

SPIRITUAL LIFE:
OR,
REGENERATION,

ILLUSTRATED

IN A SERIES OF DISQUISITIONS,

RELATIVE TO ITS

AUTHOR, SUBJECT, NATURE, MEANS, &c.

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"Let no man upon a weak conceit of sobriety, or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain that a man can search too far, or be too well studied in the book of God's word, or in the book of God's works; divinity or philosophy; but rather let men endeavour an endless progress, or proficience in both; only let men beware that they apply both to charity and not to swelling; to use and not to ostentation; and again that they do not unwisely mingle or confound these learnings together."—*Bacon*.

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TO THE
MEMBERS OF HIS CHARGE,

THE FOLLOWING DISQUISITIONS ARE

Affectionately Dedicated,

AS AN

ATONEMENT;

FOR OCCASIONAL ATTEMPTS, IN THE EARLY PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY AMONG
THEM, TO EXPLAIN THE GREAT FACT OF A

SINNER'S REGENERATION,

BY THE AID OF A PHILOSOPHY IMBIBED IN HIS THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION,

AND INTERWOVEN

IN MANY OF HIS EXHIBITIONS OF SCRIPTURAL TRUTH;

BUT FOR YEARS PAST

REPUDIATED,

BY THEIR MUCH ATTACHED

PASTOR.

PREFACE.

Whoever will carefully inquire, into the means by which he arrives at the knowledge of truth, not immediately falling under the cognizance of his senses, will presently discover, that he is entirely destitute of any original *intuitive* perceptions. All our knowledge, is, at first, derived through the avenue of our senses. The impressions made from sensible things, the mind combines in endless forms, and rising into loftier spheres, employs the ideas originally thence obtained as the representatives of unseen and spiritual verities;—and this it feels at liberty to do, by virtue of some assumed analogy between them.

It is in this way, we obtain our ideas of God, and of His perfections, and indeed of all the grand truths and facts of our religion. These are all as perfect realities as if they were perceptible through the medium of our senses. It is the great business of religion to bring us to the right apprehension of them. The right apprehension of them is necessary,—to counteract and overcome the influence of sense, which binds us to earth and time,—and to connect us with the grand scenes of Heaven and Eternity. Human reason here impertinently volunteers its deductions, to lead us away into the regions of abstraction; and we shall not have pursued this flattering guide far, till we shall be lost in labyrinths and worlds of our own creating. But faith affords a light, as much safer, as it is summarily, and more satisfactorily, given. The living God has in various ways reported to us the reality of His own existence, the attributes of His character and all that it is important, and necessary for our happiness here or hereafter, to know with regard to things unseen, spiritual and eternal. The

glories and faithfulness of His character, stand pledged for the truth of His communications.

It is our duty and blessedness to believe what He says. But, in so believing, we are, from the very depravity of our nature, constrained to take our ideas of the things He reports to us, according to the plain and natural import of the language in which He addresses us. In doing so, we are not aware of any obligation to believe things are *literally* and *formally*, as, His expressions, taken from sensible objects with which we are familiar, would, at first hearing, intimate. Our minds are so constituted, and such is the law by which God is pleased to govern them, in our present complex state, as that, while we apprehend as realities, the things He states, we apprehend them not as clearly and perfectly understood, but as bearing some *analogy* to those sensible things, from which we ourselves originally took the ideas by means of which we have formed conceptions of what we can neither see, hear, taste, touch, nor smell.

The vulgar, or commonly received acceptation of terms, is the only true one, when they are transferred to a Being, whose intrinsic attributes are as incomprehensible by us, as His essence, and to a world which lies too remote for our intuitive cognizance. And yet to understand them *literally*, and *properly*, as we do, in reference to beings like ourselves, and to things in this world, who does not see how egregiously we shall err? For example, we commonly talk of the *Life* of God; but who will say that it is of the same kind with ours, which consists in the circulation of blood through our veins and arteries, and of breath through our nostrils, and lungs, and in other well known actions of our animal frame? Yet do we believe that there is some incessant activity in God, suitable to His own ineffable essence, which bears a resemblance, sufficiently striking to our life, to be thus denominated. In like manner we do not conceive of the *Life* even of our own

immortal spirits, as of the same kind with that of our bodies;—but still we assume, that there is a resemblance, sufficiently striking to justify us, in *analogically* conceiving of the former by means of our idea of the latter. If this be so,—and our knowledge of the spiritual realities reported to us by God, and received by faith, is had by means of analogical conceptions,—it will be at once apparent to every intelligent reader, that in order to the best, and most approximated ideas of the latter, we must have clear and accurate ideas of those sensible things which we employ as their representatives.

It has been under the influence of such views, that the following pages—a great part of which was originally intended to facilitate the author's own private studies,—were prepared. The sacred scriptures represent the change produced by the Spirit of God, and called Regeneration, under the idea of a *New Life*. Now it is manifest, that if we have mistaken views, as to what *Life* is, in its more ordinary forms, and as it presents itself to the inspection of our senses, we shall necessarily be led into vague, mystic, and indefinite notions of it in spiritual things—which lie beyond the sphere of our senses. Any and every false, or imperfect view of life, in the former, must and will eventuate in analogical error. It is well that the vulgar apprehensions on this subject, are practically correct. Common sense, invariably associates the idea of action and enjoyment with that of life, in its more obvious and imposing forms;—and following these, as its guide, it will never be found far from the truth, in that high and wondrous exhibition, viz. *the life of God in the soul*. Philosophy however has here done incalculable mischief. It has come with one, and another theory, and with one or more associated, and having laid a false metaphysical or philosophical basis in its definitions of life, has reared a mass of emptiness and mysticism only to bewilder and perplex.

In the early period of his theological studies, the author felt the extreme perplexity of this subject; but, having imbibed the philosophy of the schools, for several years after the commencement of his ministerial life, was wont to define and illustrate Regeneration, according to philosophical views, which he is now persuaded were incorrect. They were never fully satisfactory to him, but he comforted himself, as he had learned to do, from the authors whose views he had embraced, by identifying the mist of that philosophy, with the scriptural facts in the case,—which, like all other facts, he was prepared to believe, in their intimate nature, to be inexplicable. He regrets deeply the influence which they had on his early ministrations among the people of his charge,—being convinced that they seduced him from that simple testifying to matters of fact, and condemning the theories and deductions of philosophy, which should characterize the preaching of him who desires to be blessed by the Spirit of truth. And for this he knows no more suitable atonement that he can offer, than to give to them, in a volume, the result of investigations which he is convinced, are not appropriate to the pulpit.

