? what does it signify now to have the form of godliness, without the power? a name to live, and yet be dead? or hereafter; for "what is the hope of the hypocrite" of what use is it to him? "though he hath gained" the name of a professor, of a religious man, and a place in the house of God, "when God takes away his soul", these will be of no service to him? Though may be the ultimate state of glory

may be meant by the kingdom of God, in the above passages; as in 1Co 6:9 Lu 12:32 Mt 25:34. An unregenerate man has no apparent right unto it; nor meetness for it. The proper right unto it lies in adoption; "If children, then heirs". But this right, so founded, does not appear till a man is born again, which is the evidence of adoption; nor can he be meet and fit for it, without this grace of God regenerating, quickening, and sanctifying; for without holiness man shall see the Lord; and nothing shall enter into the heavenly state that defiles or makes an abomination; but when men are born again, they are, heirs apparent to the heavenly inheritance; they are rich faith, and heirs of a kingdom; and are meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light.

5. The properties of regeneration; and which may serve to throw more light on the nature of it.

5a. Regeneration is a passive work, or rather, men are passive in it; as they must needs be, in the first infusion and implantation of grace, and the quickening of them; even as passive as the first matter created was, out of which all things were made; and as a dead man, when raised from the dead is; or as the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision were, while the Spirit of God breathed upon them, and then they became active; and as infants are in the natural generation of them; for men no more contribute to their spiritual birth, than infants do to their natural birth; all this appears from regeneration being a creation, a resurrection from the dead, and a being begotten and born again.

5b. It is an irresistible act of God's grace; no more resistance can be made unto it, than there could be in the first matter to its creation; or in a dead man to his resurrection; or in an infant to its generation. Regeneration is of the will of God, which cannot be resisted; the Spirit, in regeneration, is like "the wind", which "bloweth where it listeth", and none can hinder it "so is everyone that is born of the Spirit", Joh 3:8 it is done by the power of God, which is uncontrollable; whatever aversion, contrariety, and opposition there

may be in the corrupt nature of men unto it, that is soon and easily overcome by the power of divine grace; when the stony heart is taken away, and an heart of flesh is given. When God works, nothing can let; an unwilling people are made willing in the day of his power; high thoughts, reasonings, and imaginations of the carnal mind, are cast down by him.

5c. It is an act that is instantaneously done, at once; it is not like sanctification it gives rise to; which is but a begun work, and is carried on gradually; faith grows, hope and love abound more and more, and spiritual light and knowledge increase by degrees, till they come to the perfect day: but regeneration is at once; as an infant in nature is generated at once, and is also born at once, and not by degrees; so it is in spiritual generation; one man cannot be said to be more regenerated than another, though he may be more sanctified; and the same man cannot be said to be more regenerated at one time than at another.

5d. As it is done at once, so it is perfect; some persons speak of a regenerate and an unregenerate part in men; and that they are partly regenerate and partly unregenerate. I must confess I do not understand this; since regeneration is a new creature, and perfect in its kind. There are, indeed, two principles in a man that is born again; a principle of corrupt nature, and a principle of grace; the one is called the old man, and the other the new: the whole old man is unregenerate, no part in him is regenerated; he remains untouched, and is just the same he was, only deprived of his power and dominion; and the new man is wholly regenerate, no unregenerate part in him: there is no sin in him, nor done by him, he cannot commit sin; "the king's daughter is all glorious within": a man child, as soon as born, having all its limbs, is a perfect man, as to parts, though these are not at their full growth and size, as they will be, if it lives: so the new man is a perfect man at once, as to parts, though as yet not arrived to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

5e. The grace of regeneration can never be lost; once regenerated, and always so; one that is born in a spiritual sense, can never be unborn again; for he cannot die a spiritual death; he is born of incorruptible and immortal seed; he is born of water and of the Spirit, or of the grace of the Spirit, which is as a well of living water in him, springing up unto everlasting life: and all such who are begotten again unto a lively hope of a glorious inheritance, are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, 1Pe 1:3-5,23. To which may be added,

5f. An adjunct which always accompanies regeneration, a spiritual warfare between the old and the new man, the principle of sin, and the principle of grace; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; the law in the members warring against the law of the mind; which are, as it were, a company of two armies engaged in war with each other, which always issues in a victory on the side of the new creature; for whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and sin and Satan, and every enemy, and is more than a conqueror over all, through Christ.

The Canons of the Council of Orange 529 AD

CANON 1. If anyone denies that it is the whole man, that is, both body and soul, that was "changed for the worse" through the offense of Adam's sin, but believes that the freedom of the soul remains unimpaired and that only the body is subject to corruption, he is deceived by the error of Pelagius and contradicts the scripture which says, "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezek. 18:20); and, "Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are the slaves of the one whom you obey?" (Rom. 6:16); and, "For whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved" (2 Pet. 2:19).

CANON 2. If anyone asserts that Adam's sin affected him alone and not his descendants also, or at least if he declares that it is only the death of the body which is the punishment for sin, and not also that sin, which is the death of the soul, passed through one man to the whole human race, he does injustice to God and contradicts the Apostle, who says, "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

CANON 3. If anyone says that the grace of God can be conferred as a result of human prayer, but that it is not grace itself which makes us pray to God, he contradicts the prophet Isaiah, or the Apostle who says the same thing, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me" (Rom 10:20, quoting Isa. 65:1).

CANON 4. If anyone maintains that God awaits our will to be cleansed from sin, but does not confess that even our will to be cleansed comes to us through the infusion and working of the Holy Spirit, he resists the Holy Spirit himself who says through Solomon, "The will is prepared by the Lord" (Prov. 8:35, LXX), and the salutary word of the Apostle, "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

CANON 5. If anyone says that not only the increase of faith but also its beginning and the very desire for faith, by which we believe in Him who justifies the ungodly and comes to the regeneration of holy baptism -- if anyone says that this belongs to us by nature and not by a gift of grace, that is, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit amending our will and turning it from unbelief to faith and from godlessness to godliness, it is proof that he is opposed to the teaching of the Apostles, for blessed Paul says, "And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). And

again, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). For those who state that the faith by which we believe in God is natural make all who are separated from the Church of Christ by definition in some measure believers.

CANON 6. If anyone says that God has mercy upon us when, apart from his grace, we believe, will, desire, strive, labor, pray, watch, study, seek, ask, or knock, but does not confess that it is by the infusion and inspiration of the Holy Spirit within us that we have the faith, the will, or the strength to do all these things as we ought; or if anyone makes the assistance of grace depend on the humility or obedience of man and does not agree that it is a gift of grace itself that we are obedient and humble, he contradicts the Apostle who says, "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7), and, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10).

CANON 7. If anyone affirms that we can form any right opinion or make any right choice which relates to the salvation of eternal life, as is expedient for us, or that we can be saved, that is, assent to the preaching of the gospel through our natural powers without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who makes all men gladly assent to and believe in the truth, he is led astray by a heretical spirit, and does not understand the voice of God who says in the Gospel, "For apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), and the word of the Apostle, "Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5).

CANON 8. If anyone maintains that some are able to come to the grace of baptism by mercy but others through free will, which has manifestly been corrupted in all those who have been born after the transgression of the first man, it is

proof that he has no place in the true faith. For he denies that the free will of all men has been weakened through the sin of the first man, or at least holds that it has been affected in such a way that they have still the ability to seek the mystery of eternal salvation by themselves without the revelation of God. The Lord himself shows how contradictory this is by declaring that no one is able to come to him "unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44), as he also says to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17), and as the Apostle says, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3).

CANON 9. Concerning the succor of God. It is a mark of divine favor when we are of a right purpose and keep our feet from hypocrisy and unrighteousness; for as often as we do good, God is at work in us and with us, in order that we may do so.

CANON 10. Concerning the succor of God. The succor of God is to be ever sought by the regenerate and converted also, so that they may be able to come to a successful end or persevere in good works.

CANON 11. Concerning the duty to pray. None would make any true prayer to the Lord had he not received from him the object of his prayer, as it is written, "Of thy own have we given thee" (1 Chron. 29:14).

CANON 12. Of what sort we are whom God loves. God loves us for what we shall be by his gift, and not by our own deserving.

CANON 13. Concerning the restoration of free will. The freedom of will that was destroyed in the first man can be restored only by the grace of baptism, for what is lost can be returned only by the one who was able to give it. Hence the Truth itself declares: "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

CANON 14. No mean wretch is freed from his sorrowful state, however great it may be, save the one who is anticipated by the mercy of God, as the Psalmist says, "Let thy compassion come speedily to meet us" (Ps. 79:8), and again, "My God in his steadfast love will meet me" (Ps. 59:10).

CANON 15. Adam was changed, but for the worse, through his own iniquity from what God made him. Through the grace of God the believer is changed, but for the better, from what his iniquity has done for him. The one, therefore, was the change brought about by the first sinner; the other, according to the Psalmist, is the change of the right hand of the Most High (Ps. 77:10).

CANON 16. No man shall be honored by his seeming attainment, as though it were not a gift, or suppose that he has received it because a missive from without stated it in writing or in speech. For the Apostle speaks thus, "For if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose" (Gal. 2:21); and "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men" (Eph. 4:8, quoting Ps. 68:18). It is from this source that any man has what he does; but whoever denies that he has it from this source either does not truly have it, or else "even what he has will be taken away" (Matt. 25:29).

CANON 17. Concerning Christian courage. The courage of the Gentiles is produced by simple greed, but the courage of Christians by the love of God which "has been poured into our hearts" not by freedom of will from our own side but "through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5).

CANON 18. That grace is not preceded by merit. Recompense is due to good works if they are performed; but grace, to which we have no claim, precedes them, to enable them to be done.

CANON 19. That a man can be saved only when God shows mercy. Human nature, even though it remained in that sound state in which

it was created, could be no means save itself, without the assistance of the Creator; hence since man cannot safe-guard his salvation without the grace of God, which is a gift, how will he be able to restore what he has lost without the grace of God?

CANON 20. That a man can do no good without God. God does much that is good in a man that the man does not do; but a man does nothing good for which God is not responsible, so as to let him do it.

CANON 21. Concerning nature and grace. As the Apostle most truly says to those who would be justified by the law and have fallen from grace, "If justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose" (Gal. 2:21), so it is most truly declared to those who imagine that grace, which faith in Christ advocates and lays hold of, is nature: "If justification were through nature, then Christ died to no purpose." Now there was indeed the law, but it did not justify, and there was indeed nature, but it did not justify. Not in vain did Christ therefore die, so that the law might be fulfilled by him who said, "I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfil them" (Matt. 5:17), and that the nature which had been destroyed by Adam might be restored by him who said that he had come "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

CANON 22. Concerning those things that belong to man. No man has anything of his own but untruth and sin. But if a man has any truth or righteousness, it from that fountain for which we must thirst in this desert, so that we may be refreshed from it as by drops of water and not faint on the way.

CANON 23. Concerning the will of God and of man. Men do their own will and not the will of God when they do what displeases him; but when they follow their own will and comply with the will of God, however willingly they do so, yet it is his will by which what they will is both prepared and instructed.

CANON 24. Concerning the branches of the vine. The branches on the vine do not give life to the vine, but receive life from it; thus the vine is related to its branches in such a way that it supplies them with what they need to live, and does not take this from them. Thus it is to the advantage of the disciples, not Christ, both to have Christ abiding in them and to abide in Christ. For if the vine is cut down another can shoot up from the live root; but one who is cut off from the vine cannot live without the root (John 15:5ff).

CANON 25. Concerning the love with which we love God. It is wholly a gift of God to love God. He who loves, even though he is not loved, allowed himself to be loved. We are loved, even when we displease him, so that we might have means to please him. For the Spirit, whom we love with the Father and the Son, has poured into our hearts the love of the Father and the Son (Rom. 5:5).

CONCLUSION. And thus according to the passages of holy scripture quoted above or the interpretations of the ancient Fathers we must, under the blessing of God, preach and believe as follows. The sin of the first man has so impaired and weakened free will that no one thereafter can either love God as he ought or believe in God or do good for God's sake, unless the grace of divine mercy has preceded him. We therefore believe that the glorious faith which was given to Abel the righteous, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and to all the saints of old, and which the Apostle Paul commends in extolling them (Heb. 11), was not given through natural goodness as it was before to Adam, but was bestowed by the grace of God. And we know and also believe that even after the coming of our Lord this grace is not to be found in the free will of all who desire to be baptized, but is bestowed by the kindness of Christ, as has already been frequently stated and as the Apostle Paul declares, "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). And again, "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). And again, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and it is not your own doing, it is the gift of

God" (Eph. 2:8). And as the Apostle says of himself, "I have obtained mercy to be faithful" (1 Cor. 7:25, cf. 1 Tim. 1:13). He did not say, "because I was faithful," but "to be faithful." And again, "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). And again, "Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas. 1:17). And again, "No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven" (John 3:27). There are innumerable passages of holy scripture which can be quoted to prove the case for grace, but they have been omitted for the sake of brevity, because further examples will not really be of use where few are deemed sufficient.

According to the catholic faith we also believe that after grace has been received through baptism, all baptized persons have the ability and responsibility, if they desire to labor faithfully, to perform with the aid and cooperation of Christ what is of essential importance in regard to the salvation of their soul. We not only do not believe that any are foreordained to evil by the power of God, but even state with utter abhorrence that if there are those who want to believe so evil a thing, they are anathema. We also believe and confess to our benefit that in every good work it is not we who take the initiative and are then assisted through the mercy of God, but God himself first inspires in us both faith in him and love for him without any previous good works of our own that deserve reward, so that we may both faithfully seek the sacrament of baptism, and after baptism be able by his help to do what is pleasing to him. We must therefore most evidently believe that the praiseworthy faith of the thief whom the Lord called to his home in paradise, and of Cornelius the centurion, to whom the angel of the Lord was sent, and of Zacchaeus, who was worthy to receive the Lord himself, was not a natural endowment but a gift of God's kindness.

Quotes on Monergistic Regeneration from Church History

edited by John Hendryx

While this is by no means an exhaustive list, the following are Christians in the course of the history of the Church who believed and taught monergistic regeneration: (we will add to this list as more resources are found)

[Scripture](#), [Augustine](#), [Council of Orange](#), [Martin Luther](#) (who considered this doctrine the heart of the Reformation), [John Calvin](#), [Ulrich Zwingli](#), [Blaise Pascal](#), [Jonathan Edwards](#), [Charles Spurgeon](#), [John Owen](#), [John Flavel](#), [Thomas Manton](#), [William Gurnall](#), [Thomas Watson](#), [Thomas Boston](#), [Stephen Charnock](#), [Francis Turretin](#), more [Puritans of the 17th century](#) including all the signatories of the [Westminster Confession of Faith](#), and [other church creeds and confessions](#), [George Whitefield](#), [Augustus Toplady](#), [John Newton](#), [Charles Hodge](#), [A.A. Hodge](#), [J. C. Ryle](#), [A. W. Pink](#), [John Murray](#) and some contemporary pastors and theologians such as [Martyn Lloyd-Jones](#), [John Piper](#), [Wayne Grudem](#), [R.C. Sproul](#), [Iain Murray](#), [J.I. Packer](#), and signatories to the [Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals](#) and [more...](#)

"And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." - **Deut 30:6**

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. - **Ezek 36:27**

"Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple." - **Psalms 65:4**

"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.'" - **Matthew 16:15-17**

"John answered, 'A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.'" - **John 3:27**

"For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will" - **John 5:21**

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, "This is why I told you that **no one** can come to me [i.e. believe in me] unless it is granted him by the Father." - **John 6:63-65** [*All of God's operations in the economy of salvation proceed from the Father, are through the Son, and are executed by the Spirit. No one believes unless God grants it*]

"All that the Father gives to me will come to me" (i.e. believe in me) - **John 6:37** [*all whom God grants to the Son, believes*]

"Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." - **John 8:47**

"He [Jesus] said, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that "seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." - **Luke 8:10**

"One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul." - **Acts 16:14**

"...it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy." - **Rom 9:16**

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13who were born, not of blood **nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man**, but of God." - **John 1:13**

"...no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit." - **1 Cor 12:3**

*"What have you that you did not receive?" - **1 Cor. 4:7***

"In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." - **2 Cor 4:4-6**

" In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our

sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." - **Colossians 2:11-14**

"But by the grace of God I am what I am" - 1 Cor. 15:10

"The heart of a man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps." - **Prov 16:9**

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he **cannot see** the kingdom of God."..."Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter** the kingdom of God." - **John 3:3-5**

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive [quickenened us] with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved." - **Ephesians 2:4-5**

"The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both." - **Proverbs 20:12**

"For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." **1 Thess 1:4-5**

"...the Son gives life to whom he will." - **John 5:21**

"...Christ Jesus has made me his own" - **Philippians 3:12**

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." - **1 John 5:1**

"And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live...Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do

it, declares the LORD."

- **Ezekiel 37:14**

"Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." - **1 Thessalonians 1:5**

Grace is not a reward for obedience; obedience is the result of grace. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." - **1 Corinthians 1:30**

"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have GIVEN HIM ... I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have GIVEN ME, for they are yours."

- **John 17:2, 9**

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one... knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. - **Matt 11:25-27**

"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" - **1 Timothy 1:12-17**

"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted." - **Job 42:2**

QUOTES FROM CHURCH HISTORY:

Augustine

For them [the Pelagians], grace means the knowledge with which the Lord God helps us, by which we can know what our duty is. The true meaning of grace, however, is the love that God breathes into us, which enables us with a holy delight to carry out the duty that we know.

Augustine - Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 4:11

Can you say, 'We will first walk in His righteousness, and will observe His judgments, and will act in a worthy way, so that He will give His grace to us'? But what good would you evil people do? And how would you do those good things, unless you were yourselves good? But Who causes people to be good? Only He Who said, 'And I will visit them to make them good,' and, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and will cause you to walk in my righteousness, and to observe my judgments, and do them' (Ezek.36:27). Are you asleep? Can't you hear Him saying, 'I will cause you to walk, I will make you to observe,' lastly, 'I will make you to do'? Really, are you still puffing yourselves up? We walk, true enough, and we observe, and we do; but it is God Who He makes us to walk, to observe, to do. This is the grace of God making us good; this is His mercy going before us.

Augustine - Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 4:15

"To will is of nature, but to will aright is of grace." - **Augustine**

"God bids us do what we cannot, that we may know what we ought to seek from him." - **Augustine**

"Grace alone brings about every good work in us." - **Augustine**

"Nature is common to all, but not grace." - **Augustine**

"The grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so." - **Augustine**

"The nature of the Divine goodness is not only to open to those who knock. but also to cause them to knock and ask."-
Augustine

"Let God give what he commands, and command what he will."-
Augustine

"Grace does not destroy the will but rather restores it."-
Augustine

"In some places God requires newness of heart [Ezek 18:31]. But elsewhere he testifies that it is given by him [Ezek. 11:19; 36:26]. But what God promises we ourselves do not do through choice or nature; but he himself does through grace."-
Augustine

"Indeed, God requires faith itself of us; yet he does not find something to require unless he has given something to find."-
Augustine

'Can we possibly, without utter absurdity, maintain that there first existed in anyone the good virtue of a good will, to entitle him to the removal of his heart of stone? How can we say this, when all the time this heart of stone itself signifies precisely a will of the hardest kind, a will that is absolutely inflexible against God? For if a good will comes first, there is obviously no longer a heart of stone.' - **Augustine**

"Since these things are so, everything that is commanded to human beings by the Lord in the holy Scriptures, for the sake of testing human free will, is either something we begin to obey by God's goodness, or is demanded in order to show us our need of grace to do it. Indeed, a person does not even begin to be changed from evil to good by the first stirrings of faith, unless the free and gratuitous mercy of God produces this in him.... So, therefore, we should think of God's grace as working from the beginning of a person's changing towards goodness, even to the

end of its completion, so that he who glories may glory in the Lord. For just as no-one can bring goodness to perfection without the Lord, so no one can begin it without the Lord."

- Augustine, Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 2:23

The following Quotes form Augustine are compiled by Dr. N.R. Needham (with references)

A definition of grace

The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord must be understood as follows: grace is the only thing that delivers human beings from evil; without it, they do absolutely nothing good, whether in thought, or in will and emotion, or in action. Grace not only makes known to people what they ought to do, but also enables them to perform with love the duty that they know.

The apostle Paul certainly asked God to inspire the Corinthians with this good will and action when he said, 'Now we pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear to be approved, but that you should do what is good' (2 Cor.13:7). Who can hear this and not wake up and confess that the Lord God is the One Who turns us away from evil so that we do good? For the apostle does not say, 'We admonish, we teach, we exhort, we rebuke.' He says, 'We pray to God that you do no evil, but that you should do what is good.' Of course, he was also in the habit of speaking to them, and doing all those things which I have mentioned — he admonished, he taught, he exhorted, he rebuked. But he knew that all these things which he was openly doing in the way of planting and watering were of no avail, unless He Who secretly gives the increase answered his prayer on the Corinthians' behalf. For as the same teacher of the Gentiles says, 'Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God Who gives the increase' (1 Cor.3:7).

On Rebuke and Grace, 3

Two more definitions

Listen to the apostle Paul when he says, 'Love is the fulfilment of the law' (Rom.13:10). How do we obtain the love? By the grace of God. By the Holy Spirit. For we could not have it from ourselves, as if we created it for ourselves. Love is the gift of God. And a great gift it is! For the apostle says, 'The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us' (Rom.5:5).

Sermons on John, 17:6

For them [the Pelagians], grace means the knowledge with which the Lord God helps us, by which we can know what our duty is. The true meaning of grace, however, is the love that God breathes into us, which enables us with a holy delight to carry out the duty that we know.

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 4:11

No-one has any right to God's grace

The grace of Christ, without which neither infants nor adults can be saved, is not bestowed on account of any virtues, but is given gratuitously, which is why it is called 'grace'. As Paul says, 'being justified freely through His blood' (Rom.3:24). So those who are not liberated by grace are indeed justly condemned ³/₄ those who are not yet able to hear, those who are unwilling to obey, or again those who did not receive (at the time when their youth made them unable to hear) that washing of regeneration, which they might have received and through which they might have been saved. All these are justly condemned, because they are not without sin, either the sin that they have derived from their

birth, or the sin that they have added from their own misconduct. 'For all have sinned' whether in Adam or in themselves 'and come short of the glory of God' (Rom.3:23).

The entire mass of humanity, therefore, becomes liable to punishment. And if the deserved punishment of condemnation were inflicted on all, it would without doubt be righteously inflicted. Consequently, those who are delivered from punishment by grace are called, not vessels of their own virtues, but 'vessels of mercy' (Rom.9:23). Whose mercy? God's ³/₄ the One Who sent Christ Jesus into the world to save the sinners whom He foreknew, and predestined, and called, and justified, and glorified. Now, who could be so madly insane as to fail to give inexpressible thanks to the mercy which liberates whom it chooses? The person who correctly appreciated the whole subject could not possibly blame the justice of God if He utterly condemned all people absolutely.

On Nature and Grace, 4-5

There is no true goodness in us prior to our conversion

You [Julian of Eclanum] think that a person is helped by the grace of God in a good work, in such a way that grace does nothing to stir up his will towards that good work. Your own words sufficiently declare this. For why have you failed to say that a person is aroused by God's grace to a good work, as you have indeed said that he is aroused to evil by the suggestions of the devil? Why have you merely said that a person is always 'helped' in a good work by God's grace? As if by his own will, and without any grace of God, he undertook a good work, and then was divinely helped in the work itself, on account of the virtues of his good will. In that case, grace is rendered as something due, rather than given as a gift — and so grace is no longer grace. But this is what, in the Palestinian verdict [the synod of

Diospolis — see Introduction], Pelagius with a deceitful heart condemned, namely, that the grace of God is given according to our virtues.

Tell me, please, what good Paul willed while he was still Saul, when he was in fact willing great evils, breathing out slaughter as he went, in a horrible darkness of mind and madness, to destroy Christians? What virtues of Saul's good will prompted God to convert him by a marvellous and sudden call from those evils to good things? What shall I say, when Paul himself cries, 'Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us' (Tit.3:5)? And what about that saying of the Lord which I have already mentioned, 'No one can come to Me' — that is, 'believe in Me' — 'unless it has been granted to him by My Father' (Jn.6:65)? Is faith given to the person who is already willing to believe, in recognition of the virtues of his good will? Or rather, is not the will itself stirred up from above, as in the case of Saul, in order that he may believe, even though he is so hostile to the faith that he persecutes believers?

Indeed, how has the Lord commanded us to pray for those who persecute us? Do we pray that the grace of God may reward them for their good will? Do we not rather pray that the evil will itself may be changed into a good one? Surely the saints whom Saul was persecuting prayed for Saul, that his will might be converted to the faith which he was destroying; and they did not pray in vain. Indeed, the obviously miraculous nature of Saul's conversion made it clear that it originated in heaven. How many enemies of Christ at the present day are suddenly drawn to Him by God's secret grace! And let me set down this word from the gospel: 'No-one can come to Me, unless the Father Who sent me draws him' (Jn.6:44). What would Julian not have said against me, if it were not for that verse? As it is, he is rousing himself, not against me, but against Christ Who spoke these words. For He does not say, 'unless He leads him,' which would have allowed us to think that the person's will went beforehand. But

who is 'drawn,' if he was already willing? And yet no-one comes unless he is willing. Therefore in wondrous ways a person is drawn into a state of willingness, by Him who knows how to work within the very hearts of human beings. Not that unwilling people are made to believe, which cannot be. Rather, unwilling people are made willing.

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 1:37

The proud Pelagian takes the credit for his own goodness

What good does it do the Pelagians to praise free will by saying, 'grace assists everyone's good resolution'? We could accept this without hesitation as being said in a Catholic spirit, if they did not attribute worthiness to the good resolution. For that would mean that God's assistance was now a wage paid as a debt to this worthiness ³/₄ and that is no longer grace. They need to understand and confess that even that good resolution itself, which grace then comes and assists, could not have existed in a person if grace had not gone before it. How can there be a good resolution in someone without the mercy of God going first, since it is the good will which is itself prepared by the Lord?

When the Pelagians say that 'grace assists everyone's good resolution,' and then add, 'yet grace does not infuse the love of virtue into a heart that resists,' even this might be understood in a right sense, except that we know what they really mean. For in the case of the heart that resists, God's grace itself first of all makes the heart willing to hear the divine call; and then, the heart no longer resisting, grace kindles the desire for virtue. So then, in everything where anyone does anything in accordance with God, God's mercy works first. And this our adversaries will not confess, because they choose to be not Catholics, but Pelagians. For it gives much delight to a proud ungodliness to

think that, even when a person is forced to acknowledge that the Lord has given him something, it was not given as a gift, but paid in return for something. In this way, the children of destruction, not of the promise, think that they have made themselves good, and that God has repaid the self-made virtuous the reward they deserve for their work.

This is the pride that has blocked up the ears of the Pelagians' hearts, so that they do not hear, 'For what do you have that you did not receive?' (1 Cor.4:7) They do not hear, 'Without Me you can do nothing' (Jn.15:5) They do not hear, 'Love is from God' (1 Jn.4:7) They do not hear, 'God has dealt out to each one a measure of faith' (Rom.12:3). They do not hear, 'The Spirit breathes where He wills' (Jn.3:8), and, 'Those who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God' (Rom.8:14). They do not hear, 'No-one can come to Me, unless it has been granted to him by My Father' (Rom.8:14). They do not hear what Ezra writes, 'Blessed is the Lord of our fathers, Who has put into the heart of the king to glorify His house which is in Jerusalem' (Ezra 7:27). They do not hear what the Lord says through Jeremiah, 'And I will put My fear into their heart, so that they will not depart not Me. Yes, I will visit them to make them good' (Jer.32:40-41).

And especially they do not hear that word spoken by Ezekiel the prophet, where God fully shows that He does not make people good (that is, obedient to His commands) because He is moved by worthy qualities in them. No, He repays people good for evil, by doing this for His own sake, and not for theirs. For He says, 'Thus says the Lord God: I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations, where you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into

your own land. And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you. A new heart also I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My ordinances, and do them' (Ezek.36:22-27).

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 4:13-14

God is the source of the new heart and Christian obedience

What does the putrid flesh of humanity have left to puff itself up with, and to refuse to glory in the Lord? Whatever it claims it has done to achieve virtue by its own effort, so that God must then reward it — against all such claims it shall be answered, it shall be exclaimed, it shall be contradicted, 'I do it; but for My own holy name's sake; I do not do it for your sakes, says the Lord God' (Ezek.36:22). Nothing so overthrows the Pelagians when they say that the grace of God is given according to our virtues. (In fact, Pelagius himself condemned this view, although he did not embrace the correct one — he was just afraid of the Eastern judges.) Nothing so overthrows the arrogance of people who say, 'We do it, that we may by our virtues establish a basis for God to work.' It is not Pelagius that answers you, but the Lord Himself: 'I do it, and not for your sakes, but for My own holy name's sake.' For what good can you do out of a heart that is not good? But in order that you may have a good heart, He says, 'I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you' (Ezek.36:26).

Can you say, 'We will first walk in His righteousness, and will observe His judgments, and will act in a worthy way, so that He

will give His grace to us'? But what good would you evil people do? And how would you do those good things, unless you were yourselves good? But Who causes people to be good? Only He Who said, 'And I will visit them to make them good,' and, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and will cause you to walk in my righteousness, and to observe my judgments, and do them' (Ezek.36:27). Are you asleep? Can't you hear Him saying, 'I will cause you to walk, I will make you to observe,' lastly, 'I will make you to do'? Really, are you still puffing yourselves up? We walk, true enough, and we observe, and we do; but it is God Who He makes us to walk, to observe, to do. This is the grace of God making us good; this is His mercy going before us.

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 4:15

Without Me, you can do nothing

The Pelagians think they have good grounds for accusing us of false teaching when we say, 'God inspires an unwilling and resisting person with the desire,' not for any very great good, but 'even for imperfect good.' Possibly, then, they themselves are keeping open a place for grace (at least in some sense) by thinking as follows: a person can have the desire for good without grace, but only for imperfect good; he could not easily have the desire for perfect good even with grace, but without grace he could not desire perfect good at all.

But actually, even this view sees God's grace as being given according to our virtues (which Pelagius, in the church synod in the East, condemned, merely from the fear of being condemned). For if the desire for good begins from ourselves without God's grace, virtue itself will have begun — and to this virtue, the assistance of grace then comes, as if it were owed. Thus God's grace is not bestowed freely, but is given according to our virtue. However, in order that he might provide a reply to

the future Pelagius, the Lord does not say, 'Without Me, it is with difficulty that you can do anything,' but He says, 'Without Me, you can do nothing' (Jn.15:5). And, that He might also provide an answer to these future heretics, in that very same Gospel saying He does not say, 'Without me you can bring nothing to perfection,' but 'do' nothing. For if He had said 'bring nothing to perfection', they might say that God's help is necessary, not for beginning good, which rests with ourselves, but for perfecting it. But let them hear the apostle too. For when the Lord says, 'Without me you can do nothing,' in this one word He comprehends both the beginning and the ending. The apostle, indeed, as if he were an expounder of the Lord's saying, distinguishes both [beginning and ending] very clearly when he says, 'Because He who has begun a good work in you will perfect it even to the day of Christ Jesus' (Phil.1:6).

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 2:18

From first beginnings to final completion, salvation is by grace

Since these things are so, everything that is commanded to human beings by the Lord in the holy Scriptures, for the sake of testing human free will, is either something we begin to obey by God's goodness, or is demanded in order to show us our need of grace to do it. Indeed, a person does not even begin to be changed from evil to good by the first stirrings of faith, unless the free and gratuitous mercy of God produces this in him.... So, therefore, we should think of God's grace as working from the beginning of a person's changing towards goodness, even to the end of its completion, so that he who glories may glory in the Lord. For just as no-one can bring goodness to perfection without the Lord, so no one can begin it without the Lord.

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 2:23

Pelagius turns grace into a reward for human goodness

Then again, whatever it is that Pelagius means by 'grace,' he says is given even to Christians according to their virtues, although (as I have already mentioned above), when he was in Palestine, in his truly remarkable vindication of himself, he condemned those who hold this opinion! Now these are his words: referring to non-Christians, he says, 'In these, the good of their created condition is naked and defenceless.' Then he adds: 'In those, however, who belong to Christ, there is defence afforded by Christ's help.' You see it is still uncertain what this 'help' is, according to the remark we have already made on the same subject. Pelagius goes on, however, to say of those who are not Christians: 'They deserve judgment and condemnation, because they possess free will whereby they could come to have faith and deserve God's grace, but they make a bad use of the freedom which has been granted to them. But as for those who by the right use of free will merit the Lord's grace, and keep His commandments $\frac{3}{4}$ these deserve to be rewarded.'

Now it is clear; he says grace is bestowed according to worthiness (whatever he means by grace, which he does not make clear). For when he speaks about people deserving reward because they make a good use of their free will, so that they merit the Lord's grace, he asserts in fact that a debt is paid to them. What, then, becomes of the apostle's saying, 'Being justified freely by His grace' (Rom.3:24)? And what of his other statement too, 'By grace you are saved' (Eph.2:8)? In this verse, Paul prevents us from supposing that salvation is by works, by expressly adding, 'by faith.' And even further, in case anyone imagines that faith itself is of human origin independently of the grace of God, the apostle says: 'And that not of yourselves; for it is the gift of God.'

On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin, 1:34

The Pelagians call it ‘fate’; we call it ‘grace’

I was carefully meditating about why the Pelagians think they have a trump card when they accuse us of teaching ‘fate’ under the name of grace. So I first of all looked into their statements on the matter. They thought they could bring this objection against us: ‘Under the name of grace, they teach fate, for they say that unless God inspired an unwilling and resisting person with the desire for good (even an imperfect good), he would not be able to cease from evil, nor to embrace good.’ Then a little later, they assert their own beliefs, which I also examined: ‘We confess that baptism is necessary for all ages, and that grace assists the good resolutions of everybody. But grace does not infuse the love of virtue into a reluctant soul, because there is no favouritism with God.’

From these words of theirs, I perceived that the Pelagians think (or wish others to think) that we ‘teach fate under the name of grace’ merely because we say that God’s grace is not given in respect of our virtues, but according to God’s own most merciful will. For He said, ‘I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy’ (Rom.9:15). And by way of consequence, Scripture adds, ‘Therefore it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God Who shows mercy’ (Rom.9:16). Here, anyone might be equally foolish in thinking or saying that the apostle teaches fate! But these Pelagians sufficiently lay themselves open to accusation. For when they slander us by saying that we ‘maintain fate under the name of grace’, because we say that God’s grace is not given on account of our virtues, beyond a doubt they confess that they themselves say that grace is given on account of our virtues!

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 2:10

The effective transforming teaching of the Holy Spirit

The kind of teaching we are talking about is spoken of by the Lord when He says: 'Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me' (Jn.6:45). So if someone does not come to Christ, we cannot correctly say of him, 'he has heard and learned that he ought to come to Christ, but he is not willing to do what he has learned.' It is indeed absolutely improper to apply such a statement to God's method of teaching people by grace. For if, as the Truth says, 'Everyone who has learned comes,' it follows, of course, that whoever does not come has not learned. But who can fail to see that a person's coming or not coming is by the choice of his will? If a person does not come to Christ, he has simply made his choice not to come. But if he does come, it cannot be without assistance — such assistance that he not only knows what it is he ought to do, but actually does what he knows.

And so, when God teaches, it is not by the letter of the law, but by the grace of the Spirit. Moreover, He teaches so that whatever a person learns, he not only sees it with his perception, but also desires it with his choice, and accomplishes it in action. By this method of divine instruction, our very choosing itself, and our very performance itself, are assisted, and not merely our natural 'capacity' of willing and performing. For if nothing but this 'capacity' of ours were assisted by this grace, the Lord would have said, 'Everyone that has heard and learned from the Father may possibly come to Me.' This, however, is not what He said. His words are these: 'Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.'

Now Pelagius says that the possibility of coming lies in our nature. Or as we even found him attempting to say some time ago, it lies in grace (whatever that may mean according to him), as when he says, 'grace assists our capacity of coming to Christ.'

But he holds that our actual coming to Christ lies in our own will and act. Now just because a person may come to Christ, it does not follow that he actually comes, unless he has also willed and acted to come. But everyone who has learned from the Father not only has the possibility of coming, but actually comes! And in this result are already included the use of the capacity, the affection of the will, and the effect of the action.

On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin, 1:27

Only those taught by the Father come to Christ

Accordingly, our only Master and Lord Himself, when He had said what I previously mentioned — ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent’ (Jn.6:29) — says a little afterwards in the same discourse, ‘I said to you that you also have seen Me and have not believed. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me’ (Jn.6:37). What is the meaning of ‘will come to Me’ but ‘will believe in Me’? But it is the Father’s gift that this happens. Moreover, a little later Jesus says, ‘Do not murmur among yourselves. No-one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes to Me’ (Jn.6:43-5). What is the meaning of ‘Everyone who has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes to Me,’ except that there is no-one who fails to come to Me if they hear from the Father and learn? For if everyone who has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes, then certainly everyone who does not come has not heard from the Father! For if he had heard and learned, he would come. No-one has heard and learned, and yet has failed to come. But everyone, as the Truth declares, who has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes.

This teaching in which the Father is heard, and teaches to come to the Son, is far removed from the senses of the flesh. The Son Himself is also involved in this teaching, because He is the Father's Word by which He teaches; and He does not do this through the ear of the flesh, but the ear of the heart. The Spirit of the Father and of the Son is also, at the same time, involved in this teaching; He, too, teaches, and does not teach separately, for we have learned that the workings of the Trinity are inseparable. And that is certainly the same Holy Spirit of Whom the apostle says, 'We, however, having the same Spirit of faith' (2 Cor.4:13). But this teaching is especially ascribed to the Father, because the Only Begotten is begotten from Him, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him, of which it would be tedious to argue more elaborately. I think that my work in fifteen books on the Trinity which God is, has already reached you.

No, this instruction in which God is heard and teaches is very far removed, I say, from the senses of the flesh. We see that many come to the Son because we see that many believe in Christ; but when and how they have heard and learned this from the Father, we do not see. It is true that that grace is exceedingly secret, but who doubts that it is grace? This grace, therefore, which is invisibly bestowed on human hearts by the divine gift, is not rejected by any hard heart — because it is given for the purpose of first taking away the hardness of the heart! When, therefore, the Father is heard within, and teaches, so that a person comes to the Son, He takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh, as He has promised in the declaration of the prophet. He thus makes them children and vessels of mercy which He has prepared for glory.

On the Predestination of the Saints, 13

Free will and a good will both come from God

It is not enough simply to have choice of will, which is freely turned in this direction and that, and belongs among those natural gifts which a bad person may use badly. We must also have a good will, which belongs among those gifts which it is impossible to use badly. This impossibility is given to us by God; otherwise I do not know how to defend what Scripture says: 'What do you have that you did not receive?' (1 Cor.4:7) For if God gives us a free will, which may still be either good or bad, but a good will comes from ourselves, then what comes from ourselves is better than what comes from God! But it is the height of absurdity to say this. So the Pelagians ought to acknowledge that we obtain from God even a good will.

It would indeed be a strange thing if the will could stand in some no-man's-land, where it was neither good nor bad. For we either love righteousness, and this is good; and if we love it more, this is better. If we love it less, this is less good; or if we do not love righteousness at all, it is not good. And who can hesitate to affirm that, when the will does not love righteousness in any way at all, it is not only a bad will, but even a totally depraved will? Since therefore the will is either good or bad, and since of course we do not derive the bad will from God, it remains that we derive from God a good will. Otherwise, since our justification proceeds from a good will, I do not know what other gift of God we ought to rejoice in. That, I suppose, is why it is written, 'The will is prepared by the Lord' (Prov.8:35, Septuagint). And in the Psalms, 'The steps of a man will be rightly ordered by the Lord, and His way will be the choice of his will' (Ps.37:23). And what the apostle says, 'For it is God Who works in you both to will and to do of His own good pleasure' (Phil.2:13).

On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, 2:30

What we need is love

We maintain that God does not only create a person with a free will, and give teaching by which he is instructed how he ought to live. We say further that the human will is so divinely aided in the pursuit of righteousness, that a person receives the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit forms in his mind a delight in, and a love of, that supreme and unchangeable good which is God, even now while he is still 'walking by faith' and not yet 'by sight' (2 Cor.5:7). By this gift to him of the Spirit as the pledge, as it were, of the free gift [of eternal life], he conceives an ardent desire to cling to his Creator, and burns to enter into a state of participation in that true light, so that he may enjoy blessing from the One to Whom he owes his existence. A person's free will, indeed, avails for nothing except to sin, if he does not know the way of truth. And even after his duty and his true goal begin to become known to him, he still fails to do his duty, or to set about it, or to live rightly, unless he also takes delight in it and feels a love for it. Now, in order to win our affections to what is right, God's 'love is shed abroad in our hearts,' not through the free-will which arises from ourselves, but 'through the Holy Spirit Who is given to us' (Rom.5:5).

On the Spirit and the Letter, 5

God's grace works in us sovereignly to produce a godly will

Some might interpret 'It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God Who shows mercy' (Rom.9:16), in this sense — that salvation comes from both, that is, both from the human will and from the mercy of God. In that case, we must understand the saying, 'It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God Who shows mercy,' as if it meant that the human will alone is not sufficient, unless the mercy of God goes with it. But then it would follow that the mercy of God alone is not sufficient, unless the human will goes with it! Therefore, if

we may rightly say, 'it is not of man who wills, but of God Who shows mercy,' because the human will by itself is not enough, why may we not also rightly put it the other way round: 'It is not of God Who shows mercy, but of man who wills,' because the mercy of God by itself is not sufficient? Surely, no Christian will dare to say this, 'It is not of God Who shows mercy, but of man who wills,' in case he openly contradicts the apostle!

So it follows that the true interpretation of the saying, 'It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God Who shows mercy,' is that the entire work belongs to God, Who both makes the human will righteous, and prepares it in this way for His assistance, and then assists it when it is prepared. For human righteousness of will precedes many of God's gifts, but not all of them; and it must itself be included among those gifts which it does not precede. We read in Holy Scripture, both that God's mercy 'shall meet me' (Ps.59:10), and that His mercy 'shall follow me' (Ps.23:6). Mercy goes before the unwilling person to make him willing; it follows the willing person to make his will effective. Why are we taught to pray for our enemies, who are plainly unwilling to lead a holy life, unless that God may produce willingness in them? And why are we ourselves taught to ask in order that may receive, unless that He who has created in us the wish, may Himself satisfy the wish? We pray, then, for our enemies, that the mercy of God may go before them, as it has gone before us; and we pray for ourselves that His mercy may follow us.

Enchiridion, 32

Grace creates a truly free will

Do we by grace destroy free will? God forbid! We establish free will. For even as the law is not destroyed but established by faith, so free will is not destroyed but established by grace. The

law is fulfilled only by a free will. And yet the law brings the knowledge of sin; faith brings the acquisition of grace against sin; grace brings the healing of the soul from the disease of sin; the health of the soul brings freedom of will; free will brings the love of righteousness; and the love of righteousness fulfils the law. Thus the law is not destroyed but established through faith, since faith obtains grace by which the law is fulfilled. Likewise, free will is not destroyed through grace, but is established, since grace cures the will so that righteousness is freely loved. Now all the stages which I have here connected together in their successive links, are each spoken of individually in the sacred Scriptures. The law says: 'You shall not covet' (Ex.20:17). Faith says: 'Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You' (Ps.41:4). Grace says: 'See, you have been made well: sin no more, in case a worse thing comes upon you' (Jn.5:14). Health says: 'O Lord my God, I cried to You, and You have healed me' (Ps.30:2). Free will says: 'I will freely sacrifice to You' (Ps.54:6). Love of righteousness says: 'Transgressors told me pleasant tales, but not according to Your law, O Lord' (Ps. 119:85).

How is it then that miserable human beings dare to be proud, either of their free will, before they are set free, or of their own strength, if they have been set free? They do not observe that in the very mention of free will they pronounce the name of liberty. But 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty' (2 Cor.3:17). If, therefore, they are the slaves of sin, why do they boast of free will? For 'by whatever a person is overcome, to that he is delivered as a slave' (2 Pet.2:19). But if they have been set free, why do they puff themselves up as if it were by their own doing? Why do they boast, as if their freedom were not a gift? Or are they so free that they will not have Him for their Lord Who says to them, 'Without Me, you can do nothing' (Jn.15:5), and, 'If the Son sets you free, you shall be truly free?' (Jn.8:36).

On the Spirit and the Letter, 52

Sovereign grace humbles human pride

God does not grant His mercy to some people because they know Him, but in order that they may know Him. Nor is it because they are upright in heart, but that they may become so, that He grants them His righteousness by which He justifies the ungodly. This thought does not inflate us with pride! The sin of pride arises when anyone has too much self-confidence, and makes himself the supreme reason for living. Driven by this conceited feeling, the proud person departs from the Fountain of life, from Whose streams alone we can drink the holiness which is itself the good life. Yes, the proud person departs from that unchanging Light, by sharing in which the rational soul set on fire (so to speak) and becomes a created and reflected light.

On the Spirit and the Letter, 11

Spiritual desire comes from God

God does many good things in a human being that the human being does not do. But a human being does nothing good that God does not cause him to do. Accordingly, the Lord would not put a desire for something good in a person, if that thing were not indeed good; but if it is good, we derive it only from Him Who is supremely and incomparably good. For what is the desire for good but love? John the apostle speaks of this without any ambiguity, and says, 'Love is from God' (1 Jn.4:7). Love does not begin from ourselves, and then get perfected by God. No, if love is from God, we have the whole of it from God. May God by all means turn us away from this folly of making ourselves first and Himself last in our reception of His gifts!

Love comes from God

It is no wonder that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it. In John's letter, the Light declares, 'Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God' (1 Jn.3:1). And in the Pelagian writings the darkness says, 'Love comes to us from our own selves.' Now, if the Pelagians only possessed true love, that is, Christian love, they would also know where they obtained possession of it. The apostle knew this when he said, 'But we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit Who is from God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God' (1 Cor.2:12). And John says, 'God is love' (1 Jn.4:16). So the Pelagians are saying that they actually have God Himself, not from God, but from their own selves! They admit that we have the knowledge of the law from God, but they insist that love is from our own selves. They are not listening to the apostle when he says, 'Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up' (1 Cor.8:21). Now what can be more absurd, what can be more insane and more alien to the very sacredness of love itself, than to maintain that God merely gives us the knowledge which (apart from love) puffs us up, while the love that prevents the possibility of this inflated knowledge springs from ourselves?!

On Grace and Free Will, 40

The difference between knowledge and love

Now even Pelagius should frankly confess that this grace is plainly set forth in the inspired Scriptures. He should not, with shameless insolence, hide the fact that he has too long opposed

it. Let him admit it with healthy regret, so that the holy Church may cease to be troubled by his stubborn persistence, and rejoice instead in his sincere conversion. Let him distinguish between knowledge and love, as they ought to be distinguished. For 'knowledge puffs up, but love builds up' (1 Cor.8:1). Knowledge no longer puffs up when love builds up. And since each is the gift of God (although one is less, and the other greater), Pelagius must not extol our righteousness above the praise which is due to God Who justifies us. Yet this is what he does, when he says that the lesser of these two gifts (knowledge) is assisted by divine grace, and claims that the greater gift (love) comes from the human will.

But if Pelagius agrees that we receive love from the grace of God, he must not think that any virtues of our own preceded our reception of the gift. For what virtues could we possibly have had, at the time when we did not love God? Indeed, so that we might receive the love that enables us to love, God loved us while as yet we had no love ourselves. This the apostle John most expressly declares: 'Not that we loved God,' says he, 'but that He loved us' (1 Jn.4:10). And again, 'We love Him, because He first loved us' (1 Jn.4:19). Most excellently and truly spoken! For we could not have any power to love Him, unless we received it from Him in His first loving us. And what good could we possibly do if we possessed no love? But how could we help doing good if we have love? God's command may appear sometimes to be kept by those who do not love Him, but only fear Him; but where there is no love, God does not reckon any work as good, nor is there any 'good work' rightly so called. For 'whatever is not from faith is sin' (Rom.14:23) and 'faith works by love' (Gal.5:6).

On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin, 1:27

When we do good, God's will inspires ours

It is certain that we keep the commandments if we will. But because ‘the will is prepared by the Lord’ (Prov.8:35, Septuagint), we must ask Him for such a force of will that is sufficient to make us act by willing. Again, it is certain that when we will, we are the ones who do the willing. But it is God Who causes us to will what is good, of whom it is said (as he has just now expressed it), ‘The will is prepared by the Lord.’ Of the same Lord it is said, ‘The steps of a man are ordered by the Lord, and He wills his way’ (Ps.37:23). Of the same Lord it is also said, ‘It is God who works in you, even to will!’ (Phil.2:13) Again, it is certain that when we act, we are the ones who act. But it is God who causes us to act, by applying efficacious powers to our will. As He has said, ‘I will make you to walk in my statutes, and to observe my judgments, and to do them’ (Ezek.36:27). When he says, ‘I will make you ... to do them,’ what else does He say in fact than, ‘I will take away from you your heart of stone,’ from which used to arise your inability to act, ‘and I will give you a heart of flesh,’ in order that you may act (Ezek.36:26)? And what does this promise amount to but this: I will remove your hard heart, out of which you did not act, and I will give you an obedient heart, out of which you shall act?

On Grace and Free Will, 32

Called according to God’s purpose, not ours

Why do the Pelagians say they believe that ‘grace assists the good resolution of everyone, but it does not instil the desire for virtue into a reluctant heart’? They say this as if a person from his own resources, without God’s assistance, has a good resolution and a desire for virtue; and this preceding virtue is worthy of being assisted by the subsequent grace of God. For they think, perhaps, that when the apostle said, ‘For we know that He works all things for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose’ (Rom.8:28) — they think

perhaps that Paul meant human purpose, so that this purpose, as a worthy quality, would secure the mercy of the God Who calls.

If that's what they think, they are ignorant of Paul's real meaning: 'Who are called according to purpose,' that is, not human purpose, but the purpose of God, by which before the world's creation He elected those whom He foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom.8:29). For not all the called are 'called according to purpose', since 'many are called, few are chosen' (Matt.22:14). But those who are called according to purpose are the persons who were elected before the creation of the world. Of this purpose of God, it was also said (as I have already mentioned concerning the twins Esau and Jacob), 'that the purpose of God might stand according to election, not by works, but by Him Who calls, it was said, that the elder shall serve the younger' (Rom.9:11-12). This purpose of God is also mentioned in that place where, writing to Timothy, he says, 'Labour with the gospel according to the power of God, Who saves us and calls us with this holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before eternal ages, but is now made manifest by the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Tim.1:8-10).

This, then, is the purpose of God, of which it is said, 'He works together all things for good for those who are called according to purpose.' Subsequent grace indeed assists a human good purpose, but the good purpose would not itself exist if grace did not work first.

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 2:22

Grace in operation and co-operation

‘Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Rom.13:10). This love the apostle Peter did not yet possess, when he denied the Lord three times out of fear. ‘There is no fear in love,’ says the gospel writer John in his first letter, ‘but perfect love casts out fear’ (1 Jn.4:18). But still, however small and imperfect Peter’s love was, it was not entirely lacking when he said to the Lord, ‘I will lay down my life for Your sake’ (Jn.13:37). For he supposed he was able to carry out what he felt himself willing to do. And who was it that had begun to give Peter his love, however small? Who but God Who prepares the will, and perfects by His co-operation what He begins by His operation? For in beginning to work, He works in us to give us the will, and in perfecting this work, He works with us when we have the will. This is why the apostle says, ‘I am confident of this very thing, that He Who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ’ (Phil.1:6). He operates, therefore, without our help, in order that we may will; but when we will, and will so as to act, He co-operates with us. We can, however, ourselves do nothing to carry out good works of godliness, without God either working to give us the will, or co-working with us when we will.

On Grace and Free Will, 33

Give what You command, and command what You will

When we commit sin, we get no help from God; but we are not able to act justly, and to fulfil the law of righteousness in every part, unless we are helped by God. Light does not help our physical eyes to shut out light; rather, light helps our eyes to see, and the eye cannot see at all unless light helps it. Likewise God, Who is the light of the inner self, helps our mental sight, in order that we may do some good, not according to our own righteousness, but according to His. But if we turn away from God, it is our own act; then we are wise according to the flesh,

then we consent to the lust of the flesh for unlawful deeds. When we turn to God, therefore, He helps us; when we turn away from Him, He forsakes us. But God even helps us to turn to Him; and this, certainly, is something that light does not do for the eyes of the body.

When, therefore, He commands us in the words, ‘Turn to Me, and I will turn to you’ (Zech.1:3), and we say to Him, ‘Turn us, O God of our salvation’ (Ps.85:4), and again, ‘Turn us, O God of hosts’ (Ps.80:3) — what else do we say but, ‘Give what You command’? When He commands us, saying, ‘Understand now, O simple among the people’ (Ps.94:8), and we say to Him, ‘Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments’ (Ps.119:73) — what else do we say but, ‘Give what You command’? When He commands us, saying, ‘Do not go after your lusts’ (Ecclesiasticus 18:30), and we say to Him, ‘We know that no-one can be chaste, unless God gives it to him’ (Wisdom 8:21) — what else do we say but, ‘Give what You command’? When He commands us, saying, ‘Do justice’ (Isa.56:1), and we say, ‘Teach me Your judgments, O Lord’ (Ps.119:108) — what else do we say but, ‘Give what You command’? Likewise, when He says: ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled’ (Matt.5:6), from whom should we seek the meat and drink of righteousness, but from Him Who promises His fullness to those who hunger and thirst after it?

On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, 2:5

Is faith itself the gift of God?

We must still try to answer briefly this question: Is the will by which we believe itself the gift of God, or does it arise from that free will which is naturally implanted in us? If we say that faith is not the gift of God, we must then fear that we have discovered

some answer to the apostle's reproachful appeal: 'What do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you received it, why do you boast, as if you had not received it?' (1 Cor.4:7) If the will to believe is not God's gift, we could reply: 'See, we have the will to believe, which we did not receive. See what we boast about — even something we did not receive!' If, however, we were to say that this kind of will is entirely the gift of God, we would then have to fear that unbelieving and ungodly people might unreasonably seem to have a fair excuse for their unbelief, in the fact that God had refused to give them the will to believe.

On the Spirit and the Letter, 57

Faith itself is God's gift

Paul's last statement here is, 'I have kept the faith' (2 Tim.4:7). But the man who says this is the same man who declares in another passage, 'I have obtained mercy that I might be faithful' (1 Cor.7:25). He does not say, 'I obtained mercy because I was faithful,' but 'in order that I might be faithful.' This shows that even faith itself cannot be had without God's mercy, and that it is the gift of God. Paul very expressly teaches us this when he says, 'For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God' (Eph.2:8). The Pelagians might possibly say, 'We received grace because we believed.' as if they would attribute the faith to themselves, and the grace to God. Therefore the apostle, having said, 'You are saved through faith,' added, 'And that not of yourselves, but it is the gift of God.' And again, in case they say they deserved so great a gift by their works, he immediately added, 'Not of works, in case anyone should boast.' Not that Paul denied good works, or emptied them of their value, for he says that God renders to everyone according to his works (Rom.2:6); but works proceed from faith, not faith from works. Therefore it is from God that we have works of righteousness, as it is from

Him that faith, concerning which it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’ (Rom.1:17).

On Grace and Free Will, 17

Faith is part of our re-creation in Christ

And in case people should arrogate to themselves the merit at least of their own faith, not understanding that this too is the gift of God, this same apostle, who says in another place that he had ‘obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful’ (1 Cor.7:25), here also adds: ‘and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, in case anyone should boast’ (Eph.2:8). And in case it should be thought that good works will be lacking in those who believe, he adds further: ‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them’ (Eph.2:10). We shall be made truly free, then, when God fashions us, that is, forms and creates us anew, not as human beings — for He has done that already — but as good people. His grace is now doing this, so that we may be a new creation in Christ Jesus, according as it is said: ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God’ (Ps.51:10). For God had already created David’s heart, so far as the physical structure of the human heart is concerned; but the psalmist prays for the renewal of the life which was still lingering in his heart.

Enchiridion, 31

If faith is not God’s gift, salvation is no longer by grace

It follows, therefore, that without any virtue of our own, we receive the gift of faith, from which the rest of salvation flows — although according to the Pelagians, we obtain salvation because of our virtue. If, however, they insist on denying that faith is freely given to us, what is the meaning of the apostle’s words:

‘According as God has dealt to everyone a measure of faith’ (Rom.12:3)? And if they argue that faith is bestowed as a reward for virtue, not as a free gift, what then becomes of another saying of the apostle: ‘To you it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake’ (Phil.1:29)? The apostle’s testimony makes each of these a gift — both that a person believes in Christ, and that he suffers for Christ’s sake. These Pelagians, however, attribute faith to free will, in such a way as to make it seem that grace is given to faith not as a gratuitous gift, but as a debt. Thus grace ceases to be grace any longer. How can something be grace if it is not gratuitous?

On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin, 1:34

Giving thanks to God for faith proves that faith is His doing

The apostle gives thanks to God for those who have believed — not, clearly, because the gospel has been declared to them, but because they have believed. For he says, ‘in whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation — in whom, having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is a pledge of our inheritance, for the redemption of God’s own possession, for the praise of his glory. For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus and with reference to all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you’ (Ephesians 1:13-16). Their faith was new and recent, following on the preaching of the gospel to them. When the apostle hears of this faith of theirs, he gives thanks to God for them. If he were to give thanks to someone for what he might think or know that person had not given, it would be called a flattery or a mockery, rather than a giving of thanks. ‘Do not be deceived, for God is not mocked’ (Gal.6:7); for the beginning of faith is also His gift, unless we rightly judge the

apostolic giving of thanks to be either mistaken or fallacious! What then? Does that not stand forth as the beginning of the faith of the Thessalonians, for which the same apostle gives thanks to God when he says, 'For this reason also we thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works in you, and which you believed' (1 Thess.2:13)? What does Paul give thanks to God for here? Surely it is a vain and idle thing if He to whom Paul gives thanks did not Himself do the thing! But, since this is not a vain and idle thing, certainly God, to whom Paul gave thanks for this work, Himself did it, so that when they had received the word of God which they heard, they received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God. God, therefore, works in human hearts with that 'calling according to His purpose' (Rom.8:28), of which we have spoken a great deal, in order that people should not hear the gospel in vain, but when they hear it, should be converted and believe, receiving it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.

On the Predestination of the Saints, 39

The example of Lydia

For what is the meaning of, 'praying also for us that God would open to us a door of the word' (Col.4:3), unless it is a most manifest demonstration that even the very beginning of faith is the gift of God? For faith would not be sought from God in prayer, unless it were believed to be given by Him. This gift of heavenly grace had descended to that seller of purple for whom, as Scripture says in the Acts of the Apostles, 'The Lord opened her heart, and she gave heed to the things spoken by Paul' (Acts 16:14). For she was called so that she might believe. For God does what He wills in human hearts, either by His assistance or

by His judgment, so that through their means may be fulfilled what His hand and counsel have predestined to be done.

On the Predestination of the Saints, 41

Why pray that God will give faith to unbelievers, if faith is not a gracious gift?

If God does not make people willing who were not willing, on what principle does the Church pray, according to the Lord's commandment, for her persecutors?... For what do we pray for on behalf of those who are unwilling to believe, except that God would work in them to make them willing? Certainly the apostle says, 'Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation' (Rom.10:1). He prays for those who do not believe — for what, except that they may believe? For they will obtain salvation in no other way. If, then, the faith of those praying precedes the grace of God [in converting unbelievers], what about the faith of those for whom prayer is offered that they may come to faith? Does their faith precede the grace of God? How can it, since this is the very thing that we seek for them, that on those who do not believe— that is, who have no faith — faith itself may be bestowed?

On the Predestination of the Saints, 15

The same theme pursued

Now if faith comes simply from free will, and is not given by God, why do we pray for unbelievers that they may believe? This it would be absolutely useless, unless we believe (quite correctly) that almighty God is able to take wills that are perverse and opposed to faith, and turn them to faith. Human free will is addressed when it is said, 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do

not harden your hearts' (Ps.95:7-8). But if God were not able to remove from the human heart even its obstinacy and hardness, He would not say, through the prophet, 'I will take from them their heart of stone, and will give them a heart of flesh' (Ezek.11:19). All this was foretold in reference to the New Testament, as is shown clearly enough by the apostle when he says, 'You are our epistle, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart' (2 Cor.3:2-3).

We must not, of course, suppose that this phrase is used as if those who ought to live spiritually might live in a fleshly way. But a stone, with which the hard human heart is compared, has no feeling. What was there left for God to compare the wise human heart with, but the flesh which possesses feeling? For this is what is said by the prophet Ezekiel: 'I will give them another heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh, so that they may walk in My statutes, and keep My ordinances, and do them: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, says the Lord' (Ezek.11:19-29). Can we possibly, without utter absurdity, maintain that there first existed in anyone the good virtue of a good will, to entitle him to the removal of his heart of stone? How can we say this, when all the time this heart of stone itself signifies precisely a will of the hardest kind, a will that is absolutely inflexible against God? For if a good will comes first, there is obviously no longer a heart of stone.

On Grace and Free Will, 29

Repentance is the gift of God

The mercy of God is necessary not only when a person repents, but even to lead him to repent. How else can we explain what

the apostle says of certain people: 'if perhaps God may give them repentance' (2 Tim.2:25)? And before Peter wept bitterly, we are told by the gospel-writer, 'The Lord turned, and looked upon him' (Lk.22:61).

Enchiridion, 82

Grace is the death of pride

Beware, O Christian, beware of pride. Even though you are a disciple of the saints, ascribe it always and wholly to grace. It was not brought about by what you deserve, but by the grace of God, that there is any 'remnant' in you. For the prophet Isaiah, having this remnant in view, had already said, 'Unless the Lord of Hosts had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and would have been like Gomorrah' (Isa.1:9, Rom.9:29). 'So then,' says the apostle, 'at this present time also a remnant is saved through the election of grace. But if it is by grace,' he says, 'then it is no longer by works' (that is, 'do not be puffed up any longer on what you deserve'); 'otherwise grace is no longer grace' (Rom.11:5-6). For if you build on your own work; then a reward is rendered to you, rather than grace freely bestowed. But if it is grace, it is gratuitously given.

I ask you, then, O sinner, 'Do you believe in Christ?' You say, 'I do believe.' 'What do you believe? Do you believe that all your sins can be forgiven freely through Him?' Then you have what you have believed. O grace gratuitously given! And you, righteous soul, what do you believe? Do you believe that you cannot keep your righteousness without God? If you are righteous, then, impute it wholly to His mercy; but if you are a sinner, ascribe it to your own iniquity. Be your own accuser, and He will be your gracious Deliverer. For every crime, wickedness, or sin comes from our own negligence, but all virtue and holiness come from God's gracious goodness.

Sermons on the Gospels, 50:4

When God crowns our virtues, grace is crowning its own gifts

The Pelagians say that the only grace that is not given according to our virtues is the grace by which a person's sins are forgiven, but that the final grace of eternal life is given as a reward to our preceding virtues. They must not be allowed to go without an answer. If, indeed, they understand and acknowledge our virtues to be the gifts of God too, then their opinion would not deserve condemnation. But since they preach human virtues by declaring that a person has them from his own self, then most rightly the apostle replies: 'Who makes you to differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now, if thou received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?' (1 Cor.4:7) To a person who holds such views, it is perfect truth to say: It is His own gifts that God crowns, not your virtues. If your virtues come from your own self, not from God, then they are evil, and God does not crown them. But if they are good, they are God's gifts, because, as the Apostle James says, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights' (Jam.1:17). In accordance with this John the Lord's forerunner also declares: 'A man can receive nothing unless it is given to him from heaven' (Jn.3:27) — from heaven, of course, because from there came also the Holy Spirit, when Jesus ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. If, then, your good virtues are God's gifts, God does not crown them as your virtues, but as His own gifts.

On Grace and Free Will, 15

The same theme pursued

Finally, after the redemption from all corruption, what remains but the crown of righteousness? This at least remains, but even here, under the crown, do not let your head be swollen, in case it fails to receive the crown! Listen, mark well the psalm, how that crown will not rest on a swollen head. After the psalmist had said, ‘Who redeems your life from corruption,’ he says, ‘Who crowns you’ (Ps.103:4). Here you were ready at once to say, ‘The phrase “Crowns you” is an acknowledgment of my virtues; my own excellence has done it; it is the payment of a debt, not a gift.’ Listen rather to the psalm. For it is you again that say this; and ‘all men are liars’ (Ps.116:11)!

Hear what God says: ‘Who crowns you with mercy and pity’ (Ps.103:4). From His mercy He crowns you, from His pity He crowns you. For you had no worthiness that He should call you to Himself; or being called, no worthiness that He should justify you; or being justified, no worthiness that He should glorify you. ‘The remnant is saved by the election of grace. But if it is by grace, then it is no longer by works; otherwise grace is no more grace’ (Rom.11:5-6). ‘For to him who works, the reward shall not be reckoned according to grace, but according to debt’ (Rom.4:4). The apostle says, ‘Not according to grace, but according to debt.’ But ‘He crowns you with pity and mercy.’ If your own virtues have gone before, God says to you, ‘Examine well your virtues, and you shall see that they are My gifts.’

This then is ‘the righteousness of God’ (Rom.1:17). It is like the phrase, ‘the Lord’s salvation’ (Ex.14:13) — not that by which the Lord is saved, but which He gives to those whom He saves. So too the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord is called ‘the righteousness of God’ — not that by which the Lord is righteous, but by which He justifies those ungodly people whom He makes righteous.

Sermons on the Gospels, 81:8-9

Chapter 5 of The Triumph of Grace: Augustine's Writings on Salvation

Dr. N.R. Needham

Council of Orange 529 AD Canons 3-8

CANON 3. If anyone says that the grace of God can be conferred as a result of human prayer, but that it is not grace itself which makes us pray to God, he contradicts the prophet Isaiah, or the Apostle who says the same thing, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me" (Rom 10:20, quoting Isa. 65:1).

CANON 4. If anyone maintains that God awaits our will to be cleansed from sin, but does not confess that even our will to be cleansed comes to us through the infusion and working of the Holy Spirit, he resists the Holy Spirit himself who says through Solomon, "The will is prepared by the Lord" (Prov. 8:35, LXX), and the salutary word of the Apostle, "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

CANON 5. If anyone says that not only the increase of faith but also its beginning and the very desire for faith, by which we believe in Him who justifies the ungodly and comes to the regeneration of holy baptism -- if anyone says that this belongs to us by nature and not by a gift of grace, that is, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit amending our will and turning it from unbelief to faith and from godlessness to godliness, it is proof that he is opposed to the teaching of the Apostles, for blessed Paul says, "And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). And again, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). For those who state that the faith by which we

believe in God is natural make all who are separated from the Church of Christ by definition in some measure believers.

CANON 6. If anyone says that God has mercy upon us when, apart from his grace, we believe, will, desire, strive, labor, pray, watch, study, seek, ask, or knock, but does not confess that it is by the infusion and inspiration of the Holy Spirit within us that we have the faith, the will, or the strength to do all these things as we ought; or if anyone makes the assistance of grace depend on the humility or obedience of man and does not agree that it is a gift of grace itself that we are obedient and humble, he contradicts the Apostle who says, "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7), and, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10).

CANON 7. If anyone affirms that we can form any right opinion or make any right choice which relates to the salvation of eternal life, as is expedient for us, or that we can be saved, that is, assent to the preaching of the gospel through our natural powers without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who makes all men gladly assent to and believe in the truth, he is led astray by a heretical spirit, and does not understand the voice of God who says in the Gospel, "For apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), and the word of the Apostle, "Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5).

CANON 8. If anyone maintains that some are able to come to the grace of baptism by mercy but others through free will, which has manifestly been corrupted in all those who have been born after the transgression of the first man, it is proof that he has no place in the true faith. For he denies that the free will of all men has been weakened through the sin of the first man, or at least holds that it has been affected in such a way that they have still the ability to seek the mystery of eternal salvation by themselves without the revelation of God. The Lord himself

shows how contradictory this is by declaring that no one is able to come to him "unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44), as he also says to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17), and as the Apostle says, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3).

- Council of Orange 529 AD

John Calvin

Indeed the Word of God is like the sun, shining upon all those to whom it is proclaimed, but with no effect among the blind. Now, all of us are blind by nature in this respect.. Accordingly, it cannot penetrate into our minds unless the Spirit, as the inner teacher, through his illumination makes entry for it.

John Calvin from *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (3.2.34)

David had the law, comprehending in it all the wisdom that could be desired, and yet not contented with this, he prays, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," (Ps. 119: 18.) By this expression, he certainly intimates, that it is like sunrise to the earth when the word of God shines forth; but that men do not derive much benefit from it until he himself, who is for this reason called the Father of lights (James 1: 17,) either gives eyes or opens them; because, whatever is not illuminated by his Spirit is wholly darkness.

John Calvin, from *But Spiritual Discernment is Wholly Lost Until we are Regenerated*

"...Only when God shines in us by the Holy Spirit is there any profit from the Word. Thus the inward calling, which alone is effectual and peculiar to the elect, is distinguished from the outward voice of men."

- John Calvin, Commentary on Romans and Thessalonians on Romans 10:16, p 232

"How can it be said that the weakness of the human will is aided so as to enable it to aspire effectually to the choice of good, when the fact is, that it must be wholly transformed and renewed?" - **John Calvin, Institutes II.III**

"The whole comes to this, that Christ, when he produces faith in us by the agency of his Spirit, at the same time ingrafts us into his body, that we may become partakers of all spiritual blessings." - **John Calvin**

"It is entirely the work of grace and a benefit conferred by it that our heart is changed from a stony one to one of flesh, that our will is made new, and that we, created anew in heart and mind, at length will what we ought to will." - **John Calvin, The Bondage and Liberation of the Will**

"In the elect alone God implants the living root of faith, so that they persevere even to the end." - **John Calvin**

"When we see that the whole sum of our salvation, and every single part of it, are comprehended in Christ, we must beware of deriving even the minutes portion of it from any other quarter." - **John Calvin**

"Because the will renewed is the Lord's work, it is wrongly attributed to man that he obeys prevenient grace with his will as attendant." - **John Calvin**

"God works in his elect in two ways: inwardly, by his Spirit; outwardly, by his Word." - **John Calvin**

"But we have nothing of the Spirit except through regeneration. Everything, therefore, which we have from nature is flesh." - **John Calvin**

"The gift of faith proceedeth from the free election of the Father in Christ, after which followeth necessarily everlasting life. Therefore faith in Christ Jesus is a sure witness of our election, and therefore of our glorification to come." - **John Calvin** on John 6:37

"For the Lord has so knit together the certainty of his Word and his Spirit, that our minds are duly imbued with reverence for the Word when the Spirit shining upon it enables us there to behold the face of God, and, on the other hand, we embrace the Spirit with no danger of delusion when we recognise him in his image, that is, in his Word. Thus, indeed, it is. God did not produce his Word before men for the sake of sudden display, intending to abolish it the moment the Spirit should arrive; but he employed the same Spirit, by whose agency he had administered the Word, to complete his work by the efficacious confirmation of the Word." - **John Calvin**

"The first part of a good work is the will, the second is vigorous effort in the doing of it. God is the author of both. It is, therefore, robbery from God to arrogate anything to ourselves, either in the will or the act." - **John Calvin**

"Faith does not proceed from ourselves, but is the fruit of spiritual regeneration." - **John Calvin**

"When God designs to forgive us he changes our hearts and turns us to obedience by His Spirit." - **John Calvin**

"...nothing good can proceed from our will until it be formed again, and that after it is formed again in so far as it is good, it is of God, and not of us."
- **John Calvin**

"The grace of God has no charms for men till the Holy Spirit gives them a taste for it." - **John Calvin**

Martin Luther

I say that man, before he is renewed into the new creation of the Spirit's kingdom, does and endeavours nothing to prepare himself for that new creation and kingdom, and when he is re-created has does and endeavors nothing towards his perseverance in that kingdom; but the Spirit alone works both blessings in us, regenerating us, and preserving us when regenerate, without ourselves..."

Martin Luther from *The Bondage of the Will* (pg. 268)

"If any man doth ascribe of salvation, even the very least, to the free will of man, he knoweth nothing of grace, and he hath not learnt Jesus Christ aright."

-Martin Luther

When God works in us, the will, being changed and sweetly breathed upon by the Spirit of God, desire and acts, not from compulsion, but responsively.

-Martin Luther

"The will of man without grace is not free, but is enslaved, and that too with its own consent." - **Martin Luther**

"Let all the 'free-will' in the world do all it can with all its strength; it will never give rise to a single instance of ability to avoid being hardened if God does not give the Spirit, or of meriting mercy if it is left to its own strength." - **Martin Luther**

"Free will without God's grace is not free will at all, but is the permanent prisoner and bondsman of evil, since it cannot turn itself to good." - **Martin Luther**

"All the passages in the Holy Scriptures that mention assistance are they that do away with "free-will", and these are

countless...For grace is needed, and the help of grace is given, because "free-will" can do nothing." - **Martin Luther**

"Does it follow from: 'turn ye' that therefore you can turn? Does it follow from "'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart' (Deut 6.5) that therefore you can love with all your heart? What do arguments of this kind prove, but the 'free-will' does not need the grace of God, but can do all things by its own power....But it does not follow from this that man is converted by his own power, nor do the words say so; they simply say: "if thou wilt turn,telling man what he should do. When he knows it, and sees that he cannot do it, he will ask whence he may find ability to do it..." 164" - **Martin Luther**

"God has surely promised His grace to the humbled: that is, to those who mourn over and despair of themselves. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled till he realizes that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsels, efforts, will and works, and depends absolutely on the will, counsel, pleasure and work of Another -- God alone. - **Martin Luther**

"A man who has no part in the grace of God, cannot keep the commandments of God, or prepare himself, either wholly or in part, to receive grace; but he rests of necessity under the power of sin."- **Martin Luther**

"It is false that the will, left to itself, can do good as well as evil, for it is not free, but in bondage...On the side of man there is nothing that goes before grace, unless it be impotency and even rebellion."- **Martin Luther**

"As long as a man is persuaded that he can make even the smallest contribution to his salvation, he remains self-confident and does not utterly despair of himself, and so is not humbled before God. Such a man plans out for himself a position, an

occasion, a work, which shall bring him final salvation, but which will not."- **Martin Luther**

"So these truths are published for the sake of the elect, that they may be humbled and brought down to nothing, and so saved. The rest of men resist this humiliation; indeed, they condemn the teaching of self-despair; they want a little something left that they can do for themselves ... and therefore enemies of the grace of God."- **Martin Luther**

"The saved are singled out not by their own merits, but by the grace of the Mediator."- **Martin Luther**

"He that will maintain that man's free will is able to do or work anything in spiritual cases, be they never so small, denies Christ." - **Martin Luther**, Table Talk

"Even like as St. Paul was converted, just so are all others converted; for we all resist God, but the Holy Ghost draws the will of mankind, when he pleases, through preaching."- **Martin Luther**

"God foreknows nothing by contingency, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His immutable, eternal, and infallible will. By this thunderbolt, "Free-will" is thrown prostrate, and utterly dashed to pieces."- **Martin Luther**

Ulrich Zwingli

"The Christian, delivered from the law, depends entirely on Jesus Christ. Christ is his reason, his counsel, his righteousness, and his whole salvation. Christ lives and acts in him. Christ alone is his leader, and he needs no other guide." - **Ulrich Zwingli**

Francis Turretin

"This calling is an act of the grace of God in Christ by which he calls men dead in sin and lost in Adam through the preaching of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit, to union with Christ and to salvation obtained in him." Francis Turretin

Blaise Pascal

The law demands what it cannot give; grace gives all it demands." - Blaise Pascal

"No man ever believes with a true and saving faith unless God inclines his heart; and no man when God does incline his heart can refrain from believing." - Blaise Pascal

Westminster Confession of Faith

Under the terms of the covenant of grace, God "freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe."

- **Westminster Confession of Faith CHAP. VII. - Of God's Covenant with Man III**

John Owen

"... the whole efficiency of the new birth is ascribed to God alone...The natural and carnal means of blood, flesh, and the will of man, are rejected wholly in this matter." (John 1:13), - **John Owen**

"To say that we are able by our own efforts to think good thoughts or give God spiritual obedience before we are spiritually regenerate is to overthrow the gospel and the faith of the universal church in all ages."- **John Owen**

"To suppose that whatever God requireth of us that we have power of ourselves to do, is to make the cross and grace of Jesus Christ of none effect." [this includes faith] - **John Owen**

"If we believe not with faith divine and supernatural, we believe not at all." - **John Owen**

"As among all the doctrines of the gospel, there is none opposed with more violence and subtlety than that concerning our regeneration by the immediate, powerful, effectual operation of the Holy Spirit of grace." - **John Owen**

"There neither is, nor ever was, in the world, nor ever shall be, the least dram of holiness, but what, flowing from Jesus Christ, is communicated by the Spirit, according to the truth and promise of the gospel." - **John Owen**

"In or towards whomsoever the Holy Spirit puts forth His power, or acts his grace for their regeneration, he removes all obstacles, overcomes all oppositions, and infallibly produces the intended effect." - **John Owen**

"Where any work of grace is not effectual, God never intended it should be so, nor did put forth that power of grace which was necessary to make it so. Wherefore, in or towards whomsoever the Holy Spirit puts forth his power, or acts his grace for their regeneration, he removes all obstacles, overcomes all oppositions,... and infallibly produceth the effect intended." - **John Owen**

"A natural man hath no such thing as free-will at all, if you take it for a power of doing that which is good and well-pleasing unto God in things spiritual." - **John Owen**

"All spiritual acts well-pleasing unto God, as faith, repentance, obedience, are supernatural; flesh and blood revealeth not these things." - **John Owen**

A spiritual darkness and death came by sin on all mankind... In thi state of things, the Holy Spirit undertook to create a new world... wherein righteousness should dwell. And this, in the first place, was by his effectual communication of a new principle of spiritual life to the souls of God's elect... This he does in their regeneration... All our faith and obedience to God, and all our acceptance with him, depend on regeneration or being born again.

—John Owen, "Discourse on the Holy Spirit"

John Flavel

"All believing motions towards Christ are the effects of the Father's drawing. A glorious and irresistible power goes forth from God to produce it, whence it is called the faith of the operation of God." Colossians 2:12." - **John Flavel**

"No repentance, obedience, self-denial, prayers, tears, reformation or ordinances, without the new creation, avail any thing to the salvation of thy soul."

- **John Flavel**

"The opening of your hearts to receive the Lord Jesus Christ is not a work done by any power of your own, but the arm of the Lord is revealed therein."

- **John Flavel**

"As the blood of Christ is the fountain of all merit, so the Spirit of Christ is the fountain of all spiritual life; and until he quicken us and infuse the principle of the divine life into our souls, we can put forth no hand, or vital act of faith, to lay hold upon Jesus Christ."- **John Flavel**

"That soul is dead to which the Spirit of Christ is not given in the work of regeneration; and all its works are dead works."- **John Flavel**

"Let all Arminians know: we have as high an esteem for faith as any men in the world, but yet we will not rob Christ to clothe faith." - **John Flavel**

"The Spirit must therefore first take hold of us before we can live in Christ, and when he doth so, then we are enabled to exert that vital act of faith, whereby we receive Christ." - **John Flavel**

"We acknowledge no righteousness but what the obedience and satisfaction of Christ yields us. His blood, not our faith; his satisfaction, not our believing it, is the matter of our justification before God." - **John Flavel**

"Regeneration expresses those supernatural, divine, new qualities imparted by the Spirit to the soul, which are the principle of all holy action."
- **John Flavel**

"Christ's resurrection is the ground-work of our hope. And the new birth is our title or evidence of our interest in it."
- **John Flavel**

Thomas Manton

The gospel is a ministry of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 8. It not only requireth duty, but giveth power to perform it. The letter of the law requireth, but giveth no principle or inclination to do it; that which is from regenerating grace ... John iii. 6, ' is suited, inclined, disposed, fitted for spiritual life."
- **Thomas Manton**

"It is necessary man should be converted and changed, as well as God satisfied and Satan overcome. Now who can convert himself or change his own heart? That work would cease for ever unless God did undertake it by his all-conquering Spirit." - **Thomas Manton**

Because the Spirit's revelation is the token of God's special love; and that is not given to every one: God has appointed his special love but for a few. The outward revelation is to leave men without excuse; it is but a token of God's comm...on love: 2 Cor. 4:3, 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost'—hidden from their hearts, though it be revealed to their ears. Those that are lost have not the inward discoveries—that is, the effectual discovery and special effect of God's peculiar love: Acts 13:48, 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed;' such have God's special love. - **Thomas Manton**

"A Christian is nothing and hath nothing but what God is pleased to work in him by his creating word... we need not only leave to come to God by Christ, but also quickening and encouragement, for we are backward."- **Thomas Manton**

"We cannot get, nor keep, nor act, nor increase grace of ourselves, if forsaken by the Spirit of grace."- **Thomas Manton**

William Gurnall

"It is one thing to know a truth, and another thing to know it by unction." - **William Gurnall**

"The glory of the work shall not be crumbled and piece-mealed out, some to God and some to the creature, but all entirely paid in to God, and He acknowledged all in all."- **William Gurnall**

"As the eye of the body once put out, can never be restored by the creature's art, so neither can the spiritual eye lost by Adam's sin be restored by the teaching of men or angels. It is one of the diseases which Christ came to cure."- **William Gurnall**

"The regenerating Spirit is compared to the wind. His first attempts on the soul may be so secret that the creature knows not whence they come, or whither they tend; but, before he hath

done, the sound will be heard throughout the soul."- **William Gurnall**

"Indeed all the saints are taught the same lesson - to renounce their own strength, and rely on the power of God; their own policy, and cast themselves on the wisdom of God; their own righteousness, and expect all from the pure mercy of God in Christ, which act of faith is so pleasing to God, that such a soul shall never be ashamed." - **William Gurnall**

Thomas Watson

"Faith is the chief work which the Spirit of God works in a man's heart. In making the world God did but speak a word, but in working faith he puts forth his arm." - **Thomas Watson**

"The greatest of all disorders is to think we are whole and need no help." - **Thomas Watson**

"The ministry of the Word is the pipe or organ; the Spirit of God blowing in it, effectually changes men's hearts... Ministers knock at the door of men's hearts; the Spirit comes with a key and opens the door."- **Thomas Watson**

Thomas Boston

"Believing, repenting, and the like, are the product of the new nature; and can never be produced by the old corrupt nature... as the child cannot be active in his own generation, so a man cannot be active in his own regeneration. The heart is shut against Christ: man cannot open it, only God can do it by his grace." - **Thomas Boston**

"Persuade yourselves, that the faith of the gospel is beyond the power of nature; that there is a necessity of a power from on high to bring you to believe. This will raze the old foundation, and cause you to look up for it."- **Thomas Boston**

"The gospel casts out a rope to hale sinners to land; but the sinner has no hands to lay hold on it; his very faith must be wrought in him by the Spirit." - **Thomas Boston, Necessity of Divine Power In Order To Faith**

"There is no true believing or trusting to the report of the gospel, but what is the effect of the working of a divine power on the soul for that end."