In adventuring, some things to aid their researches, he regrets that a state of things should have arisen in the Presbyterian church, entirely unforeseen, at the period when he consented that they should pass into the printer's hands. The spirit of party prevalent at the present day, is exceedingly prejudicial to candid investigation;—and this is the more to be regretted, because the contention is not so much for the *facts* of revelation, as—if not for something still worse—for the philosophical theory employed in the explanation of those facts,—a theory, so consecrated in the theological writings of former days, and so interwoven in their technics, as to be mistaken; by those who have had access to none other, for the very truths of Scripture itself. All agree as to the facts of the reality and necessity of

Regeneration and of the Spirit's influence to secure it. Here then, let brethren caress each other, and co-operate in giving their testimony to the truth. Why should any follow the light of philosophy, which beguiles from the simplicity of faith, and causes christian ministers and people to diverge further and further from each other?

If the following disquisitions will, in any measure contribute to heal divisions,—to correct suspicions,—to promote the unity of the Spirit,—to lead any to see the essential accordance in faith, of those who are at war with each other in philosophy, the author will consider himself amply rewarded. They have been submitted to the press as they were prepared, in moments redeemed from many pressing engagements;—and they have been conducted through it, in the midst of the cares, anxieties, labours, watchings and interruptions incident to a season of the powerful and gracious effusions of the Spirit of God, among the people of his charge, and others whom he has been called occasionally to visit. The author therefore claims the indulgence of the reader for whatever diffuseness and desultoriness and other imperfections he may notice, while he commends the whole to God, with earnest prayer for His blessing to accompany it.

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

Some peculiar life, as produced by the Spirit, spoken of by Christ and the prophets—The design of the work stated—The character and source of proof to be adduced—Illustrations drawn from the analogy of nature legitimate—God's moral and physical constitutions not at variance—Mode of interpreting scripture—The divine testimony paramount evidence—The biblical student should not violate the principles of sound philosophy—The principles to conduct the investigation avouched—The author's hopes expressed.

It was long since predicted, that *some divine energy* should be exerted to produce life in the souls of men. "And shall put my SPIRIT in you, and ye shall live,"* said "the Lord God" by the mouth of Ezekiel. Whether this language is wholly metaphorical, will be seen in the progress and result of the discussion contained in these pages. The PREDICTION relates particularly to the conversion of the Jews. That event shines conspicuously in prophetic story, and we are directed to it, as to the bright morning star which immediately precedes, and even shines resplendent in the rising glory of millennial day. What shall be the *circumstances* connected with their national regeneration, time alone will disclose. The operative and efficient agent will be the Spirit of God, and the immediate effect and proof of His influence, will be the possession of life in their souls. However the circumstances conducive to the conversion of the Jews shall differ from those ordinarily employed by the Spirit, the charac-

* Ezek. xxxvii, 14.

ter of the agent and of His influence shall not. The regeneration of a sinner is *life from the dead* in every instance, whether the subject be Jew or Gentile. The preaching of the gospel is indeed the means most frequently employed, and rendered most efficacious in producing this life; but it possesses no power to this end, except as it may be *the word of God*. "The hour is coming and now is," said the Lord of life, "when the *dead* shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall *live*."*

The language, both of the prediction, and of Christ, implies that there is some *other* life, to be had by men, than that which *all* in common possess as creatures composed of soul and body. And the allusions in the scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments, to a life peculiar and distinguishing, as imparted by the Spirit of God to some, and not to all, prevent the supposition that it is altogether imaginative, and the language merely metaphorical. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, *hath quickened*† us (made us alive) together with Christ." It is the object of the following work to investigate, and illustrate that great moral renovation, of which the scriptures speak so decisively, according as it is represented under the idea of LIFE PRODUCED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

The inspired writers employ a variety of terms in treating of this subject, and present it under almost endless aspects. At one time it is called *regeneration*, at another being *born again*, one while a *raising from the dead*, and again *creating anew*; one while *the taking away the hard and stony heart*, and at another *the giving an heart of flesh*; one while *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, and at another *the law of the Spirit of Life*, besides others of

* John vi. 25.

† Eph. ii. 4, 5.

the same general import. It is unnecessary to examine the meaning, or inquire into the reason of each expression. We have selected the idea of LIFE, as the simplest and most comprehensive, and design, by means of it, to subject the whole subject of REGENERATION, or the NEW BIRTH, in all its grand and important relations, to a careful and candid analysis.

In announcing this design, it may not be improper to apprise the reader of the source and character of the proofs and illustrations to be adduced. The sacred scriptures are assumed to be the INFALLIBLE *word of God*. Its revelations are not reputed *mere abstractions*, but simple MATTERS OF FACT. So far from the idea being admitted, that the bible is a mere *guide to opinions*, and calculated to induce theory and speculation, it is affirmed that the disclosures which it makes are solemn declarations of FACT, and not the less interesting because originally beyond the sphere of human reason. They affect the character, the condition, the hopes, the destiny of the ruined race of man, and have a most important and essential bearing on individual happiness and expectation. In the interpretation of these words of truth, it is deemed impertinent to ask, "*can* such a thing be," or "is it compatible with our notion of the Divine Being." It is from God's own disclosure of himself—from His revelation of His own mind and will—that we are to form our ideas of Himself. If we imbibe them from another source, we shall err; for naturally we "walk in the vanity of our mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness* of our heart." If God has been pleased to *speak*—it is assumed as, unquestionably because most demonstratively; true, that He has—it is for us to *hear*, and not ask impertinently *how* or *why* is this or that which He

* Eph. iv. 17, 18.

declares to be the fact. They that will reserve to themselves this liberty, and judge of the revelations of the scriptures according as they may meet or favor their peculiar prejudices and feelings, or as they are pleased to dignify them—their reason, had better act consistently, and proclaim themselves infidels at once, rejecting the authority of the word of God. However common it may be for men to allege they will not believe this or that, because it does not commend itself to their judgment, because it does not comport with their views of God, because they reserve to themselves in all cases the right of private opinion, because they cannot understand it, it will not for one moment be conceded that with such the bible is accounted of paramount authority. Our discussions are with, and for those who feel that “thus saith the Lord” is like the oath among men, and must “put an end to all strife.” All others, though they may pretend to believe in a divine revelation, are mere hypocrites and unbelievers.

Yet, in illustrating the facts which it has pleased God to make known to us in the sacred scriptures, we shall deem it perfectly lawful to avail ourselves of all the light which may be obtained from the analogy of His works. While we magnify revelation, as an authority from which there is no appeal, and insist, that our minds and consciences bow to its decisions without a moment’s hesitancy, we are nevertheless far from exalting it as contrary to the established order of nature. There is a beautiful harmony between them, as being alike the offspring of the same bounteous parent, and they serve often to illustrate each other. For, although the kingdoms of nature and of grace may be as perfectly distinct as two distant worlds can be, yet, as they both are established in the same, it is perfectly reasonable to expect that the same God who presides over both, and is the author of both, should have maintained an essential concord between them. He does not frame His moral constitutions

at variance with His physical. We may have occasion frequently to trace the beautiful analogy between them, and be led to admire the divine original of both. But in doing so we must still claim supreme authority for the written word: and that we may not be misunderstood, or our whole subject, and sources of proof rejected as mystical, we shall devote a chapter explicitly to the character of the objects which form the *materiel* of our knowledge, and the *mode* by which it is obtained.

Should there be any obscurity in the language in which it has pleased God to speak, the previous question as to what He actually does say, must be carefully and accurately determined. And in determining this, we shall not perplex ourselves, or our readers, with any learned or labored applications of the rules and principles of *Hermeneutics* as it is called. Common sense, a knowledge of the original languages in which the scriptures were written, and of the customs, manners, and history, &c. which may be necessary to understand the *rationale* or allusions of its terms, are of principal importance. If criticism becomes necessary, and a demand is made on our philological resources, the reader who is unacquainted with the Hebrew and Greek, shall not be offended by the introduction of things on which he can pass no judgment; but the result of inquiry shall be given in its proper place, while the mode of obtaining that result, or the reasons for maintaining it, shall, to such as may be able and disposed to investigate them, be furnished in notes subjoined. In all controversy, or doubt about the meaning of a passage of scripture, the appeal must be to the very words which the Spirit of God himself has employed, and the signification of those words must be determined by comparing the passages in which they occur, and the manner in which they are used by classical authorities, or those with whom the language was vernacular. Having ascertained the meaning of

the words, and relieved the text from obscurity, so that the mind and will of God has been discovered in the plain import of the passage, we shall hold ourselves bound to receive His testimony, without making or entertaining a solitary objection. Whatever is asserted by God claims credence from us, in despite of all imaginations and reasonings to the contrary. It must be assumed as indisputable *fact*, which, whether we can *understand* it or not, whether we can unravel its perplexities and solve its difficulties, or must leave it involved in its own native mystery, cannot be rejected or denied, except at the peril of *taking from the word of God*, and impeaching Him with falsehood. The testimony of Him that cannot lie is evidence, in every case, conclusive and overpowering; and it is more than our souls are worth to doubt, whether it is or can be true, after that God has declared it to be the fact.

Nor shall we admit, for one moment, that there is ground of reproach against us as weak and credulous, though we thus speak. We plant ourselves upon the same solid ground on which the votary of sound philosophy essays to rear his system. He asks not, like the incredulous Jew, "how can these things be?" but his first inquiry is, is it indeed the fact? Afterwards he labors to solve the phenomenon. Should he fail to do so, he chronicles the fact and waits for further light to aid his investigations. Should he have ransacked the vast store-house of science, and found nothing that would enable him satisfactorily to explain the mystery, and should theory after theory be framed, and then discarded, and not one ray of light beam upon the dark bosom of his theme, yet does he not feel himself authorized to disbelieve what *upon sufficient evidence* he is convinced is THE FACT. However it may seem to be at variance with the established laws of nature, or to involve matters altogether novel or inexplicable, he admits the phenomenon, admiring and adoring the vastness

and mystery of Nature's works. It is thus, too, that the firm believer in revelation—the biblical philosopher de-means himself. He is perfectly convinced that the bible is the word of God, (and he that is not, has not yet half explored the proofs that crowd upon the subject), and being satisfied that God the Holy One and true has spoken, not all his perplexity can make him for a moment reject the fact. Theorise and speculate he may, and though wearied with his devices to pry into the *mystery* of the fact, he bows submissively to the majesty of truth—the word of an undeceived and undeceiving God—and lifts his heart in devout and adoring admiration, “O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.”* No more shall he be reproached for credulity and weakness than the loftiest son of science, who, like the comet,

“Takes his ample round.

Thro’ depths of ether; coasts unnumbered worlds,
Of more than solar glory.”

Both may soar on fancy’s airy wings, and climb among the higher spheres of God’s exalted sway; but both must cease from proud imaginings, and, as they value peace and knowledge too, learn to rest on simple, sober fact—the only difference discernible between them being, that before the one, God spreads the mighty efforts of his creative power, and bids him “LOOK AND LEARN,” while to the other He speaks in terms direct and plain, and bids him “HEAR AND KNOW.” But the eye’s seeing is not half such satisfying and luxurious evidence, as the heart’s believing.

Such are the principles by which it is proposed that our investigations shall be conducted. We may perhaps occasionally find it necessary to refer to them; but after this avowal, such references need not be frequent or prolix.

* Rom. xi. 35.