- **Thomas Boston, Necessity of Divine Power In Order To Faith**

"The natural man cannot but resist the Lord's offering to help him; yet that resistance is infallibly overcome in the elect, by converting grace." -

- **Thomas Boston**

"We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case, whoever thou art, who are not born again."

- **Thomas Boston**

"No work nor deed of ours whatsoever, no not faith itself, can be the condition of the covenant of grace properly so called; but only Christ's fulfilling all righteousness."- **Thomas Boston**

"Sinners in their natural state lie dead, lifeless, and moveless; they can no more believe in Christ, nor repent, than a dead man can speak or walk: but, in virtue of the promise, the Spirit of life from Christ Jesus, at the time appointed, enters into the dead soul, and quickens it; so that it is no more morally dead, but alive, having new spiritual powers put into it, that were lost by Adam's fall."- **Thomas Boston**

"Ye are God's building -- All hands of the glorious Trinity are at work in this building. The Father chose the objects of mercy, and gave them to the Son to be redeemed; the Son purchased

redemption for them; and the Holy Ghost applies the purchased redemption unto them."- **Thomas Boston**

"Free grace will fix those, whom free will shook down into a gulph of misery."- **Thomas Boston**

"Call it no more free-will, but slavish lust; free to evil, but free from good, till regenerating grace loosens the bands of wickedness."- **Thomas Boston**

"As the corruption of our nature shews the absolute necessity of regeneration, so the absolute necessity of regeneration plainly proves the corruption of our nature; for why should a man need a second birth, if his nature were not quite marred in the first birth?"- **Thomas Boston**

"Good education is not regeneration. Education may chain up men's lusts, but cannot change their hearts." - **Thomas Boston**

"If a man be new-born, he will desire the sincere milk of the word."- **Thomas Boston**

"The believer is sensible of his infirmities, for it is supposed that he is wrestling under them. He sees, he feels, that he is not man enough for his work; that his own hands are not sufficient for him, nor his own back for his burden; this is what drives him out of himself to the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And thus he lies open to the help of the Spirit, while proud nature in unbelievers is left helpless."- **Thomas Boston**

"The regenerate man's desires are rectified; they are set on God himself, and the things above... Before, he saw no beauty in Christ, for which he was to be desired; but now he is all he desires, he is altogether lovely... regenerating grace sets the affections so firmly on God, that the man is disposed, at God's command, to quit his hold of every thing else, in order to keep his hold of Christ... If the stream of our affections were never

thus turned, we are, doubtless, going down the stream into the pit."- **Thomas Boston**

"There is, in the unrenewed will, an utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God. The natural man's will is in Satan's fetters, hemmed in within the circle of evil, and cannot move beyond it, any more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave. We deny him not a power to choose, pursue and act what is good, as to the matter; but though he can will what is good and right, he can will nothing aright and well. Christ says -- Without me -- that is, separate from me, as a branch from the stock, as both the word and context will bear -- ye can do nothing -- which means, nothing truly and spiritually good."- **Thomas Boston**

"In regeneration, the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of spiritual things... The will is renewed... The will is cured of its utter inability to will what is good. While the opening of the prison to them that are bound, is proclaimed in the Gospel, the Spirit of God comes and opens the prison door, goes to the prisoner, and, by the power of his grace, makes his chains fall off; breaks the bonds of iniquity, wherewith he was held in sin, so as he could neither will nor do any thing TRULY good; and brings him forth into a large place."- **Thomas Boston**

"Saving faith is the faith of God's elect; the special gift of God to them, wrought in them by his Spirit."- **Thomas Boston**

John Bunyan

"All that the Father giveth me SHALL COME... Here, therefore, the Lord Jesus positively determineth to put forth such a sufficiency of all grace as shall effectually perform this promise. They shall come; that is, he will CAUSE them to come, by infusing of an effectual blessing into all the means that shall be used to that end." - **John Bunyan**

"Run, John, run. The law commands but gives neither feet nor hands. Better news the gospel brings; it bids me fly and gives me wings."- **John Bunyan**

"Though it be said that faith cometh by hearing, yet it is the Spirit that worketh faith in the heart through hearing, or else they are not profited by hearing."

- **John Bunyan**

"Faith is a fruit, work, or gift of the Spirit of God, whereby a poor soul is enabled through the mighty operation of God, in a sense of its sins and wretched estate to lay hold on the righteousness, blood, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and coming again of the Son of God which was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, for eternal life."- **John Bunyan**

"Without the Spirit man is so infirm that he cannot, with all other means whatsoever, be enabled to think one right saving thought of God, of Christ, or of his blessed things."- **John Bunyan**

"God, as I may say, is forced to break men's hearts, before he can make them willing to cry to him, or be willing that he should have any concerns with them; the rest shut their eyes, stop their ears, withdraw their hearts, or say unto God, Be gone."- **John Bunyan**

"What comes from this throne of grace is pure grace, and nothing else; clear grace, free grace; grace that is not mixed, nor need be mixed with works of righteousness that we have done. It is of itself sufficient to answer all our wants, to heal all our diseases and to help us at a time of need. It is grace that chooses, it is grace that calleth, it is grace that preserveth, and it is grace that brings to glory; even the grace that like a river of water of life proceedeth from this throne. And hence it is, that from first to last, we must cry, Grace, grace unto it!"- **John Bunyan**

"It is the Spirit that showeth us our sins, and the Spirit that showeth us a Saviour, and the Spirit that stirreth up in our hearts desires to come to God."

- **John Bunyan**

"Men, even the elect, have too many infirmities to come to Christ without help from heaven; inviting will not do."- **John Bunyan**

"God beareth with his own elect, for Christ's sake, all the time of their unregeneracy, until the time comes which he hath appointed for their conversion."

- **John Bunyan**

"Beware of resting in the word of the kingdom, without the spirit and power of the kingdom of that gospel, for the gospel coming in word only saves nobody, for the kingdom of God or the gospel, where it comes to salvation, is not in word but in power."- **John Bunyan**

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. By this one word, down goes all carnal privilege of being born of flesh and blood, and of the will of man. Canst thou produce the birthright?"- **John Bunyan**

"There can be but one will the master in our salvation, but that shall never be the will of man, but of God; therefore man must be saved by grace." - John Bunyan

"To lay hold of and receive the gospel by a true and saving faith is an act of the soul that has been made a new creature, which is the workmanship of God... Wherefore whoever receiveth the grace that is tendered in the gospel, they must be quickened by the power of God, their eyes must be opened, their understandings illuminated, their ears unstopped, their hearts circumcised, their wills also rectified, and the Son of God revealed in them."- **John Bunyan**

Stephen Charnock

"Since we are dead in sin, a spiritual light and flame in the heart suitable to the nature of the object of our worship, cannot be raised in us without the operation of supernatural grace... such a worship God must have, whereby he is acknowledged to be the true sanctifier and quickener of the soul."

- **Stephen Charnock**

Man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself. This is not the birth of a darkened wisdom and an enslaved will. We affect a kind of divinity, and would centre ourselves in our own strength; therefore it is good to be sensible of our own impotency, that God may have the glory of his own grace, and we the comfort of it in a higher principle and higher power than our own...God challenges this work as his own, excluding the creature from any share as a cause: Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, I will cleanse you, I will give you a new heart, I will put a new spirit into you, I will take away the heart of stone, I will give you a heart of flesh, I will put my Spirit into you.' Here I will no less than seven times. Nothing is allowed to man in the production of this work in the least; all that is done by him is the walking in God's statutes by virtue of this principle. The sanctifying principle, the actual sanctification, the reception of it by the creature, the removal of all the obstructions of it, the principle maintaining it, are not in the least here attributed to the will of man. God appropriates all to himself. He does not say he would be man's assistant, as many men do, who tell us only of the assistance of the gospel, as if God in the gospel expected the first motions of the will of man to give him a rise for the acting of his grace. You see here he gives not an inch to the creature. To ascribe the first work, in any part, to the will of man, is to deprive God of half his due, to make him but a partner with his creature. - **Stephen Charnock** from A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration

"Regeneration is a spiritual change; conversion is a spiritual motion." - **Stephen Charnock**

More Puritans

"What God requires of us he himself works in us, or it is not done. He that commands faith, holiness, and love, creates them by the power of his grace ..."

- **Matthew Henry**

The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ implants the principle of [repentance] at regeneration, and converts this principle into a habit in sanctification. True repentance is not the work of nature but of grace; not of man's own spirit but of the Spirit of Christ..."

- **John Colquhoun**

"The passive receiving of Christ is the process by which a spiritual principle of grace is generated in the will of man." -

William Ames

"The inward offer is a kind of spiritual enlightenment, whereby the promises are presented to the hearts of men, as it were, by an inward word."

- **William Ames**

"God works with power, and can make the unwilling willing; if He undertakes the conversion of a soul, it will be converted. All the pious workings of our heart towards God are the fruit and consequence of the powerful working of His grace in us."

- **Thomas Goodwin**

"Christ quickens none but the dead. Why do not the papists attain to this grace of justification? They never see themselves wholly dead, but join some life to the natural estate of man. Therefore Christ quickens them not." - **Richard Sibbes**

"God knoweth we have nothing of ourselves, therefore in the covenant of grace he requireth no more than he giveth, and giveth what he requireth, and accepteth what he giveth." - **Richard Sibbes**

"Saving faith, by which alone a man can heartily close with God in Christ, is above our power and is the gift of God... The Lord commanding this thing, which is above our power, willeth us to be sensible of our inability to do the thing, and would have us to put it on him to work it in us." - **William Guthrie**

"True faith in the lowest degree is the gift of God, and above the power of flesh and blood; for God must draw men to Christ." - **William Guthrie**

"True faith is not a mere passive impression, or an inoperative notion. It is a holy principle wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, producing gracious habits, holy affections, filial reverence, and obedience." -- **Thomas Reade**

"Conversion is a work above man's power... Never think you can convert yourself. If ever you would be savingly converted, you must despair of doing it in your own strength. It is a resurrection from the dead, a new creation, a work of absolute omnipotence... This is a supernatural work."
- **Joseph Alleine, An Alarm To The Unconverted**

"None are drawn to Christ by their calling, nor come to him by believing, but only his sheep, those whom the Father has given him,. Effectual calling runs parallel with eternal election." - **Joseph Alleine**

"Conversion is not a repairing of the old building, but it takes all down, and erects a new structure... The sincere Christian is quite a new fabric, from the foundation to the top-stone. He is a new man, a new creature; all things are become new. Conversion is a deep work, a heart work. It makes a new man in a new world. It

extends to the whole man, to the mind, to the members, to the motions of the whole life." - **Joseph Alleine**

"When Christ comes with regenerating grace, he finds no man sitting still, but all posting to eternal ruin, and making haste toward hell; till, by conviction, he first brings them to a stand, and then, by conversion, turn first their hearts, and then their lives, sincerely to himself." - **Richard Baxter**

"To be the people of God without regeneration, is as impossible as to be the children of men without generation." - **Richard Baxter**

The regenerate are such as sons both by receiving a new nature in their regeneration, and a new title in their adoption... Because they are sons, therefore, God sends the Spirit of His Son into their hearts (Gal. 4:6), and he is styled the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:14-15). Receiving the Son... and believing in his Name, they have authority or right to become the sons of God (John 1:12), being also regenerate, born not of flesh and blood—but of God. And thus, by faith, receiving him, by faith they retain him, or have him abiding in them, as they abide in him. Their union is intimate and mutual. What was lately a ruinous heap is become an animated temple, inhabited by the Divine presence. Where one person of the Godhead is present, there the whole Trinity is present. Amazing thing! The Old and New Testament evince the right which believers—they who are God's own people—have to the abiding indwelling presence of his Spirit as the inhabitant of that temple which they are now become. [All this is through] Emmanuel, the founder and restorer of this temple.

—**John Howe**

"Adoption gives us the privilege of sons, regeneration the nature of sons." - **Stephen Charnock**

"The internal call is when the Spirit of God accompanies the outward administration of the Word to call a man from ignorance to knowledge, and a state of nature to a state of grace." - **Christopher Love**

Jonathan Edwards

"Faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and not the cause of a spiritual experience." - **Jonathan Edwards**

"It is from mean thoughts of God, that you contend with him, because he bestows grace on some, and not on others....Therefore consider what you do in quarrelling with God, and opposing his sovereignty. Consider with whom it is you contend." - **Jonathan Edwards**

"Those who are in a state of salvation are to attribute it to sovereign grace alone, and to give all the praise to him, who maketh them to differ from others."

- **Jonathan Edwards**

"...whatever scheme is inconsistent with our entire dependence on God for all, and of having all of him, through him, and in him, it is repugnant to the design and tenor of the gospel, and robs it of that which God accounts its luster and glory." - **Jonathan Edwards**, God Glorified In Man's Dependence

Without ... VITAL UNION there is, there can be, no faith. This being the case, a VITAL UNION is formed before faith can have any ground of existence; and consequently a justification which is a necessary result of this union takes place. - **Jonathan Edwards**

"The notion that there is a Christ, and that Christ is holy and gracious, is conveyed to the mind by the Word of God, but the sense of the excellency of Christ by reason of that holiness and

grace, is nevertheless immediately the work of the Holy Spirit."-
Jonathan Edwards

"God insists that his sovereignty be acknowledged by us, even in this great matter, a matter which so nearly and infinitely concerns us, as our own eternal salvation. This is the stumbling-block on which thousands fall and perish; and if they go on contending with God about his sovereignty, it will be their eternal ruin. It is absolutely necessary that we should submit to God as our absolute sovereign, and the sovereign over our souls, as one who may have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and harden whom he will." - **Jonathan Edwards**, God's Sovereignty In The Salvation Of Men

"A person therefore may have affecting views of the things of religion, and yet be very destitute of spiritual light. Flesh and blood may be the author of this; one man may give another an affecting view of divine things with but common assistance; but God alone can give a spiritual discovery of them."
- **Jonathan Edwards**

"There is a discovery of the divine superlative glory and excellency of God and Christ peculiar to the saints; and this is as immediately from God as light from the sun, and it is the immediate effect of his power and will."- **Jonathan Edwards**

"Hath any man hope that he is converted? ...that his sins are forgiven, and he received into God's favor, and exalted to the honor and blessedness of being his child, and an heir of eternal life? let him give God all the glory; who alone makes him to differ from the worst of men in this... world, or the most miserable of the damned in hell."- **Jonathan Edwards**

"We are dependent on God's power through every step of our redemption. We are dependent on the power of God to convert

us, and give faith in Jesus Christ, and the new nature. It is a work of creation."- **Jonathan Edwards**

"We are dependent on God, not only for redemption itself but for our faith in the Redeemer; not only for the gift of His Son but for the Holy Ghost for our conversion." - **Jonathan Edwards in a public lecture in Boston July 8, 1731**

"...the first effect of the power of God in the heart in regeneration is to give the heart a Divine taste or sense; to cause it to have a relish of the loveliness and sweetness of the supreme excellency of the Divine nature ... The word of God is no proper cause of this effect: it does not operate by any natural force in it. The word of God is only made use of to convey to the mind the subject matter of this saving instruction: and this indeed it doth convey to us by natural force or influence. It conveys to our minds these and those doctrines; it is the cause of the notion of them in our heads, but not of the sense of the divine excellency of them in our hearts. Indeed a person cannot have spiritual light without the word. But that does not argue, that the word properly causes that light. The mind cannot see the excellency of any doctrine, unless that doctrine be first in the mind; but the seeing of the excellency of the doctrine may be immediately from the Spirit of God; though the conveying of the doctrine or proposition itself may be by the word. So that the notions that are the subject matter of this light, are conveyed to the mind by the word of God; but that due sense of the heart, wherein this light formally consists, is immediately by the Spirit of God. As for instance, that notion that there is a Christ, and that Christ is holy and gracious, is conveyed to the mind by the word of God: but the sense of the excellency of Christ by reason of that holiness and grace, is nevertheless immediately the work of the Holy Spirit."

- **Jonathan Edwards** - A Divine and Supernatural Light

Jonathan Edwards even said of Peter Van Mastricht's "*A Treatise of Regeneration*" "This book is much better than any other book in the world, excepting the Bible, in my opinion." From beginning to end this book was a defence for monergistic regeneration.

George Whitefield

"If we are not inwardly wrought upon, and changed by the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit, and our moral actions proceed from a principle of a new nature, however we may call ourselves Christians, we shall be found naked at the great day." - **George Whitefield**

C. H. Spurgeon

Faith in the living God and his Son Jesus Christ is always the result of the new birth, and can never exist except in the regenerate. Whoever has faith is a saved man.

- **C.H. Spurgeon from "Faith and Regeneration"**

"A man's conversion is nothing, his believing is nothing, his profession is nothing unless he is made to be a new creature in Christ Jesus... If our faith has not brought with it the Holy Spirit, if, indeed, it is not the fruit of the Spirit...then our faith is presumption, and our profession is a lie."

- **C. H. Spurgeon Quote Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol XXX, Receiving The Holy Ghost**

"No sooner is the soul quickened, than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him." -

C.H. Spurgeon

"God the Holy Ghost must illuminate us, or all the suns in the milky way never will." - **C.H. Spurgeon**

"The new creation is as much and entirely the work of God as the old creation"- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"To fear God and to walk uprightly is a higher nobility than blood or birth can bestow."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"We are chosen of God, according to the good pleasure of his will, and this alone is blessedness. Then, since we cannot and will not come to God of ourselves, he works graciously in us, and attracts us powerfully; he subdues our unwillingness, and removes our inability by the almighty workings of his transforming grace."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"Conversion is as divine a work as creation." - **C.H. Spurgeon**
on Psalm LXXX

"If there is to be in our celestial garment but one stitch of our own making we are all of us lost."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"It is not your hold of Christ that saves, but his hold of you!"- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"...none take Jehovah to be their God till he takes them to be his people."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"You may be quite certain that if you love God it is a fruit, not a root."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"We are chosen of God, according to the good pleasure of his will, and this alone is blessedness. Then, since we cannot and will not come to God of ourselves, he works graciously in us, and attracts us powerfully; he subdues our unwillingness, and removes our inability by the almighty workings of his transforming grace."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"The Spirit of God must come, and make the letter alive to you, transfer it to your heart, set it on fire and make it burn within

you, or else its divine force and majesty will be hid from your eyes."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

Without the Spirit of God, we are like a ship stranded on the beach when the tide has receded-there is no moving her until the flood shall once again lift her from the sands. Until the Spirit of God shall thaw the chilly coldness of our natural estate, and bid the life-floods of our heart flow forth, there we must be- ...cold, cheerless, lifeless, and powerless. - **C.H. Spurgeon**

"All that the Father gives me shall come to me."- John 6:37 ... Oh! the power and majesty which rest in the words "shall come." He does not say they have power to come, nor they may come if they will, but they "shall come" ... subdued by sovereign love!"- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"A man is opposed to Christ, he hates his gospel, does not understand it and will not receive it-- the Holy Spirit comes, puts light into his darkened understanding, takes the chain from his bondaged will, gives liberty to his conscience, gives life to his dead soul, ... and the man becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus." - **C.H. Spurgeon**

Preach the necessity for the Holy Ghost's divine operations. ... 'Men must be told that they are dead, and that only the Holy Spirit can quicken them; that the Spirit works according to his own good pleasure, and that no man can claim his visitations or deserve his aid. This is thought to be very discouraging teaching, and so it is, but men need to be discouraged when they are seeking salvation in a wrong manner. To put them out of conceit of their own abilities is a great help toward bringing them to look out of self to another, even the Lord Jesus. The doctrine of election and other great truths which declare salvation to be all of grace, and to be, not the right of the creature, but the gift of the Sovereign Lord, are all calculated to hide pride from man,

and so prepare him to receive the mercy of God.' - **C.H. Spurgeon** (from Lectures to My Students)

"Only God himself can satisfy the craving of a soul really aroused by the Holy Spirit."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"You think that if you had a long hand you could reach the grace of God. No, but if you have a withered hand, that grace can reach you."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"Do not think Christians are made by education; they are made by creation... The vital spark must come from above! Regeneration is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but by the power and energy of the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God alone!"
- **C.H. Spurgeon**, "Light, Natural and Spiritual" No. 660.

"God wrought our deliverance alone, and he alone shall have the praise."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"No Christian man will ever say that faith came of itself without the gift and without the working of the Holy Spirit."- **C.H. Spurgeon**

"When a man is converted to God, it is done in a moment. Regeneration is an instantaneous work. Conversion to God, the fruit of regeneration, occupies all our life, but regeneration itself is effected in an instant. A man hates God-- the Holy Spirit makes him love God. A man is opposed to Christ, he hates his gospel, does not understand it and will not receive it-- the Holy Spirit comes, puts light into his darkened understanding, takes the chain from his bondaged will, gives liberty to his conscience, gives life to his dead soul, so that the voice of conscience is heard, and the man becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. And all this is done, mark you, by the instantaneous supernatural influence of God the Holy Spirit working as he wills among the

sons of men."

From C.H. Spurgeon's, "THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

Augustus Toplady

"Grace alone makes the elect gracious; grace alone keeps them gracious; and the same grace alone will render them everlastingly glorious in the heaven of heavens." - **Augustus Toplady**

"Faith, repentance, and holiness are no less the free gifts of God than eternal life." - **Augustus Toplady**

"Ask almost any man, "Whether he hopes to be saved eternally?" He will answer in the affirmative. But enquire again, "On what foundation he rests his hope?" Here too many are sadly divided

...The Pelagian hopes to get to heaven by a moral life and a good use of his natural powers.

The Arminian by a jumble of grace and free-will, human works, and the merits of Christ.

The Deist by an interested observance of the social virtues.

Thus merit-mongers, of every denomination, agree in making any thing the basis of their hope, rather than that foundation which God's own hand hath laid in Zion.

But what saith Scripture? It avers, again and again, that Jesus alone is our hope: to the exclusion of all others, and to the utter annihilation of human deservings. Beware, therefore, of resting your dependence partly on Christ, and partly on some other basis. As surely as you bottom your reliance partly on the rock, and partly on the sand; so certainly, unless God give you an

immediate repentance to your acknowledgment of the truth, will your supposed house of defence fall and bury you in its ruins, no less than if you had raised it on the sand alone. Christ is the hope of glory." - Augustus Montague Toplady

John Newton

"Though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor what I hope to be--I can truly say that I am not what I once was--a slave to sin and Satan. And I can heartily join with the apostle and say that "by the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10 - **John Newton**

J. C. Ryle

"On the one hand stand salvation by free grace for Christ's sake; but on the other stands renewal of the carnal heart by the Spirit. We must be changed as well as forgiven; we must be renewed as well as redeemed." - **J. C. Ryle**

"Without the blessing of the Lord, your best endeavors will do no good. He has the hearts of all men in His hands, and except He touch the hearts of your children by His Spirit, you will weary yourself to no purpose. Water, therefore, the seed you sow on their minds with unceasing prayer." - **J. C. Ryle**

"Let it be a settled principle ...that men's salvation, if saved, is wholly of God; and that man's ruin, if lost, is wholly of himself." - **J. C. Ryle**

Charles Hodge

"No more soul-destroying doctrine could well be devised than the doctrine that sinners can regenerate themselves, and repent and believe just when they please...As it is a truth both of Scripture and of experience that the unrenewed man can do nothing of himself to secure his salvation, it is essential that he

should be brought to practical conviction of that truth. When thus convinced, and not before, he seeks help from the only source whence it can be obtained."- **Charles Hodge**

"Sanctification is not a work of nature, but a work of grace. It is a transformation of character effected not by moral influences, but supernaturally by the Holy Spirit." - **Charles Hodge**

A. A. Hodge

"Whatever man may do after regeneration, the first quickening of the dead must originate with God."

- **A.A. Hodge**

A. W. Pink

"It is supposed that the Holy Spirit quickens only those who believe. But this is to put the cart before the horse. Faith is not the cause of the new birth, but the consequence of it." - **A. W. Pink**

"We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace...No sinner ever comes to Christ until the Holy Spirit first comes to him! And no sinner will savingly believe on Christ until the Spirit has communicated faith to him."- **A. W. Pink**

"Saving faith is not a native product of the human heart, but is a spiritual grace communicated from on High."- **A. W. Pink**

"The mission of the Holy Spirit in the world today is to apply the benefits of Christ's redemptive sacrifice."- **A. W. Pink**

"The demands of Christ are too humbling to our natural pride, too searching for the callous conscience, too exacting for our fleshly desires. And a miracle of grace has to be wrought within

us before this awful depravity of our nature, this dreadful state of affairs, is changed."- **A. W. Pink**

"Regeneration is that miracle of Divine grace wrought in the soul which enlists the affections Godward, which brings the human will into subjection to the Divine, and which produces a real and radical change in the life...from worldliness to godliness, from disobedience to obedience." (1 John 2:3, 3:9, 4:7, 5:18) - **A. W. Pink**

"We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case, whoever thou art, that art not born again."- **A. W. Pink**

"In every instance where God has decreed an end, He has also decreed every means to that end. The One who decreed the salvation of His elect also decreed to work faith in them."- **A. W. Pink**

"Of himself the fallen sinner can no more repent evangelically than he can create a world. "With men it is impossible" rules out of court all special pleading for the power of man's will. Nothing but a miracle of grace can lead to the saving of any sinner. - **A. W. Pink**

"A natural faith is sufficient for trusting a human object; but a supernatural faith is required to savingly trust in a Divine object."- **A. W. Pink**

"To declare that God helps those who help themselves, is to repudiate one of the most precious truths taught in the Bible, and in the Bible alone; namely, that God helps those who are unable to help themselves, who have tried again and again only to fail."- **A. W. Pink**

"Christ...is supernaturally revealed and applied to the heirs of salvation by the Holy Spirit, when, where, and as He pleases,

and not when, where, and how men please."- **A. W. Pink**

"to mortify the lusts of the flesh, to be crucified unto the world, to overcome the Devil, to die daily unto sin and live unto righteousness, to be meek and lowly in heart, trustful and obedient, pious and patient, loving and gentle is a task far, far beyond the poor resources of fallen human nature."- **A. W. Pink**

D. M. Lloyd-Jones

"Grace is in no sense contingent upon or dependent upon what man does." - **D. M. Lloyd Jones**

"God, through the gospel and by the Holy Spirit, sends out this general call to the whole world, but He calls certain people in particular, and no man is a Christian unless he is called in this special sense. They are people in whom the Word of God has been made effective; it has come to them in power, it has come as a command which they find to be irresistible, and they readily respond to it with the whole of their being." **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"A Christian is the result of the operation of God, nothing less, nothing else. No man can make himself a Christian; God alone makes Christians... A Christian is one who has been created anew; and there is only One who can create, namely, God. It takes the power of God to make a Christian."

- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"In every view of salvation the place given in it to the glory of God provides the ultimate test. The proof that it is truly scriptural is that it gives ALL the glory to God."- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"The extent of man's fall is so great and extensive that no man by the exercise of his own will or understanding can ever save

himself or become a Christian." - **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**,
Exposition of Ephesians

"If God did not make this call effectual for the people whom He has marked out they would not believe. This is the way in which God guarantees their full salvation and glorification. He calls them in such an effectual manner by the Spirit that this is what they now desire above everything else."

- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"Why is it that some have believed? It is because the Spirit has sanctified them, has set them apart, has called them out. It is the call of the Spirit; it is the work of the Spirit in conviction, and calling out, and giving power to believe."- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"Our Lord did not come to tell us what we have to do in order to save ourselves; He came to save us... The Christian doctrine of salvation and redemption is this - that Christ Himself is the salvation."- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"If a man is saved it is because God saves him; if he is lost it is because he has not believed. Paul teaches both and we must not try to get rid of either."

- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"No man can believe the gospel in and of himself; the power of the Spirit alone can lead anyone to belief; without it we are spiritually dead and lost and ruined, and under the wrath of God."- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"A Christian is the result of the operation of God, nothing less, nothing else. No man can make himself a Christian; God alone makes Christians... A Christian is one who has been created anew; and there is only One who can create, namely, God. It takes the power of God to make a Christian."

- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"God causes the word of the gospel, which is preached to all creatures, to come to these people whom He has foreknown, with power, the power of the Holy Ghost."- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"Our very believing is the result of the power of God... There is a strong tendency to talk in a superficial manner about believing, as if it were an easy thing which any man can do if he feels disposed to it. - **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"If you are clear in your theology and in your doctrine you will know that no natural man can believe the gospel... So if you expect a natural man to believe the gospel simply because you are putting it to him, you are denying the gospel; you have not understood it yourself."- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"There has been so much emphasis upon decision, receiving, yielding, being willing, and giving ourselves that salvation is regarded almost exclusively in terms of our activity... [But] We do not give birth to ourselves, we are not reborn because we believe. We believe be...cause we are reborn."

- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"We can do nothing, it is all of God... If God had not quickened us we should still be dead. A dead man cannot give himself life. God quickened us, and because God has put new life into us we are alive in Christ Jesus, and in the realm of the Spirit."- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

"If we hold that we become regenerate because we have already believed, then we have to show why we need to be regenerated at all... The doctrine of regeneration has a great deal to say about election and this doctrine of divine choice... The natural man hates this doctrine more than any other."

- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

J. I. Packer

"Infants do not induce, or cooperate in, their own procreation and birth; no more can those who are 'dead in trespasses and sins' prompt the quickening operation of God's Spirit within them."

- J I Packer

"...sinners cannot obey the gospel, any more than the law, without renewal of heart."- **J I Packer**

"As grace led me to faith in the first place, so grace will keep me believing to the end. Faith, both in its origin and continuance, is a gift of grace."- **J I Packer**

"You thank God [for your salvation] because "you do not attribute your repenting and believing to your own wisdom, or prudence, or sound judgment, or good sense."- **J I Packer**

"The saving power of the cross does not depend on faith being added to it; its saving power is such that faith flows from it"- **J I Packer**

"The gift of sonship to God becomes ours not through being born, but through being born again."- **J I Packer**

"God is triune; there are within the Godhead three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and the work of salvation is one in which all three act together, the Father purposing redemption, the Son securing it and the Spirit applying it."- **J I Packer**

"We do not make friends with God; God makes friends with us, bringing us to know him by making his love known to us...The word know, when used of God in this way, is a sovereign-grace word, pointing to God's initiative in loving, choosing, redeeming, calling and preserving."- **J I Packer**

"It cannot be over-emphasised that we have not seen the full meaning of the Cross till we have seen it as the divines of Dort display it—as the centre of the gospel, flanked on the one hand by total inability and unconditional election, and on the other by irresistible grace and final preservation. - **J I Packer**

J. I. Packer was recently asked, "which theological issues he would commend young Christian leaders to study in order to be prepared for the next fifty years.?" His number one answer was **Regeneration** — He said that the doctrine of regeneration has not been fully appreciated by many who do not understand that to be born again with a new heart and new nature means that we have at our deepest level a new identity and new passionate desires for God's Word and ways. He commended to all young Christian leaders a thorough study on the doctrine of regeneration.

Wayne Grudem

Regeneration is a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us. As the gospel comes to us, God speaks through it to summon us to himself (effective calling) and to give us new spiritual life (regeneration) so that we are enabled to respond in faith. Effective calling is thus God that Father speaking powerfully to us, and regeneration is God that Father and God the Holy Spirit working powerfully in us, to make us alive. Sometimes the term irresistible grace is used in this connection. It refers to the fact that God effectively calls people and also gives them regeneration, and both actions guarantee that we will respond in saving faith. The term irresistible grace is subject to misunderstanding, however, since it seems to imply that people do not make a voluntary choice in responding to the gospel - a wrong idea, and a wrong understanding of the term irresistible grace. The term does preserve something valuable, however, because it indicates that God's work reaches into our hearts to bring about a response that is absolutely certain - even

tough we respond voluntarily. - **Wayne Grudem from Systematic Theology (pg. 699)**

John Piper

"Faith is the evidence of new birth, not the cause of it."- **JOHN PIPER**

John Murray

"Regeneration is inseparable from its effects and one of its effects is faith." - **John Murray**

"We are not born again by repentance or faith or conversion: we repent and believe because we have been born again." - **John Murray**

"The embrace of Christ in faith is the first evidence of regeneration and only thus may we know that we have been regenerated." - **John Murray**

R. C. Sproul

"Regeneration Precedes Faith" - R. C. Sproul

"No sinner has the right to say with impunity, 'God you owe me grace.' If grace is owed, it is not grace. The very essence of grace is its voluntary character. God reserves to himself the sovereign, absolute right to give grace to some and withhold that grace from others." - **R.C. Sproul**

Iain Murray

"Non-Christians are in a condition of blindness and bondage. They are under a power greater than the will of man and from which only Christ can set them free." - **Iain Murray**

"The error of Arminianism is not that it holds the Biblical doctrine of responsibility, but that it equates this doctrine with an un-Biblical doctrine of 'free-will' and preaches the two things as if they were synonymous." - **Iain Murray, The Forgotten Spurgeon**

"To make human action the cause of divine blessing is to overturn the whole nature of salvation." - **Iain Murray**

More...

"To cut off the sinner from all reliance upon himself, his merits and his powers; and throw him, naked and helpless, into the hands of the Holy Spirit to lead him to Christ in faith; should be the one great aim of the ministry." - **Ichabod Spencer**

The new life is not imparted because man perceives the truth, but he perceives the truth because the new life is imparted. A man is not regenerated because he has first believed in Christ, but he believes in Christ because he has been regenerated." - **W. T. Shedd**

"...though man by his sin has lost his power to obey the will of God in a right manner, yet God has not lost his authority to command; which he may use without obliging himself to find man sufficient strength to act in obedience to it." - **John Gill**

Even though the Holy Spirit could accomplish this without means, it pleases Him to use the Word as a means. Nevertheless He immediately (that is, without means) touches the soul in a manner not known to us, exerting a creative power similar as at the time of creation when He moved upon the face of the waters. The Hebrew uses the word מְרַחֵף (Merachepheth), which is indicative of motion that forms and brings forth. As I stated, the Spirit uses the Word in regeneration. "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth" (James 1:18); "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God,

which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

—Wilhelmus â Brakel "The Christian's Reasonable Service"

"Before faith and obedience become acts of man they are gifts of God." - **R.B. Kuypers**

"Whatever contribution men make to their salvation they make by the grace of God. And that makes salvation the work of grace a hundred percent."

- **R. B. Kuiper**

"Regeneration, however it is described, is a divine activity in us, in which we are not the actors but the recipients." - **Sinclair Ferguson**

If salvation is the implantation of a new, infinite life in the soul, it must be a work of God. Self-caused effects can never rise above the character or qualities of their cause. "Flesh gives birth to flesh but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit," Jesus told Nicodemus. This saving grace cannot be caused by the creature, it can only come from God. - **John Hannah from To God be the Glory (pg. 34-5)**

The fruit of regeneration is faith." - **Steven Lawson**

"All that is necessary for salvation is accomplished in Christ's work, even the guarantee of its application." - **Ernest Reisinger**

"Grace is not a reward for faith; faith is the result of grace." - **John Blanchard**

"Regeneration is the fountain, sanctification is the river." - **J Sidlow Baxter**

"God does not expect any good in us but what He has wrought in us." - **Anon**

"Whatever the details and steps of the work of redemption, all must be traced up to this original fountain, the sovereign grace and mercy of our God... The eternal, free, unchangeable, inexhaustible mercy of our God revealed through his dear Son Jesus Christ." - **Edward Bickersteth**

Grace is not like a box of candy that you can send back if you don't want it. Grace is divine favor, an attitude of God's own heart. We cannot stop him from loving us, if he chooses to do so. Nor can we stop him from giving us blessings of salvation: regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification. His purpose in us will certainly be fulfilled, Phil. 1:6, Eph. 1:11. - **John Frame**

If salvation is the implantation of a new, infinite life in the soul, it must be a work of God. Self-caused effects can never rise above the character or qualities of their cause. "Flesh gives birth to flesh but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit," Jesus told Nicodemus. This saving grace cannot be caused by the creature, it can only come from God.

John Hannah from *To God be the Glory* (pg. 34-5)

"All men's hearts are fully set in them to do evil, and would certainly continue impenitent did not God, out of His gracious purpose, efficaciously persuade some to come to Him." - **R.L. Dabney**

"The [Roman Catholic] Council of Trent anathematizes anyone who says you can be saved without the grace of God. The Reformers, however, never claimed Rome believed you can be saved apart from grace. That wasn't the debate. The debate of the Reformation was never, ever about the necessity of grace, it was always about the sufficiency of grace. That remains the issue today in so many contexts." - **James White**

"It is wrong to suppose that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that storm center of the Reformation, was the crucial question in the minds of such theologians as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and John Calvin. This doctrine was important to the Reformers because it helped to express and to safeguard their answer to another, more vital, question, namely, whether sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace, not only justifying them for Christ's sake when they come to faith, but also raising them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith." - **Michael Haykin**

"Yet, after all, faith is not our righteousness. It is accounted to us in order to righteousness (Rom 4:5, GREEK), but not as righteousness; for in that case it would be a work like any other doing of man, and as such would be incompatible with the righteousness of the Son of God; the righteousness which is by faith. Faith connects us with the righteousness, and is therefore totally distinct from it. To confound the one with the other is to subvert the whole gospel of the grace of God. Our act of faith must ever be a separate thing from that which we believe." - **Horatius Bonar**

"Faith is not our physician; it only brings us to the Physician. It is not even our medicine; it only administers the medicine, divinely prepared by Him who healeth all our diseases. In all our believing, let us remember God's word to Israel: I am Jehovah, that healeth thee (Exod. 14:26). Our faith is but our touching Jesus; and what is even this, in reality, but His touching us?" - **Horatius Bonar**

"Faith is not our saviour. It was not faith that was born at Bethlehem and died on Golgotha for us. It was not faith that loved us, and gave itself for us; that bore our sins in its own body on the tree; that died and rose again for our sins. Faith is one

thing, the Saviour is another. Faith is one thing, and the cross is another. Let us not confound them, nor ascribe to a poor, imperfect act of man, that which belongs exclusively to the Son of the Living God." - Horatius Bonar

"...the cross saves completely, or not at all. Our faith does not divide the work of salvation between itself and the cross. It is the acknowledgment that the cross alone saves, and that it saves alone. Faith adds nothing to the cross, nor to its healing virtue."
- **Horatius Bonar**

"Faith is the acknowledgment of the entire absence of all goodness in us, and the recognition of the cross as the substitute for all the want on our part. Faith saves, because it owns the complete salvation of another, and not because it contributes anything to that salvation. There is no dividing or sharing the work between our own belief and Him in whom we believe. The whole work is His, not ours, from the first to last." - **Horatius Bonar**

Cambridge Declaration

"God's grace in Christ is not merely necessary but is the sole efficient cause of salvation... We deny that salvation is in any sense a human work. Human methods, techniques or strategies by themselves cannot accomplish this transformation. Faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature."
- **Cambridge Declaration**

More Historical Church Councils and And Documents Which Teach the Doctrine of Monergistic Regeneration

Related concepts in **The Canons of Dordt of 1618-19** **teaching monergistic regeneration**

Article 11: The Holy Spirit's Work in Conversion

Moreover, when God carries out this good pleasure in his chosen ones, or works true conversion in them, he not only sees to it that the gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly, and enlightens their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but, by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, he also penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant; he activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds.

Article 12: Regeneration a Supernatural Work

And this is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, and the making alive so clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, which God works in us without our help. But this certainly does not happen only by outward teaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a way of working that, after God has done his work, it remains in man's power whether or not to be reborn or converted. Rather, it is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead, as Scripture (inspired by the author of this work) teaches. As a result, all those in whose hearts God works in this marvelous way are certainly, unfailingly, and effectively reborn and do actually believe. And then the will, now renewed, is not only activated and motivated by God but in being activated by God is also itself active. For this reason, man himself, by that

grace which he has received, is also rightly said to believe and to repent.

Article 14: The Way God Gives Faith

In this way, therefore, faith is a gift of God, not in the sense that it is offered by God for man to choose, but that it is in actual fact bestowed on man, breathed and infused into him. Nor is it a gift in the sense that God bestows only the potential to believe, but then awaits assent--the act of believing--from man's choice; rather, it is a gift in the sense that he who works both willing and acting and, indeed, works all things in all people produces in man both the will to believe and the belief itself.

Article 16: Regeneration's Effect

However, just as by the fall man did not cease to be man, endowed with intellect and will, and just as sin, which has spread through the whole human race, did not abolish the nature of the human race but distorted and spiritually killed it, so also this divine grace of regeneration does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and--in a manner at once pleasing and powerful--bends it back. As a result, a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant. It is in this that the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consists. Thus, if the marvelous Maker of every good thing were not dealing with us, man would have no hope of getting up from his fall by his free choice, by which he plunged himself into ruin when still standing upright.