Our readers may expect a liberal use of the lively oracles, and they are solicited to come with us to the consideration of a theme of infinite moment to us all; and to come with docile minds and humble hearts. We desire no higher honor than to be instrumental in leading them to the fountain of truth, and inciting them to inquire of the Great "Teacher sent from God," what He is willing we should know of "the life hid with Christ in God,"* And, should it please the great and sovereign Lord of all, to guide any humble and anxious mind, through our feeble efforts, into clearer and admiring perceptions of His own most wondrous work in quickening those who were "dead in trespasses and in sins," and thus creating them anew His workmanship unto good works,† to Him shall be ascribed all the glory. Our own hearts rejoice in every survey of the new creation. Its glory shines with dazzling radiance on our delighted minds, and we long that hundreds and thousands, now in the grave of their corruptions, should waken into life, and come forth to swell the anthems of praise that ascend to "Him that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, amen, and has the keys of hell and death."‡ The utmost we purpose, is, by the light of divine truth, to trace that blessed agency, and that influence of the eternal life-giving Spirit of God, on the mind and heart of man, which are designed to qualify him, alike for usefulness in this world, and glory in the world to come. In attempting so to do, it will not, we hope, be thought strange or uncongenial with our subject, if we take a deliberate and comprehensive view of the *character* of the glorious agent by whom the life of which we speak is produced, and of the original and peculiar structure of the creature man, who is the subject of it. If any of our readers should think, that we escape into the regions of metaphysical philosophy, we hope it will be remembered that

* Col. iii. 3.

† Eph. ii. 5, 10.

‡ Rev. i. 18.

it is only because our subject necessarily leads us there, and, we think that, holding in our hand the torch of truth divine, we need not be afraid

“Of wandering in airy mazes lost.”

The very topic of a change of heart, requires some knowledge of man's rational and sensitive soul, in order to its faithful exhibition. And it may be profitable for us to trace the influence which a mistaken view of the human mind—a “philosophy falsely so called,” has had in shaping and determining men's notions and practice, on a subject of such high concernment. We ask the patient and candid attention of our readers, and pray that the Spirit of God may guide both us and our readers, into the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

CHAPTER II.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE SPIRIT.

The life-giving influence of the Spirit peculiarly characteristic of the evangelical dispensation—The Spirit a personal agent—A two-fold source of objection against this—Proofs of His personality—1. The *power of spontaneous* action, and the actual *voluntary exercise* of it—2. The Spirit performs *actions* peculiar to a personal agent—3. *Operates, &c.*—4. *Is affected, &c.*—5. Exercises the functions of various *offices*—6. Has various *personal attributes*.

“THE Lord is that Spirit,”¹ said the apostle, when speaking of the influence necessary to remove the prejudices of the Jews against Christ. He had been contrasting the Mosaic and Evangelical dispensations, and extolling the latter as possessing richer glory, because of its being accompanied with the life-giving influences of the Spirit of God. The communications of God, under the former economy, were made by means of Moses, and the law engraved on tables of stone. It was indeed a glorious revelation, but comparatively little more than the knowledge of the letter was had by its votaries. There was no provision made for an especial, powerful, and enlightening influence of the Spirit of God on the minds and hearts of ancient worshippers. Whatever influence the Spirit vouchsafed, it was adapted to the sensible ordinances, and appalling rites celebrated in the temple of Jehovah. There was a veil of darkness and mystery thrown around the whole system, so “that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.”²

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 17.

² 2 Cor. iii. 13.

But under the gospel, there are ministers of Christ commissioned to teach, and enforce, the great truths of religion, whose efforts are accompanied with a convincing and illuminating agency of the Spirit of God. This Spirit, the apostle declares is **JEHOVAH—THE LORD**. His influence is represented as *giving life* in opposition to the killing sentence of the law of God, which was engraven on the tables of stone, and which formed as it were the grand central glory of the whole system of types and shadows. “Who also,” says he, “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**.”¹ In contemplating an exposition of this, His peculiar work, therefore, it becomes necessary for us to clear away all the obscurity and perplexity which hang around our subject, in consequence of the objections and doubts expressed by some in relation to the existence and personality of the Spirit of God. Wherefore, we have quoted the assertion of the apostle, with a view to present distinctly for discussion the two following propositions, which his language evidently involves:

I. That the Spirit of God is a **PERSONAL AGENT**, and

II. That He is possessed of a divine nature or is in reality God.

It is objected, by the enemies of our faith, that the word **PERSON** is not to be found in the sacred scriptures as designating any distinct or separate subsistence in the divine essence. This is freely admitted. But it does not, therefore, follow, that there are no distinct or separate *subsistences* in the divine nature, to which severally and respectively are attributed, an understanding and will and power to exert them. The translators of the New Testament have used the term *person* in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, no doubt because it is the best

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 6.

they could employ, and approximates most to the idea expressed by the original. All that is meant, however, when personality is attributed to the Spirit of God, is, simply, that there is *some distinct subsistence* in the divine nature, possessed of an understanding, and will, and such other intellectual and moral properties, as authorise us to believe him to be, and to speak of him as, a personal agent, who is represented by this appellation. We would not be very tenacious of the English term, but we claim the privilege of using it till a better can be substituted.

We are aware that objections are urged against it in a two-fold form. It is alleged that the idea of there being three distinct personal subsistences in the divine essence, is incompatible with that of the unity of God—a fact most plainly asserted in the sacred scriptures; and that, as for the Spirit of God so frequently spoken of, nothing else is meant by it than an attribute of Deity: wisdom, for instance, or more frequently, perhaps, the divine power. The first objection is by no means admissible. That there may be, and is something altogether unintelligible in the *fact* of three distinct personal subsistences dwelling in the same divine essence, is not to be denied: but this is by no means a sufficient reason for rejecting it, since the evidence which establishes it is most unquestionable. We daily admit and believe many things, which we cannot, and do not even attempt to explain. We believe that we are possessed of two natures, or perhaps three, according to Paul's philosophy, *body, soul, and spirit*, perfectly distinct and dissimilar, and yet that they are resident in one moral being, which we call man. The thing is inexplicable, and yet the fact is undeniable. Does any one allege the two natures in man as an objection against the unity of his person? Where then is there any greater ground of objection against the unity of the divine nature from the plurality of divine persons? We are not at liberty to urge objections

from what *appears* inconsistent and may be inexplicable to us, provided the evidence sufficiently establishes the fact. And that such is the fact, that there is a plurality of personal subsistences in the divine essence, cannot be successfully disputed by any one who acknowledges that there is evidence in testimony, and that the sacred scriptures, as being the word of God, are of *paramount* authority. Of this we shall be more convinced presently.

As for the attempt of those who allege that the Spirit of God is a mere attribute, spoken of, in a bold personification, according to the highly figurative style of the sacred scriptures, it may be remarked, that such a figure of speech is indeed sometimes employed by the inspired writers, but only in the lofty strains of eloquence, or in their sublime flights of poetry, not in the plain, sober, historical narrative. In the much admired instance of the personified wisdom in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, it is, to say the least, very doubtful whether it is not the Lord Jesus Christ, the personal wisdom, who is spoken of. At all events, the figure of speech occurs in the rich imagery employed by our inspired *poet*, and therefore cannot furnish any thing conclusive on the main question. For, as we shall now proceed to shew all the peculiar and appropriate acts of a person are attributed to the Spirit of God, or, as He is often called, the Holy Spirit.

It would be unnecessary to notice all the passages in which the Spirit of God is spoken of as a personal agent. Our attention must be confined to a few which we shall classify under the following heads:

1. The power of SPONTANEOUS action, and the ACTUAL VOLUNTARY EXERCISE of it, are attributed to the Spirit. Thus, He is said to *move*. "The Spirit of God *moved* upon the face of the waters."¹ It is true that some understand by

¹ Gen. i. 2. Merahepheth, in the Hithpael which has the force of a reflexive verb—motitans se, molli fotu incubans.—Clay. pent. p. 4.

the Spirit in this passage, *a mighty wind*, according to the idiomatic import, as they allege, of the Hebrew phrase. The term translated Spirit, it is confessed, does primarily signify *breath*, or wind, and also, that the name of God, among the Hebrews, was, and as a mode of comparison, being designed to express the superlative degree: but this method of resolving the phrase cannot be correct; for the wind has not the power of spontaneous motion. By whatever causes its motions may be originated, the air is always entirely passive. We do, indeed, personify the wind in ordinary speech, but it is in a manner perfectly intelligible by all, and never as though it possessed life, and was capable of *spontaneously* affecting other things. The SPIRIT or God, however, in the place referred to, is spoken of as originating his own actions. Strictly and literally the expression may be rendered *moved himself*,¹ as the fowl does over her nest when she is hatching her young. The motion described by the term, is totally dissimilar from that of the wind. Beside, there are many passages in which the phrase, *the Spirit* of God, cannot possibly, by any licentiousness of criticism whatever, be conceived to mean breath or wind, though they are so translated. For example, the *breath* of the Almighty hath given me life:"² "by the *breath* of God frost is given:" "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the *breath* of His mouth:"³ "Behold the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy, his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire, and his *breath* as an overflowing stream."⁴ "For Tophet is ordained of old, and the *breath* of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it:"⁵ "Prophecy unto the *wind*, prophecy son of man, and say to the *wind*, thus saith the Lord God,

1 Job, xxxiii. 4.

2 Job. xxxvii. 10.

3 Psalms, xxxiii. 6

4 Isaiah, xxx. 27, 28.

5 Isaiah, xxx. 33.

come from the four winds, Oh, *breath*, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”¹

The Spirit of God also is said to *speak*, which is another voluntary action. The Spirit *spoke* to Peter² and to Philip,³ &c.

He is also said to *lead*: “as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God”⁴ —*to guide*—“He will *guide* you into all truth”⁵ —*to help*—“the Spirit *helpeth* our infirmities”⁶ *to hear*—“whatsoever he shall *hear* that shall he also speak,”⁷ and other things of the same nature.

Now it is certainly personifying too much if all these things are affirmed, and that in the midst of sober narrative or didactic discussion, of an attribute. Surely it is too absurd to gain the credence of any individual that an attribute should *move itself, speak, lead, guide* and *help* our infirmities.

2. The Spirit of God is represented as performing THOSE ACTIONS WHICH CAN BE PREDICATED ONLY OF SOME INTELLIGENT PERSONAL AGENT. Thus, He is said to *REVEAL*—“as it is now *revealed* to his apostles and prophets by the Spirit”⁸ —*to teach*—“the Comforter shall *teach* you all things”⁹ —*to testify*—“the Spirit itself *beareth witness*”¹⁰ —“when the Comforter is come, even the Spirit of truth, he shall *testify* of me”¹¹ —*to receive and shew*—“he shall *receive* of mine and shall *shew* it unto you”¹² —*to search*—“the Spirit *searcheth* all things”¹³ —*to have a mind*—“He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is *the mind* of the Spirit”¹⁴ —*to prophesy*—“He shall *shew you things to come*”¹⁵ —*to intercede*—“the Spirit *maketh intercession* for us,”¹⁶ and *to know*—“even

1 Ezekiel, xxxvii. 9.

4 Rom. viii. 14.

7 Eph. iii. 5.

10 John, xv. 26.

13 Rom. viii. 27.

2 Acts, x. 19.

5 John, xvi. 13.

8 John, xiv. 26.

11 John, xvi. 14.

14 John, xvi. 12.

3 Acts, viii. 20.

6 Rom. viii. 26.

9 Rom. viii. 16.

12 1 Cor. ii. 10.

15 Rom. viii. 26.

so the things of God *knoweth* no one, but the Spirit of God.”¹

Now is it possible that such things can with any shew of reason or propriety be said of an attribute? Would it not be an outrage upon common sense thus to personify? By what imaginable license of speech would any one venture to declare, that an attribute—the wisdom or the power of God for example, should *reveal, teach, testify, receive, shew, search, prophesy, intercede* and *know*? Knowledge is itself an attribute—one of those essential to God. Who can conceive that *knowledge* can with any meaning be predicated of the divine *power*, or even of the divine *wisdom*. God Himself is undoubtedly wise and powerful and omniscient, but shall we affirm *these things* of any *one* of His *perfections*? Can power know? These are the mysteries—we should rather say the *absurdities*, that must be adopted by those who reject the scriptural doctrine of the *personality* of the Spirit.

3. The Spirit of God is represented as OPERATING in such way as NECESSARILY TO IMPLY THE EXISTENCE OF AN INTELLIGENT PERSONAL AGENT. Thus, He is said to *work miracles*—“through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God”² —to *confer gifts*—“to one is *given* by His Spirit the word of wisdom”³ —to *sanctify*—“ye are *sanctified* by the Spirit of God”⁴ —to *give life*—“it is the Spirit that *quickeneth*”⁵ —to *reprove*—“He will *reprove* the world of sin”⁶ —to *strive*—“My Spirit shall not always *strive* with men.”⁷ Such are some of his operations. If working miracles, conferring gifts, sanctifying, giving life, reproofing and remonstrating do not indicate personality, what can?