Article 17: God's Use of Means in Regeneration

Just as the almighty work of God by which he brings forth and sustains our natural life does not rule out but requires the use of means, by which God, according to his infinite wisdom and goodness, has wished to exercise his power, so also the

aforementioned supernatural work of God by which he regenerates us in no way rules out or cancels the use of the gospel, which God in his great wisdom has appointed to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason, the apostles and the teachers who followed them taught the people in a godly manner about this grace of God, to give him the glory and to humble all pride, and yet did not neglect meanwhile to keep the people, by means of the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline. So even today it is out of the question that the teachers or those taught in the church should presume to test God by separating what he in his good pleasure has wished to be closely joined together. For grace is bestowed through admonitions, and the more readily we perform our duty, the more lustrous the benefit of God working in us usually is and the better his work advances. To him alone, both for the means and for their saving fruit and effectiveness, all glory is owed forever. Amen.

The Lutheran **Formula of Concord** states that "man of himself, or from his natural powers, cannot contribute anything or help to his conversion, and that conversion is not only in part, but altogether an operation, gift and present and work of the Holy Ghost alone, who accomplishes and effects it, by his virtue and power, through the Word, in the understanding, heart and will of man."

1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter 10: Of Effectual Calling

1._____ Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, he is pleased in his appointed, and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

(*Romans 8:30; Romans 11:7; Ephesians 1:10, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; Ephesians 2:1-6; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 1:17, 18; Ezekiel 36:26; Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 36:27; Ephesians 1:19; Psalm 110:3; Song of Solomon 1:4*)

2._____ This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit; he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.

(*2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:5; John 5:25; Ephesians 1:19, 20*)

Some Confessions of Faith or Historic Creeds that Teach Monergism

Canons of the Council of Orange (529)

The Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)

The Belgic Confession

The Canons of Dordt of 1618-19

The Heidelberg Catechism

Scottish Confession of Faith 1560
The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Anglican Church
The Westminster Confession of Faith
Doctrinal Position of the Lutheran Missouri Synod (1932)

For the record, these are some of the historical persons who opposed monergism:

Semi-Pelagians as led by John Cassian (440); Then later there were clear denunciations from the Council of Trent (1563) Justification Canons, which is the standard of the Roman Catholic Church, Arminius and his followers in the Remonstrance of 1610 also disapproved; Finally, this list also includes individuals such as John Wesley, Charles Finney and a high percentage of evangelicals from 20th century America.

The Jesus Syllogism: A Biblical Reflection on John 6

by John Hendryx

According to Scripture, all persons have a knowledge of God (Rom 1:21), but not all persons know Him in the same way. Some people know Him as a friend, but others know Him only as an enemy. These are, by nature, hostile in mind toward Christ, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness (Rom 1:18), because they love darkness and hate the light (John 3:19, 20). The question I want to put before you to contemplate today is this: why is it that some persons see the beauty and excellence of Christ, knowing Him as a friend, while others find

Jesus and his promises of grace so repulsive, remaining His enemy? What is it that makes people to differ in their response to the promises of the gospel?

The purpose of this short essay is to show from Scripture a discussion Jesus had in his time on earth, where he unequivocally asserts that it is grace alone that makes persons to differ in their response to the gospel: whether they believe it, or reject it. And to drive this point home we will show how Jesus insists that UNLESS God grants His invincible grace no one would ever believe the gospel ... yet ALL persons to whom he grants this same grace will believe unto eternal life.

If you have not considered Jesus' discourse to the Jews in John 6, I would encourage you to take the time to reflect on it today. We find out that, when speaking to the Jews, Jesus uses a syllogism that leaves no room for human boasting. Defined simply, a syllogism is a logical formula consisting of two premises and a conclusion which follows of necessity from them. It is a combination of two judgments infallibly necessitating a third judgment as a consequence of their mutual relation. A simple example of a syllogism is: If all humans are sinners, and all Greeks are humans, then all Greeks are sinners.

You ask, but what does this have to do with Jesus?

In John chapter 6, in the context of Jesus' calling the Jews to believe the gospel about Himself and their resulting unbelief in Him, He presents them with the following two simple yet profound statements, which, when applied together necessitate the conclusion that saving grace is always both invincible and indelible. He claims that those whom, in due season, the Spirit regenerates will infallibly believe the gospel. Grace and faith, therefore, are not the same thing, and when it comes down to why some have faith and not others, Jesus emphatically comes down on the side of grace. What I call "the Jesus syllogism", where He authoritatively communicates this truth, should end all arguments about this issue. it can be found in the

midst of his discourse with the Jews in John 6:37 & John 6:65 where He says:

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.” (6:37) ”... no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” (6:65)

To give context to these texts, just prior to verse 37 he says, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe." Here we observe that Jesus uses the phrase "believe in me" and "come to me" interchangeably. The context of John 6:63-65 forces us to understand "come to me" to mean "believe in me" or "have faith in me". Scholars and biblical commentators would agree that in context Jesus is speaking about faith. In fact this is usually the case with the phrase "come to me" throughout Scripture. But the meaning can usually be found simply by seeing the context in which it was spoken. In this case, when Jesus says "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father," the context is faith. So the passage is now understood to be saying that no one can believe in Jesus unless God grants it. With this in mind, in the context of unbelief in John 6:64, Jesus issues a UNIVERSAL NEGATIVE: "... no one can come to me UNLESS God grants it. Since the phrase "come to Me" is spoken of as a synonym of believing on him, in John 6:65 Jesus is telling us that "no one can believe on Him UNLESS God grants it" through the Spirit, who "gives life" or "quickens" (6:63). But in John 6:37 (the same passage) Jesus likewise issues a UNIVERSAL POSITIVE with the same grammatical construct or phrase "come to me". He says, "All that the Father gives to me WILL COME TO ME".

So if we observe what Jesus explicitly teaches concerning who will believe (by putting these two passages/concepts together), He says, "No one will believe in Me unless God grants it, and ALL to whom God grants it will believe". Jesus, using a syllogism, is making sure that no one thinks that anything apart from grace is what saves them.

That even the very desire for faith and the new heart we need to understand spiritual truth and love Jesus is itself a gift of God. This text leaves no room for any other interpretation. This is profoundly important because it creates the inescapable conclusion that the quickening grace of God is invincible. This is why just prior to saying “no one can come to me UNLESS God grants it”, Jesus says, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail.” This means that it is the Spirit who quickens, raises our dead spirits to life, makes us born from above (John 3:3, 6). The flesh, that is, our sinful nature, cannot regenerate itself and can do no redemptive good of itself, including believe the gospel.

How do I know this is what it means? Because the entire context on both sides of this verse is Jesus speaking of the Jews' unbelief. Jesus is exposing their unbelief and claiming that He is sovereign even over the granting of faith. Faith, He is saying, is not a product of our unregenerate human natures; It is, rather, the product of new life that only He can give us. It is the Spirit alone who, uniting us to Christ, can give life to our dead souls that we may believe. Jesus is affirming the same truth to Nicodemus in John 3, using the same type of language. In verse 6 Jesus tells him, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” And unless one is born of the Spirit he can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God. Jesus never gives Nicodemus an imperative (command) to be born again, but instead, tells him what must happen to him for eternal life to be a reality. Belief springs from a change of nature, for the old man considers the gospel foolish and thus cannot comprehend it (1 Cor 2:14).

On a side note, it is interesting to note that the passage on regeneration in John 6:63-65 is one of the most explicitly Trinitarian passages in all of Scripture. It speaks of this work as the powerful, supernatural work of the Triune God. The Father grants faith in Christ (John 6:65), the redeemer, through the quickening of the Holy Spirit by means of the spoken word (John 6:63). So the Spirit is the

Agent and the word is the instrument used to germinate spiritual life in us, apart from which, no one would believe (V.65).

I have often heard preachers say to people, “all you need to do is believe,” as if this were the easiest thing in the world, but the natural man is unwilling to submit to the gospels' humbling terms. It is a massive affront to our pride to believe that we have no hope save in Jesus alone. J.I. Packer once wisely said, "Sinners cannot obey the gospel, any more than the law, without renewal of heart." We see this at work in this passage when, at the end of John chapter six many of those who previously were with Jesus left because his teaching was too hard, and only the twelve were left. Peter confesses belief however, and Jesus responds, “...have I not chosen you?” But what is so hard about this that everyone else leaves Jesus? It is hard because the gospel of grace alone strips man of all hope that he could have to contribute something, be it ever so small, to his own salvation. Never underestimate the reality of our sinful nature deceiving you this way. The gospel forces us to see our own spiritual impotence and bankruptcy in contributing anything, or even lifting a finger toward our own salvation. But of those who do believe the gospel, we can know with certainty that the Holy Spirit has quickened them and is doing a work of grace in them. Trusting Christ is the immediate result of the new birth, not the cause of it, as John notes in his first epistle:

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God” (1 John 5:1)

It is also important to further understand that Jesus “will never cast out [those the Father has given Him].” (John 6:37). Those whom He draws are the same as those he will raise up at the last day (John 6:44). This is important because those who reject the perseverance of the saints, believing that Christ does not preserve us to the end, are in effect saying that we must somehow maintain our own justification before God. This is to believe that Jesus' atonement for us is not sufficient for salvation. This is a borderline heretical view

akin to what Roman Catholics believe, because it makes maintenance of justification/salvation the work of man and not Christ.

To conclude, Jesus tells us that all those whom God gives to the Son will believe in the Son and no one will believe in the Son whom God does not grant to do so. I bring this passage up to you because it is one of the most forceful passages in all of Scripture relating to the invincibility of saving grace. The grace of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is not only sufficient but efficient, unfailingly bringing about God's desired result. We may resist the gospel when hearing the outward call and even resist stirrings of the Holy Spirit, but no one resists the inward quickening and call of God (Rom 8:30; 1 Cor 1:22-24). In the Old Testament sometimes God would discipline Israel by telling them their crops would fail even though they labored to sow seed. This is proof that all that we do in this world, such as planting crops, requires the prior blessing of God if it is to be fruitful.

Similarly Paul uses an agricultural metaphor when speaking of casting the seed of the gospel. He says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." This simply means that people need to hear the gospel in order to be saved, but we can preach till we are blue in the face and nothing will take root unless the Holy Spirit sovereignly applies that word to the heart that one might hear.

To use some biblical imagery, we cast the seed of the gospel indiscriminately because the Holy Spirit alone can "germinate" the word unto life in Christ. The fallow ground of our hearts must first be plowed up by God, for the soil of our heart is not good by nature, but only by grace. The seed will not find good soil until God makes it so. For Ezekiel the prophet says:

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will

remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

Notice that in order for obedience to take place the Lord must first cleanse our hearts, put a new spirit in us and remove our hardened uncircumcised heart. No one believes and obeys while their heart is still stone. Our blind eyes must be opened, our deaf ears unstopped, and our corrupt nature supernaturally changed by the Holy Spirit, before we can begin to have any good thoughts about Christ. The Bible likens the new birth, or regeneration, to the first creation (2 Cor. 5:17). God let light shine into what was darkness. And God breathed life into lifeless man and then man, because of the new principle of life now within him, breathed and walked. Likewise regeneration can be likened to God's first breath in man, and faith, to Adam's first breath. The former is monergistic and the later, while it springs from the principle of grace that now exists within, is participatory. Both the creation and the maintaining are all of grace, but only God's breathing life into us (ex nihilo) is monergistic (that is, it is the work of God alone). When God brings forth something out of nothing, it is monergistic, but when we breathe (or have faith) as a result of God's act, we are now participating, so by definition this is not monergistic, but all springs forth from God's initial monergistic act of giving life from nothing. "Regeneration is the fountain; sanctification is the river." - J. Sidlow Baxter

"...since you have been born again [by the agency of the Spirit], not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God [instrument]" 1 Peter 1:23

A Short Response to the Arminian Doctrine of Prevenient Grace

by John Hendryx

The term "prevenient grace" – a distinctly Arminian doctrine – refers to a universal grace which precedes and enables the first stirrings of a good will or inclination toward God and it explains the extent or degree to which the Holy Spirit influences a person prior to their coming to faith in Christ. The Arminian, together with the Calvinist, affirms total human moral inability and utter helplessness of the natural man in spiritual matters and the absolute necessity for supernatural prevenient grace if there is to be any right response to the gospel. Like Calvinists, Arminians agree that, apart from an act of grace on God's part, no one would willingly come to Christ. This point is important to distinguish so as to not confuse Classical Arminianism with either Finneyism or Semi-Pelagianism, which both reject the need for prevenient grace. So Christ's redemption is universal in a provisional sense but conditional as to its application to any individual, i.e. those who do not resist the grace offered to them through the cross and the gospel. Prevenient grace, according to Arminians, convicts, calls (outwardly), enlightens and enables before conversion and makes conversion and faith possible. While Calvinists believe the inward call to the elect is irrevocable and effectually brings sinners to faith in Christ, the Arminian, on the other hand understand God's grace as ultimately resistible. In short, they affirm that prevenient grace, which is given to all men at some point in their life, temporarily brings the sinner out of his/her condition of total depravity and puts them in a neutral state of free will wherein the natural man can either accept or reject Christ.

Prevenient grace defined as follows by "Wesley's Order of Salvation":

"Human beings are totally incapable of responding to God without God first empowering them to have faith. This empowerment is known as "Prevenient Grace." Prevenient Grace doesn't save us but, rather, comes before anything that we do, drawing us to God, making us WANT to come to God, and enabling us to have faith in God. Prevenient Grace is Universal, in as much as all humans receive it, regardless of their having heard of Jesus. It is manifested in the deep-seated desire of most humans to know God."

Furthermore, in reply to the orthodox assertion that the sinners' generation of faith itself implies merit the Arminian will often respond by affirming that the human will, aided by prevenient grace, is free, even in accepting pardoning grace; that though this acceptance is no more meritorious than a beggar's acceptance of an offered fortune, yet it is accepted freely, and with the full power of rejection, and is none the less grace for that. In other words, every sinner determines for himself, whether or not he will be saved, and thus determines his own election based on whether or not he responds positively to the gospel offered to him by God while under the influence of prevenient grace. The Arminian contends or reasons that anything else would be unfair of God.

Response:

While the example of the beggar may sound reasonable at first glance, I propose we look more closely at these concepts. What are the similarities and differences of Arminian theology with orthodoxy on the concept of saving grace?

Arminian Similarities with Reformed Theology:

- (1) All men need to be saved from God's wrath through the atoning work of Christ
- (2) Both Reformed and Arminians believe, that, without the grace of God, man is totally incapable of responding to the Gospel. In this both positions are in total agreement.

Arminian Differences with Reformed Theology is in its understanding of the meaning of grace:

Let's observe at least three ways in which prevenient grace sharply differs from the monergistic view:

(1) The Arminian doctrine of "prevenient grace" is exhaustively universal; meaning, it is extended to all people regardless of whether or not they have heard the gospel. This appears to be in direct contradiction to the Bible, for instance the apostle's question: "how can one be believe if they have not heard?" and "...faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." - Rom 10:14-17. This view, then, affirms (or at least make room for) the idea that the gospel is not cognitively necessary for one to be saved. In spite of the overwhelming case made by Paul against the Gentiles in Romans 1-3, some Arminians believe that if a person is faithful, that is, responds believingly to, the degree of revelation made to them then God will accept that faith and impute it to them as righteousness, whether or not that have actually heard the gospel. This is, of course, purely speculative and not derived from revelation.

(2) Prevenient grace is not effectual but rather renders the sinner "neutral" – able to decide for themselves whether they will accept or reject Christ. First, since we must always go to Scripture as our authority in matters of faith (especially matters of this magnitude) we must seriously inquire whether there is any biblical evidence whatsoever to substantiate the Arminian dogma that there is a state of being that God places sinners into that is neither regenerate nor unregenerate, an in-between state which is neither corrupt nor good. It is imperative that this "state" is substantiated biblically, not merely by unaided speculation or logical necessity. Where does the Bible say that when God's gives grace to people they become partly regenerate but not fully regenerate?

Assuming for the sake of argument that such a state was shown to exist, more questions quickly arise. If, as the result of prevenient grace, our desires are suddenly "neutral" what, then, causes a man to choose one way or another? In Jesus eyes, a person's decisions and acts are inevitably determined by their inward condition, "A good

tree bears good fruit, a bad tree bears bad fruit," to think otherwise is impossible. What then of a tree that is neither good nor bad, what determines its fruit? You simply cannot have a will that doesn't care (or is disinclined) and simply believes or rejects Christ by chance. To argue such would imply that God elects his people based upon their chance selection of Him. On the contrary, people believe in Christ because they see the awfulness of their sin, their great need of a Savior and the beauty, truth and excellency of the gospel of Christ. Only the spiritual regenerate man can see understand and see goodness in the gospel (1 Cor 2:14), an impossible supposition for one with a unrenewed heart. A blind man cannot see unless his eyes are opened. Likewise, those blind spiritually can only see if they are healed and when they are healed, they see. It is both biblical and self-evident that we always choose something based on who we are by nature – an apple tree will never produce grapes.

Moreover, we should take notice that Jesus tells us many times in Scripture why some do not believe. "You do not believe because you are not my sheep" (John 10). The order here is of great importance. Jesus does not say, "You are not my sheep because you do not believe," thereby making belief a condition of becoming a sheep. Rather, he says the exact opposite, "You do not believe because you are not my sheep." To believe therefore, far from being a condition, is the sign (or fruit) that one is already a sheep. So too, Jesus speaking to some of the Jews said, "Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." The nature of the person determines the choice he makes. And who exactly is "of God"? Jesus answers clearly in his prayer to the Father in John 17: 9 when he says, "I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours." The Father has set apart certain persons for Himself and, in His prayer here, Jesus is seen to only pray for them, while simultaneously excluding others who were not "given" to Him.

Ironically, the Arminian believes in compatibilism prior to prevenient grace ... meaning that man makes necessary moral choices based on his nature. Yet after prevenient grace, he believes

that man is freed from nature (without being given a new one), yet no biblical evidence is forthcoming to show the source of this doctrine. In other words, prior to God's grace the Arminian, like the Calvinists see the impotence of the human will, but when grace comes, he switches gears by speculating that man now does not choose according to nature (as before) but is now granted a libertarian free will, i.e. that man can choose otherwise regardless of who he is by nature. Baffling, since never once does the Bible give a shred of evidence that people are given a temporary libertarian free will. Instead, returning again to Jesus' words, we hear, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad" (Matt. 12:33). The doctrine of Arminian prevenient grace would therefore appear to have its origin in the idea that God must be "fair." Arminians logically conclude that since God is good he must treat those opposed to and in rebellion against Him with absolute equity. In order to preserve this definition of "fairness," the Arminian declares that God must give all people an equal chance. However, God is not obligated to give children of the devil (John 8:44) any chance at all if He does not want. God would have been perfectly just in doing to man what he did to the fallen angels, for whom He did not die. And if God could justly let all mankind go to hell (which we all agree) then why would it be unjust of God to forgive the debts of some, passing over the others? Does not Jesus Himself tell the parable of the landowner which ends by saying "Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" (Matt 20:15).

And regardless, if this is the case, then why would God be pleased with a choice of a person that is indifferent about the choice, someone that does not love the object of its choice? If the motive for believing the gospel is indifferent, so is the act ... If we do not desire God, choice is either impossible or it is by mere chance.

Again, the Bible never teaches in a clear and open manner the concept of prevenient grace. The above response is, therefore, simply to further render absurd this untenable belief. Arminians awkwardly force this on the Scripture in order to hold their system together.

This alone should lead us to reject it. Unaided reason should NEVER be the foundation of our theological insights, especially one of such critical importance.

(3) Arminians hold that while still unregenerate (or partly regenerate as they would have it) some can and will improve on that grace. In other words, God's prevenient grace takes us part of the way to salvation (makes us partly regenerate) but man's will (or nature) does the rest (or completes it). Given this were the case, if all human beings have this prevenient grace at some point in their life, consider, if two persons hear the same gospel, why does one man believe and not the other? What makes them to differ? Obviously it was something in nature which made the difference, not grace. From this we surmise that it wasn't prevenient grace that makes these two persons to differ from one another, but rather, something in the man who made use of prevenient grace that made them to differ. Simply put, if we desire to believe in Christ, where did this good desire come from? Grace or nature? The Arminian may say "grace". If so, why did not the one who rejected him also have this much grace? Since grace is not what ultimately sets the two men apart it must be something else. In other words, one man somehow had the natural or innate ability to create a right thought, generate a right affection, or originate a right volition toward Christ... and if these thoughts were themselves autonomous and independent of this prevenient grace that led to their salvation, springing from the heart of natural man, then this is quite a troublesome doctrine. This leads us to ask, why do some men make use of prevenient grace and not others? The Arminian, therefore, still sees the grace of God as only a penultimate cause of salvation while the sinners' faith is what is ultimate, the *sine qua non* of his salvation. It can therefore be demonstrated that Arminian prevenient grace does not teach salvation by grace alone but salvation by grace plus nature. So whether or not God extends prevenient grace you still have the same result: one man from his unregenerate will generates belief, another man from his unregenerate will does not generate belief and rejects Christ. Does one have a natural humility lacking in the other? Is not humility

itself a gift of grace? The Apostle says, "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7), and, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). In the case of believing the gospel, one person is making a morally good choice and the other a morally bad choice. In fact, any way to look at Arminian prevenient grace, it comes down to one person's internal principle of merit that ultimately makes him to differ from others. This then leads to boasting that they are unlike others who don't have faith. But again, even more importantly, prevenient grace has no biblical support and this is what makes the position untenable. Arminians are making the assistance of grace depend on the humility or obedience of man and does not agree that it is the effectual gift of grace itself that we are obedient and humble. I guess Arminians believe that some beggars are more equal than others. :) [Click here](#) to see how one Arminian Phd. attempts an answer to this question.

In the end the problem with Arminian prevenient grace is that it is guided by unaided human logic and rationality rather than the Scriptures. The Scriptures testify that the man without the Spirit cannot understand the things of God (1 Cor 2:14). Even with prevenient grace theoretically putting humanity in a neutral position, we would still lack the quickening Spirit to give us what we need. How is it then that the natural man can understand or desire God independent of such quickening and renewing grace? Can a blind man see prior to his eyes being opened? Can a man with a heart of stone love and desire God before His heart is made flesh? How can an ox desire flesh to eat ...can water rise above its source? We believe that salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end. He deserves all the glory. While we were still helpless Christ died for us and His death purchased everything we need to be saved, including our regeneration. For an unregenerate man would not ever desire the things of God on his own. If God's grace does not save us then man still ultimately decides based on some principle within, either good or evil.

Lastly, I want to make clear that I am not here trying to show that Arminians are unsaved. On the contrary, I write this in the hope it will raise awareness of the inconsistency among our Arminian brethren. It is true that God often saves us in spite of our bad or inconsistent theology, or else grace would not be grace. In fact, He saved all of us in spite of ourselves and our incorrect views. If we know or understand anything it is because God chose to reveal it to us (Matt 16:17). But we must make clear that Arminian theology is not orthodox in its view of grace, since it has no biblical support to speak of. (Obviously only one of these positions can be true so one or the other is orthodox). But their inconsistency is such that I believe most are sincere believers. For example, that the Arminian affirms, together with us, that they justly deserve the wrath of God, save in the mercy of Jesus Christ alone, means that perhaps we need to give them some slack. But we should never let up or grow weary on challenging them to see the deeply flawed problem in their theology of grace, since God has made it abundantly clear that He saves us by grace ALONE. Consider: to the degree that we think wrong thoughts about God and how He saves us, to that same degree we are guilty of idolatry and, in this God is not pleased. So we must declare such an ineffectual view of grace to be wrong, but at the same time, also see it as a battle taking place inside the camp. It is serious enough to warrant a fierce debate that may continue to the end of the age because the idea of prevenient grace is really just a lesser degree of the same error as semi-pelagianism (that is, it is synergistic: i.e. that faith is produced by our unregenerated human nature) and still gives a man too much hope in himself and his own natural abilities. Of the true believer, Paul says that they worship in the Spirit, glory in Christ Jesus alone and have no confidence in the flesh (Phil 3).

My prayer for the universal church is that we would all come into the unity of the truth as God has revealed it to us ... and that God-dishonoring theology, wherever it may come from, would be trampled under foot.

Note:

R.C. Sproul once said,

As the name suggests, prevenient grace is grace that “comes before” something. It is normally defined as a work that God does for everybody. He gives all people enough grace to respond to Jesus. That is, it is enough grace to make it possible for people to choose Christ. Those who cooperate with and assent to this grace are “elect.” Those who refuse to cooperate with this grace are lost. The strength of this view is that it recognizes that fallen man’s spiritual condition is severe enough that it requires God’s grace to save him. The weakness of the position may be seen in two ways. If this prevenient grace is merely external to man, then it fails in the same manner that the medicine and the life preserver analogies fail. What good is prevenient grace if offered outwardly to spiritually dead creatures?

On the other hand, if prevenient grace refers to something that God does within the heart of fallen man, then we must ask why it is not always effectual. Why is it that some fallen creatures choose to cooperate with prevenient grace and others choose not to? Doesn’t everyone get the same amount?

Think of it this way, in personal terms. If you are a Christian you are surely aware of other people who are not Christians. Why is it that you have chosen Christ and they have not? Why did you say yes to prevenient grace while they said no? Was it because you were more righteous than they were? If so, then indeed you have something in which to boast. Was that greater righteousness something you achieved on your own or was it the gift of God? If it was something you achieved, then at the bottom line your salvation depends on your own righteousness. If the righteousness was a gift, then why didn’t God give the same gift to everybody?

Perhaps it wasn’t because you were more righteous. Perhaps it was because you are more intelligent. Why are you more intelligent? Because you study more (which really means you are more

righteous)? Or are you more intelligent because God gave you a gift of intelligence he withheld from others?

To be sure, most Christians who hold to the prevenient grace view would shrink from such answers. They see the implied arrogance in them. Rather they are more likely to say, “No, I chose Christ because I recognized my desperate need for him.” That certainly sounds more humble. But I must press the question. Why did you recognize your desperate need for Christ while your neighbor didn’t? Was it because you were more righteous than your neighbor, or more intelligent?

The question for advocates of prevenient grace is why some people cooperate with it and others don’t. How we answer that will reveal how gracious we believe our salvation really is. The \$64,000 question is, “Does the Bible teach such a doctrine of prevenient grace? If so, where?”

We conclude that our salvation is of the Lord. He is the One who regenerates us. Those whom he regenerates come to Christ. Without regeneration no one will ever come to Christ. With regeneration no one will ever reject him. God’s saving grace effects what he intends to effect by it.

[R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, Ill.]

The Relationship Between Irresistible Grace and the Atonement

by John Hendryx

In a discussion relating to particular redemption (AKA limited atonement) I discussed how all redemptive blessings are found in Christ, including the blessing of irresistible grace.

A visitor responded:

John, Please help me understand your logic here. Irresistible grace is wrought through the atonement and not election? I am under the impression that God will have mercy on whom he wills. Whether the atonement is limited or not God has chosen his elect and they are atoned for. I am not seeing how by acknowledging that "irresistible grace is found only in Christ" we "acknowledge limited atonement by default". How are the two connected?

My response

Hello _____.

Election, by itself, has never saved anyone. It is God's blueprint, so to speak, of what he intends to do in time through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. God the Father elects, the Son redeems them, and the Spirit applies the work of Christ to the same. The Trinity, in other words, works in harmony, to bring about the redemption of the elect. God the Father does not do this alone, APART from the work of the other two Persons of the Trinity. All redemptive grace is found in Christ. Ephesians 1:3 explains it thus:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."
(Eph 1:3-6)

Please note that all spiritual blessings are IN CHRIST, that the Father chose us IN CHRIST, that He predestined us to adoption as sons IN CHRIST. So yes, you are right, God elects according to his good pleasure but he gets the job done through Jesus Christ.

Particular redemption is connected to irresistible grace in that, irresistible grace (all acknowledge) is given to the elect alone. It is not granted to the non-elect. And all spiritual blessing are found in Christ... Therefore, Christ died in a way, a redemptive way, to secure irresistible grace for the elect, that he did not for the non-elect. Irresistible grace was not purchased for the non-elect PERIOD. In other words, the redemptive blessing of irresistible grace is what Christ purchased on the cross to render certain the elect would respond positively to the **outward gospel call**. God causes the the gospel, which is preached to all creatures, to come to those He has foreknown, with the power of the Holy Spirit's convicting, regenerating work accomplish through applying Christ's redemptive benefits. No redemptive grace is to be had outside of the work of Christ. All spiritual blessings are found in Christ and Christ alone. To claim otherwise is to deny Christ as our Savior and that His work is finished. At the very least, it denies that His work is sufficient to save completely. Those who deny limited atonement may well believe Christ's atonement was necessary, but it was not sufficient. Even Roman Catholics believe the grace of Christ was necessary, but it was not enough ... they must believe and persevere to the end and thus MAINTAIN their own just standing before God. We affirm that Christ work is complete ... it is totally sufficient to save. He is the author AND perfecter of our faith. There is nothing we can do to improve upon that. 1 Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, **he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**" The Text declares that our hope in Christ comes about through the new birth, which is direct result of our being intimately joined to Christ's resurrection.

In 529 AD the Council of Orange worte the following;

"...if anyone affirms that we can form any right opinion or make any right choice which relates to the salvation of eternal life... that is, assent to the preaching of the gospel through our natural powers without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit ...he is led astray by a heretical spirit." The Council of Orange, CANON 7.(529 AD)

John Owen said, "To suppose that whatever God requireth of us that we have power of ourselves to do, is to make the cross and grace of Jesus Christ of none effect."

Consider: that whatever God requires of us also includes faith. We do not have the power to believe the gospel without the the Spirit uniting us to Jesus Christ.

In Ezekiel 36:25 God says,

I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Notice that God first gives us a new heart so that we may keep his laws. Without the Holy Spirit, the word does not find a place in our heart. Jesus told his disciples that he must go to the Father so the the Spirit would come to the whole world. So again the Bible forces us to conclude that The Trinity works together to bring about his redemptive purposes.

Monergistic Regeneration and the Trinity

by John Hendryx

Monergism: The view that the Holy Spirit is the only agent who effects **regeneration** of Christians. It is on contrast with synergism, the view that there is a cooperation between the divine and the human in the regeneration process. (Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms)

God the Father made a pretemporal covenant with the Eternal Son (Psalm 110; John 6:38, 17:2; Eph 1:3, 4; Heb. 6:16-17; Heb 10:5) to enter into human history and redeem a people for Himself through His blood. Among the redemptive blessings that flow from the finished work of the cross are the effectually calling and supernaturally drawing of those same people to Himself (John 6:37, 44, 63-65; 15:16, Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4). Christ himself was chosen to be our Savior before the creation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20; Ephesians 1:4) and accomplishes this for His people in last times by taking on their flesh, fulfilling the demands of the law **for them** in His life, death and physical resurrection. Through human means of preaching the gospel, the Holy Spirit applies the life-giving work of the Son to the same by raising them from spiritual death, opening their blind eyes, unplugging their deaf ears, disarming their natural hostility and granting them new spiritual affections which see the truth, beauty and excellency of Christ (Ezek 36:26; Rom 10:17; 12:3; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor 4:13; Eph 6:23; Phil 1:29; 1 Thess 2:13; Heb 12:2). He then counts the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto those united to Him by the Holy Spirit through faith.

Due to the fall, the natural condition of human beings is that of total depravity which means that apart from a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit applying the work of Christ, no person would naturally submit to the humbling terms of the gospel. The will, affections, mind and body are enslaved to sin and corruption until Christ sets us

free (Ps 51:5; Matt. 15:19; Rom 7:14-15; Eph 4:17-19; John 8:36; Rom. 6:22). Any pretended obedience on the part of the natural man does not spring from a renewed heart that loves God so it cannot earn them the right to eternal life. The result of human depravity is that the natural man is impotent to respond in faith to God (Rom 8:7, 8; 1 Cor 2:14). Only the work of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Redeemer as revealed in Scripture (John 20:31; Rom 10:17) infallibly results in His people's response of faith (Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). The grace of God restores fallen human affections by softening the heart and illumining the mind so that distorted and hostile views of God are corrected (Eph 2:4-6; 4:17-24; Phil 2:12-13). In other words, it is grace itself that makes us humble and willing to respond in faith - Our certain response is, therefore, grounded in the initiative and regenerating work of God, not in any natural capacity.

Since He knows His sheep by name, God's love for his sheep is both intensive and particular, not a generic conditional love. When He sees that His lamb is lost He goes off in search of it until He finds it. He then scoops it up in his arms, puts it on His shoulders and carries it home. He does not merely go out and stand at a distance calling to any old stray sheep, hoping in vain that it wants to come home with Him. No, God calls us by name (since His sheep know his voice) and He mercifully does what is best for us. To those who do not follow Him Jesus said, *"you do not believe **because** you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* (John 10:26, 27) In other words, He saves His loved ones, not with an ineffectual, passive love but with an active love which accomplishes that which he set out to do and actually gets the job done.

Monergistic regeneration is a redemptive blessing purchased by Christ for those the Father has given Him (1 Pet 1:3, John 6:37, 39). This grace works independently of any human cooperation and conveys that power into the fallen soul whereby the person **whois to be saved** is effectually enabled to respond to the gospel call (Acts 2:39, 1 Cor 1:2, 9, 24, Rom 8:30 John 1:13, Acts 13:48). It is that

supernatural power of God alone whereby we are granted the spiritual ability and desire to comply with the conditions of the covenant of grace; that is, to apprehend the Redeemer by a living faith, to come up to the terms of salvation, to repent of idols and to love God and the Mediator supremely. The Holy Spirit, in quickening the fallen soul, mercifully illumines the mind and renews the heart, giving God's elect the capacity and inclination to exercise faith in Jesus Christ (John 6:44, 1 John 5:1). This instantaneous and intensely personal work of God is the means by which the Spirit brings us into living union with Him.

The Westminster Confession, also points out that faith is both a requirement of the covenant and something that God enables man to fulfill by granting him new spiritual capacities and affections:

Under the terms of the covenant of grace, God "freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; **requiring** of them **faith in him**, that they may be saved, and promising to **give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.**"

- Westminster Confession of Faith CHAP. VII. - Of God's Covenant with Man III (emphasis mine)

The great Puritan Divine Richard Sibbes once said, "God knoweth we have nothing of ourselves, therefore in the covenant of grace he requireth no more than he giveth, and giveth what he requireth, and accepteth what he giveth."

In other words, what God requires **of us** (faith, repentance, to love Him supremely) he grants **to us** in Christ (2 Timothy 2:25; Eph 2:5,8). This means that while there are many precious promises declared to us in the gospel (Rom 10:4), yet the Lord understands that **the outward letter**, even though vigorously preached, does not itself spiritually enable sinners to receive Jesus for righteousness and salvation. A command and a promise is established in the gospel

that whoever receives Jesus will be accepted and justified. Yet none of us, due to our natural love for darkness, are inclined to receive the Christ of the gospel (John 3:19). Therefore, in His great mercy to those He loves, Jesus sends His Holy Spirit to quicken us (John 6:63; John 1:13, 3:6) to a living faith that apprehends Christ and His benefits. The dead in sin are granted new life (John 5:25) by the Spirit who works in us all that is required to be made partakers of his righteousness that we might be reconciled to God. As the Spirit illumines and regenerates the soul, Christ's perfect faith and obedience are reckoned to us by God's grace, and on account of Him are we accepted as righteous before Him. What we sinners were incapable of due to pride and evil inclinations, Christ purchased **for us** as the Spirit unites us to His life, death and resurrection. This was so the righteousness of the law might be met in us. This purchased grace which includes our regeneration, justification and sanctification is all that power and righteousness which Christ has procured for us and of which He makes us partakers.

In fact, all the benefits of our salvation can be traced back to Christ and His finished work on the cross. Regeneration, one of these redemptive benefits (1 Pet 1:3), is granted to those God has set His affection on before creation (Eph 1:4), that they may appropriate those blessings at His appointed and accepted time. Therefore, it is important to not confuse the concepts of regeneration and justification. Regeneration gives us a new sense that beholds God's beauty and excellency. This inward working of the Holy Spirit gives rise to faith in Christ and appropriates the blessing of justification. These are all spiritual blessings which Christ accomplished for us by fulfilling the covenant from our side in perfectly obeying both the passive and active demands of God's law. He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we deserved. The sinner, once willfully blind to God's loveliness, making it impossible for him to have natural affection for God or to understand Spiritual things (1 Cor 2:14), is now granted the Holy Spirit, who circumcises the heart (Ezekiel 36:26, Colossians 2:11), heals our blindness and illumines the mind to understand the knowledge of Christ in the Scriptures

(John 6:45; 1 John 5:20). By the Spirit alone can we apprehend God's beauty and unsurpassed excellency which gives rise to new [affections](#) for Him infallibly leading to a living faith in Christ. To come to Christ we must understand and desire Him and such holy desires and understanding require a supernatural work of God's grace. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit we have no spiritual knowledge and thus our pride and deep-rooted affection for sin will hinder us from believing the gospel.

"...if anyone makes the assistance of grace depend on the humility or obedience of man and does not agree that it is a gift of grace itself that we are obedient and humble, he contradicts the Apostle who says, "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7), and, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). - Council of Orange 529 A.D.

Why is this so vitally important? Simply because it exalts the glory of Jesus Christ and it is biblically sound. The Scripture teaches that everything related to the gospel is designed to glorify Christ and abase man. So it follows that anything that diminishes Christ's glory is inconsistent with the true gospel. Therefore those who teach that the autonomous faith of **natural men** is what causes them to differ with others, rather than the **grace** of God which gives rise to their faith, are unduly exalting the role of man in salvation.

Monergism is the biblical doctrine that **regeneration (the new birth) both precedes and elicits faith in Christ** in those whom the Holy Spirit has sovereignly determined to save (John 6:63-65; Eph 1:3-5; Acts 16:14b; 1 John 5:10, 20). When preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel (James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23, 25) has the power to open blind eyes and unstop deaf ears. Paul, when speaking to the elect at the church of the Thessalonians said, "*for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in **power** and in the **Holy Spirit** and with **full conviction**.*" (1 Thess 1:5) In other words, the word of God does **not** work "*ex opere operato*," (automatically) rather, it is the work of the Holy Spirit sovereignly

dispensing grace ([John 3:8](#)), quickening the heart through the word to bring forth life. So the written word is not the material of the spiritual new birth, but rather its means or medium. "The word is not the begetting principle itself, but only that by which it works: the vehicle of the mysterious germinating power" [ALFORD]. It is because the Spirit of God accompanies it that the word carries in it the germ of life. The life is in God, yet it is communicated to us through the word.

The gospel declares that repentance and faith (commands of God) are themselves God's working in us the desire both to will and to do (2 Tim 2:25, Eph 2:5, 8) and not something that the sinner himself contributes towards the price of His salvation. Repentance and faith can only be exercised by a soul after, and in immediate consequence of, its regeneration by the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:1, 10; Acts 16:14b; Acts 13:48; John 10:24-26; Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 6:37; John 1:13; 1 Cor. 4:7; 1 Cor. 15:10; Jas. 1:17; John 3:27; 1 Pet 1:3). God regenerates, and we, in the exercise of the new gracious ability given, repent. God disarms the opposition of the human heart, subduing the hostility of the carnal mind, and with irresistible power (John 6:37, 63-65), draws His chosen ones to Christ. The gospel confesses "We love him because He first loved us." Whereas before we had no desire for God, but now God's regenerating grace gives us the desire, willingness and delight in His person and commands that infallibly gives rise to faith. Faith and works are both the evidences of the new birth, not the cause of it.

More Biblical Support

John 6:63-65, likewise, is probably the clearest demonstration in Scripture that regeneration precedes faith, directly from the mouth of Jesus:

"It is the Spirit who gives life [quickens]; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the

beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

All reputable scholars would acknowledge that the entire context of this conversation is that of faith in Christ. Jesus tells the Jews that they cannot have faith in Him unless God specifically grants it. It is the Spirit who quickens (regenerates, gives life), Jesus says, not the flesh, and unless God grants this quickening, no one would believe. Please take the time to examine the passage carefully and see whether or not this is exactly what Jesus is here teaching. Along with verse 37 this verse creates a syllogism: **No one** can believe unless God grants it (v.65) and **all** that the Father grants to the Son will believe (v 37) and none of these will be cast out, but rather raised up at the last day (v. 37, 39, 44). This universal positive and universal negative leave no room for the human being creating his own faith apart from the effectual working of the Spirit within.

Aside from the two places where the word "regeneration" is actually used in the Bible text (Titus 3:5, Matthew 19:26) the same doctrinal notion is elaborated in many places under various terminology such as (1) spiritual resurrection (John 5:21; Romans 6:13; Ephesians 1:19-20; 2:5; Colossians 2:13; I John 3:14) and our (2) re-creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:10; 4:24). The apostle John, apart from recording Jesus' famous discourse on the new birth in John 3, further refers to being born of God eleven times. Interestingly, while being born again is necessary for salvation, **it is never once spoken of in the imperative mood** as if the hearer could independently produce it. Rather, it is always spoken of as a work of God alone. For example John 1:13 (as if to stress this point) says we were "born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. " While John 1:12 teaches that **faith** is the crucial **precondition of justification**, but verse 13 teaches that **regeneration** is a necessary and efficient **precondition of faith in Jesus Christ**. Verse 13 therefore

qualifies verse 12 making clear that regeneration causally and immediately precedes faith.