4. The Spirit of God is represented AS BEING AFFECT-

1 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

4 1 Cor. vi. 11.

7 Gen. vi. 3.

2 Rom. xv. 19.

5 John, vi. 63.

3 1 Cor. xii. 8—14.

6 John, xvi. 8.

ED, AND THAT BY MEANS OF VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS WHICH DENOTE THE PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS OF AN INTELLIGENT AGENT. Thus, He is said to be *pleased*—"it seemed good to the Holy Ghost;"¹ to be *vexed*—"they rebelled and vexed his *Holy Spirit*;"² to be *grieved*—"grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;"³ to be *resisted*—"ye do always resist the Holy Ghost;"⁴ to be *quenched*—"quench not the Spirit."⁵ Can all these things be predicated of a mere attribute.

5. THERE ARE VARIOUS OFFICES ATTRIBUTED TO THE SPIRIT OF GOD, AND HE IS REPRESENTED AS OPERATING IN THE DISCHARGE OF THE SAME, WHICH ARE THINGS PERFECTLY UNINTELLIGIBLE AND ABSURD ON THE SUPPOSITION OF HIS BEING A PERSONAL AGENT. Thus he is said *to teach*: "But 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."⁶ By this anointing every one must admit is meant the very same thing with what is elsewhere called the Spirit of God. John said of Christ that "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him,"⁷ but in an illimitable degree, which thing in the poetic style of the Psalms, is represented by an *unction*⁸ from the Holy One, as an Apostle has infallibly declared. "Unto the Son he saith, God, even thy God, hath *anointed* thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."⁹ Whatever the Spirit of God may be, it is the same with the anointing which is said *to teach*. The Spirit also, is said expressly, or by evident implication in other passages, to teach.¹⁰ This is a work that is peculiarly attributed to Him, and may there-

1 Acts, xv. 28.

2 Isaiah, lxiii. 10.

3 Eph. iv. 30.

4 Acts, vii. 51.

5 1 Thess. v. 19.

6 1 John, ii. 27.

7 John, iii. 34.

8 Proof to the same effect is to be had by comparing 2 Cor. i. 21, 22, with Eph. i. 13, 14,—1 John, ii. 20, with 1 Cor. ii. 12,

9 Heb. i. 9: Psalm. xlv. 7. 10 Luke, xii. 12: John, xiv. 26: 1 Cor. ii. 13.

fore be considered His official business. If the blessed Saviour is represented as teaching, and is thence to be considered as an *official teacher*, having been sent from God for *this purpose*, according to the true saying of Nicodemus,¹ so ought the Holy Spirit to be, for He is sent expressly by the Lord Jesus Christ to teach, and thence takes the distinctive and official title of *the Comforter*. If the one is a true person, and if it is at all lawful to argue that He is, from the office attributed to Him and His discharge of its duties, so also must be the other. Why must we believe it mere personification in the latter instance, if it be not in the former? Every reader of the scriptures, who has not, by his prejudices or attachment to some favorite theory, been compelled to sacrifice his common sense, sees, at once, how absurd a thing it is to deny the real personality of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet it is not more so than to deny that of the Spirit. Was the former an *attribute* of Deity, or some *attribute* making manifestations of itself? How utterly absurd! No *mystery* can be half as absurd; yet this absurdity must be maintained by him that denies the personality of the Spirit of God!

The argument drawn from this source might be amplified by a reference to another very peculiar class of effects wrought by the Spirit of God, which the sacred scriptures contemplate as pertaining to Him officially—we mean those connected with the *sanctification* of believers, on account of whose agency and influence in the production of which, they are said to “*walk in the Spirit*,”² to be “*led by the Spirit*,”³ to “*live in the Spirit*,”⁴ to be “*after the Spirit*,”⁵ to be “*in the Spirit*,”⁶ to be “*filled with the Spirit*,”⁷ to have “*the fruits of the Spirit*,”⁸ &c.; but we deem it unnecessary, as every reader can readily do it for himself. What mean such expressions, if there is no

1 John, iii, 2.

4 Gal. v. 25.

7 Eph. v. 18.

2 Gal. v. 16.

5 Rom. viii. 5.

8 Gal. v. 22: Eph. v. 16.

3 Gal. v. 18.

6 Rom. viii, 9.

such blessed agent as the Spirit of God exerting an influence in and with the believer's efforts to lead a holy life? Why are they especially called "the temple of God," and is it said that "the Spirit of God *dwelleth* in"¹ them when their personal holiness is alluded to, if there is no such Being as the Spirit of God, and that holiness is not an effect of His agency and influence? Must the phrase or phrases as above, be understood to mean the influence of human reason and conscience in opposition to the animal appetites? How then without violating an idiom of speech can believers be said to be "*sanctified*?" And how is it that we read of "*sanctification through the Spirit*," as though the personal holiness of the believer is to be attributed to some *other than the influence* of their own reason? Verily language could not have been more vague, or more calculated to deceive, than that which the sacred scriptures hold with respect to the sanctification of believers, if the influence of human reason is its source, and if there is no such Being as the Spirit of God.

6. It may yet be added that THERE ARE VARIOUS ATTRIBUTES GIVEN IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES TO THE SPIRIT OF GOD. Thus, *Truth* is attributed to Him, "the Spirit of *Truth* whom the world cannot receive"² — *Holiness* also, whence he is called "the *Holy Spirit*" and "the Spirit of *Holiness*"³ — likewise *Goodness* — "Thy Spirit is *Good*" "Thy *Good Spirit*"⁴ — and *Grace* — "hath done despite to the Spirit of *Grace*"⁵ — and *Glory* — "the Spirit of *Glory* and of God resteth on you"⁶ — and *Eternity* — "who through the *Eternal Spirit*"⁷ — and *Omnipresence* — "whither shall *I go from thy Spirit*"⁸ — and *Omniscience* — "The Spirit *searcheth all things*."⁹ Can we suppose, without absurdity, that all these things are attributed to a mere attribute? Shall we personify the power of God, and in the

1 1 Cor. iii. 16: vi. 19. 2 John, xiv. 17, &c. &c. 3 1 Cor. iii. 16: Rom i. 4.