Of particular note the apostle John speaks of our spiritual resurrection (John 5:21 & Eph 2:5). The text (John 5:21) shows Jesus Himself clearly exercising sovereignty on whom He will grant the spiritual resurrection: "*For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life **to whom he will.***" Ephesians 2:5 likewise says we were dead in sins until **God**, who is rich in mercy, "**made us alive** together with Christ." Paul's word for "made us alive", often translated as "quicken" is the Greek term Paul uses for regeneration with Christ. In both these instances we must conclude that the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit causally precedes and enables man's response of saving faith to God's call.

Another critical text that we should take a closer look at is 1 John 5:1, 10:

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ **has been born of God**...Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony [of God] in himself."

Before anything else I want you to notice the clear sequential cause and effect aspect of regeneration and faith in this passage. Important for us to note is that John speaks of our actions that take place as the **result** of regeneration several times in this epistle (1 John 2:29, 1 John 3:9, 1 John 4:7, 1 John 5:1, 1 John 5:18). For example in 1 John 3:9 he says, "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he **has been born of God.**" Here we also find a cause and effect relationship between the cause of new birth and the effect that the Christian does not continue in a life of sin. [1 John 5:18](#) gives us a similar pattern of speech. Both showing that the cause of regeneration brings about the effect of a life that does not continue sinning. So not only does the tense of 1 John 5:1 show belief being actualized as the result of regeneration but this is also a continuation

of a pattern of speech that John uses throughout the epistle. Therefore it is extremely unlikely that the Apostle means anything else by this than faith is the result of our spiritual birth ... that the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is the cause of the desires that give rise to faith. Verse 10 further demonstrates the reality of this when it says that "whoever believes in the Son of God has this testimony [of God] in himself." Consider whether it is even possible for an unregenerate man, who does not have the testimony of God in himself, to actually understand or believe the gospel. It isn't possible. Instead, a person must first have the testimony of God in him if he is to believe. In other words, we must be taught of God, illumined in mind, given a new understanding... and once we are taught and understand, we will infallibly come to faith in Christ. To further drive the point home notice that 1 John 5:20 gives us the following assurance:

"And we know that the Son of God has come, and **has given us understanding so that we may know Him** who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

Jesus has given His people understanding so that they might know Him. In other words, true spiritual understanding and the knowledge of God (salvation), which is unique to the saints, are inextricably linked. One gives rise to the other and, therefore, all those given this understanding will infallibly come to know Him. "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (2 Cor 4:6) From these and similar passages it is, therefore, a certainty that this same kind of understanding is never given to the non-elect. Rather, the understanding of spiritual things granted by God alone infallibly brings those who are illumined by it unto a living faith in Christ. A real world demonstration of this is recorded in the book of Acts when Paul is preaching and a woman named Lydia, "... was listening; and **the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken**

by Paul."(Acts 16:14) This should remove all doubt as to the biblical nature of this doctrine.

Conclusion

To summarize, those dead in sin (Eph 2:1,5,8), play no part in their own new birth (Rom 3:11, 12; 8:7) and are just as **passive** as a new born physical baby in the regenerative act. However, once restored with a new sense and given spiritual understanding through Word and Spirit, the soul's new disposition immediately plays an **active** roll in conversion (repentance and faith). Thus, man does not cooperate in his regeneration but rather, infallibly responds in faith to the gospel as the Holy Spirit changes our hearts' disposition (John 3:6-8; 19-21). Faith is, therefore, not something produced by our unregenerated human nature. The fallen sinner has no moral ability or inclination to believe prior to the new birth. Instead, the Holy Spirit must open one's ears to the preaching of the gospel if one would desire to hear and believe.

Century Dictionary

Monergism: "In theol., The doctrine that the Holy Spirit is the only efficient agent in regeneration - that the human will possesses no inclination to holiness until regenerated, and therefore cannot cooperate in regeneration."

The following are some Christians in the history of the Church who defended the biblical doctrine of monergism:

Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, Martin Luther (who considered this doctrine the heart of the Reformation), John Calvin, John Owen, the Puritans of the 17th century, Augustine, George Whitefield, and some contemporary pastors and theologians such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones, John Piper, Wayne Grudem, R.C. Sproul, Michael Horton, J.I. Packer, James Montgomery Boice, and signatories to the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

Jesus Christ Fount of Every Blessing

John Hendryx

"Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas. 1:17). And again, "No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven" (John 3:27). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ." (Eph 1:3)

Since every good endowment and perfect gift is from above, Jesus leaves no room for nature to boast. This is no hyperbole but a plain expression of the Holy Spirit affirming that all our abilities; moral, natural and otherwise are the merciful unconditional gift of our Lord Jesus Christ. These and many other passages use universal positives (All, Every) to describe the all-encompassing nature of Christ as the source of every excellence and spiritual blessing. The word "endowment" used in Jas 1:17 means talent, ability or quality which points to the fact that the grace and illumination we are given in Christ to apprehend His word are a necessary precursor to have the internal moral/spiritual quality that enable us to generate right thoughts about Christ. An unspiritual man cannot naturally generate the affections or faith necessary to appropriate salvation. No stream can rise above its source, so likewise, no good thought can rise to heaven unless its fountain source is in heaven. Redemptive thoughts are not derived from resources found below but must issue forth from the river of life whose fountainhead springs forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. And it is from this same fountain that we must continually drink lest we dry up in the use our own natural resources.

We are strong because of His strength; We have good intentions only because He blesses us with a renewed heart that has His good intentions; We are wise only because of His wisdom; and we have faith because He is the author of faith (Heb 2:10, 12:2). It is when a person recognizes this Christ-centeredness, that is, when the Spirit illumines a man's mind to see this truth, it is then that we admire the Giver arightly. When we ascribe all excellencies and blessings to Him, even the very humility to believe, only then do we give all glory to Him. Consider that when the seed of the gospel is cast about by the preacher on every type of soil, we give glory to God arightly only when we acknowledge that even our good soil is only good because God first plowed up the fallow ground of our hardened heart. The soil is not good by nature (but unproductive) and it is because the farmer first plowed it up that the seed takes. Likewise, no fallen heart thinks good thoughts, or generates affection for God by nature but does so only because God has blessed Him in Christ by breaking up the natural hardness of the ground of our hearts.

If we are under the impression that the saving grace of God is conferred to us as the result of a prayer, remember that it is the grace given to us in Christ (to begin with) which stirs our souls to pray to God. Would you deny God the glory due to Him by thanking Him for all else, except your faith and thus keep this one glory for yourself? Isaiah 65:1 says, "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' To the unspiritual man, the Scripture affirms that "THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS..." This is no hyperbole but the natural state of men without the grace of Christ.

Remember also that while God commands all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel, that a command does not imply natural ability apart from the Holy Spirit. The commands of God are given, not to show ability but to reveal inability and sin (Rom 3:19,

20). In other words, even the very command to believe the gospel brings us to despair of all hope from ourselves, and it is there when we come to recognize our spiritual impotence, we know the Spirit is finally doing a work of grace in our lives. The very beginning and desire for faith and affection for Christ, cannot be ascribed to the unspiritual nature, but rather, comes through regeneration (1 John 5:1; John 1:13; 3:3; 6:37, 39, 63-65) but those who say that this ability belongs to us by nature and not by the effectual grace conferred by Christ, that is, by the communication of Christ by the Holy Spirit who Himself amends our affections, disarms our hostility and turns our will from unbelief to faith and turns our love for darkness to a love for light...that person is resisting the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. We secretly wish to keep part of the glory for ourself. But faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature (1 Cor 2:12, 14; Rom 9:16).

The grace of Christ, in other words, does not depend on the humility or obedience of man for it is because of the mercy of Christ that we are obedient and humble (1 Cor. 15:10). The natural man does not form right opinions or produce any right choices with regard to redemption nor can he positively respond to the preaching of the gospel simply through his natural powers without the Holy Spirit opening his blind eyes, unplugging his deaf ears and turning his natural heart of stone to a heart of flesh. For, as the Scripture itself affirms, we are not "competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5). Apart from Jesus Christ we can do nothing. The outward revelation of God to our nature is not apprehended spiritually by the natural mind, nor received by the fallen heart, for the revelation of God must be illumined by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:17; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Thess 4:5) who transforms our love of sin to a love of Christ. The natural mind may intellectually understand the words being said, but they do not enter his hostile and unfriendly heart. Only the love of Christ apprehended with a new heart and new eyes will, in fact receive Him. This means Christianity is not in the least about moral improvement

but rather about a completely new life in Christ. The desire to improve on the old is part of the problem.

Only God can change us to believe and obey. Until we reach this kind of despair in ourselves, one has not yet fully understood the implications of the gospel. It is not about our willing, but of God's mercy that makes us willing (Rom 9:16). All redemptive blessings find their source in Christ (Eph 1:3). But Not recognizing Christ as the source of every blessing is the cause for many errors and inconsistencies among sincere Christians. For example, many dispensationalists deny that Christ died only for the elect (particular redemption) yet will acknowledge the truth of the doctrine of irresistible grace. They will reason that Christ's death does NOT in and of itself save without the instrument of faith and, furthermore, there is nothing in scripture that forces us to think that the expiation necessarily secures faith for all for whom it is intended.

In answer to this we must consider that the work of redemption is not limited to the one spiritual blessing of "reconciliation". It has manifold aspects. "Regeneration" is also a part of the saving work of Christ and to separate regeneration and effectual grace from Christ and His work is erroneous to say the least. In other words, these "four-pointers" appear to be promoting a Christ-less regeneration. All persons associated with this blog, including the author of this article, would agree that faith is necessary for justification. But considering the fact that the redemptive blessing of regeneration (not only justification) also finds its origin in Jesus Christ should prove once for all that faith is secured for all to whom it is intended (John 6:37, 39). For this would show that Christ died in a way for the elect that He did not for the non-elect, that is, to secure the spiritual blessings of irresistible grace and regeneration which all (including four-pointers) acknowledge are blessings not granted to the non-elect. Are not these redemptive blessings also from Christ?

Christ calls all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel but the elect alone are they whose eyes God opens. To deny this is to

deny that salvation is by Christ alone. Either Christ secures all blessings for His people that they might believe, or we erroneously introduce something of nature into the work of redemption. Can we thank God even for our faith or is the one thing reserved for ourselves? Let us thank Christ for all things, even the new birth that gives rise to our hope in Christ:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3)

What Does the Ordo Salutis Mean and why is it Important?

“Ordo salutis” is a Latin term which means “the order of salvation”. It speaks of a way of organizing all the events and realities in the process of salvation, in the order that they show up in an individual's life. This order is sometimes temporal (e.g., we are justified a certain amount of time before we are glorified in the eternal state); but sometimes it is just logical, or causal (e.g., we exercise faith as soon as God gives us a new birth, but his regeneration is the cause of our faith). The “ordo salutis” is a very important concept because the doctrine of salvation is so rich and nuanced, and involves so many different realities, that we will not understand it the way that we should if we do not define all of its elements very carefully. We grow in sanctification and holiness as we grow in our understanding of the gospel, and realize all the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ; and so, if we are unclear on the many precious things that God's Word has to say about the order of events which his salvation brings about in our lives, we will remain immature in our faith and conduct.

A simple “ordo salutis” is as follows: the first event that had to take

place for us to be saved is God's unconditional love and election of us in eternity past. Then, God sent us an outward call at some point in our lives, or in other words, he brought the message of the gospel across our paths, either through the reading or the hearing of the word. Next, he gave an inward call, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, which regenerated, or brought to life our previously dead hearts. Because of this regeneration, we experienced conversion, that is, repentance from our sin and faith in Christ. Then, in consequence of our faith, we are justified, that is, God legally declares us righteous, by imputing or reckoning Jesus' perfect righteousness to our own account. At the same time, God adopts us, making us his children and the brothers and sisters of Christ; and he also unites us with Christ, so that henceforth we are in him. Beginning at that point, and on throughout our lifetime, God sanctifies us, or makes us holy, changing us into his likeness. Throughout this time, God is also preserving us, causing us to persevere in the faith, so that we do not finally fall away. Then, at death, we enter an intermediate state, where we are in the presence of the Lord, but without our physical bodies. And finally comes glorification, when our bodies will be resurrected and changed so that they will no longer decay, and we will inherit the new heavens and new earth, where we will live in the presence of our Immanuel for all eternity.

Latin, "the order of salvation." The *ordo salutis* is the theological doctrine that deals with the logical sequencing of the benefits of redemption as we are united to Christ which are applied to us by the Holy Spirit. This first thing to remember is that we must never separate the benefits (regeneration, justification, sanctification) from the Benefactor (Jesus Christ). The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration, etc.) is the work of God in Christ and is by grace alone. Election is the superstructure of our *ordo salutis*, but not itself the application of redemption. Regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit which brings us into a living union with Christ, has a causal priority over the other aspects of the process of salvation. God opens our eyes, we see. God circumcises/ unplugs our ears, we hear. Jesus calls a dead and buried Lazarus out of the grave, he comes; In

the same way, the Holy Spirit applies regeneration, (opening our spiritual eyes and renewing our affections), infallibly resulting in faith. All the benefits of redemption such as conversion (faith & repentance), justification, sanctification and perseverance presuppose the existence of spiritual life. The work of applying God's grace is a unitary process given to the elect simultaneously. This is instantaneous, but there is definitely a causal order (regeneration giving rise to all the rest). Though these benefits cannot be separated, it is helpful to distinguish them. Therefore, instead of imposing a chronological order we should view these as a unitary work of God to bring us into union with Christ. We must always keep in mind that the orders expressed in the following articles occur together or happen simultaneously like heat and fire. All aspects of the work of God continue together throughout the life of a Christian.

Historically in the Church there has been disagreement about the order of salvation, especially between those in the Reformed and Arminian camps. The following two perspectives of God's order in carrying out His redemptive work reveals the stark contrast between these two main historic views. Keep in mind that both viewpoints are based on the redemptive work which Christ accomplished for His people in history:

In the Reformed camp, the *ordo salutis* is 1) election, 2) predestination, 3) gospel call 4) inward call 5) regeneration, 6) conversion (faith & repentance), 7) justification, 8) sanctification, and 9) glorification. (Rom 8:29-30)

In the Arminian camp, the *ordo salutis* is 1) outward call 2) faith/election, 3) repentance, 4) regeneration, 5) justification, 6) perseverance, 7) glorification.

Notice the crucial difference in the orders of regeneration and faith. While the Reformed position believes spiritual life is a prerequisite for the existence of the other aspects of salvation, the Arminians believe that fallen, natural man retains the moral capacity to receive

or reject the gospel of his own power. Even with the help of grace he still must find it within himself to believe or reject Christ. This has broad implications and raises questions like why does one man believe and not another? You might also notice that, according to Arminians, election is dependent on faith, not the other way around. This is no small matter ...understanding the biblical order, while keeping in mind its unitary process, is crucial and has a profound impact on how one views God, the gospel, and the Bible as a whole.

Regeneration

by A.A. Hodge; revised by B.B. Warfield

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Regeneration (from Lat. re-, again + generare, beget) is a theological term used to express the initial stage of the change experienced by one who enters upon the Christian life. It is derived from the New Testament, where the "new birth" (1 Pet. i. 3, 23; Titus iii. 5; John iii. 3 f.) is the beginning of that "renewal" which produces the "new creature." In the history of theology the term has been used with varying latitude of meaning. Among the Jews it was employed in an external sense to express the change of relation which took place when a heathen became a Jew; from them it was adopted in this sense by many of the Fathers, and is still so used by many advocates of "baptismal regeneration." It is used in the Latin Church to express the whole real change which corresponds to this external change of relation. The Reformers separated justification by itself as something wrought on, not in, the sinner, and employed regeneration to express the whole process of inner renovation in all its stages. In the development of Protestant theology the term has been still further narrowed: first, to express the opening stage of this subjective work as distinguished from its continuance in sanctification; and then, since the seventeenth century, to express the initial divine act in this opening stage itself, as distinguished from the broader term conversion, which includes, along with the act of God, revivifying man, also the act of man in turning to God.

The nature of regeneration is of course variously conceived by different schools, according to their various views of the nature of the soul and its relation to God, of original or habitual sin, and of divine grace.

1. Pelagians, in accordance with their view of freedom and of sin, necessarily regard regeneration as a self-determined change in the general moral course of man's life, an act of the man himself, without any gracious assistance other than that involved in instruction and favorable providential conditions This was the teaching of Pelagius in the early part of the fifth century; and although not adopted by a historical church, it has been reproduced in various combinations by Rationalists and Socinians.

2. The Semi-Pelagian doctrine taught by John Cassian (d. 440) admits that divine grace (*assistentia*) is necessary to enable a sinner to return unto God and live, yet holds that, from the nature of the human will, man may first spontaneously, of himself, desire and attempt to choose and obey God. They deny the necessity of prevenient but admit the necessity of co-operative grace and conceive regeneration as the product of this co-operative grace.

3. The Mediaeval and Papal doctrine, which is practically that of Thomas Aquinas, and is hence often called "Thomism," admits original sin and the necessity of prevenient grace, but places the efficacy of grace in the non-resistance of the subject.¹ But this grace is supposed to be exercised only through the instrumentality of baptism, which acts as an *opus operatum*, *ex vi actionis ipsius*, effecting regeneration and the entire removal of sin, and consequently of guilt, from every infant, and from every adult who does not willfully resist (*non ponentibus obicem*).²

4. The Arminian view of regeneration admits total depravity and consequent moral impotency, yet holds that man is not really responsible until there is redemptively bestowed upon him for Christ's sake sufficient grace to re-endow him with ability (gracious, substituted for natural) to do right, which grace becomes efficient when the sinner co-operates with it, and thus effects the end intended.

5. The Synergistic view was held by a party among the Lutherans under the leadership of Melanchthon. At the Leipzig conference (1548) Melanchthon said: "there concur three causes of a good action—the word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the human will assenting, not resisting the word of God."³

6. The Lutheran standard, the Formula Concordiae, teaches that: (1) human nature is spiritually dead; and (2) the Holy Ghost is the sole efficient agent who quickens the dead soul to life, without the least co-operation of the will of the subject; but the non-regeneration of the unbeliever is referred not to the absence nor to any deficiency of grace, but to the positive resistance of the man himself.⁴

7. The Reformed doctrine teaches as follows: (1) As to the nature of regeneration: (a) There are in the soul, besides its several faculties, habits or dispositions, innate or acquired, which lay the foundation for the soul's exercising its faculties in a particular way. (b) These dispositions (moral) are anterior to moral action, and determine its character as good or evil. (c) In creation God made the dispositions of Adam's heart holy. (d) In regeneration God recreates the governing dispositions of the regenerated man's heart holy. Regeneration is therefore essentially the communication of a new spiritual life, and is properly called a "new birth." (2) As to its efficient cause: It is effected by divine power acting supernaturally and immediately upon the soul, quickening it to spiritual life, and implanting gracious principles of action. (3) As to man's action: Conversion (*conversio actualis*) instantly follows, as the change of action consequent upon the change of character, and consists in repentance, faith, holy obedience, etc.⁵

What is called baptismal regeneration is held by members of the Church of England and others in various senses. (1) Some hold 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 (in conversion) or blasted. (2) Others hold that there are two regenerations one a change of state or

relation, and the other a change of nature; the first is baptismal and the second moral, though both are spiritual, since both are wrought by the Holy Ghost.

Notes

1. See the Council of Trent, sess. 6, can. 4, chs. v and vi, and sess 7, cans. 6 and 8.
2. Council of Trent, sess. 7, can. 6; Bellarmin, De Sacramentis, 2,1.
3. Loc. Com., p. 90.
4. Formula Concordiae, pp. 662, 666, 582, 677.
5. Thirty- nine Articles, art. 10; Canons of Synod of Dordt, ch. iii, art 3; Westminster Confession, ch. x.

The Nature of Regeneration

by Thomas Boston

I. For the better understanding of the nature of regeneration, take this along with you, in the first place, that as there are false conceptions in nature, so there are also in grace: by these many are deluded, mistaking some partial changes made upon them for this great and thorough change. To remove such mistakes, let these few things be considered:

1. Many call the Church their mother, whom God will not own to be His children. "My mother's children," that is, false brethren, "were angry with me" (Cant. 1:6). All that are baptized, are not born again. Simon was baptized, yet still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:13-23). Where Christianity is the religion of the country, many are called by the name of Christ, who have no more of Him than the name: and no wonder, for the devil had his goats among Christ's sheep, in those places where but few professed

the Christian religion. "They went out from us, but they were not of us" (I John 2:19).

2. Good education is not regeneration. Education may chain up men's lusts, but cannot change their hearts. A wolf is still a ravenous beast, though it be in chains. Joash was very devout during the life of his good tutor Jehoiada; but afterwards he quickly showed what spirit he was of, by his sudden apostasy (2 Chron. 24:2-18). Good example is of mighty influence to change the outward man; but that change often goes off when a man changes his company; of which the world affords many sad instances.

3. A turning from open profanity to civility and sobriety falls short of this saving change. Some are, for a while, very loose, especially in their younger years; but at length they reform, and leave their profane courses. Here is a change, yet only such as may be found in men utterly void of the grace of God, and whose righteousness is so far from exceeding, that it does not come up to the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

4. One may engage in all the outward duties of religion, and yet not be born again. Though lead be cast into various shapes, it remains still but a base metal. Men may escape the pollutions of the world, and yet be but dogs and swine (2 Pet. 2:20-22). All the external acts of religion are within the compass of natural abilities. Yea, hypocrites may have the counterfeit of all the graces of the Spirit: for we read of "true holiness" (Eph. 4:23); and "faith unfeigned" (I Tim. 1:15); which shows us that there is a counterfeit holiness, and a feigned faith.

5. Men may advance to a great deal of strictness in their own way of religion, and yet be strangers to the new birth. "After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee" (Acts 26:5). Nature has its own unsanctified strictness in religion. The Pharisees had so much of it that they looked on Christ as little better than a mere libertine. A man whose conscience has been awakened, and who lives

under the felt influence of the covenant of works, what will he not do that is within the compass of natural abilities? It is a truth, though it came out of a hellish mouth, that "skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2:4).

6. A person may have sharp soul-exercises and pangs, and yet die in the birth. Many "have been in pain," that have but, as it were, "brought forth wind." There may be sore pangs and throes of conscience, which turn to nothing at last. Pharaoh and Simon Magus had such convictions as made them desire the prayers of others for them. Judas repented himself; and under terrors of conscience, gave back his ill-gotten pieces of silver. All is not gold that glitters. Trees may blossom fairly in the spring, on which no fruit is to be found in the harvest: and some have sharp soul exercises, which are nothing but foretastes of hell.

The new birth, however in appearance hopefully begun, may be marred two ways: First, Some, like Zarah (Gen. 38:28,29), are brought to the birth, but go back again. They have sharp convictions for a while; but these go off, and they become as careless about their salvation, and as profane as ever and usually worse than ever; "their last state is worse than their first" (Matt. 12:45). They get awakening grace, but not converting grace and that goes off by degrees as the light of the declining day, till it issue in midnight darkness.

Secondly, Some, like Ishmael, come forth too soon; they are born before the time of the promise. (Gen. 16:2; compare Gal. 4:22, etc.) They take up with a mere law-work, and stay not till the time of the promise of the Gospel. They snatch at consolation, not waiting till it be given them; and foolishly draw their comfort from the law that wounded them. They apply the healing plaster to themselves, before their wound is sufficiently searched. The law, that rigorous husband, severely beats them, and throws in curses and vengeance upon their souls; then they fall to reforming, praying, mourning, promising, and vowing, till this ghost be laid; which done, they fall asleep again in

the arms of the law: but they are never shaken out of themselves and their own righteousness, nor brought forward to Jesus Christ.

Lastly, There may be a wonderful moving of the affections, in souls that are not at all touched with regenerating grace. Where there is no grace, there may, notwithstanding, be a flood of tears, as in Esau, "who found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:17). There may be great flashes of joy; as in the hearers of the Word, represented in the parable by the stony ground, who "anon with joy receive it" (Matt. 13:20). There may also be great desires after good things, and great delight in them too; as in those hypocrites described in Isa. 58:2: "Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways: they take delight in approaching to God." See how high they may sometimes stand, who yet fall away (Heb. 6:4-6). They may be "enlightened, taste of the heavenly gift," be "partakers of the Holy Ghost, taste the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come." Common operations of the Divine Spirit, like a land flood, make a strange turning of things upside down: but when they are over, all runs again in the ordinary channel. All these things may be, where the sanctifying Spirit of Christ never rests upon the soul, but the stony heart still remains; and in that case these affections cannot but wither, because they have no root.

II. But regeneration is a real thorough change, whereby the man is made a new creature. (2 Cor. 5:17.) The Lord God makes the creature a new creature, as the goldsmith melts down the vessel of dishonor, and makes it a vessel of honor. Man is, in respect of his spiritual state, altogether disjointed by the fall; every faculty of the soul is, as it were, dislocated: in regeneration the Lord loosens every joint, and sets it right again. Now this change made in regeneration, is:

1. A change of qualities or dispositions: it is not a change of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul. Vicious qualities are removed, and the contrary dispositions are brought in, in their room. "The old man is put off" (Eph. 4:22); "the new man put on" (ver. 24). Man lost none of the rational faculties of his soul by sin- he had an

understanding still, but it was darkened; he had still a will, but it was contrary to the will of God. So in regeneration, there is not a new substance created, but new qualities are infused; light instead of darkness, righteousness instead of unrighteousness.

2. It is a supernatural change; he that is born again, is born of the Spirit. (John 3:5.) Great changes may be made by the power of nature, especially when assisted by external revelation. Nature may be so elevated by the common influences of the Spirit, that a person may thereby be turned into another man, as Saul was, (I Sam. 10:6) who yet never becomes a new man. But in regeneration, nature itself is changed, and we become partakers of the Divine nature; and this must needs be a supernatural change. How can we, that are dead in trespasses and sins, renew ourselves, more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave? Who but the sanctifying Spirit of Christ can form Christ in a soul, changing it into the same image? Who but the Spirit of sanctification can give the new heart? Well may we say, when we see a man thus changed: "This is the finger of God."

3. It is a change into the likeness of God. "We, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image" (2 Cor. 3:18). Everything that generates, generates its like; the child bears the image of the parent; and they that are born of God bear God's image. Man aspiring to be as God, made himself like the devil. In his natural state he resembles the devil, as a child doth his father. "Ye are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). But when this happy change comes, that image of Satan is defaced, and the image of God is restored. Christ Himself, who is the brightness of His Father's glory, is the pattern after which the new creature is made. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Hence He is said to be formed in the regenerate. (Gal. 4:19.)

4. It is a universal change; "all things become new," (2 Cor. 5:17). Original sin infects the whole man; and regenerating grace, which is the salve, goes as far as the sore. This fruit of the Spirit is in all

goodness; goodness of the mind, goodness of the will, goodness of the affections, goodness of the whole man. He gets not only a new head, to know religion, or a new tongue to talk of it; but a new heart, to love and embrace it in the whole of his conversation.

EFFECTUAL CALLING;

UNION WITH CHRIST;

REGENERATION.

by Francis R. Beattie

**SHORTER CATECHISM, 29-31; LARGER CATECHISM, 57-60 AND 66-69;
CONFESSION OF FAITH, X.**

In preceding chapters it has been seen how, by the mediation of Christ, redemption has been procured, and an everlasting inheritance has been purchased for his elect believing people. In the last chapter it was shown that man was in a state of guilt and sin, and unable to turn to God or to remedy his sad estate. The question which next arises relates to the way in which the redemption purchased by Christ comes into the possession of guilty, helpless sinners. This is the question which the chapter on effectual calling undertakes to answer. How are the elect from among sinful men made partakers of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and of all the benefits which are connected therewith ?

It is interesting to note the fact that the Standards do not use the term regeneration in this connection, while this term has a large place and a well-defined meaning in theological writings. At first glance it may seem that the Standards are defective in their

statement upon this point, but a little reflection will show that such is not the case, for it will appear that what the theologians call regeneration is included under the term effectual calling in the Standards; and the great fact of the union of the believer with Christ is also implied in effectual calling. To signalize all this, these three terms are set down at the head of this chapter. It may be well to remark, further, that the Confession and the Shorter Catechism deal with this subject in a compact and comprehensive way, while the Larger Catechism Introduces five or six questions at this stage which deal with the church viewed in its visible and invisible aspects. As the subject of the church is not touched upon in the Shorter Catechism at all, and as it is treated of in another place in the Confession, its discussion may be properly deferred till a later stage in this exposition, so that attention can be entirely devoted to the all-important topic of this chapter.

I. The various ways in which the different parts of the Standards deal with effectual calling must be first explained. The question is, How are believers made partakers of Christ's redemption ? How are the benefits of the Redeemer's work applied to the elect ? The briefest form of the answer, which is found in substance in all parts of the Standards, is that we are made partakers of the benefits of Christ's redemption by the effectual application of it to us by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, therefore, is the agent in this important matter. The truth is the instrument which the Spirit usually employs, yet the truth, in the way of instruction or moral suasion, does not itself effect the work. There must also be a direct operation of the Holy Spirit in the dead, sinful soul, in order to the saving reception of the benefits of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus by that soul.

It is exceedingly instructive to observe the manner in which the Confession and the Catechisms describe the mode by which this effectual application takes place. This is now briefly noticed. In the Confession, what is prominent is the change in the moral state of the sinner. God, by his word and Spirit, brings the elect out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation

by Jesus Christ, thereby taking away their heart of stone and giving them a heart of flesh. This statement emphasizes the change of nature involved in regeneration.

In the Larger Catechism vital union with Christ is signalized. This union is described as one which is spiritual and mystical in its nature, and at the same time it is said to be real, and to unite the believer and Christ inseparably. The figures of the head and the members, and of the husband and wife, are used to illustrate this union, which is the work of God's grace in the heart of the believer. By means of this union the basis of communion between Christ and his people and of the communion of the saints with each other is laid.

In the Shorter Catechism stress is laid on the fact of faith in this connection. The Holy Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ by working faith in us, thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling. This statement puts the stress upon the experimental or practical side of the great truth here taught, and thus faith is in the foreground.

These three aspects of the same great fact are exceedingly instructive, and, taken together, they supply a very complete view of the various factors involved in effectual calling. The Confession accents the change of nature, the Larger Catechism signalizes union with Christ, and the Shorter Catechism gives emphasis to faith in Christ, while the agent behind all three factors is the Holy Ghost. Thus, in the complex process by which the Spirit applies, and the believer receives, the benefits of Christ's redemption, there is the change of nature usually known as regeneration, the mystical union with Christ, the source of spiritual life, and saving faith, which is the sinner's act of appropriating Christ and his benefits. The first two are implied in effectual calling, and the third grows out of it. Effectual calling viewed Christwards effects spiritual union with him; viewed man-wards it produces regeneration, and in the sphere of man's activity it evinces faith in Christ. This is the complete statement of the matter as taught in the Standards.

II. The nature of effectual calling must now be more fully explained. It is a very important matter to understand the precise nature of that change of nature and union with Christ which effectual calling denotes. What was said in the previous paragraph paves the way for a more careful statement in this one.

1. The distinction between the external and the internal aspects of the calling now under notice is of some importance. This distinction is not fully set forth, though it is distinctly implied, in the Scriptures. The term effectual indicates that there is a peculiar phase of this calling or vocation to be considered. Then the Confession speaks of some who may be called by the ministry of the word, and who may have some of the common operations of the Spirit, yet who never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved. And the Larger Catechism speaks in almost the same terms. This brings out the distinction between the two phases of the calling in question. The outward call is by the word, which is to be preached to all men. Some who hear it may not be saved. The inward call is by the Spirit, usually through the word, and it comes, as will be presently seen, to the elect. All who experience this call are surely saved. It is the latter aspect of the call which is termed effectual, and which is now under discussion.

2. This effectual call is entirely gracious in its nature. The Confession clearly asserts that this effectual call, addressed by the Holy Spirit to the elect, is of God's free and special grace alone. What are known as the common operations of the Spirit are not sufficient, hence the effectual grace is special. It is grace which changes the nature, unites to Christ, and works faith in us. Hence, it may also be called efficacious grace, or invincible grace.

And, as gracious, it does not rest in, nor spring from, anything foreseen in the nature or actions of men. Neither the believer's faith nor his good works can be the ground of the call, for these facts imply or follow effectual calling. Further, man is viewed as passive in experiencing this call; and, until quickened and renewed by the Holy

Spirit, he is not able to answer the call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it. But, when thus quickened and renewed by the effectual call which results in regeneration and union with Christ, the sinner is able to answer the call by the response which his personal faith gives. The Larger Catechism emphasizes the gracious nature of this call in slightly different terms. It is said to be a work of God's almighty power and grace, and that it is bestowed out of God's free and especial love to the elect, and while nothing in them moves him to bestow this grace, yet in the fulness of time he doth invite and draw them to Jesus Christ by his word and Spirit. Hence, the application of redemption is gratuitous at the very outset. Salvation is all of grace. The Arminian view, which requires, as a matter of justice at God's hand, common grace to restore man's lost ability, destroys the gracious nature of salvation at its very root; and the further Arminian claim, that the improvement of common grace purchases renewing grace, makes salvation depend upon the yet unrenewed will of man.

3. The several factors which enter into effectual calling are next to be considered. All the three parts of the Standards enumerate these factors in a somewhat similar way. Perhaps the clear-cut statement of the Shorter Catechism gives the best outline to follow in making further explanation of this doctrine.

First, There is conviction of our sin and misery. It has already been pointed out that, by reason of the fall, man is in a state of sin, misery, and guilt. The first thing which the Spirit does is to convince us of our sinful, miserable, and guilty condition, and to show us that we are without God and without hope in the world. This factor is properly set down first in order. The inward spiritual sense of sin, and the conviction of our ill-desert and guilt, is a very important matter in a true religious experience.

Secondly, The enlightenment of the mind in the knowledge of Christ comes next. This is, of course, spiritual enlightenment, and not merely intellectual knowledge. And it is not merely a general

knowledge about Christ, but a knowledge which relates to him as the only means of deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. The Confession speaks of this as an enlightenment of the mind spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, while the Larger Catechism briefly describes it as savingly enlightening the mind. This is that spiritual discernment which the Scriptures say is necessary in order to know the things of God, which the natural man does not, and cannot, know.

Thirdly, The renewal of the will follows. This is the simple language of the Shorter Catechism. The Larger Catechism is more complete in its statement, saying that the will is not only renewed but also powerfully determined, so that, although dead in sin, we are made willing and freely able to obey his call. The Confession has a complete statement, to the effect that our wills are renewed by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good. This is the determining grace already spoken of in its bearing upon the will, in accordance with the true doctrine of the will as set forth in a former chapter. The Confession has a phrase at this point which is worth adding here. It says that the heart of stone is taken away and a heart of flesh is given. This statement clearly relates to the change of the nature of the believer, and thus of his moral states and dispositions, which is effected by regeneration.

Fourthly, Embracing Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel is the culmination of effectual calling. The will being renewed, the sinner is persuaded and enabled to accept Christ as his Saviour. The Holy Spirit by means of the word persuades, and by his divine operation in the soul enables, the sinner to embrace the Saviour as he is presented in the gospel message. The Larger Catechism says that we are invited and drawn to Christ in effectual calling, and are made able and willing to accept the call. The Confession says that we are effectually drawn to Jesus Christ, and at the same time we come most freely, being made willing by his grace. This is an admirable statement of an exceedingly difficult topic. We are effectually drawn, and our wills are determined by his almighty power; and yet that power is so

exercised by the agency of the Holy Spirit that no violence is done to the faculties of our nature. The sinner comes to Christ as a free, rational, responsible agent, and yet he comes because he has been made able and willing to come. Thus the people of God are made willing in the day of his power.

III. The next question is: Who are the subjects of this effectual call? Under this general heading several subjects remain to be considered in this chapter. The four following topics are touched upon in the Standards: Those who are effectually called, the salvation of infants dying in infancy, the failure of some who hear the gospel to attain unto salvation, and the salvation of those who have never heard the gospel at all. These several points are now taken up in order, and very briefly considered. In regard to some of these topics there has been a good deal of controversy, and some of them have been made the ground of objection to the system of doctrine taught in the Standards. In regard to these controverted points the wise caution with which the Standards speak is abundantly evident.

1. Who are effectually called ? This question is referred to in several places in the Standards, and receives somewhat various answers. The Confession opens its statement upon this subject by saying that all those whom God hath predestinated to life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time, to effectually call by his word and Spirit. Others, not elected, may be outwardly called by the ministry of the word, yet are not inwardly called so as to truly come to Christ for salvation. The Larger Catechism says that all the elect, and they only, are effectually called, and that others, even though they may have the common operations of the Spirit, do never truly come to Christ. For their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered they are justly left in their unbelief. This simply means that the non-elect are not effectually called, but are just left in their sinful state. Another way to state the answer would be to say that all those for whom Christ has purchased redemption are in due time effectually called, and have that redemption so applied to them that they are made sure partakers of it. This, of course, leads back to the

gracious purpose of God's electing love. All those who by that purpose are given in covenant to Christ are in due time redeemed by him, and in due season they have made good to them, by the word and Spirit of God in effectual calling, all that Christ has procured for them.

In this connection it is very instructive, as well as confirmatory of the teaching of the Standards at this point, to note that in the Scriptures the elect and the called are regarded as identical. For "whom he did predestinate, them he also called." All who are elected are effectually called, and those who are thus called are thereby assured of their election. The reason of this harmony lies in the fact that the eternal purpose of grace has regard not only to its end in the salvation of the elect, but also to all the means and agencies necessary thereto.

2. The second question relates to the salvation of infants dying in infancy, and of others, elect persons, who are incapable of receiving the outward call by the word. This raises a difficult question, which needs some careful remark. And there is the more need of careful explanation here, because the Standards have often been charged by ignorant persons with teaching infant damnation, and with giving no proper ground for the salvation of idiots. In general, it may be at once said that these charges are utterly unfounded. The teaching of the Standards at this point is entirely consistent with their teaching elsewhere. They also speak with the utmost care, and what they say relates only to those who are elected and saved, and not to the non-elected at all. The Confession simply says that elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit. It says not a word about any other infants, and leaves it open to make the reasonable inference that all infants so dying are among the elect. This inference is just as valid as to say that there are non-elect infants who die in infancy, for the contrast drawn in the Standards is not between elect and non-elect infants, but between elect persons who die in infancy, and elect persons who do not die in infancy. Elect persons who die in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, and in the case of elect persons who reach adult

years, precisely the same conditions of salvation are required, only in the case of adult elect persons personal faith comes into exercise.

So all other elect persons, such as idiots and incapables of any sort, are saved by Christ and the agency of the Spirit. They are not saved because they are incapable of responding to the outward call of the word, but because they do receive the benefits of the mediation of Christ, and experience the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in their souls. Hence, when the root of the matter is reached, the conditions of salvation are the same in the case of all elect persons, whether they be infants, incapables, or adults. These conditions constitute effectual calling, whereby the elect are united to Christ and regenerated by the Holy Ghost, and thus made partakers of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. If any of these die in infancy faith does not emerge, but in case of others who do not die in infancy faith in the Saviour in due time appears.

To make the dogmatic statement in a creed that all infants dying in infant years are saved, whether of believers, unbelievers or pagans, can scarcely be justified by the Scriptures, although a well-grounded hope that this is true may be cherished, for where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. But it can with the fullest confidence be asserted, in the language of the Confession, that elect infants dying in infancy are saved, because they are regenerated and saved through Christ by the Spirit. This statement cannot be modified without trenching upon the fundamental positions of the Standards in regard to election and effectual calling. This teaching also magnifies the grace of God, and better than any other system provides a good and gracious ground for infant salvation. Thus, those who deny infant baptism cannot consistently maintain infant salvation, and those who make the decision for salvation turn finally upon the choice of the human will, apart from determining grace, have serious difficulty in giving any basis for infant salvation, unless they deny that the infant is guilty and depraved, or make its salvation depend on the mere fact that it happens, in the order of providence, to die in infancy. But the doctrine of the Standards is free from these

and other difficulties, so that it may be confidently relied on as in harmony with Scripture and sound reason.

3. The failure of some who hear the outward call to attain to salvation is the third question to be considered. This point calls for but brief remark. The position of the Standards in reference to it is that all who hear the gospel and live within the visible church are not saved. This follows directly from what was stated in the previous section. By means of effectual calling we become members of the invisible church, which is the body of Christ, and those who are not so called are not saved, whether they belong to the visible church or not. Those who are not elected are not saved, and yet it is their wilful neglect of grace and continuance in sin which grounds their condemnation. Even the common operations of the Spirit are not enough, for, as has been seen, special renewing and determining grace is needed.

4. The last topic relates to the salvation of those who do not profess the Christian religion. This raises a wide and important inquiry, upon which the Confession announces no uncertain opinion. The persons who now are to be considered are not those who may profess but do not possess the benefits of redemption, but it is the case of such as do not profess the faith of Christ at all. This class includes the mere moralist and the profane man in Christian lands, and it also embraces the devotees of all forms of pagan religion. The cautious teaching of the Confession relates to the case of those who are seeking to frame their lives by the light of nature, or to follow the law of the religion, other than the Christian, which they profess. The position of the Standards upon this subject is that such persons shall not be saved, no matter how great their diligence or earnest their efforts. To assert that they may is very pernicious and to be detested, is the strong language of the Standards upon this matter. It will be observed that this teaching bears in a very practical way upon the faithful preaching of the gospel in Christian lands, and that it is of vital moment in regard to the spread of the gospel among the people of heathen countries. To teach, directly or indirectly, that the

heathen may be saved without the knowledge of Christ which the gospel gives is unscriptural, and must be fatal to all missionary effort.