4 Psalm, cxliii. 10: Neh. ix. 20. 5 Heb. x. 29. 6 1 Peter, iv. 14.

7 Heb. ix. 14.

8 Psalm, cxxxix. 7.

9 1 Cor. ii. 16.

boldness of lofty conception weave around it the other perfections of Deity? Then what are we to make of the attribute of power itself, which is given to the Spirit of God, as we read of "many signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God?"¹ Is it at all conceivable that truth, holiness, goodness, grace, glory, eternity, omnipresence and omniscience should be attributed to power,—and *power* too? Is it not absurd to talk of the power of the power of God? So far from the Spirit of God being identical with the power of God, they are accurately distinguished in the sacred scriptures, "not by *might* nor by *power*, but by *My Spirit* saith the Lord."²

When therefore we survey the different parts of our argument, we confidently challenge any and every man who can divest his mind of prejudice, and who will rationally and coolly consider the import of language, to say, whether there is not the most overwhelming proof of the Spirit's *personality*, or real personal existence. If He possesses the power of spontaneous action, and actually and voluntarily exerts it; if He performs those actions which can be predicated only of a personal intelligent agent—speaking, testifying, searching, shewing, and the like; if He operates, and is affected in such way as to imply personality—working miracles, conferring gifts, being vexed and grieved, &c.; if He discharges the functions of various offices—teaching and sanctifying; if He is possessed of various attributes of a personal intelligent agent—truth, holiness, goodness, grace, power, &c., ought we, can we for one moment doubt with respect to His real personal existence? If these things do not prove personality what else can? It is just as impossible to prove the personal existence of Jesus Christ, or even of God the Father, as it is of the Holy Spirit, if there is no conclusiveness in the arguments that have been adduced.

1 Rom. xv. 19.

2 Zech. iv. 6.

CHAPTER III.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE SPIRIT.

CONTINUED.

An attempt to understand the Unitarian *doctrine* concerning the Spirit—Quotation from Faustus Socinus—Quotation from Dr. Channing—From Leslie—The Unitarian's alternative—His notion of the spirit examined—Put to the test of common-sense interpretation of scripture, John xiv. 24 26—Another supposition with regard to the Spirit examined—Its falsity exposed, when put to the test of scripture, Heb. ii. 4: Acts, xiii. 2: Acts, viii. 28: xi 19, 20: xv. 28: xvi. 6—If Unitarian views are true, the sacred writers liable to a serious charge, Acts, vi. 3: John, i. 33: Acts, v. 3, 4—The Unitarian *notion of inspiration* examined—Nature of inspiration—An argument thence deduced in favour of the divine personality of the Spirit—Unitarian view of inspiration—Quotation from Priestley and Belsham, 2 Tim. iii. 16: Mark, xiii. 11—Dr. Bancroft's idea, Mat. xii. 31.

Perhaps it will be objected that we have not faithfully and accurately represented the opinion of those against whom we have been directing our arguments:—that we have taken advantage of expressions, and attributed to them sentiments which they disavow:—that they do not mean to intimate any such absurdity as that a mere abstract perfection of Deity, apart and separate from God Himself, should be represented as endowed with the attributes of personality. We confess that it is exceedingly difficult to tell what they mean, and that we find it much easier to understand the proposition setting forth this great mystery, that the Divine Being—the One God exists in three distinct personal subsistences, than the assertions and explanations *they* advance relative to God and the Spirit of God. Let them speak for themselves. The Holy Spirit of God, they say, must be understood in the same sense as when

we speak of the *Holy wisdom*, or the *Holy will*, or more especially the *Holy power* of God. Hear a great Socinian, or as he would be called in modern parlance, a *learned Unitarian* on this subject. We shall translate his language for our English readers, but his own words may be consulted in the note. * “Briefly, every Divine power and

* Breviter omnis divina vis et efficacia Dei spiritus appellari potest, et idcirco Deus ipse dicit, se replevisse Dei spiritu Beseleel filium Uri; [Exod. xxxi. 3.] quia videlicet eum implevisset scientia artis mechanicæ, qua opus erat ad ea omnia fabricanda, quæ ad sui cultum ut fierent, Mosi præceperat. Verum quia vis illa et efficacia divina, qua aliqua ratione res sanctificantur, aliis longe præstat estque Dei maxime propria, eamque et ipse frequentissime ac plurimum exerit, et sacræ litteræ commemorare necesse habent; propterea factum est, ut Dei spiritus, aut etiam simpliciter Spiritus nomine vis ista significetur, quæ, ut diximus, peculiari nomine Spiritus sanctus appellatur. Est autem hæc Spiritus pro vi et efficacia appellatio per metaphoram a vento et flatu ducta; quo res nimirum qualitate aliqua facile replentur, et simul commoventur atque agitantur. Siquidem ea vox, quæ in divinis litteris reddita est Spiritus apud Hebræos et Græcos, ut etiam interdum apud Latinos vox ipsa Spiritus, ventum et flatum significat. Eademque prorsus metaphora in eadem ipsa re, de qua loquimur, apud Latinos obtinuit. Pro eo enim, quod sanctæ litteræ Dei spiritum dicunt, ipsi divinum afflatum nominant, et quempiam Dei numine afflari aiunt vel etiam, ut Cicero (a) de poetis dixit, divino quodam spiritu afflari.