But the case is not now to be argued. The fact is simply pointed out that the teaching of the Standards is to the effect that, in the case of the moralist, he cannot be saved by the light of nature, be he ever so careful to frame his life by that light, for no man has ever so lived up even to this light that he has no sense of defect and sin. Even if it be admitted that salvation were possible by the light of nature, which could only be if man were unfallen, the fact remains that no mere man has ever fulfilled the conditions.

Then, in regard to the heathen, three things are to be kept in mind. First, A sense of hopeless guilt rests upon them, from whose awful burden their systems of religion do not set free. Secondly, The Scriptures insist upon such a change of heart and life as is never produced by any of the pagan systems of religion. Thirdly, The Scriptures plainly teach that men who are ignorant of the gospel, and who have no saving knowledge of Christ, go down to a hopeless eternity. The solemn teaching of the Scriptures, as set forth in the Standards upon this great topic, should be seriously pondered by all who are interested in the success of missionary labor.

The Spirit Quickening

by A. W. Pink

“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will” (John 5:21). “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63). All the Divine operations in the economy of salvation proceed from the Father, are through the Son, and are executed by the Spirit. Quickening is His

initial work in the elect. It is that supernatural act by which He brings them out of the grave of spiritual death on to resurrection ground. By it He imparts a principle of grace and habit of holiness; it is the communication of the life of God to the soul. It is an act of creation (2 Cor. 5:17). It is a Divine “workmanship” (Eph. 2:10). All of these terms denote an act of Omnipotency. The origination of life is utterly impossible to the creature. He can receive life; he can nourish life; he can use and exert it; but he cannot create life.

In this work the Spirit acts as *sovereign*. “The wind bloweth *where it listeth* (or “pleaseth”) . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). This does not mean that He acts capriciously, or without reason and motive, but that He is above any obligation to the creature, and is quite uninfluenced by us in what He does. The Spirit might justly have left every one of us in the hardness of our hearts to perish forever. In quickening one and not another, in bringing a few from death unto life and leaving the mass still dead in trespasses and sins, the Spirit has mercy “on whom He will have mercy.” He is absolutely free to work in whom He pleases, for none of the fallen sons of Adam have the slightest claim upon Him.

The quickening of the spiritually dead into newness of life is therefore an act of *amazing grace*: it is an unsought and unmerited favour. The sinner, who is the chosen subject of this Divine operation and object of this inestimable blessing, is infinitely ill-deserving in himself, being thoroughly disposed to go on in wickedness till this change is wrought in him. He is rebellious, and will not hearken to the Divine command; he is obstinate and refuses to repent and embrace the Gospel. However terrified he may be with the fears of threatened doom, however earnest may be his desire to escape misery and be happy forever, no matter how many prayers he may make and things he may do, he has not the least inclination to repent and submit to God. His heart is defiant, full of enmity against God, and daily does he add iniquity unto iniquity. For the Spirit to give a new heart unto *such as one* is indeed an act of amazing and sovereign grace.

This quickening by the Spirit is *instantaneous*: it is a Divine act, and not a process; it is wrought at once, and not gradually. In a moment of time the soul passes from death unto life. The soul which before was dead toward God, is now alive to Him. The soul which was completely under the domination of sin, is now set free; though the sinful nature itself is not removed nor rendered inoperative, yet the heart is no longer en rapport (in sympathy) with it. The Spirit of God finds the heart wholly corrupt and desperately wicked, but by a miracle of grace He changes its bent, and this by implanting within it the imperishable seed of holiness. There is no medium between a carnal and a spiritual state: the one is what we were by nature, the other is what we become by grace, by the instantaneous and invincible operation of the Almighty Spirit. This initial work of quickening is entirely *unperceived* by us, for it lies outside the realm and the range of human consciousness. Those who are *dead* possess no perception, and though the work of bringing them on to resurrection ground is indeed a great and powerful one, in the very nature of the case its subjects can know nothing whatever about it until *after* it has been accomplished. When Adam was created, he was conscious of nothing but that he now existed and was free to act: the Divine operation which was the cause of his existence was over and finished before he began to be conscious of anything. This initial operation of the Spirit by which the elect become new creatures can only be known by its effects and consequences. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," that is first; then "*thou hearest the sound thereof*" (John 3:8): it is now made known, in a variety of ways, to the conscience and understanding.

Under this work of quickening *we* are entirely *passive*, by which is meant that there is no co-operation whatever between the will of the sinner and the act of the Holy Spirit. As we have said, this initial work of the Spirit is effected by free and sovereign *grace*, consisting of the infusion of a principle of spiritual life into the soul, by which all its faculties are supernaturally renovated. This being the case, the sinner must be entirely passive, like clay in the hands of a potter, for

until Divine grace is exerted upon him he is utterly incapable of any spiritual acts, being *dead* in trespasses and sins. Lazarus cooperated not in his resurrection: he knew not that the Saviour had come to his sepulchre to deliver him from death. Such is the case with each of God's elect when the Spirit commences to deal with them. They must first be quickened into newness of life before they can have the slightest desire or motion of the will toward spiritual things; hence, for them to contribute the smallest iota unto their quickening is utterly impossible. The life which the Spirit imparts when He quickens is *uniform* in all its favoured subjects.

“As seed virtually contains in it all that afterwards proceeds from it, the blade, stalk, ear, and full corn in the ear, so the first principle of grace implanted in the heart seminally contains all the grace which afterwards appears in all the fruits, effects, acts, and exercises of it” (John Gill). Each quickened person experiences the same radical change, by which the image of God is stamped upon the soul: “that which is born of the Spirit is *Spirit*” (John 3:6), never any thing less, and never any thing more. Each quickened person is made a new creature in Christ, and possesses all the constituent parts of “the new man.” Later, some may be more lively and vigorous at their birth, as God gives stronger faith unto one than to another; yet there is no difference in their original: all partake of the same life.

While there is great variety in our perception and understanding of the work of the Spirit within us, there is no difference in the initial work itself. While there is much difference in the carrying on of this work unto perfection in the *growth* of the “new creature”— some making speedy progress, others thriving slowly and bringing forth little fruit—yet the new creation itself is the same in all. Each alike enters the kingdom of God, becomes a vital member of Christ's mystical body, is given a place in the living family of God. Later, one may appear more beautiful than another, by having the image of his heavenly Father more evidently imprinted upon him, yet not more truly so. There are degrees in sanctification, but none in vivification. There has never been but one kind of spiritual quickening in this

world, being in its essential nature specifically the same in all.

Let it be pointed out in conclusion that the Spirit's quickening is only *the beginning* of God's work of grace in the soul. This does not wholly renew the heart at once: no indeed, the inner man needs to be "renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). But from that small beginning, the work continues—God watering it "every moment" (Isa. 27:3)—and goes on to perfection; that is, till the heart is made perfectly clean and holy, which is not accomplished till death. God continues to work in His elect, "both to will and to do of His own good pleasure," they being as completely dependent upon the Spirit's influence for every right exercise of the will after, as for the first. "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).—A.W.P.

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The General Nature of Effectual Application Stated

by John Flavel

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:" 1
Cor. 1:30

He that enquires what is the just value and worth of Christ, asks a question which puts all the men on earth, and angels in heaven, to an everlasting non-plus.

The highest attainment of our knowledge in this life, is to know, that himself and his love do pass knowledge, Eph. 3: 19.

But how excellent soever Christ is in himself, what treasures of righteousness soever lie in his blood, and whatever joy, peace, and ravishing comforts, spring up to men out of his incarnation, humiliation, and exaltation, they all give down their distinct benefits and comforts to them, in the way of effectual application.

For never was any wound healed by a prepared, but unapplied plaister. Never any body warmed by the most costly garment made, but not put on: Never any heart refreshed and comforted by the richest cordial compounded, but not received: Nor from the beginning of the world was it ever known, that a poor deceived, condemned, polluted, miserable sinner, was actually delivered out of that woeful state, until of God, Christ was made unto him, wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

For look as the condemnation of the first Adam passeth not to us, except (as by generation) we are his; so grace and remission pass not from the second Adam to us, except (as by regeneration) we are his. Adam's sin hurts none but those that are in him: and Christ's blood profits none but those that are in him: How great a weight therefore does there hang upon the effectual application of Christ to the souls of men! And what is there in the whole world so awfully solemn, so greatly important, as this is! Such is the strong consolation resulting from it, that the apostle, in this context, offers it to the believing Corinthians, as a superabundant recompence for the despicable meanness, and baseness of their outward condition in this world, of which he had just before spoken in ver. 27, 28. telling them, though the world condemned them as vile, foolish, and weak, yet "of God Christ is made unto them wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

In which words we have an enumeration of the chief privileges of believers, and an account of the method whereby they come to be

invested with them.

First, Their privileges are enumerated, namely, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, mercies of inestimable value in themselves, and such as respect a fourfold misery lying upon sinful man, viz. ignorance, guilt, pollution, and the whole train of miserable consequences and effects, let in upon the nature of men, yea, the best and holiest of men, by sin.

Lapsed man is not only deep in misery, but grossly ignorant, both that he is so, and how to recover himself from it: Sin has left him at once senseless of his state, and at a perfect loss about the true remedy.

To cure this, Christ is made to him wisdom, not only by improvement of those treasures of wisdom that are in himself; for the benefit of such souls as are united to him, as an head, consulting the good of his own members; but also, by imparting his wisdom to them by the Spirit of illumination, whereby they come to discern both their sin and danger; as also the true way of their recovery from both, through the application of Christ to their souls by faith.

But alas! simple illumination does but increase our burden, and exasperate our misery as long as sin in the guilt of it is either imputed to our persons unto condemnation, or reflected by our consciences in a way of accusation.

With design therefore to remedy and heal this sore evil, Christ is made of God unto us righteousness, complete and perfect righteousness, whereby our obligation to punishment is dissolved, and thereby a solid foundation for a well-settled peace of conscience firmly established.

Yea, but although the removing of guilt from our persons and consciences be an inestimable mercy, yet alone it cannot make us completely happy: For though a man should never be damned for sin, yet what is it less than hell upon earth, to be under the dominion

and pollution of every base lust? It is misery enough to be daily defiled by sin, though a man should never be damned for it.

To complete therefore the happiness of the redeemed; Christ is not only made of God unto them wisdom and righteousness, the one curing our ignorance, the other our guilt; but he is made sanctification also, to relieve us against the dominion and pollutions of our corruptions: "He comes both by water and by blood, not by blood only, but by water also," 1 John 5: 6. purging as well as pardoning: How complete and perfect a cure is Christ!

But yet something is required beyond all this to make our happiness perfect and entire wanting nothing; and that is the removal of those doleful effects and consequences of sin, which (notwithstanding all the fore-mentioned privileges and mercies) still lie upon the souls and bodies of illuminated, justified, and sanctified persons. For even with the best and holiest of men, what swarms of vanity, loads of deadness, and fits of unbelief, do daily appear in, and oppress their souls! to the embittering of all the comforts of life to them? And how many diseases, deformities, and pains oppress their bodies, which daily boulder away by them, till they fall into the grave by death, even as the bodies of other men do, who never received such privileges from Christ as they do? For if "Christ be in us (as the apostle speaks, Rom. 8: 10.) the body is dead, because of sin:" Sanctification exempts us not from mortality.

But from all these, and whatsoever else, the fruits and consequences of sin, Christ is redemption to his people also: This seals up the sum of mercies: This so completes the happiness of the saints, that it leaves nothing to desire.

These four, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, take in all that is necessary or desirable, to make a soul truly and perfectly blessed.

Secondly, We have here the method and way, by which the elect come to be invested with these excellent privileges: the account

whereof the apostle gives us in these words, "Who of God is made unto us," in which expression, four things are remarkable.

First, That Christ and his benefits go inseparably and undividedly together: it is Christ himself who is made all this unto us: we can have no saving benefit separate and apart from the person of Christ: many would willingly receive his privileges, who will not receive his person; but it cannot be; if we will have one, we must take the other too: Yea, we must accept his person first, and then his benefits: as it is in the marriage covenant, so it is here.

Secondly, that Christ with his benefits must be personally and particularly applied to us, before we can receive any actual, saving privilege by him; he must be [made unto us] i.e. particularly applied to us: as a sum of money becomes, or is made the ransom and liberty of a captive, when it is not only promised, but paid down in his name, and legally applied for that use and end. When Christ died, the ransom was prepared, the sum laid down; but yet the elect continue still in sin and misery, notwithstanding, till by effectual calling it be actually applied to their persons, and then they are made free, Rom. 5: 10-11. reconciled by Christ's death, by whom "we have now received the atonement".

Thirdly, That this application of Christ is the work of God, and not of man: "Of God he is made unto us:" The same hand that prepared it, must also apply it, or else we perish, notwithstanding all that the Father has done in contriving, and appointing, and all that the Son has done in executing, and accomplishing the design thus far. And this actual application is the work of the Spirit, by a singular appropriation.

Fourthly and lastly, This expression imports the suitableness of Christ, to the necessities of sinners; what they want, he is made to them; and indeed, as money answers all things, and is convertible into meat, drink, raiment, physic, or what else our bodily necessities do require; so Christ is virtually, and eminently all that the necessities of our souls require; bread to the hungry, and clothing to

the naked soul. In a word, God prepared and furnished him on purpose to answer all our wants, which fully suits the apostle's sense, when he saith, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." The sum of all is, Doct. That the lord Jesus Christ, with all his precious benefits, becomes ours, by God's special and effectual application.

There is a twofold application of our redemption, one primary. the other secondary: The former is the act of God the Father, applying it to Christ our surety, and virtually to us in him: the latter is the act of the Holy Spirit, personally and actually applying it to us in the world of conversion: The former has the respect and relation of an example, model, or pattern to this; and this is produced and wrought by the virtue of that. What was done upon the person of Christ, was not only virtually done upon us, considered in him as a common public representative person, in which sense, we are said to die with him, and live with him, to be crucified with him, and buried with him, but it was also intended for a platform, or idea, of what is to be done by the Spirit, actually upon our souls and bodies, in our single persons. As he died for sin, so the Spirit applying his death to us in the work of mortification, causes us to die to sin, by the virtue of his death: And as he was quickened by the Spirit, and raised unto life, so the Spirit applying unto us the life of Christ, causeth us to live, by spiritual vivification. Now this personal, secondary, and actual application of redemption to us by the Spirit, in his sanctifying work, is that which I am engaged here to discuss and open; which I shall do in these following propositions.

Prop. 1. The application of Christ to us, is not only comprehensive of our justification, but of all these works of the Spirit which are known to us in scripture by the names of regeneration, vocation, sanctification, and conversion.

Though all these terms have some small respective differences among themselves, yet they are all included in this general, the

applying and putting on of Christ, Rom. 13: 14. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Regeneration expresses those supernatural, divine, new qualities, infused by the Spirit into the soul, which are the principles of all holy actions.

Vocation expresses the terms from which, and to which, the soul moves, when the Spirit works savingly upon it, under the gospel call.

Sanctification notes an holy dedication of heart and life to God: our becoming the temples of the living, God, separate from all profane sinful practices, to the Lord's only use and service.

Conversions denotes the great change itself, which the Spirit causeth upon the soul, turning it by a sweet irresistible efficacy from the power of sin and Satan, to God in Christ.

Now all these are imported in, and done by the application of Christ to our souls: for when once the efficacy of Christ's death, and the virtue of his resurrection, come to take place upon the heart of any man, he cannot but turn from sin to God, and become a new creature, living and acting by new principles and rules. So the apostle observes, 1 Thess. 1: 5, 6. speaking of the effect of this work of the Spirit upon that people, "Our gospel (saith he) came not to you in word only, but in power; and in the Holy Ghost:" There was the effectual application of Christ to them. "And you became followers of us, and of the Lord," ver. 6. there was their effectual call. "And ye turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God, ver. 9. there was their conversion. "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe," ver. 9. there was their life of sanctification or dedication to God. So that all these are comprehended in effectual application.

Prop. 2. The application of Christ to the souls of men is that great project and design of God in this world, for the accomplishment whereof all the ordinances and all the officers of the gospel are appointed and continued in the world.

This the gospel expressly declared to be its direct end, and the great business of all its officers, Eph. 4: 11, 12. "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God; to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," i.e. the great aim and scope at all Christ's ordinances and officers, are to bring men into union with Christ, and so build them up to perfection in him; or to unite them to, and confirm them in Christ: and when it shall have finished this design, then shall the whole frame of gospel-ordinances be taken down, and all its officers disbanded. "The kingdom (i.e. this present oeconomy, manner, and form of government) shall be delivered up," 1 Cor. 15: 24. What are ministers, but the bridegroom's friends, ambassadors for God, to beseech men to be reconciled? When therefore all the elect are brought home in a reconciled state in Christ, when the marriage of the Lamb is come, our work and office expire together. Prop. 3. Such is the importance and great concernment of the personal application of Christ to us by the Spirit, that whatsoever the Father has done in the contrivance, or the Son has done in the accomplishment of our redemption, is all unavailable and ineffectual to our salvation without this.

It is confessedly true, that God's good pleasure appointing us from eternity to salvation, is, in its kind, a most full and sufficient impulsive cause of our salvation, and every way able (for so much as it is concerned) to produce its effect. And Christ's humiliation and sufferings are a most complete and sufficient meritorious cause of our salvation, to which nothing can be added to make it more apt, and able to procure our salvation, than it already is: yet neither the one nor the other can actually save any soul, without the Spirit's application of Christ to it; for where there are divers social causes, or concauses, necessary to produce one effect, there the effect cannot be produced until the last cause has wrought. Thus it is here, the Father has elected, and the Son has redeemed; but until the Spirit (who is the last cause) has wrought his part also, we cannot be saved. For he comes in the Father's and in the Son's name and authority, to put the

last hand to the work of our salvation, by bringing all the fruits of election and redemption home to our souls in this work at effectual vocation. Hence the apostle, 1 Pet. 1: 2. noting the order of causes in their operations, for the bringing about of our salvation, thus states it, "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Here you find God's election and Christ's blood, the two great causes of salvation, and yet neither of these alone, nor both together can save us: there must be added the sanctification of the Spirit, by which God's decree is executed; and the sprinkling (i. e. the personal application of Christ's blood) as well as the shedding of it, before we can have the saving benefit of either of the former causes.

Prop. 4. The application of Christ, with his saving benefits, is exactly of the same extent and latitude with the Father's election, and the Son's intention in dying, and cannot possibly be extended to one soul farther.

"Whom he did predestinate, them he also called," Rom. 8: 30. and Acts 13: 48. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed;" 2 Tim. 1: 9. "Who has saved and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ, before the foundation of the world."

The Father, Son, and Spirit, (betwixt whom was the council of peace) work out their design in a perfect harmony and consent: as there was no jar in their council, so there can be none in the execution of it: those whom the Father, before all time, did chose; they, and they only, are the persons, whom the Son, when the fulness of time for the execution of that decree was come, died for, John 17: 6. "I have manifested thy name unto the men, which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me;" and ver. 19. "For their sakes I sanctify myself;" i.e. consecrate, devote, or set myself apart for a sacrifice for them. And those for whom Christ died, are

the persons to whom the Spirit effectually applies the benefits and purchases of his blood: he comes in the name of the Father and Son. "But the world cannot receive him, for it neither sees, nor knows him," John 14: 17. "They that are not of Christ's sheep, believe not," John 10: 26.

Christ has indeed a fulness of saving power, but the dispensation thereof is limited by the Father's will; therefore he tells us, Mat. 20: 23. "It is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." In which words he no ways denies his authority, to give glory as well as grace; he only shows that in the dispensation proper to him, as Mediator, he was limited by his Father's will and counsel.

And thus also are the dispensations of grace by the Spirit, in like manner, limited, both by the counsel and will of the Father and Son. For as he proceeds from them, so he acts in the administration proper to him, by commission from both. John 14: 26. "The Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name:" and as he comes forth into the world by this joint commission, so his dispensations are limited in his commission; for it is said, Johns 16: 13. "He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak?" i.e. He shall in all things act according to his commission, which the Father and I have given him.

The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do, John 5: 19. And the Spirit can do nothing of himself; but what he hears from the Father and Son; and it is impossible it should be otherwise, considering not only the unity of their nature, but also of their will and design. So that you see the application of Christ, and benefits by the Spirit, are commensurable with the Father's secret counsel, and the Son's design in dying, which are the rule, model, and pattern of the Spirit's working.

Prop. 5. The application of Christ to souls, by the regenerating work of the Spirit, is that which makes the first internal difference and

distinction among men.

It is very true, that in respect of God's fore-knowledge and purpose, there was a distinction betwixt one man and another, before any man had a being, one was taken, another left: and with respect to the death of Christ, there is a great difference betwixt one and another; he laid down his life for the sheep, he prayed for them, and not for the world; but all this while, as to any relative change of state, or real change of temper, they are upon a level with the rest of the miserable world. The elect themselves are "by nature the children of wrath, even as others," Eph. 2: 3. And to the same purpose the apostle tells the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 6: 11. (when he had given in that black bill, describing the most lewd, profligate, abominable wretches in the world, men whose practices did stink in the very nostrils of nature, and were able to make the more sober Heathens blush; after this he tells the Corinthians) "And such were some of you, but ye are washed," &c. q. d. look, these were your companions once: as they are, you lately were.

The work of the Spirit does not only evidence and manifest that difference which God's election has made between man and man, as the apostle speaks, 1 Thes. 1: 4, 5. But it also makes a twofold difference itself; namely in state and temper? whereby they visibly differ, not only from other men, but also from themselves; after this work, though a man be the "who", yet not the "what" he was. This work of the spirit makes us new creatures, namely; for quality and temper, 2 Cor. 5: 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are past away, behold, all things are become new."

Prop. 6. The application of Christ, by the work of regeneration, is that which yield unto men all the sensible sweetness and refreshing comforts that they have in Christ, and in all that he has done, suffered, or purchased for sinners.

An unsanctified person may relish the natural sweetness of the creature, as well as he that is sanctified; he may also seem to relish

and taste some sweetness in the delicious promises and discoveries of the gospel, by a misapplication of them to himself. But this is like the joy of a beggar, dreaming he is a king; but he awakes and finds himself a beggar still: but for the rational, solid, and genuine delights and comforts of religion, no man tastes them, till this work of the Spirit has first passed upon his soul: it is an enclosed pleasure, a stranger intermeddles not with it. "The white stone, and the new name," (denoting the pleasant results and fruits of justification and adoption) "no man knows but he that receives it," Rev. 2: 7. There are all those things wanton, in the unsanctified (though elect) soul, that should capacitate and enable it to relish the sweetness of Christ and religion, namely, propriety, evidence, and suitableness of spirit.

Propriety is the sweetest part of any excellency; therefore Luther was wont to say, that the sweetness of the gospel lay mostly in pronouns, as me, any, thy, &c. who loved [me] and gave himself for me, Gal. 2: 20. Christ Jesus [my] Lord, Phil. 3: 18. So Matt. 9: 2. Son, be of good cheer, [thy] sins are forgiven. Take away propriety, and you deflower the very gospel of its beauty and deliciousness: and as propriety, so

Evidence is requisite to joy and comfort; yea, so necessary, that even interest and propriety afford no sensible sweetness without it. For as to comfort, it is all one not to appear, and not to be. If I am registered in the book of life, and know it not, what comfort can my name there afford me? Besides, to capacitate a soul for the sweetness and comfort of Christ there is also an agreeable temper of spirit required; for how can Christ be sweet to that man's soul, whose thoughts reluctate, decline, or nauseate so holy and pure an object? Now, all these requisites being the proper effects and fruits of the Spirit's sanctifying operations upon us, it is beyond controversy, that the consolations of Christ cannot be tasted, until the application of Christ be first made.

Prop. 7. The application of Christ to the soul effectually, though it be so far wrought in the first saving work of the Spirit, as truly to unite the soul to Christ, and save it from the danger of perishing; yet it is a

work gradually advancing in the believer's soul, whilst it abides on this side heaven and glory.

It is true, indeed, that Christ is perfectly and completely applied to the soul in the first act for righteousness. "Justification being a relative change, properly admits no degrees, but is perfected together, and at once, in one only act; though as to its manifestation, sense, and effects, it has various degrees." But the application of Christ to us, for wisdom and sanctification, is not perfected in one single act, but rises by many, and slow degrees to its just perfection.

And though we are truly said to be come to Christ when we first believe, John 6: 35. yet the soul after that is still coming to him by farther acts of faith, 1 Pet. 2: 4. "To whom [coming] as unto a living stone;" the participle notes a continued motion, by which the soul gains ground, and still gets nearer and nearer to Christ; growing still more inwardly acquainted with him. The knowledge of Christ grows upon the soul as the morning light, from its first spring to the perfect day, Prov. 4: 18. Every grace of the Spirit grows, if not sensibly, yet really: for it is in discerning the growth of sanctification, as it is in discerning the growth of plants, which we perceive rather *crevisse, quam crescere*; to have grown, rather than grow. And as it thrives in the soul, by deeper radications of the habits, and more promptitude and spirituality in the acting; so Christ, and the soul proportionally, close more and more inwardly and efficaciously, till at last it is wholly swallowed up in Christ's full and perfect enjoyment.

Prop. 8. Lastly, Although the several privileges and benefits before mentioned are all true and really bestowed with Christ upon believers, yet they are not communicated to them in one and the same day and manner; but differently and divers, as their respective natures do require.

These four illustrious benefits are conveyed from Christ to us in three different ways and methods; his righteousness is made ours by

imputation: his wisdom and sanctification by renovation: his redemption by our glorification.

I know the communication of Christ's righteousness to us by imputations is not only denied, but scoffed at by Papists; who own no righteousness, but what is (at least) confounded with that which is inherent in us; and for imputative (blasphemously stiled by them putative righteousness, they flatly deny it, and look upon it as a most absurd doctrine, every where endeavouring to load it with these and such like absurdities, That if God imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer, and accepts what Christ has performed for him, as if he had performed it himself; then we may be accounted as righteous as Christ. Then we may be the redeemers of the world. False and groundless consequences; as if a man should say, my debt is paid by my surety, therefore I am as rich as he. "When we say the righteousness of Christ is made ours by imputation, we think not that it is made ours according in its universal value, but according to our particular necessity: not to make others righteous, but to make us so: not that we have the formal intrinsical righteousness of Christ in us, as it is in him, but a relative righteousness, which makes us righteous, even as he is righteous; not as to the quantity, but as to the truth of it: nor is it imputed to us, as though Christ designed to make us the causes of salvation to others, but the subjects of salvation, ourselves," it is inhesively in him, communicatively it becomes ours, by imputation, the sin of the first Adam becomes ours, and the same way the righteousness of the second Adam becomes ours, Rom. 5: 17. This way the Redeemer became sin for us, and this way we are made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. 5: 21. This way Abraham the father of believers was justified, therefore this way all believers, the children of Abraham, must be justified also, Rom. 4: 22, 23. And thus is Christ's righteousness made ours.

But in conveying, and communicating his wisdom and sanctification, he takes another method, for this is not imputed, but really imparted to us by the illuminating and regenerating work of the Spirit: these are graces really inherent in us: our righteousness comes from Christ

as a surety but our holiness comes from him as a quickening head, sending vital influences unto all his members.

Now these gracious habits being subjected and seated in the souls of poor imperfect creatures, whose corruptions abide and work in the very same faculties where grace has its residence; it cannot be, that our sanctification should be so perfect and complete, as our justification is, which inheres only in Christ. See Gal. 5: 17. Thus are righteousness and sanctification communicated and made ours: but then,

For redemption, that is to say, absolute and plenary deliverance from all the sad remains, effects, and consequences of sin, both upon soul and body; this is made ours, (or, to keep to the terms) Christ is made redemption to us by glorification; then, and not before, are these miserable effects removed; we put off these together with the body. So that look, as justification cures the guilt of sin, and sanctification the dominion of sin, so glorification removes, together with its existence and being, all those miseries which it let in (as at a flood-gate) upon our whole man, Eph. 5: 26, 27.

And thus of God, Christ is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption; namely, by imputation, regeneration, and glorification.

I shall next improve the point in some useful inferences.

Inference 1. Learn from hence, what a naked, destitute, and empty thing, a poor sinner is, in his natural unregenerate state.

He is one that naturally and inherently has neither wisdom, nor righteousness, sanctification nor redemption; all these must come from without himself, even from Christ, who is made all this to a sinner, or else he must eternally perish.

As no creature (in respect of external abilities) comes under more natural weakness into the world than man, naked, empty, and more

shiftless and helpless than any other creature; so it is with his soul, yea, much more than so: all our excellencies are borrowed excellencies, no reason therefore to be proud of any of them, 1 Cor. 4: 7. "What hast thou that thou hast not received? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" q. d. that intolerable insolence and vanity would it be for a man that wears the rich and costly robe of Christ's righteousness, in which there is not one thread of his own spinning, but all made by free-grace, and not by free-will, to jet proudly up and down the world in it, as if himself had made it, and he were beholden to none for it? O man! thine excellencies, whatever they are, are borrowed from Christ, they oblige thee to him, but he can be no more obliged to thee, who wearest them, than the sun is obliged to him that borrows its light, or the fountain to him that draws its water for his use and benefit.

And it has ever been the care of holy men, when they have viewed their own gracious principles, or best performances, still to disclaim themselves, and own free-grace as the sole author of all. Thus holy Paul, viewing the principles of divine life in himself, (the richest gift bestowed upon man in this world by Jesus Christ) how does he renounce himself, and deny the least part of the praise and glory as belonging to him, Gal. 2: 20. "Now I live, yet not I; but Christ liveth in me": and so for the best duties that ever he performed for God: (and what mere man ever did more for God?) Yet when, in a just and necessary defence, he was constrained to mention them, 1 Cor. 15: 10. how carefully is the like [Yet not I] presently added? "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Well then, let the sense of your own emptiness by nature humble and oblige you the more to Christ, from whom you receive all you have.

Infer. 2. Hence we are informed, that none can claim benefit by imputed righteousness, but those only that live in the power of inherent holiness; to whomsoever Christ was made righteousness, to him he also was made sanctification.

The gospel has not the least favour for licentiousness. It is every way as careful to press men to their duties as to instruct them in their privileges, Tit. 3: 8. "This is a faithful saying; and these things I will that ye affirm constantly; that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works." It is a loose principle, divulged by libertines, to the reproach of Christ and his gospel, that sanctification is not the evidence of our justification. And Christ is as much wronged by them who separate holiness from righteousness (as if a sensual vile life were consistent with a justified state) as he is in the contrary extreme, by those who confound Christ's righteousness with man's holiness, in the point of justification; or that own no other righteousness, but what is inherent in themselves. The former opinion makes him a cloak for sin, the latter a needless sacrifice for sin.

It is true, our sanctification cannot justify us before God; but what then, can it not evidence our justification before men? Is there no necessity, or use for holiness, because it has no hand in our justification? Is the preparation of the soul for heaven, by altering its frame and temper, nothing? Is the glorifying of our Redeemer, by the exercises of grace in the world, nothing? Does the work of Christ render the work of the Spirit needless? God forbid: "He came not by blood only, but by water also," 1 John 5: 6. And when the apostle saith, in Rom. 4: 5. "But unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness", the scope of it is neither to characterise and describe the justified person, as one that is lazy and slothful, and has no mind to work, nor the rebellious and refractory, refusing obedience to the commands of God; but to represent him as an humbled sinner, who is convinced of his inability to work out his own righteousness by the law, and sees all his endeavours to obey the law fall short of righteousness, and therefore is said, in a law-sense, not to work, because he does not work so as to answer the purpose and end of the law, which accepts of nothing beneath perfect obedience.

And when (in the same text) the ungodly are said to be justified, that character describes not the temper and frame of their hearts and lives, after their justification, but what it was before; not as it leaves, but as it found them.

Infer. 3. How unreasonable, and worse than brutish, is the sin of infidelity, by which the sinner rejects Christ, and with him all those mercies, and benefits, which alone can relieve and cure his misery!

He is by nature blind and ignorant, and yet refuses Christ, who comes to him with heavenly light and wisdom, he is condemned by the terrible sentence of the law to eternal wrath, and yet rejects Christ, who renders to him complete and perfect righteousness: he is wholly polluted and plunged into original and actual pollution of nature and practice, yet will have none of Christ, who would become sanctification to him. He is oppressed in soul and body, with the deplorable effects and miseries sin has brought upon him, and yet is so in love with his bondage, that he will neither accept Christ, nor the redemption he brings with him to sinners.

O! what monsters, what beasts has sin turned its subjects into! "You will not come to me that ye may have life," John 5: 40. Sin has stabbed the sinner to the heart, the wounds are all mortal, eternal death is in his face; Christ has prepared the only plaister that can cure his wounds, but he will not suffer him to apply it. He acts like one in love with death, and that judges it sweet to perish. So Christ tells us, Prov. 8: 36 "All they that hate me, love death:" not in itself but in its causes, with which it is inseparably connected. They are loth to burn, yet willing to sin; though sin kindle those everlasting flames. So that in two things the unbeliever shows himself worse than brutish, he cannot think of damnation, the effect of sin, without horror; and cannot yet think of sin, the cause of damnation, without pleasure; he is loth to perish to all eternity without a remedy, and yet refuses and declines Christ as if he were an enemy, who only can and would deliver him from that eternal perdition.

How do men act therefore, as if they were in love with their own ruin! Many poor wretches now in the way to hell, what an hard shift do they make to cast themselves away! Christ meets them many times in the ordinances, where they studiously shun him: many times checks them in their way by convictions, which they make an hard shift to overcome and conquer. Oh how willing are they to accept a cure, a benefit, a remedy, for any thing but their souls! You see then that sinners cannot, (should they study all their days to do themselves a mischief), take a readier course to undo themselves, than by rejecting Christ in his gracious offers.

Surely the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is less shall this sin.

Mercy itself is exasperated by it, and the damnation of such as reject Christ, (so prepared for them, with whatever they need, and so seriously and frequently offered to them upon the knee of gospel entreaty), is just, inevitable, and will be more intolerable the to any in the world beside them. It is just, for the sinner has but his own option, or choice: he is but come to the end which he was often told his way would bring him to. It is inevitable, for there is no other way to salvation, but that which is rejected. And it will be more intolerable than the damnation of others, because neither heathens nor devils ever aggravated their sins by such an horrid circumstance, as the wilful refusing of such an apt, offered, and only remedy.

Infer. 4. What a tremendous symptom of wrath, and sad character of death, appears upon that mans' soul, to which no effectual application of Christ can be made by the gospel.

Christ, with his benefits, is frequently tendered to them in the gospel; they have been beseeched once and again, upon the knee of importunity, to accept him; those entreaties and persuasions have been urged by the greatest arguments, the command of God, the love of Christ, the inconceivable happiness or misery which unavoidably follow the accepting or rejecting of those offers, and yet nothing will affect them: all their pleas for infidelity have been over and over

confuted, their reasons and consciences have stood convinced, they have been speechless, as well as Christless: not one sound argument is found with them to defend their infidelity: they confess in general, that such courses as theirs are, lead to destruction. They will yield them to be happy souls that are in Christ; and yet, when it comes to the point, their own closing with him, nothing will do; all arguments, all entreaties, return to us without success.

Lord! what is the reason of this unaccountable obstinacy? In other things it is not so: If they be sick, they are so far from rejecting a physician that offers himself, that they will send, and pray, and pay him too. If they be arrested for debt, and anyone will be a surety, and pay their debts for them, words can hardly express the sense they have of such a kindness: but though Christ would be both a physician and surety, and whatever else their needs require, they will rather perish to eternity, than accept him. What may we fear to be the reason of this, but because they are not of Christ's sheep, John 10: 26. The Lord open the eyes of poor sinners, to apprehend not only how great a sin, but how dreadful a sign this is.

Infer. 5 If Christ, with all his benefits, be made ours, by God's special application, what a day of mercies then is the day of conversion! What multitudes of choice blessings visit the converted soul in that day!

"This day (saith Christ to Zaccheus, Luke 19: 9) is salvation come to this house." In this day, Christ comes into the soul, and he comes not empty, but brings with him all his treasures of wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Troops of mercies, yea, of the best of mercies, come with him. It is a day of singular gladness and joy to the heart of Christ, when he is espoused to, and received by the believing soul: it is a coronation day to a king. So you read, Cant. 3: 11. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Sion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

Where, under the type of Solomon in his greatest magnificence and glory, when the royal diadem was set upon his head, and the people shouted for joy, so that the earth did ring again, is shadowed out the joy of Christ's heart, when poor souls, by their high estimation of him, and consent to his government, do, as it were, crown him with glory and honour, and make his heart glad.

Now, if the day of our espousals to Christ be the day of the gladness of his heart, and he reckons himself thus honoured and glorified by us, what a day of joy and gladness should it be to our hearts, and how should we be transported with joy, to see a King from heaven, with all his treasures of grace and glory, bestowing himself freely, and everlastingly upon us, as our portion! No wonder Zaccheus came down joyfully, Luke 19: 6; that the eunuch went home rejoicing, Acts 8: 39. that the gaoler rejoiced, believing in God with all his household, Acts 16: 34. that they that were converted, did eat their meat with gladness, praising God, Acts 2: 41, 46. that there was great joy among them at Samaria, when Christ came among them in the preaching of the gospel, Acts 8: 5, 8. I say, it is no wonder we read of such joy accompanying Christ into the soul, when we consider, that in one day, so many blessings meet together in it, the least of which is not to be exchanged for all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them. Eternity itself will but suffice to bless God for the mercies of this one day.

Infer. 6. If Christ be made all this to every soul, unto whom he is effectually applied, what cause then have those souls, that are under the preparatory work of the Spirit, and are come nigh to Christ and all his benefits, to stretch out their hands, with vehement desire to Christ, and give him the most important invitation into their souls!

The whole world is distinguishable into three classes, or sorts of persons; such as are far from Christ; such as are not far from Christ; and such as are in Christ. They that are in Christ have heartily received him. Such as are far from Christ, will not open to him; their hearts are fast barred by ignorance, prejudice, and unbelief against

him: But those that are come under the preparatory workings of the Spirit, nigh to Christ, who see their own indispensable necessity of him, and his suitableness to their necessities, in whom also encouraging hopes begins to dawn, and their souls are waiting at the foot of God for power to receive him, for an heart to close sincerely and universally with him; O what vehement desires! what strong pleas! what moving arguments should such persons urge, and plead to win Christ, and get possession of him! they are in sight of their only remedy; Christ and salvation are come to their very doors; there wants but a few things to make them blessed for ever. This is the day in which their souls are exercised between hopes and fears: Now they are much alone, and deep in thoughtfulness, they weep and make supplication for a heart to believe, and that against the great discouragements with which they encounter.

Reader, if this be the case of thy soul, it will not be the least piece of service I can do for thee, to suggest such pleas as in this case are proper to be urged for the attainment of thy desires, and the closing of the match between Christ and thee.

First, Plead the absolute necessity which now drives thee to Christ: Tell him thy hope is utterly perished in all other refuges. Thou art come like a starving beggar to the last door of hope. Tell him thou now beginnest to see the absolute necessity of Christ. Thy body has not so much need of bread, water, or air, as thy soul has of Christ, and that wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that are in him.

Secondly, Plead the Father's gracious design in furnishing and sending him into the world, and his own design in accepting the Father's call. Lord Jesus, was thou not "anointed to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound?" Isa. 61: 1, 3. Behold an object suitable to thine office: whilst I was ignorant of my condition, I have a proud rebellious heart, but conviction and self-acquaintance have now melted it: my heart was

harder than the nether millstone, and it was as easy to dissolve the obdurate rocks, as to thaw and melt my heart for sin; but now God has made my heart soft, I sensibly feel the misery of my condition. I once thought myself at perfect liberty, but now I see what I conceited to be perfect liberty, is perfect bondage; and never did a poor prisoner sigh for deliverance more than I. Since then thou hast given me a soul thus qualified, though still unworthy, for the exercise of thine office, and execution of thy commission; Lord Jesus, be, according to thy name, a Jesus unto me.

Thirdly, Plead the unlimited and general invitation made to such souls as you are, to come to Christ freely. Lord, thou hast made open proclamations; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, Is. 55: 1. And Rev. 22: 17. "Him that is a-thirst come". In obedience to thy call, lo, I come; had I not been invited, my coming to thee, dear Lord Jesus, had been an act of presumption, but this makes it an act of duty and obedience.

Fourthly, Plea the unprofitableness of thy blood to God; Lord, there is no profit in my blood, it will turn to no more advantage to thee to destroy, than it will to save me: if thou send me to hell, (as the merit of my sin calls upon thy justice to do,) I shall be there dishonouring thee to all eternity, and the debt I owe thee never paid. But, if thou apply thy Christ to me for righteousness, satisfaction for all that I have done will be laid down in one full, complete sum; indeed, if the honour of thy justice lay as a bar to my pardon, it would stop my mouth: but when thy justice, as well as thy mercy, shall both rejoice together, and be glorified and pleased in the same act, what hinders but that Christ be applied to my soul, since, in so doing, God can be no loser by it?

Fifthly, and lastly, Plead thy compliance with the terms of the gospel: tell him, Lord, my will complies fully and heartily to all thy gracious terms, I can now subscribe a blank: let God offer his Christ on what terms he will, my heart is ready to comply; I have no exception against any article of the gospel. And now, Lord, I wholly refer myself to thy pleasure; do with me what seems good in thine eyes, only give

me an interest in Jesus Christ; as to all other concerns I lie at thy feet, in full resignation of all to thy pleasure. Never did any perish in that posture and frame; and I hope I shall not be made the first instance and example.

Inf. 7. Lastly, If Christ, with all his benefits, be made ours, by a special application; how contented, thankful, comfortable, and hopeful, should believers be, in every condition which God casts them into in this world!

After such a mercy as this, let them never open their mouths any more to repine and grudge at the outward inconveniences of their condition in this world. What are the things you want, compared with the things you enjoy? What is a little money, health, or liberty, to wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? All the crowns and sceptres in the world, sold to their full value, are no price for the least of these mercies. But I will not insist here, your duty lies much higher than contentment.

Be thankful, as well as content, in every state. "Blessed be God, (saith the apostle) the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all [spiritual blessings] in heavenly places in Christ:" O think what are men to angels, that Christ should pass by them to become a Saviour to men? And what art thou among men, that thou shouldst be taken, and others left! And among all the mercies of God, what mercies are comparable to these conferred upon thee? O bless God in the lowest ebb of outward comforts, for such privileges as these.

And yet you will not come up to your duty in all this, except you be joyful in the Lord, and rejoice evermore after the receipt of such mercies as these, Phil. 4: 4. "Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous, and again I say rejoice." For has not the poor captive reason to rejoice, when he has recovered his liberty? The debtor to rejoice when all scores are cleared, and he owes nothing? The weary traveller to rejoice, though he be not owner of a shilling, when he is come almost home, where all his wants shall be supplied? Why this is our case, when Christ once becomes yours: you are the Lord's freemen, your

debts to justice are all satisfied by Christ; and you are within a little of complete redemption from all the troubles and inconveniences of your present state.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

NEW BIRTH, REPENTANCE, AND FAITH

by James Buchanan

CONVERSION properly consists in a sinner being brought actually, intelligently, and cordially⁴⁶ to close and comply with God's revealed will on the subject of his salvation. Some conviction of sin being wrought in the conscience and some knowledge of God's truth imparted to the understanding, the sinner is, at the time of his conversion, brought to the point: he comes to a final decision, a decision which implies at once a firm assent of the understanding in an act of faith and a full consent of the will in an act of deliberate choice. He surrenders himself to the power of God's truth. He submits to God's revealed will in the matter of his salvation. Convinced that he is a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior, a Savior appointed by God Himself, qualified alike by the dignity of His divine nature, the tenderness of His human sympathies, and the efficacy of His meritorious work to save unto the very uttermost all that come unto God by Him, a Savior exhibited...to every sinner in the general doctrine of the Gospel, and declaring His own free and unutterable love in its universal calls...The sinner, taking that Gospel as his warrant, comes to Christ, closes with Him, embraces Him in all the fullness of His offices, and surrenders himself without reserve into the Savior's hands to be washed, justified, and sanctified according to the terms of the everlasting covenant. This is conversion. This will secure the salvation of the sinner, and nothing short of this can.

There must be a decisive closing⁴⁷ with the Gospel call, a final determination, first on the part of the understanding, and secondly on the part of the will...believing it to be infallibly certain that Jesus is the Christ, the only but allsufficient Savior, we must close with Him as He is revealed to us in the Gospel and [believe] Him as all our salvation and all our desire (2Sa 23:5). It is not enough that we are vis-ited with occasional convictions of sin: so was Cain, so was Herod, and so was Judas. Nor is it enough that we acquire some speculative knowledge⁴⁸ of divine truth: so did Agrippa, who was almost persuaded to be a Christian, and so also did Simon Magus, who made such a profession as was sufficient for his baptism, and who yet remained "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity" (Act 8:23). Conversion implies much more: it implies an actual, deliberate, and cordial closing with Christ in His revealed character and a surrender of our souls into His hands. It is a radical heart-change by which the sinner is brought to close in right earnest with the Savior. He may have been troubled in his conscience before and moved in his affections and, to a certain extent, instructed in the truths of God. But until now, he hesitated, delayed, and doubted. The bargain was not struck, the covenant was not subscribed, the decisive act was not done. But now he is brought to a point: the business, long in negotiation, is about to be finally settled. He sees the magnitude of impending ruin, the fearful hazard of an hour's delay; and hearing that Christ and Christ only can save him, he believes, and he comes to Christ deliberately and solemnly to commit his soul into His hands and to embrace Him as his own Savior.

This decisive act of closing with Christ and complying with God's revealed will in the matter of our salvation, although it may at first sight appear a very simple and easy process, includes in it, I apprehend, everything that is essential to saving conversion or that is declared in Scripture to accompany or flow from it. Let the sinner close with Christ in His scriptural character, in other words, let him have a correct apprehension of Christ as He is revealed in the Gospel and cordially believe on Him...as his own Savior, in all the fullness of His offices, and he is really from that time a converted man, however

defective his knowledge and his experience in many other respects may be. He has already experienced all that is essentially involved in that great change, and every other consequence that properly flows from conversion will ensue.

This decisive act implies [the following]:

1. That he believes Jesus to be the Christ. In other words, he believes the same Jesus Who was crucified on the hill of Calvary to be the Son of God, manifested in human nature as the Savior of sinners and, as such, executing the will of God, acting by His authority, bearing His commission. [He was] anointed with the Holy Ghost as a Prophet to declare God's infallible truth, as a Priest to satisfy God's inflexible justice, and as a King to subject the world to God's rule. [He was] a Christ once crucified, but now exalted, invested with almighty power, and able to save unto the very uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

2. This decisive act of closing with Christ in His revealed character implies that the man feels himself to be a sinner. As such, [he is] condemned by God's Law, exposed to God's threatenings, and in imminent danger of eternal ruin, while he has no means and no power to save himself, but must be indebted to a Savior.

3. It implies that he is willing or rather that he has been made willing to receive, own, and submit to Christ as God's Anointed One, and in respect to every one of His offices as the Redeemer of God's people. He willingly submits his understanding to Christ's teaching, receiving the truth from His lips, and on His authority, as the infallible truth of God. He willingly acquiesces⁴⁹ in the method of being justified, not by his own righteousness but by the righteousness of Christ, seeking to be pardoned only through the merit of His blood, shed on the cross and accepted only through the efficacy of His meritorious obedience. He willingly subjects his heart and life to Christ's royal authority, that his heart may be renewed and sanctified by Christ's Spirit, and that his life may be governed and

regulated by Christ's law. In a word, he is willing to receive and embrace a whole Christ and a whole salvation; to surrender himself unreservedly—soul, body, and spirit—into Christ's hands; to be saved and sanctified, governed and dealt with, now and eternally, according to the terms of the everlasting covenant.

Here we have a real, thorough conversion, which consists mainly and essentially in repentance and faith, two gifts of the Spirit that are often used together or even separately to denote the whole of this great change: repentance indicating what the sinner turns from, faith, what he turns unto. Conversion is the turning point at which he turns out of the broad way that leads to destruction and into the strait,⁵⁰ the narrow way that leads unto life. He then flees from the wrath to come and flees to Christ as his refuge. He forsakes the service of sin and follows Christ as his Master. He shuns perdition⁵¹ and seeks salvation in Christ as his Savior. Now repentance describes his conversion with reference chiefly to what he turns from, and faith describes his conversion with reference chiefly to what he turns to. Each implies the other, there being no true repentance where there is no faith, and no true faith where there is no repentance.

Both are wrought in the soul at the time of its conversion by the power of the Holy Ghost applying the truth as it is in Jesus. From this radical change of heart, there flows an outward change of life, reformation of life proceeding from a renewed mind. First, the tree is made good; and the fruit becomes good also (Mat 12:33). The fountain is purified, and the stream that flows from it is also pure.

The production of true faith is often spoken of in Scripture as amounting to the whole work of regeneration: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1Jo 5:1). And again, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Joh 1:12-13). Here, every one who really believes is said to be born of God; and as every true believer is a converted man, it follows that

the production of saving faith is equivalent to the work of regeneration.

But then it must be a real scriptural faith, such as is required in the Gospel: not the faith which the Apostle James declares to be dead, but that living faith that is described in Scripture as a well-grounded belief resting on the sure testimony of God. [It must be] a positive belief, not a mere negation or absence of disbelief, nor a doubtful and wavering opinion, but a thorough conviction of mind. [It must be] an intelligent belief, such as is inconsistent with blind ignorance and implies a perception of the meaning of God's truth, a full and comprehensive belief, embracing all that is essential to be known in regard to the method of salvation. This belief impl[ies] scriptural apprehensions of God in His true character, of Christ in His person as Immanuel,⁵² in the fullness of His offices as Mediator, His great design and His finished work, and of ourselves as guilty, depraved, and exposed to a sentence of righteous condemnation.

This belief, thus founded on God's testimony and implying spiritual apprehensions of His truth, is a vital, active, and operative principle, bending the will to a compliance with God's call, awakening suitable emotions of reverence, fear, complacency,⁵³ delight, love, and joy, renewing, transforming, purifying the soul, and effecting a complete change on all our practical habits.

The production of this real, living, and sanctifying faith is the great work of the Spirit in conversion, a work which implies or produces a universal change on all the faculties of our nature, so that as soon as this faith is implanted in his soul, the sinner becomes a new man, the truth of God received by faith renewing his understanding, his conscience, his will, his desires, his affections: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Co 5:17).

Every believer then, in the Gospel sense of that term, is born again. In other words, no one is a believer who is not regenerated...The

production of saving faith is that wherein regeneration properly consists. But then it must be such a faith as the Gospel requires and describes. That faith, although it may have its seat in the understanding, implies a change in our whole moral nature, and especially a renewal of the will. The understanding is, in the order of nature, the leading and governing faculty of the soul, and it is by means of truth cordially believed that the great change is accomplished.

But the truth is either not duly⁵⁴ understood or not really believed, where it works no change on the heart and habits of the sinner. He may read, speak, and speculate about it; he may even embrace some fragments of it and hold them tenaciously...but the substantial truth of Christ's Gospel cannot be really understood and believed by any man who remains unconverted...It is true that many an unregenerate man may suppose that he believes: he may never have questioned the general truth of God's Word; he may even have ranged⁵⁵ himself on the side of the Gospel; and by a public profession or in private conversation, he may have often defended and maintained it. Nay, he may have had many thoughts passing through his mind, many convictions awakened in his conscience that show that he is not altogether ignorant or unimpressed...Yet I apprehend that nothing can be plainer from the Word of God than that these transient impressions may often be experienced by an unconverted man, and that the man who is not regenerated and transformed by his faith has no true faith at all.

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**The Wind of the Holy Ghost Blowing
upon
the Dry Bones in the Valley of Vision
by Mr Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754).**

Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. Ezekiel 37:9.

In the beginning of this chapter, the Lord, in a vision, brings the prophet Ezekiel into a valley full of dead men's bones, quite dried and withered, and asks him the question, if he thought it possible for these dry bones to live? Thereby intimating, that although it was a thing impossible with men, yet it was easily effected by the almighty power of God. And, to convince him of it, he commands the prophet to speak to the dry bones, and to tell them, in his name, that he would make the breath of life to enter into them; which accordingly is done; for the prophet having in the name of the Lord, called upon the four winds to breathe upon the dry bones, immediately life enters into them, and they come together bone to his bone, and they lived, and "stood up upon their feet, and became an exceeding great army." by which vision we have a lively representation of a threefold resurrection, as a late commentator (Mr. Henry) very well observes. 1. Of the resurrection of the body at the last day, and general resurrection, when God will command the earth to give up its dead, and the sea to give up its dead; and when, by the ministry of angels, the dust and bones of the saints shall be gathered from the four winds of heaven, to which they have been scattered. Or, 2. We have in this vision a lively representation of the resurrection of the soul

from the grave of sin; which is effected by preaching or prophesying, as the instrumental, and by the powerful influence of the Spirit of the Lord, as the principal efficient cause of it; and the wind here spoken of is plainly said to be understood of the Spirit, (ver. 14:) "I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live." Or, 3. We have, by this vision, a representation of the resurrection of the church of God, from the grave of her bondage and captivity in Babylon, under which they were at present detained. And this indeed is the primary and immediate scope of the vision, as is plain from the explication that follows it, ver. 11-14. However, seeing the deliverance of the children of Israel out of their Babylonish captivity, was typical of our spiritual redemption purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, and in a day of power applied by the mighty and powerful operation of the Holy Spirit of God; and seeing it is this redemption with which we under the gospel are principally concerned, therefore I shall handle the words that I have read under this spiritual sense and meaning.

And in them briefly we have, 1. A dismal case supposed, and that is, spiritual deadness. The people of God were not only in bondage under their enemies, but likewise their souls were at this time in a languishing condition. But of this more afterwards.

2. We have a blessed remedy here expressed, and that is the breathings of the Spirit of the Lord, the influences of the Holy Ghost: Come from the four winds, O breath, &c. Now, these influences of the Holy Ghost are here described,

1st, From their nature, held out under the notion and metaphor of wind; Come from the four winds, O breath. There are three elements by which the operations of the Spirit are held out to us in scripture. Sometimes they are compared to fire: Matt. 3:11: "He shall baptize you (speaking of Christ) with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Sometimes they are compared to water: Isa. 44:3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Sometimes the influences of the Spirit

are held forth under the metaphor of wind, as in Cant. 4:16: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden." So here, by the wind, or breath here spoken of, we are principally to understand the Spirit: it is plainly declared to be the Spirit of God in the 14th verse of this chapter. I cannot stand to show you the grounds of this metaphor. Wind, you know, is of a cleansing, cooling, fructifying nature and virtue; it acts freely and irresistibly. It is not in the power of man to resist or oppose the blowings of the wind. So the influences of the Spirit cleanse and purify the heart; they allay the storms of conscience, "make the bones which were broken to rejoice." They make the soul to grow as the lily, and to cast forth its roots like Lebanon ;" they render the soul fruitful "like the garden of God ," and the Spirit acts with a sovereign freedom, and irresistible efficacy, as you may hear afterwards. But,

2dly, These influences of the Holy Ghost, are described, from their variety, four winds: Come from the four winds, O breath; importing the manifold influences and operations of this one and eternal Spirit. Hence we read of the "north and south wind," Cant. 4:16 ; and of "the seven spirits that are before the throne of God," Rev. 4:5.

3dly, These influences are described from their acting or operation, which is here called a breathing: Breathe upon these slain. By the acting of this almighty wind, our natural life was produced and formed, Gen. 2:7. We are there told, that after God had "formed man of the dust of the ground, he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and he became a living soul." Hence is that of Elihu, Job 33:4: "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." And it is by the influences of the same almighty breath, that our souls are "quicken'd, when dead in trespasses and sins," and our spiritual life is formed within us. But then,

4thly, These influences are described from the end and effect of their operation: Breathe upon these slain, that they may live; that is, that the dry bones may become living souls, that out of these stones children may be raised up to Abraham.

Now, from these words, thus briefly explained, I only offer you this one observation; namely,

DOCT. "That as the generality of a church and people in covenant with God, may be in a very dead and languishing condition as to their souls; so the breathings and influences of the Holy Spirit of God are absolutely necessary for their revival. This is the sum of what I intend from these words, Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

In discoursing upon this doctrine, I shall,

I. Speak a little upon this deadness which is incident to a people externally in covenant with God.

II. Upon the influences or breathings of the wind of the Holy Ghost, which are so absolutely necessary in order to their revival.

III. Touch at that life which is effected by these breathings.

IV. I shall apply.

I. I say, I would speak a little on this deadness which is incident to a people externally in covenant with God. And here I shall only, 1. Give you some of its kinds. 2. Some of the causes of it. 3. Some of the symptoms of it.

1. The first thing is to give you some kinds of deadness. — Know, then, in general, that there is a two-fold death; one is proper and natural, the other is improper and metaphorical.

(1.) Death, properly so called, is a thing so well known, that it is needless for me to tell you what it is. There is none of us all but we shall know it experimentally within a little; for "it is appointed for every man once to die." — The grave is a house appointed for all living; and therefore, with Job, we may "say to corruption, Thou art

our father; and to the worm, Thou art our mother and sister." But this is not the death I now speak of; and therefore,

(2.) There is a death which is improper or metaphorical; which is nothing else but a disease or distemper of the soul, by which it is rendered unmeet and incapable for holy and spiritual exercises. And this, again, is two-fold; either total or partial.

1st, There is a total death incident to the wicked and ungodly, who are stark dead, and have nothing of spiritual life in them at all. Hence, (Eph. 2:1,) men in a state of nature are said to be "dead in trespasses and sins;" that is, under the total reigning power of sin, "in the gall of bitterness, and under the bond of iniquity;" without God, without Christ, and therefore without hope.

2dly, There is a partial death incident to believers, whom God has raised out of the grave of an unrenewed state, and in whose souls he has implanted a principle of spiritual life. And this partial death, incident to believers, consists in a manifest decay of spiritual principles and habits, in the abating of their wonted life and vigour, and activity in the way and work of the Lord: their faith, their love, their hope, and other graces, are all in a fainting and languishing condition; they lie dormant in the soul, like the life of the tree that lies hid in its root, without fruit or blossoms, during the winter season. Such deadness as this we find the Lord's people in scripture frequently complaining of particularly Isa. 56:3: "The son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, and taken hold of his covenant," he is made to speak, saying, "The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people:" and the eunuch cries out, I am a dry tree, wherein there is no life or sap. It is this kind of spiritual deadness, incident to believers, that I now principally speak of. The leaves of his profession may in a great measure be withered; the candle of his conversation may burn dimly, or with a very imperfect light; the flame of his affections, his zeal, love, desire, may, like that of a great fire, be reduced to a few coals and cinders. There may be a great intermission or formality in the discharge of commanded duty.

The mind, which once with delight and admiration, could meditate upon God and Christ, and the covenant, and things that are above, may come to lose its relish for these things, and to dote upon the transitory fading vanities of a present world. The common gifts of the Spirit, through carnal ease, and defect of employment, may be in a great measure blasted: and, which is worst of all, the saving graces, and fruits of the Spirit, may come to be woefully impaired as to their former degrees and actings. But now, this partial death of believers, again, is twofold: there is a deadness which is felt by God's people, and a deadness which is not felt; "gray hairs are here and there upon them, sometimes, and they do not behold them." The Lord was departed from Samson, and he wist not, Judg. 16:20 . But then there is a deadness which is felt, when God's people have a sense of their deadness, and are lamenting it. And it is an evidence of spiritual life, or of some revival, when the Lord's people are beginning to cry out with the church, (Psal. 85:6:) "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee? — Why hast thou hardened our heart from thy fear?" Isa. 63:17. But,

2. The second thing is, to take notice of some of the causes of this spiritual deadness. I shall only name them, because your time would not allow me to enlarge.

(1.) Then, abstinence or neglect of food, you know, will soon bring the body into a pining, languishing condition: so, if the means of grace be not diligently improved, if we neglect, by faith, to apprehend and to improve Christ, and to feed upon him, whose "flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed," the spiritual life of the soul will soon languish and wither. Hence is that [declaration] of Christ, John 6:53: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

(2.) Surfeiting the soul with sensual pleasure is another great cause of spiritual death: Hos. 4:11: "Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart:" they suck out the very life of the soul. What is the reason why many professors of religion have lost their wonted

vigour in the way of the Lord, and are in such a languishing condition as to their soul-matters? The plain reason of it is this, they are glutting themselves with the pleasures of sense. If Samson do but sleep on Delilah's lap, she will betray him into the hands of the Philistines, and cut the locks wherein his strength lies; and when he goes out to shake himself, as at other times, he will find his strength gone away from him.

(3.) Inactivity and sloth in salvation and regeneration-work is another cause of spiritual deadness. Physicians observe, that as too violent exercise, so too much rest, or a sedentary way of living, is prejudicial to the health of the body. This holds also in spiritual things: if we do not exercise ourselves unto godliness, and endeavour to abound in the work of the Lord, the spiritual life will soon languish and dwindle away. Therefore, "Let us not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; and whatever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with all our might." And beware of resting upon empty wishes and desires in spiritual matters; for "the desire of the slothful kills him, because his hands refuse to labour."

(4.) The contagion of ill example, of a carnal world, and irreligious relatives, has a fatal influence this way. You know it is exceedingly dangerous for those who have the seed of all diseases in them to frequent the company of those who are infected with the plague or pestilence. A Joseph, if he stay long in the Egyptian court, will learn to swear "by the life of Pharaoh." It is true, indeed, as fire sometimes burns with the greater vehemence, and casts the greater heat, the colder the air be; so the zeal and life of God's people is sometimes rather quickened, by beholding the wickedness of those among whom their lot is cast, as Paul among the Athenians. But if we shall adventure to cast ourselves into the society of the wicked, without a special call and warrant from Providence, it will be next to an impossibility to keep ourselves free of the contagion: for "Can a man carry fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can a man walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? Evil communications corrupt good manners."

(5.) Some deadly wound in the soul, not carefully noticed, may be the cause of spiritual death. You know a man may die not only by a draught of poison, or the like, but also by the cut of a sword. While we are in the wilderness, we live in the very midst of our spiritual enemies: the fiery darts of Satan are flying thick about us; he is always seeking to bruise the believer's heel, "going about seeking to devour:" and not only so, but our own lusts also do war against the soul, so that we cannot miss to be wounded thereby. And if the filth and guilt of these wounds be not carefully washed away by the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, they cannot miss exceedingly to impair the spiritual life and health: therefore, David, after he had been wounded by murder and adultery, is so earnest that God would wash and cleanse his wounds, and purge him with hyssop, that so the joy of his salvation might be restored. But then,

(6.) A holy God has sometimes a righteous and holy hand in this spiritual death, to which the Lord's people are liable, by withdrawing and suspending the influences of his Spirit from them. For as the plant and the herb of the field wither, and languish when the rain of heaven is withheld; so when the influences of the Holy Ghost are suspended, the very sap of the soul, and its spiritual life go away. And the Lord upholds the influences of his Spirit for many reasons, As,

1st, He does it sometimes in a way of awful and adorable sovereignty, to show that he is not a debtor to any of his creatures. However, because the Spirit's influences are seldom withdrawn in a way of sovereignty, it is our part to search and try if conscience do not condemn us, as having a sinful and culpable hand in it ourselves.

2dly, Sometimes he does it to humble his people, and to prevent their pride, which makes him to "behold them afar off." If we were always under the lively gales and influences of the Spirit, we would be ready to forget ourselves, and in danger with Paul, of being lifted up above measure, when he was wrapt up into the third heaven. Upon this account, some of the saints have said, that they have got more good sometimes by their desertion, than by their enlargement.

3dly, He does it to make them prize Christ, and see their continual need of fresh supplies "out of his fulness." He lets our cisterns run dry, that we may come anew, and lay our empty vessels under the flowings of the blessed "fountain of life," that "out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace."

4thly, He does it sometimes for the trial of his people, to see if they will follow him "in a wilderness, in a land that is not sown," as well as when he is feeding them with the sensible communications of his grace and Spirit; to see if they will live on him by faith, when they cannot live by sight or sense.

5thly, Sometimes he does it for their chastisement, to correct them for their iniquities. And this, indeed, is the most ordinary cause why the Spirit of the Lord is suspended and withdrawn.

I have not time to enumerate many of these sins which provoke the Lord to withdraw his Spirit; I shall only mention two or three.

(1.) Not hearkening to the motions of his Spirit, is one great reason why the Lord withdraws his Spirit; as you see in the spouse, Cant. 5: There Christ comes, and moves, and calls for entrance: the spouse does not hearken to the motion: "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Upon which he immediately withdraws and leaves her, as you may read at your own leisure.

(2.) Lukewarmness and formality in the discharge of duty is another cause of it, as we see in the church Laodicea; it made him to spew that church out of his mouth. And then

(3.) Prostituting the gifts and graces of the Spirit to carnal, selfish, and base ends, to procure a name, or make a show in the world. This is another reason of it.

(4.) Sinning against light. Trampling upon the belly of conscience, as David no doubt did in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba; whereby

he provoked the Lord so far to leave him, that he cries out, (Psal. 51:11) "Cast me not out of thy sight; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

(5.) Barrenness and unfruitfulness under the means of grace: Isa. 5: the clouds are commanded to give no rain upon the barren vineyard. And then

(6.) And lastly, Their not listening carefully to the voice of God in ordinances and providences: this is another cause of it; Psal. 81:11, 12: "My people would not hearken to my voice; therefore, I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." And thus you have some of the causes of this spiritual deadness. I come to—

3. The third thing, which was to give you some of the symptoms of it: and would to God they were not too visible, rife, and common in the day, and upon the generation in which we live. I shall name a few of them to you.

(1.) Want of appetite after the bread and water of life is a symptom of spiritual death. You know that man cannot be in a healthful condition that loathes his food, or has lost his appetite after it. Alas! Is not the manna of heaven, that God is raining about our tent-doors, generally loathed? The great truths of God, which some of the saints have found to be "sweeter than honey, from the honey-comb," have not that savour and relish with us that they ought to have. Are not sabbaths, sacraments, sermons, fast-days, and feast-days, burdens to many among us; so that if they would but speak out the language of their hearts, they would be ready to join issue with these, Mal. 1:13: "What a weariness is this?" Whereas, the soul that is in a lively condition is ready to say of the word, "It is better to me than thousands of gold and silver; I esteem it more than my necessary food:" and of ordinances, "I love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy honour dwelleth;" and Psal. 84:10: "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

(2.) Though a man have something of an appetite, yet if he do not grow, or look like his food, it looks something dangerous and death-like. The thriving Christian is a growing Christian: "They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. — The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." But, alas! is it not quite otherwise with the most part? Many are going backward, instead of forward; as it is said of Jerusalem ; (Lam. 1:8:) "She sigheth, and turneth backward." May we not cry out of our leanness, our leanness, notwithstanding of all the fattening means and ordinances that we enjoy?

(3.) You know, when death takes a dealing with a person, it makes his beauty to fade: "When with rebukes thou dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." Pale death soon alters the ruddy countenance. Perhaps the day has been, O believer, when the beauty of holiness adorned every step of thy conversation; thy "light did so shine before men, that they, seeing thy good works," could not but "glorify thy heavenly Father;" but now, alas! the beauty of thy conversation is sullied and stained, by "lying among the pots" of sin. This says, that spiritual death is dealing with thy soul.

(4.) Death not only wastes the beauty, but the strength also: Eccl. 12:3: "The keepers of the house do tremble, and the strong men do bow," upon the approaches of the king of terrors. Now, see if your wonted strength and ability to perform duty, or to resist temptations, be not abated. Perhaps the day has been, when thou couldst have said with Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? for, through Christ strengthening me, I can do all things;" but now thou art ready to faint and sit up at the very thoughts of duty. The day perhaps has been, when, though Satan, that cunning archer, did shoot sore at thee; yet "thy bow did abide in its strength, and the arms of thy hands were made strong by the mighty God of Jacob;" thou wast in care to beat back the fiery darts of Satan, and to stand thy ground against the corruptions and defections of the day and generation: but

now, like a dead fish, thou art carried down the stream. Does not this proclaim thy soul to be under a sad decay?

(5.) Death wastes the natural heat and warmness of the body. There is a kind of chilliness and coldness that seizes a man when death takes a dealing with him. So it is a sign of a spiritual decay and deadness, when wonted zeal for God and his glory, and the concerns of his church and his kingdom, is abated. Perhaps the day has been, when, with David, the zeal of God's house did in a manner eat you up, and you "preferred Jerusalem to your chief joy:" but now you are almost come the length of Gallio's temper, to "care for none of these things;" indifferent whether the work of God in the land sink or swim. Laodicea's distemper is too prevalent among us at this day: we are "neither cold nor hot" in the things of God; and therefore have reason to fear, lest we be spewed out of God's mouth. The day has been, when your spirits were lifted up, in prayer, in hearing, in communicating; you were "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; "you could rejoice to work righteousness, and say, in some measure, with David, "I will go unto the altar of God, to God, my exceeding joy;" but now all this holy warmth is gone in a great measure; you are become formal and careless in the concerns of God's glory.

(6.) A dead man, you know, cannot move, but only as he is moved from without, in regard he wants a principle of motion within. So it is a sign of spiritual death, even in believers, when external motives and considerations have a greater influence in the duties of religion upon them, than an internal principle of faith and love. When the believer is himself, "the love of Christ constrains" him in every duty; this is the "one thing" he desires, "that he may behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple:" but when any selfish or external motive sets him at work, it is a sign of spiritual death. Other things might be added; but I hasten to speak to,

II. The second thing proposed in the method, and that was, to speak a little of these breathings and influences of the Spirit of God, which are absolutely necessary for the revival of the Lord's people under

deadness: Come from the four winds, O breath! and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. And here I would, 1. Clear the nature of these influences, in a word or two. 2. Speak to the variety of these influences, four winds. 3. To the manner of their operation upon the elect; they are said to breathe upon, the slain. 4. Speak a little to the necessity of these breathings. 5. To the several seasons of the Spirit's reviving influences.

I fear your time will cut me short before I have done; but I shall run through these particulars as quickly as possible.

1. The first thing is, to clear the nature of these breathings or influences. And what I have to offer upon this head, you may take in these few propositions:

(1.) You would know, that the influences and gifts of the Spirit of God are of two sorts, either common or saving. As for the common influences of the Spirit, which are sometimes bestowed upon the wicked and reprobate world, I am not to speak of these at this time. All I shall say about them is, to tell you, that they are given in common to the children of men, "for edification of the mystical body of Christ," until it arrive at "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," as you read, Eph. iv.: and therefore they are commonly called by divines *donæ ministrantia*, or ministering gifts. Although they have no saving efficacy upon the person in whom they dwell; yet God, in his holy wisdom, makes use of them for the good of his church in general, as we read, Eph. 4: And another thing that I would tell you, likewise, concerning these common influences, is, that they of an exceeding dangerous nature when they are not accompanied with saving grace. The man that has them, is like a ship having very large sails, and but little or no ballast at all, in the midst of the ocean; and is therefore in danger of being split in pieces against every rock. In Matt. 7:22, we read of some who had extraordinary common gifts; they prophesied in Christ's name, wrought miracles, and cast out devils in his name, and did many wonderful works, and yet Christ

utterly disowns them. I do not speak of these common influences now, but of such as are saving. And therefore,

(2.) A second proposition is, that the Holy Spirit of God, considered in his particular economy in the work of redemption, as the applier of the Redeemer's purchase, is the author and efficient cause of all saving influences. It is he, I say, that prepares and disposes the soul of man for the entertainment of the things of God, which are not received nor discerned by the natural mind. It is he that ploughs up the fallow ground of the heart, and brings in the wilderness, and turns it into a fruitful field. It is he that garnishes the face of the soul with the saving graces of the Spirit; these are flowers of the upper paradise, therefore called "the fruits of the Spirit," Gal. 5:22. It is he that preserves, cherishes, and maintains, them by renewed influences: he cherishes the smoking flax, and at last turns it into a lamp of glory in heaven; for "he brings forth judgment unto victory."

(3.) Again; you would know that the elect of God are the subjects recipient of all saving influences of the Spirit of God: I say, they are peculiar only to the elect of God, and to them only upon their conversion, when they come to be united to Christ, as members of his mystical body. We must be ingrafted into this true olive tree, otherwise we can never partake of his sap, and "receive out of his fulness, grace for grace." That these influences are peculiar to the elect of God, is plain from Tit. 1:1; where we read of "the faith of God's elect."

(4.) These influences of the Spirit, are given for various ends to the elect of God. The judicious Dr. Owen, in his Discourses on the Spirit, observes, that these saving influences are given to the elect of God for regeneration, to the regenerate for sanctification, to the sanctified for consolation, and to the comforted Christian for further up-building and edification; and establishment, until they arrive at perfection in glory. But the nature of these influences will farther appear from,

2. The second thing proposed, which was, to speak a little to the variety of these influences of the Spirit. You see they are diversified here, while they are called four winds: Come from the four winds, O breath. The apostle tells us, that "there are diversities of gifts and operations, but the same Spirit," 1 Cor. 11:4. And we read, as I was telling you, of "seven Spirits that are before the throne," Rev. 1. Here, if time would allow me to enlarge, I might tell you, that the saving influences and breathings of the Spirit are either primary, fundamental, and absolutely necessary to salvation; or they are accumulative, additional, necessary only for the believer's comfort and well-being. Some of these influences are antecedent, or preparative unto conversion; some of them are regenerating, and others are subsequent and posterior unto regeneration. But I shall not stand upon such subtle distinctions. You may take a few of them in the order following: —

(1.) There are the convincing influences of the Spirit: John 16:8: "When he is come, he will convince the world of sin." This is what I conceive we are to understand by the "north wind," (Cant. 4:16;) which is commonly boisterous, cold, chill and nipping. The elect of God by nature lie fast asleep within the tidal mark of God's wrath, upon the very brink of everlasting ruin, crying, "Peace, peace," to themselves; the Spirit of the Lord comes like a stormy north wind, blows hard upon the sinner's face, and awakens him; breaks his carnal peace and security, brings him to himself and lets him see his danger; fills him with remorse and terror. Hence, (Isa. 28:17,) the hail is said to "sweep down the refuge of lies," before the sinner come to settle upon the "foundation that God hath laid in Zion." In Acts 2:37, it is said, "they were pricked in their heart;" and then they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

(2.) There are the enlightening influences and breathings of the Spirit. Hence, he is compared to eye-salve, Rev. 3:18: "Ye have received an unction from the Holy One, whereby ye know all things," 1 John 2:20. We read, Isa. 25:7, of a "veil and face of a covering that is spread over all nations." The wind of the Holy Ghost must blow off

this veil of ignorance and unbelief; and then the poor sinner comes to see a new world of wonders that he never saw before; a wonderful great God, a wonderful Redeemer, a wonderful covenant, and a wonderful holy law. Hence, we are said to be "translated out of darkness into a marvellous light. The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God." And, I Cor. 2:12: "By the Spirit we know the things that are freely given to us of God."

(3.) There are the renewing influences of the Spirit. We are said to be "saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. 3:5. Hence, he is called "a new Spirit." He renews the will, and "makes old things to pass away, and all things to become new."

(4.) There are the comforting influences of the Spirit. This is the south-wind, as it were, gentle and easy, and refreshing; and therefore he is called the Comforter. And, indeed, his consolations are strong consolations; they put more gladness into the heart than corn, wine, and oil in abundance; fill the soul with a joy that is "unspeakable, and full of glory." And then,

(5.) There are the corroborating and strengthening influences of the Spirit. By the breathings of the Spirit the feeble are made "like David, and as the angel of God before him." It is he that "gives power to the faint, and increases strength to them that have no might." It is by him that worm Jacob is made to "thresh the mountains, and to beat them small, and to make the hills as chaff" And then.

(6.) There are the drawing and enlarging influences of the Spirit: "Draw me," (says the spouse,) "we will run after thee." The poor believer lies many times, as it were, wind-bound, that he is not able to move one step in the way of the Lord: but, O! when the Spirit of the Lord comes, then come liberty and enlargement: "I will run the way of thy commandments," (says David,) "when thou hast enlarged my heart;" to wit, by the influences of thy Spirit. He is like oil to their

chariot-wheels; and when he comes, they are as the chariots of Amminadib, or a willing people.

(7.) There are the sin-mortifying and sin-killing influences of the Spirit: "We, through the Spirit," are said to "mortify the deeds of the body, that so we may live." When this wind of the Holy Ghost blows upon the soul, he not only makes the spices to revive, but he kills the weeds of sin and corruption, making them to wither and decay; so that the poor believer, who was crying, "Wretched man, what shall I do to be delivered from this body of death!" is made some-times to tread upon the necks of these enemies, as a pledge of his complete victory at last; And then,

(8.) There are the interceding influences of the Spirit: Rom. 8:26: "The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He intercedes in a physical and efficient way. He makes us to wrestle and pray; therefore he is called "the Spirit of grace and supplications," Zech. 12:10. He fills the believer's heart and mouth with such a heavenly rhetoric, that God is not able to withstand it. Hence Jacob "had power with the angel, and prevailed;" for "he wept, and made supplication unto him." And then

(9.) There are the sealing and witnessing influences of the Spirit: He "witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the sons of God." He bears witness of the glorious fulness and suitableness of Christ to the soul: "The Spirit shall testify of me," John 15:26. And he is said to "seal believers to the day of redemption;" and his seal is the earnest of glory: Eph. 1:13, 14: "Ye are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance." But these things I have not time to insist upon. So much for the second thing.

3. The third thing that I proposed here, was, to speak a little to the manner of the acting or operation of these influences, or flow it is that this wind blows upon the soul? I answer,

(1.) The wind of the Holy Ghost blows very freely; the Spirit acts as an independent sovereign, John 3:8. It does not stay for the command, nor stop for the prohibition of any creature. So the breathings of the Spirit are sovereignly free as to the time of their donation, free as to their duration and continuance, free as to the measure, and free as to the manner of their working. And then

(2.) He breathes on the soul sometimes very surprisingly: "Or ever I was aware (says the spouse,) my soul made me like the chariots of Animinadib." Canst thou not seal this in thy experience, believer, that sometimes, when thou hast gone to duty in a very heartless and lifeless condition, perhaps beginning to raze foundations, and to say with Zion, "The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forrgotten," a gale from heaven has in a manner surprised thee, and set thee upon the high places of Jacob, and made thee to cry with the spouse, "It is the voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills? —His anger endureth but for a moment: in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

(3.) These breathings and influences of the Spirit are some-times very piercing and penetrating. The cold nipping north wind, you know, goes to the very quick. The sword of the Spirit "pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Wind, you know, is of a very seeking, penetrating nature; it seeks through the closest chambers. So the Spirit, which is the candle of the Lord, "searcheth the lower parts of the belly:" he makes a discovery of these lusts and idols that sulk in the secret chambers of the heart.

(4.) The breathings of this wind are very powerful, strong, and efficacious. Who can oppose the blowings of the winds? Some winds have such a mighty force with them, that they bear down, overturn, and overthrow every thing that stands in their way. So the Spirit of the Lord sometimes, especially at first conversion, breaks in upon the soul like the rushing of a mighty wind, as he did upon the apostles,

breaking down the strongholds of iniquity, casting to the ground every high thought and towering imagination of the soul, that exalts itself against Christ, with a powerful and triumphant efficacy. He masters the darkness of the mind, the contumacy and rebellion of the will, and the carnality of the affections: the enmity of the heart against God, and all the spiritual wickednesses that are in the high places of the soul, are made to fall down at his feet, as Dagon did before the ark of the Lord.

(5.) Although he act thus powerfully and irresistibly, yet it is with an overcoming sweetness, so as there is not the least violence offered to any of the natural faculties of the soul: for whenever the Spirit comes with his saving influences, he sweetly overcomes the darkness of the mind; the sinner becomes a volunteer, and content to enlist himself a soldier under Christ's banner: Psal. 110:3: "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." No sooner does Christ by his Spirit say to the soul, "Follow me," but immediately they arise and follow him. "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Then,

(6.) There is something in the breathing of this wind that is incomprehensible by reason: John 3:8: "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goes," says Christ: "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There is something in the operation of the eternal Spirit and his influences beyond the reach, not only of natural but of sanctified reason. Who can tell "how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child?" So, far less can we tell how the Spirit forms the babe of grace in the heart; how he preserves, maintains, and cherishes "the smoking flax," that is not quite extinguished. We may, in this case, apply the words of the psalmist in another case, and say, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known;" and that of the apostle, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

(7.) These influences of the Spirit, are sometimes felt before they are seen; as you know a man will feel the wind, and hear it, when he

cannot see it. So it is with the Lord's people many times, on whom the Spirit breathes: they feel his actings, they are sensible that he has been dealing with them; and all that they can say about it is, with the man that was born blind, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." "The kingdom of heaven comes not with observation."

4. The fourth thing proposed was, to speak a little to the necessity of these breathings. And here I shall show, 1. That they are necessary. 2. To what things they are necessary.

(1.) That they are necessary, will appear,

1st, From the express declaration of Christ, John 15:5: "Without me, ye can do nothing;" that is, without the aid and influences of my Spirit. He does not say, Without me, ye cannot do many things, or great things; but, "Without me, ye can do nothing."

2dly, It is evident from the express acknowledgment of the saints of God upon this head: 2 Cor. 3:5: "We are not," says the apostle, "sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." It is he that must "work all our works in us and for us."

3dly, It is plain from the earnest prayers of the saints for the breathings of this wind: Cant. 4:16: "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden." Psal. 85:6: "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee?" They are promised in the covenant, and therefore necessary: Isa. 44:3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Ezek. 36:27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Now, there is not a mercy promised in the covenant that can be lacking. But,

(2.) To what are these breathings necessary? I answer, they are necessary,

1st, To the quickening of the elect of God, when they are stark dead in trespasses and sins. Can ever the dry bones live, unless this omnipotent wind blow upon them? It is strange, to hear some men that profess Christianity, talking of the power of their own wills to quicken and convert themselves. They may as well say, that a dead man may take his grave in his two arms, and lay death by him, and walk. "No man," says Christ, "can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." Oh! What a dead weight is the sinner, that a whole Trinity must draw! For both Father and Son draws the sinner by the breathings of the Holy Ghost

2dly, These influences are necessary for the suitable discharge of every duty of religion. You cannot read, you cannot hear, you can not pray or praise, you cannot communicate to any advantage, unless the wind of the Holy Ghost blow upon you. It is the Lord that must enlarge our steps under us, and make your feet like hinds' feet in the ways of the Lord

3dly, They are necessary for accomplishing our spiritual warfare against sin, Satan, and the world. We will never be able to combat with our spiritual enemies, if he do not help us: it is he only that must "teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, so as bows of steel may be broken in pieces by us." Without the Spirit, we will fall before every temptation; like Peter, curse and swear, that we never knew him.

4thly, They are necessary to the exercise of grace already implanted in the soul. As we cannot work grace in our hearts, so neither can we exercise it without the renewed influences of the Holy Ghost, Cant. 4:16: When this wind blows, then, and never till then, do the spices flow out. But I shall not stand on this: the Spirit's influences are necessary to all the uses mentioned upon the second head: for conviction, illumination, renovation, consolation, enlargement, mortification of sin, for assurance of our adoption.

5. The fifth thing that I proposed upon this head, was, to give you some of the seasons of these influences of the Spirit: for the wind, you know, has its seasons and times of blowing and breathing. I shall only name a few of them to you.

(1.) The Spirit's reviving influences blow, very ordinarily, in a day of conversion. This, as you were hearing, is a season when this wind breathes on the soul, Ezek. 36:26: when God "takes away the stony heart, and gives the heart of flesh." He puts his Spirit within them, when the soul is first espoused unto Christ. So Jer. 2:2: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."

(2.) When the soul has been deeply humbled under a sense of sin and unworthiness. When Ephraim is brought low, and is smiting on his thigh, acknowledging his sin and folly, then the Spirit of the Lord comes with a reviving gale upon his spirit. "Is Ephraim," says the Lord "my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

(3.) After a dark night of desertion, when the Lord returns again, it is a time of sweet influences. After Zion had been crying, "The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me;" upon the back of it comes a sweet gale of the Spirit, "Can a woman forget her child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee."

(4.) Times of earnest prayer and wrestling; for he gives his Spirit to them that ask it. This is agreeable to the promise, Ezek. 36:37.

(5.) Times of serious meditation are times of sweet influences of the Spirit Psal. 63:5, 6, 8: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, my soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my soul followeth hard after thee."

(6.) Communion-days are sometimes days of sweet influences. Some of the Lord's people can attest it from their experience, with the spouse; that "while the King sat at his table, the spikenard sent forth the smell thereof;" and when they "sat down under his shadow, they found his fruit sweet to their taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

(7.) The day of death has sometimes been found to be a day of such pleasant gales of the Spirit that they have been made to enter into the haven of glory with the triumphant song in their mouth, saying, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus David, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Thus, Simeon, thus Paul, &c.

III. The third thing in the text and doctrine to be spoken to, is the life that is effected and wrought in the souls of God's elect by these influences and breathings of the Holy Spirit. Your time will not allow me to enlarge upon this. I shall only tell you, in a few particulars, what sort of a life it is.

(1.) It is a life of faith. The apostle calls it so, Gal. 2:20, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And the just is said to live by faith. The man is ever embracing a Redeemer, and the fulness of the Godhead in him; always deriving fresh supplies out of that full treasury and store-house.

(2.) It is a life of justification. The law pronounces a curse against every one that "doth not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The believer gets this sentence of death cancelled: Rom. 8:1. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And not only so, but he has the everlasting righteousness of Immanuel God-man imputed to him: so that with a holy boldness he may challenge justice, and challenge the law, what

they have to say against him, as the apostle does, Rom. 8:33: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" &c.

(3.) It is a life of reconciliation with God; God and they are at friendship; which follows naturally on their justification: Rom. 5:1: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." God does not retain the least grudge in his heart against them; and he and they walk together, because they are agreed: that is, they have fellowship one with another, according to that, 1 John 1:3: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

(4.) It is a life of holiness and sanctification: for the Spirit of the Lord is a cleansing, purifying, and renewing Spirit: he renews the soul after the image of God; makes the heart, that was a "cage of unclean birds," a fit temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; he garnishes the soul, and makes it like the King's daughter, all glorious within. They that had lain among the pots, become "like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

(5.) It is a very lightsome and comfortable life: and no wonder; for his name is The Comforter. His consolations are so strong, that they furnish the soul with ground of joy in the blackest and cloudiest day: Hab. 3:17, 18: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." And the joy that he gives is deep: "Your heart shall rejoice." And it is abiding: "Your joy shall no man take from you." And it is such as cannot be made language of: "We rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

(6.) It is a life of liberty; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." He brings us into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." Before the Spirit comes with his saving influences, the man is in bondage; in bondage to sin, to Satan, to the law, and to the curse and condemnation of God: but the Spirit of the Lord frees from all these.

Christ, by his Spirit, sets the captives of the mighty at liberty, and "delivers the prey from the terrible."

(7.) It is a hidden life: Col. 3:3: "Your life is hid with Christ in God." And believers are called "God's hidden ones," Psal. 83:3: The spring and fountain of this life is hid, namely, an unseen Christ; for with him is the fountain of life. The subject of this life is hid, even the hidden man of the heart. The actings of this life are hid, and the means of its support; he feeds upon "the hidden manna, and the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." And then the beauty and glory of this life is hid; for "the King's daughter is all glorious within." The beauty of the hypocrite's life lies all in the outside, painted sepulchres.

(8.) It is a heavenly life; they are made to live above the world: "Our conversation is in heaven," says the apostle. They look on themselves as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and, therefore, look not so much to the things that are seen, as to the things that are not seen. With Moses, they "have respect unto the recompense of the reward;" their eyes are set upon the land that is very far off, and the King in his beauty.

(9.) It is a royal life: for they are "made kings and priests unto God," Rev. 1:6: They have a royal kingdom, of which they are heirs: "I appoint unto you a kingdom," says Christ; a royal crown, "a crown of glory which fadeth not away." They shall have a royal throne at last, Rev. 3:21. Royal robes, princely attire, "the garments of salvation;" a royal table provided for them, Isa. 25:6: "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined;" royal guard continually attending them, the angels of God, and the attributes of the divine nature, &c.

(10.) It is an eternal life: John 17:3: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The saving knowledge of a God in Christ, what is it but the first dawns of eternal glory in the soul? And where he once dawns, he

is ever in the ascendant until the mid-day of glory come; for "his goings forth are prepared as the morning.

IV. The fourth thing is the use of the doctrine. And waiving other uses that might be made of this doctrine, I shall only improve it by way of examination and of exhortation.

The first use shall be of trial and examination. Oh try, sirs, whether or not these saving influences of the Spirit did ever breathe upon your souls, yea, or not. For your trial I shall only suggest these few things: —

1. If these breathings have blown upon thy soul, man, woman, then he has blown away "the veil and face of the covering" that was naturally upon your mind and understanding. He has given you other views of spiritual and divine things, than you can have by any natural or acquired knowledge. The Spirit of the Lord is called "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation," Eph. 1:17: because he reveals these things to the soul which flesh and blood is not able to receive or understand. So then, has the Spirit testified of Christ unto you? Has he "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?" And as a fruit and consequence of this,

2. If the wind of the Holy Ghost has blown upon thy soul, he has blown away some of the filth of hell that did cleave to thy soul, and has transformed thee into his own image: 2 Cor. 3:18: "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, thou art changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." If you have the Spirit, the "same mind will be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:" for "he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit." You will imitate and resemble him in his imitable perfections, in his holiness, meekness, self-denial, patience. He is a holy God; and wherever he comes, he works holiness, and makes the soul holy.

3. If this Wind has blown upon your souls, then it has driven you from your lying refuges, and made you take sanctuary in Christ. He has driven you from the law, and made you consent to the method of salvation through the righteousness of the Son of God: "I through the law," (says the apostle,) "am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." This is the design of all the Spirit's influences, to lead sinners off from sin, off from self, off from the law, that they may rest in Christ only.

4. If ever you felt any of the reviving gales of this wind of the Spirit, you will long for new gales and breathings of it: and when these breathings are suspended and withheld, your souls will be like to faint, as it were, like a man that wants breath. You will pant for the air of the Spirit's influences, like David, Psal. 63:1: "My soul longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;" and Psal. 84:2: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Oh for another gale of his Spirit in public ordinances!

5. If you have felt the breathings of this wind you will not snuff up the east wind of sin and vanity: John 4:14: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." You will not thirst immoderately after things of time; no, no; you will see them to be but mere trash and vanity. You will "choose that good part which shall not be taken away from you." You will "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

6. If this wind has blown upon thy soul, then you will follow the motion of this wind: you will not run cross to this wind, but will go along with it. I mean, you will yield yourselves to the conduct of the Spirit speaking in his word; for "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

But, say you, How shall I know if I be led by the Spirit of God? I answer,

1st, If you follow the Spirit, then "you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," but, on the contrary, you will study to "crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts." You will be ready to cut off your right hand, and to pluck out the right eye sins at the Lord's command.

2dly, Then the way wherein you walk will be a way of holiness, for he is a Spirit of sanctification; and a way of truth; for the Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of truth, and he leads into all truth: a way of uprightness: Psal. 143:10: "Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness."

3dly, You know leading imports spontaneousness and willingness. There is a great difference between leading and drawing; between being driven by the wind, and following the motion of the wind. Sometimes, indeed, the wicked, a hypocrite, a natural man, by a strong north wind of conviction, may be driven on to duty through the force of terror. But the believer is a volunteer; he freely yields himself to the Spirit's conduct; he rejoices to work righteousness, and to remember God in his ways. Whenever he hears the Spirit whispering in his ears, and saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," presently, he complies. When the Spirit of Lord says, "Come," he immediately echoes back again, and says, "Behold, I come unto thee; for thou art the Lord my God." Now, try yourselves by these things.

The second use shall be exhortation. Is it so, that the influences of the Spirit are so necessary in order to our revival? Then be exhorted to look up to Heaven, and cry for the breathings of the Spirit. O sirs, will you turn the words of my text into a prayer? And say, "Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live?" I might enforce this exhortation by many motives: I only name them.

Motive 1. Consider, that spiritual deadness is very prevalent in the day in which we live. There is a great multitude of "dry bones" scattered up and down our "valley of vision." There are many that carry the marks of a deadly leprosy on their foreheads: their atheism,

their profanity, irreligion, and other gross abominations, plainly declare to the world, that they are "dead in trespasses and sins." And, alas! May it not be for matter of lamentation, that even many of those, who, in the judgment of charity, have "the root of the matter," the principles of spiritual life, are yet under sad decays of the life of grace? Alas! It is not with Scotland's ministers and professors as once it has been. I might produce many melancholy evidences of this, if time would allow. Remember those already mentioned, the general loathing of the word, &c.

Mot. 2. Consider the evil and danger of spiritual deadness. The evil of it will appear,

1st, If you consider that it is a frame of spirit directly contrary to the command of God. God commands us to "present ourselves a living sacrifice unto him:" and, indeed, this "is our reasonable service," Rom. 12:1. Yea, it is contrary to the very nature of God; for God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth," 1 John 4:24.

2dly, The evil and danger of it appears farther from this; that it unfits the soul for every duty, and mars our communion and fellowship with God. God meets the lively Christian in the way of duty: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways." But, for the man that comes to him with a Laodicean, dead, lifeless, and lukewarm frame of soul, he will not hold communion with that man; no he "will spew him out of his mouth."

3dly, It opens a door for all other sins, and renders a man an easy prey to every temptation. A dead man can make no manner of resistance; he is carried down the stream without opposition. Then,

4thly, It lays a foundation for sad and terrible challenges from conscience. David's spiritual deadness brought him to that pass, in the end, that he is made to cry out of broken bones, &c.

Mot. 3. Consider, that as the breathings of the Spirit are necessary for every duty, so particularly for that solemn work which you have before your hands of commemorating the death of the exalted Redeemer. I might here let you see, how the influences of the Spirit are necessary for every part of your work, if time would allow. Without the Spirit's influences of light, you can never examine yourselves to purpose: it is "the Spirit of the Almighty that giveth understanding" how to search out "the mystery of iniquity" in the heart, which is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And then, without the Spirit you cannot mourn for sin; for it is the kindly influences of the Spirit that thaws the heart into evangelical tears, Zech. 12:10. Without the Spirit you cannot discern the broken body of a Redeemer; for it is the Spirit that testifies of Christ. "I will pour the Spirit of grace upon the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem;" and then follows, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." In a word, you cannot exercise any grace, you cannot wrestle in prayer, you cannot have any right view of the contrivance of redemption, you cannot "take hold of God's covenant," or improve any promise of the covenant, without the Spirit.

Mot. 4. Consider the excellency of these influences of the Spirit.

1st, They blow from an excellent quarter and original: the Holy Ghost is the author of them; and you know he "proceeds from the Father and the Son." So that a whole Trinity, as it were, convey themselves with these breathings.

2dly, They are the purchase of a Redeemer's blood, and therefore excellent. There is not the least grace, or the least gale of the Spirit, that is given to believers, but it cost Christ the blood of his heart. He purchased grace as well as glory.

3dly, These influences of the Spirit, as it were, supply Christ's room while he is in glory. And truly, sirs, I may safely say it upon scripture-warrant, that the presence of the Spirit with believers upon earth, is a

greater blessing than the mere bodily presence of Christ: and, therefore, Christ tells his disciples by way of comfort, (John 16:7:) "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." As if he had said, "When I am gone, the Spirit will be poured out from on high, which is far better for you than my bodily presence."

4thly, These breathings of the Spirit are pledges of glory, the earnest-penny of the inheritance: Eph. 1:13, 14: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance."

5thly, Their excellency appears from the excellent effects that they produce upon the soul. They beautify the soul on whom they fall, and make it like "a field which the Lord hath blessed." They render the soul "fruitful in every good word and work:" Hos. 14:5: "I will be as the dew unto Israel:" And what follows? "he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Isa. 44:3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;" and then follows, (ver. 4,) "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses."

Quest. What advice or counsel do you give, in order to our obtaining or recovering the enlightening and reviving gales of the Spirit?

Ans. 1. Be aware of your deadness, and mourn over it; for the Lord "comforts them that mourn in Zion." He will "give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness:" and then follows, "They shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," Isa. 61:2, 3.

2. Be much upon the mount of divine meditation; for here it is that the Spirit of the Lord breathes: "While I was musing the fire burned," says David, Psal. 39:3; Psal. 63:5, 6: "When I meditate on thee in the

night-watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness."

3. Cry mightily to God for these influences, that he would pour down his Spirit from on high: for "if ye, being evil," says Christ, "know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke 11:13. Plead the promises of the new covenant; and, particularly, be much in pleading this absolute promise of the Spirit, Isa. 44:3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Ezek. 36:27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." But still remember, that these promises are to be managed by the prayer of faith. We are to turn God's promises into prayers; for it is added, (ver. 37,) "For these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

4. Make conscience of waiting on him in all the duties and ordinances of his appointment, particularly the preaching of the word. And beware of a legal frame of spirit in your attending upon these ordinances, as if thereby you could merit anything at God's hand, or as if God were obliged to you for what you do this way; for "we receive the Spirit," (says the apostle,) "not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith." Gospel ordinances are the usual chariots in which the Spirit rides, when he makes his entrance at first, or when he returns into the soul after absence.

5. Lastly, Study to have union with Christ; for it is upon them that are in Christ, that "the Spirit of God and of glory" rests: "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit" with him. "The oil of gladness," that was poured upon the head of our exalted Aaron, runs down upon the skirts of his garments, upon every member of his mystical body.

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Enlightening the Mind

by James Buchanan

HAVING considered the general design of the gift of the Spirit, in reference both to the world and the Church, and described the course or process by which a soul is translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, I propose to illustrate separately the various parts of the Spirit's work, or his successive operations on the soul, from the time when it is first taken under his teaching, till it is made 'meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.'

One of his most necessary operations is that by which he conveys *spiritual light into the understanding*; and to this part of his work, which is indeed so important, that it is often put for the whole, the apostle refers, when, speaking of the Holy Ghost as 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,' he prays that by the Spirit 'the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened' (Eph. i. 17, 18), and when he describes true converts as having had their eyes opened, and having been turned from darkness to light; nay, translated out of darkness into God's marvellous light.

The illuminating work of the Holy Spirit may be said to be the groundwork of all his other operations; for it is by the truth known and believed that the Spirit fulfils all the functions of his glorious office.¹ By enlightening the mind in the knowledge of sin, he lays a groundwork for the *conviction* of conscience; by enabling us to see the import and meaning of the Gospel, he proposes motives for *conversion*; by teaching us right views of God and of ourselves, our privileges and prospects, he supplies us with means of *comfort*; by showing us the nature and necessity of Gospel holiness, he carries forward the work of *sanctification*; by disclosing to us scriptural

views of our spiritual necessities, he calls forth the *spirit of prayer*; and, generally, he does whatever he is wont to do, by means of the *knowledge*. Hence it is important to give due consideration to this part of the Spirit's work, that we may be prepared to understand, and rightly to improve, whatever we shall find revealed respecting his other operations on the soul. Such, indeed, is the inseparable connection, or rather the real affinity of all the saving graces of the Spirit, that none of them can exist without being accompanied or followed by all the rest; and hence any one of them may be used to signify the presence of all. Thus, *knowledge, faith, repentance, and love* are severally spoken of in Scripture as either comprehending or implying every thing that is essential to a sinner's salvation; and hence a full exposition of any one of these fruits of the Spirit might embrace a description of the whole of the Spirit's work. It is not, then, with the view of separating betwixt them, or assigning the precise order of their production, that we distinguish one part of the Spirit's work from another; but rather with the view of unfolding it, in all the magnitude of its extent, and the variety of its aspects, as it is exhibited in the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit is the enlightener of God's people, and imparts *spiritual illumination* to their minds.

This part of the Spirit's work implies a *previous state of spiritual darkness* on the part of those who are the subjects of it; and the natural state of all men is very frequently represented under the figures of darkness, blindness, and ignorance. They are described as 'walking in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' And again, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'

Here observe, that this spiritual darkness is *universal*; it is affirmed of all the Gentiles, and we shall find that it is also affirmed of all the

unbelieving Jews: it belongs to the 'natural man,' or to every man as he is by nature. It is not dispelled by those common notions of God and divine things, which an unrenewed mind may acquire in the exercise of its own faculties. Nor is its prevailing power disproved by the existence of these notions, any more than the prevailing power of sin is disproved by the existence of some notions of the difference betwixt right and wrong. Nay, as in nature itself there is 'no darkness without a mixture of light,'² such light as serves only to make 'the darkness visible,' so is it with the unrenewed soul; its common notions of God are not sufficient to dispel the darkness in which it is shrouded; and hence the apostle, in one place, declares, that when 'men *knew* God, they glorified him not as God;' and, regarding this as a proof that there was some radical defect in their knowledge of him, he speaks of it elsewhere as if it were no knowledge at all; for, says he, 'the world by wisdom *knew not* God.' And may we not apply to these common notions, which have nothing in them of the true celestial light, the solemn remark of our Lord himself, 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' This darkness does not consist merely in the absence of outward light, but in the 'blindness of the mind' such blindness as obstructs the entrance of the light, even when it is shining gloriously around us. Thus, of the unbelieving Jews it is said, that they remained in spiritual darkness with the revelation of God in their hands: 'But their minds were *blinded*: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.' (2 Cor. 3. 14-16). A two-fold veil is here spoken of — the one which covered the Old Testament, before the advent of Christ, by whom it was explained as well as fulfilled; and the other which lay upon their own souls, and which prevented them from seeing, even when the first 'veil was done away in Christ.' And so, of multitudes who live in the full blaze of Gospel light, it is said, that they remain inwardly in a state of spiritual darkness; for 'if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious

gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.’ (2 Cor. 4. 3, 4). If this spiritual darkness be natural to all men, and if it may exist notwithstanding the common notions of God and religion which they may acquire by their natural faculties, and notwithstanding the still higher instruction of the written Word; it follows that it can only be removed by an inward operation on the mind itself, and this is expressly ascribed to the enlightening influence of the Spirit. ‘The Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.’ If we would ‘with open or unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord,’ it must be ‘as by the Spirit of the Lord.’

Accordingly, the change which is wrought in the mind at the time of its conversion is compared to a transition from darkness to light, or to the change of night into day. It is said of the Father, that ‘he hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son;’ that ‘he hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light;’ and of Christ, that he commissioned Paul ‘to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God:’ but that this was not to be accomplished by mere human teaching appears from that striking passage where God speaks of it as his own peculiar work, and intimates that it could be accomplished by no other than that creative power which, ‘when the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,’ spoke saying, ‘Let there be light, and there was light;’ for says the apostle, ‘God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’ And then will the wondering disciple exclaim, ‘One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.’

This great change is ascribed to the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit on the soul. It is ascribed, indeed, to the Father, as ‘the fountain of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift;’ and to the Son also, as the anointed Prophet of the Church, ‘the light of the world;’ but it is the Holy Spirit, who proceedeth from the

Father and the Son, by whose immediate personal agency this illumination of the mind is wrought. Our Lord himself promised to send the Spirit as an Enlightener. 'When he, the *Spirit of truth*, is come, he will guide you into all truth.' 'He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall *show* it unto you.' 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall *teach* you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' And that this precious promise was not personal to the apostles, nor limited to the primitive Church, appears from the preceding context: 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for *ever*; even the Spirit of truth;' by whose constant presence and continued grace in the Church, he fulfils that other promise, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

There are various distinct operations of the Holy Spirit as the Enlightener of the soul. (1) As the *revealer* of the truth, by whom it was made known to the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, — for 'holy men of old *spake* as they were moved by the *Holy Ghost*.' 'God hath *revealed* them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.' (2) As the Author of the Scriptures, inspiring the prophets, evangelists, and apostles to write what should be preserved and recorded for the conviction of the world, and the comfort of the Church, in all ages, for 'all Scripture was given by his inspiration.' So that every individual stands indebted to the Holy Ghost for every ray of light that has ever beamed on his understanding from the page of Scripture. The Bible is the Spirit's message; it is the textbook which he has provided for the Church. (3) But there is, and must be, a more direct operation of the Holy Spirit on every human soul that is enlightened by his truth. It is not enough that he has revealed the truth to his apostles, and that he has embodied and preserved it in an authentic Bible. The *glorious light* may *shine around us*, without shining *into our hearts*. There is a defective vision that must be cured, a blind eye that must be opened, a veil that must be taken away, a thick darkness within, which must be dispelled by his creative mandate, 'Let there be light.'

Notwithstanding all the abundance of Gospel light, it is still true as it ever was, that ‘the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God’; ‘that no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;’ and that he is often pleased ‘to hide these things from the wise and prudent, and to reveal them unto babes.’

The *Word of God* is the *instrument*, the *Spirit of God* is the *agent*, in this great work of illumination. The Bible is the textbook, but the Spirit is himself the teacher. He is not only the author of that book, but the interpreter of it also, who guides us into a knowledge of its truths. He puts the Bible into our hands, as a ‘light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path;’ but, knowing that we are naturally blind, and cannot see afar off, he opens our eye and shines into our heart. All the truth which the Spirit ever teaches is *in* the Word; but never would it find *entrance* into our hearts unless he put it there. The Word is a *sword* — a sharp two-edged sword; but its efficacy depends on this — that it is the sword of the Spirit. The Word is alight; but it is ‘in *his light* we see light.’ ‘The entrance of his Word giveth light;’ but it obtains entrance only when ‘he openeth the heart.’ Hence the prayer of the Psalmist, ‘Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law;’ and the still more remarkable prayer of the apostle, ‘For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be *strengthened with might* by his Spirit in the inner man.’ Here is a powerful work of the Spirit on the soul; it must be strengthened with might. And for what end? ‘That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.’ Here no new truth is said to be revealed; but what is contained in the Word is made known by the inward enlightening of the Holy Spirit.

On the *teaching of the Spirit the efficacy of all the means of grace depends*, and especially the efficacy of the reading and preaching of the Word. Without the Spirit the ministry of the Word would be

utterly fruitless for all the ends of saving conversion. It might be a social blessing, as a means of keeping alive a sense of common morality in the world, but never could it be the means of spiritual life to the soul, unless it were accompanied with the enlightening grace of the Spirit. What more powerful than the ministry of the apostles? what reasoning more vigorous, what appeals more overwhelming, what eloquence more lofty, what zeal more urgent, than those of Paul? What love so tender, what tenderness so pathetic, what pathos so touching, what unction so rich and sweet, as those of John? What sacred orator better furnished for his vocation than Apollos, of whom it is written, that 'he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures'? Yet even the ministry of inspired men, the preaching of the very apostles of Christ, depended for all its saving efficacy on the grace of the Spirit; for, says the apostle, 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.' 'We are labourers together with God; but ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.' Ministers are often employed as *instruments* in enlightening and converting the soul; and hence they may be said, ministerially, to be the spiritual fathers of their converts. Yet it is not by their own power, but by the power of the Holy Ghost; so that every successful minister might well say with the apostles, 'Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly upon us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?' This great truth, if it shows the weakness of the minister, will also prove the very strength of his ministry; for never will he feel so deeply impressed either with the greatness of his work, or the dignity of his mission, as when he is most thoroughly convinced that the efficacy of all his preaching depends on the power of the Spirit. This will nerve him with new strength, and inspire him with new hope, when all outward appearances are most unpromising; and in the strength of this simple faith, he will stand prepared to deliver his message, before any audience, savage or civilized, assured that the same Spirit who has brought the truth home to his own soul, can also

bring it home, with demonstration and power, both to the obtuse and unlettered peasant, and to the refined, perhaps the sceptical, or the scornful man of science.

Further, the Word, the ministry, and other means of instruction, are adapted to the rational nature of man, and are in their own nature fitted for the purpose for which they are employed; nay, men may, in the use of their natural faculties, be instructed, impressed, and affected by the reading and hearing of the Word; but they cannot be *savingly enlightened* without the teaching of the Spirit.

The Spirit's operations are adapted to the nature of man as a rational and intelligent being; and he works in and by the faculties of the soul. It is the *same mind* which is now in darkness that is to be translated into marvellous light; the same understanding which is now ignorant that is to be informed; the same eye which is now blind that is to be opened and enabled to see. — The Spirit usually exerts his power by the use of *appropriate means*. Omitting from our present consideration the case of infants, who may be sanctified from the womb by the secret operations of the Spirit, it is clear that in the case of adults, the mind is enlightened instrumentally by the truth, which is hence called 'the light of the glorious gospel,' and the 'day-star which rises on the heart.' The Word of God is an *appropriate means of enlightening* the mind; it is an instrument which is in every respect fitted for the purpose for which it is employed. (i Tim. 3. 14). If any remain in darkness with the Bible in their hands, it is not because there is no light in the Bible, but because there is no spiritual eye to discern it. All the truth which an enlightened believer ever earns under the teaching of the Spirit is really contained in the Bible, although heretofore he had not seen it there: nay, much of it may have been contained in the articles of his professed creed; but it was not known, understood, and believed in its full spiritual meaning as it is now. He is only brought, in many cases, to see what he formerly professed to believe in a new *light*, so as to understand and feel its spiritual import and power, as the truth of God.

Being an appropriate means, adapted to the faculties of the human mind, there can be no reason to doubt that the Bible, like any other book, may convey much instruction to an unrenewed man. When it is affirmed that a natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, it is not implied that the Bible is unintelligibly written, or that he cannot understand the sense and meaning of scriptural propositions, so as to be able to give a rational account of them; for he may investigate the literal meaning of Scripture, and, in doing so, may attach a definite idea to many of its statements — may be able to see their mutual relations — to reason upon them, and even to expound them; and yet, in the scriptural sense, he may be in darkness notwithstanding. There are truths in the Bible which admit of being recognized, and even proved by natural reason, ‘for the things of a man may be known by the spirit of man which is in him;’ and even ‘the things of the Spirit,’ when revealed, may be so far understood as to affect and impress the mind which is nevertheless unconverted. The Pharisees had ‘the form of knowledge in the law;’ they were the great theologians under the Old Testament. Yet our Lord declares, that, studious and instructed as they were, and capable of expounding the writings of Moses, they did not really *know* God, nor understand the writings of Moses. Simon Magus must have had some correct notional acquaintance with the leading truths of the Gospel, and must have been able to put them forth in intelligible propositions, when he made that profession of faith which the apostles themselves regarded as a sufficient ground for his admission to the sacrament of baptism. Yet he had not been spiritually enlightened, for ‘he was still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.’ So our Lord himself speaks of some who hear the Word, and anon with joy receive it. They not only have some notion of its meaning, but some impressions of its power; yet they have not the ‘light of life.’ They are like Herod, ‘who feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.’ There is a great difference betwixt the views even of *natural men* on the subject of divine truth, a difference which is strikingly exemplified by the very different language of *the three Roman*

governors, Festus, Agrippa, and Felix, in reference to the preaching of Paul. Festus spoke out in the bold language of a natural man, to whom the preaching of the Gospel was *foolishness* ‘Paul, thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad.’ Agrippa was impressed and moved, for he said, ‘Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;’ and was still more deeply moved, for, ‘as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix *trembled*.’ The natural man, then, may know something of divine truth, — he may even be impressed and affected by it, without acquiring that *saving knowledge* which our Lord himself declares to be ‘eternal life.’

The natural man is capable of acquiring, by the use of his rational faculties, such an acquaintance with the truths of God’s Word as is sufficient to *make him responsible for* his treatment of it. Not to enlarge upon other points, let us take the doctrine which affirms the darkness of the human understanding, and the necessity of the enlightening grace of the Holy Spirit, which is often supposed to destroy the grounds of human responsibility in this respect; unless he be taught of God, he cannot have such an experimental knowledge of that doctrine as belongs to the exercised believer, and probably he will not submit to it; but it is stated, nevertheless, in plain intelligible language. He cannot read his Bible without being made aware that it contains this truth, nor can he exercise his understanding upon it, without acquiring some general knowledge of its import; and that knowledge, although neither spiritual nor saving, is amply sufficient as a ground of moral obligation. And farther, he may also learn from the same source, and in the same way, how it is that the enlightening grace of the Spirit is obtained, for he cannot read such passages as these: ‘If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him;’ and, ‘If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’ — he cannot read such passages as these without forming some notion of prayer as the means by which his natural darkness may be dispelled; and if, notwithstanding his clear natural

perception of such doctrines, he either refuses to believe them, or persists in neglecting prayer for the Holy Spirit, he must be dealt with hereafter on a very different principle, and tried by a very different rule of judgment from that which alone is applicable to those who have no Bible to teach them, or no rational mind to be taught. You cannot have sat under a Gospel ministry for years without acquiring such knowledge as is abundantly sufficient to lay you under the most weighty responsibilities. It is a solemn reflection, that this knowledge must either prove 'the savour of life unto life,' or 'the savour of death unto death.' If it be not the means of your *conversion*, it will be the ground of your *condemnation*, 'For this is the condemnation, that light hath come into the world, and that men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. But he that loveth the light cometh to the light;' and he that loveth the light of the Gospel will not shrink from the enlightening work of the Spirit.

Still, it must ever be remembered, that whatever knowledge a natural man may acquire by the exercise of his rational faculties on the Word of God, that knowledge is neither spiritual nor saving, unless he be enlightened by the Spirit. Were I asked to state what is the specific difference betwixt the natural and the spiritual knowledge of divine truth, or how they may best be distinguished from each other, I should feel the difficulty that is usually attendant on a discrimination betwixt two states of mind, which have some common resemblance, and whose difference consists in a quality of which the natural man knows nothing, because he has no experience of it. As it is difficult to convey an idea of colour to the blind, or of music to the deaf, so it is difficult to describe to a natural man the Peculiar perceptions of one whose eyes have been opened by the Spirit. And the difficulty is not diminished but increased by the fact, that he has a kind of knowledge which is common to him with the true believer, and which is too apt to be mistaken for that which the Gospel requires. Perhaps the nearest approach that we can make to an explanation may be by asking you to conceive of a man who sees, but has no sense of beauty, or of a man who hears, but has no sense of harmony; just such is the

case of a natural man, who sees the truth without perceiving its spiritual excellence, and on whose ear the sound of the Gospel falls without awakening music in his soul. Saving knowledge is not a knowledge of the dead letter or outward form of the Gospel, but a knowledge of the truth in ‘the light, and lustre, and glory of it;’ ‘gustful knowledge; which has in it a *relish* of the truth as excellent: ‘O *taste* and see that the Lord is good.’ It is ‘the light of the knowledge of the *glory* of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’ Just conceive of the different views of Christ which were entertained by those with whom he mingled in Judea, and this will help you to understand the difference, or at least to see that there is one, betwixt the one kind of knowledge and the other. All the Jews who saw Christ had some views concerning him: but to the carnal eye ‘he had no form nor comeliness; and when they saw him, there was no beauty that they should desire him;’ while to the spiritual eye, he was ‘fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely;’ for, says the apostle, ‘He dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.’ And just as it was then, so is it now: as Christ, the sum and substance of the Gospel, came as the light, ‘and the darkness comprehended it not;’ as ‘he was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world *knew him not*;’ so the Gospel, which is Christ revealed, may be read and heard. Yet ‘seeing we may not perceive, and hearing we may not understand,’ until the Spirit ‘take of the things of Christ and show them unto us,’ by ‘shining into our hearts.’

Another difference betwixt the two kinds of knowledge consists in this, that true spiritual light carries with it a *self-evidencing power*, and is accompanied with a heartfelt conviction of its certainty, a cordial belief of its truth. When the eye is opened to see the glory of the Gospel, the mind has an intuitive perception of its divine authority; it ‘commends itself to the conscience in the sight of God,’ and the sinner feels that ‘God is in it of a truth.’ God has ‘magnified his Word above all his name;’ it bears upon it a more striking impress of his divine perfections than any other manifestation by which he has ever made himself known; and when the eye is opened

to perceive God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ, the mind can no more believe that the Word could be written, than that the world could be framed, by any other than the omniscient One.

But the great discriminating test of the difference betwixt the natural and spiritual knowledge of divine truth is to be found in its practical influence and actual fruits. Spiritual light is accompanied with love; it is vital and powerful, transforming, renewing, purifying the soul in which it dwells; for if we behold the glory of God, we are thereby changed into the same image; we love what we discern to be good, we admire what we perceive to be excellent, we imitate and become conformed to what we love and admire. It is not a cold light like that of the moon or stars, but a lively light, accompanied with heat and warmth, vivifying, fructifying; it attunes all the faculties of the soul for the service of God, like the light that fell on the statue of Memnon, and awoke the chords of his sleeping lyre.

The difference betwixt the natural and spiritual knowledge of divine truth is not only real but great. It is as the difference betwixt darkness and light, or betwixt night and day. Every natural man, however educated, is 'alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him.' He may be more learned in the letter of the Scriptures, more thoroughly furnished with all literary erudition, more scientific in his dogmatic orthodoxy, more eloquent in illustration and argument, than many of those who are 'taught of God;' but 'I say unto you, He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.' It is not a difference in *degree*, but in kind. In that which is common to both, the natural man may have a higher degree of learning than the spiritual; but in that which is peculiar to such as are taught of God, there is no room for comparison; that kind of knowledge, although it, too, admits of degrees as it is possessed by the people of God, belongs to none else, to none but such as are taught by his Spirit. And this difference is great, insomuch that the people of God, whose eyes are opened to understand the Scriptures, are said to have 'a new understanding given to them.' 'The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know

him that is true;’ not that another faculty is created, but that the old one is thoroughly renewed. And this change is wrought on the understanding itself. It is not enough that the affections be disengaged from sin, so as to remove obstructions to the right operation of a mind supposed to be in itself ‘pure, noble, and untainted;’ no, the understanding has shared in the ruins of the fall, and is itself perverted; and as such it must be renewed by him who created it, otherwise it will for ever distort the light, however clearly it may shine from the page of Scripture.

As the understanding is the leading faculty of the soul, and plainly designed to influence, control, and govern every other by its light, so darkness here is the prolific cause of much moral and spiritual evil. The understanding, therefore, must be enlightened, if the heart is to be renewed. Spiritual darkness is spoken of in Scripture, not as a mere passive or negative thing, but as a *positive power*; ‘the power of darkness’ is expressly mentioned, and the apostate angels are represented as kept in ‘chains of darkness,’ as if it imposed fetters on the soul, and truly none can break those fetters, but he who caused the iron chain to fall from off the hands and feet of his imprisoned disciple.

Our apostasy from God is described as consisting chiefly in our spiritual darkness. The very end of our being was, that we should ‘glorify God,’ as intelligent creatures might and ought, by perceiving, adoring, and delighting in his glory: this is the highest exercise of angels and seraphim. And if now a dark cloud conceals from us his perfections, if we can have God present to our thoughts without perceiving his glory, this is at once the evidence and essence of our melancholy fall.

This darkness is not only the deadly shade under which our enmity to God finds a shelter and covering, but it is in some sense the cause of that enmity, inasmuch as it gives rise to innumerable prejudices against God, which feed it and keep it alive, and also to multiform delusions, varying from the barest atheism up to the most awful

forms of superstition; and if these prejudices and these delusions are to be swept away, and if the enmity which they beget and nourish is to be slain, it must be by him who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shining into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

This illumination of the Spirit has reference to all Gospel truth, but is given in greater or less degrees, while in every instance it embraces whatever is necessary to be known and believed in order to salvation. 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.' 'The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.' From these words it is plain, that every one who is taught of God knows whatever is necessary to be believed in order to salvation, and that he is not left absolutely to depend on mere human teaching; but it is equally clear from the context, that this anointing does not supersede the use of such helps and such means of information as God has graciously provided for his Church; on the contrary, the same apostle says, 'I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning; I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father;' 'I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it.' The apostle's letter was designed and fitted for their instruction, and was useful, not only in 'stirring up their pure minds by way of remembrance,' but also in helping them to apply the truth to the exigencies of their condition, as one that exposed them to the seductions of false teachers, and in enabling them to grow in the knowledge of God; for among Christians there are degrees of spiritual light, as among natural men there are degrees of secular knowledge; and the one kind of knowledge admits of growth and increase, and depends on the use of ordinary means, not less than the other. We may know the Lord, like Apollos; yet we may be brought, like him, to 'know the way of the Lord more perfectly.' As the knowledge which is common to all who are taught of God embraces whatever is necessary to be known and believed in order to

salvation, while, being imparted in greater or less degrees, there may be a diversity of opinion even amongst true Christians on points of minor importance, we see at once the origin and the nature of that wonderful uniformity of sentiment amongst them which marks the unity of Christian faith in regard to all the fundamental truths of God's Word, while we may reasonably expect to find a variety of opinions, arising from different degrees of light, even amongst such as are in the main and substantially at one. And this consideration ought to be improved as a lesson of universal charity and of mutual forbearance among the disciples of Christ.

It is a precious Bible truth, that the enlightening grace of the Holy Spirit, although it be specially promised to the Gospel ministry as that by which alone their peculiar functions can be successfully exercised, is not confined to them, nor to any one class or order of men, but it is common to all believers. Every private person, — every humble man, who takes his Bible in his hand, and retires to his closet to read and meditate on it there, is privileged to ask and to expect the teaching of the Spirit of God. 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.' The direct communication of every soul with God as 'the Father of lights,' with Christ as 'the light of the world,' and with the Holy Ghost as 'the Spirit of truth,' shows what standing the Christian people have in the Christian Church; and that, although God has graciously provided for them ministerial helps and spiritual guides, he has not left them absolutely dependent on any order of men; still less has he subjected them to mere human authority in matters of faith: 'their faith must stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.'

Word & Spirit, Mind & Heart

by John Calvin

Commenting on Acts 16:14-15, "14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."1 Now when in fact only one hears attentively and effectively, could it not have appeared that the way was blocked for Christ to make an entry? But afterwards from that frail shoot a famous church sprang up, whose praises Paul sings in splendid terms. Yet it is possible that Lydia had some companions, of whom no mention is made, because she herself far surpassed them. Yet Luke does not attribute the cause for this one woman having shown herself docile, to the fact that she was harperwitted than the others, or that she had some preparation by herself, but says that the Lord opened her heart, so that she gave heed to Paul's words. He had just praised her piety; and yet he shows that she could not understand the teaching of the Gospel without the illumination of the Spirit.

Accordingly we see that not only faith, but also all understanding of spiritual things, is a special gift of God, and that ministers do not accomplish anything by speaking, unless the inward calling of God is added at the same time.

By the word heart Scripture sometimes means the mind, as when Moses says (Deut. 29:4), 'until now the Lord has not given you a heart to understand.' So also in this verse Luke means not only that Lydia was moved by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to embrace the Gospel with a feeling of the heart, but that her mind was illuminated to understand. We may learn from this that such is the dullness, such the blindness of men, that in hearing they do not hear, or seeing they do not see, until God forms new ears and new eyes for them.

But we must note the expression that the heart of Lydia was opened so that she paid attention to the external voice of a teacher. For as preaching on its own is nothing else but a dead letter, so, on the other hand, we must beware lest a false imagination, or the semblance of secret illumination, leads us away from the Word upon

which faith depends, and on which it rests. For in order to increase the grace of the Spirit, many invent for themselves vague inspirations so that no use is left for the external Word.

But the Scripture does not allow such a separation to be made, for it unites the ministry of men with the secret inspiration of the Spirit. If the mind of Lydia had not been opened, the preaching of Paul would have been mere words; yet God inspires her not only with the mere revelations but with reverence for His Word, so that the voice of a man, which otherwise would have vanished into thin air, penetrates a mind that has received the gift of heavenly light.

Therefore let us hear no more of the fanatics who make the excuse of the Spirit to reject external teaching. For we must preserve the balance which Luke established here, that we obtain nothing from the hearing of the Word alone, without the grace of the Spirit, and that the Spirit is conferred on us not that He may produce contempt of the Word, but rather to instill confidence in it in our minds and write it on our hearts.

1 From Calvin, John. *The Acts of the Apostles*. 2 vols. Trans. by John W. Fraser and W.J.G. McDonald. Ed. by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965.

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