Quamobrem non erat, cur quisquam Dei spiritum in sacris litteris personam aliquam significare existimaret, etiamsi quædam illi attributa inveniret, quæ personarum sunt propria. Sive enim vis ista atque efficacia divina, quatenus Deus per eam agit, consideratur, et Dei spiritus nominatur, metonymiæ sane et prosopopæjæ aptissimus est locus; Metonymiæ quidem, ut spiritus Dei nomine ipse Deus, qui spiritu suo agit, significetur; prosopopæjæ vero, ut quando per spiritum suum Deus agit, ipsi spiritui actio tribuatur. Sive eadem ista vis atque efficacia divina, quatenus res, in quibus Deus agit, ab ipsa afficiuntur, consideratur, ac Dei spiritus appellatur, nulla est causa, cur similiter vel per metonymiam is, qui ab eo spiritu affectus aliquid agit Spiritus Dei nomine intelligi non possit, vel per prosopopæiam, quandoquidem is, qui ita affectus est, per eum spiritum agit, actio illa ipsi Dei spiritui ascribi nequeat. *D. fensio Animadversionum Fausti Socini Senensis, in assertiones Theologicas Collegii Posnaniensis de Trino et uno Deo; adversus Gabrielem Eutropium Canonicum Posnaniensem, ab eodem Paus. Soc. c. xi. p. 291, 292.*

(a) Cic. pro Arch.

virtue can be called a Spirit of God, and therefore God Himself says, that he had filled with the Spirit of God, Bezeleel the son of Uri; because, forsooth he had filled him with the knowledge of a mechanical art necessary to his making all those things as they should be, which he had prescribed to Moses in relation to His worship. But because that Divine power and virtue, by which, in some way, things are sanctified, is especially proper to God, and which He both most frequently and most of all exerts, and the sacred Scriptures find it necessary to mention, is by far more excellent than others; therefore it has happened, that that power is denoted by the name of Spirit of God, or even simply the Spirit, which, as we have said, is called by the peculiar name the Holy Spirit. But this name of Spirit for power and virtue is metaphorically taken from a wind or breath, (*flatu*,) by which things, that is to say, of some sort, are easily filled, and at the same time mixed up and agitated. Inasmuch as that word, which in the sacred Scriptures is rendered Spirit by Hebrews and Greeks, as also sometimes by Latins, that very word Spirit signifies a wind, a breath, (*flatum*.) And generally the same metaphor, in the very same thing of which we speak, obtained among the Latins. For that which the sacred Scriptures call the Spirit of God, they denominate a Divine breath (*afflatum*,) and say that one is inspired (*afflari*) by the impulse (*numine*) of God, or even, as Cicero said of the poets, by some Divine Spirit to be inspired."

"Wherefore it does not follow that one should think the Spirit of God in the sacred Scriptures signified any person, though he should find some things attributed to it which are proper to persons. For whether that Divine power and virtue in so far as God acts by it, is considered and is called the Spirit of God, that is truly the fittest occasion for metonymy or personification (*prosopœiæ*)—of metonymy indeed,

as by the name of Spirit of God may be signified God himself, who acts by his own spirit; but of personification, as when God acts by His own Spirit, the action may be attributed to the Spirit itself. Or if that same Divine power and virtue is considered, in so far as the things on which God acts are affected by it, (*abipsa*,) as it is called the Spirit of God, there is no cause why, in like manner, either by metonymy he, who affected by that Spirit does any thing, might not be understood by the name of the Spirit of God; or, by personification, seeing that he who is so affected, acts by that Spirit, that action cannot be ascribed to the Spirit of God."

Now if there is not *mystery* here, we leave it to the common sense of our readers to say, whether there is not a great deal of *mysticism*, or learned subtlety. It is indeed exceedingly difficult to tell *what* those, who deny the personality of the Spirit of God, do really believe in relation to him. One talks of a powerful influence of the Deity (*a vis et efficacia*) in general; another of a special influence, enabling its subject to work miracles; another of an "*extraordinary* power or gift of God, first to our Lord Jesus Christ himself, in his life time, and afterwards to the Apostles and many of the first Christians, to empower them to preach and propagate the Gospel with success."¹ At one time we are told it is an attribute, at another a figure of speech, a metonymy, a metaphor, a *proropopœia*, at another a gift, a grace, the knowledge of some mechanical art; at one time, the chief of the Heavenly spirits, at another supreme minister of God; at one time the energy or Spirit (*temper* probably) of God; at another God Himself: now something different from God, and then again the very God himself. There is no uniformity or consistency in their opinions.² Surely it is not half so difficult to

¹ Lindsey's *Memoirs*, p. 212.

² See Dr. Channing's remarks on Dr. Worcester's letter to him, pages 38, 39.

believe that the Spirit of God is a distinct personal subsistence in the Divine Nature, or, that the Divine Being subsists in a personality distinct from either the Father or the Son, as it is to understand all this jargon. The *proposition* at least is intelligible, whatever of mystery there may be in the *fact*. This cannot always be said of those who claim to be rational divines. Hear Dr. Channing, "The Unitarian believes that there is but one person possessing *supreme* divinity, even the Father"—"In fact, as the word Trinity is sometimes used, we *all* believe it"—"Some suppose that Trinitarianism consists in believing in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But we all believe in them; we all believe that the *Father* sent the *Son*, and gives to those that ask the *Holy Spirit*."¹ These are taken at random. Reader can you understand them? Many other specimens of *discrimination* and *precision* might be furnished from these *rational* divines, and especially this most popular of American Unitarians. But it is unnecessary to perplex our readers or to crowd our pages. The *proposition* we stated above, or this other, that there is one God who subsists and acts in three distinct persons has no vagueness in it. If the thing or *fact*, the *mode* of this subsistence, is felt to be utterly incomprehensible what then? It is affirmed distinctly and positively that "there are *three* which bear record in Heaven, and that these *three* are one."² And do we not meet with resemblances to this in nature, and that not a few? Light, heat and electricity are perfectly distinct, and yet, if the philosophical views of some be correct, they all agree in one. We shall find occasion to refer to this subject more at large hereafter, and at present only add that what Virgil from the Platonics says of the Infinite and Divine

1 See Dr. Channing's remarks on Dr. Worcester's letter to him, p. 38, 39.

2 1 John, v. 7.

Mind is strictly and literally true of the human soul and body.

Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus
Mens agitat Molem.

“We say,” observes a profound scholar, “that the soul is *all* in *all*, and all in *every part* of the body ; yet, that the soul is neither *multiplied* nor *divided* among the several *members* of the *body*. It is impossible for us to *explain* this or to *deny* it; for we *feel* it to be so, though it is wholly *unconceivable* to us *how it can be*. Now if the soul, which is but an image of God at an infinite distance, can communicate itself to several *members* without breach of its *unity*, why should it be impossible for the *Eternal and Infinite Mind* to communicate itself to several *persons* without breach of *its unity*.”¹ The Unitarian cannot but acknowledge that the Father, the Word and the Spirit are three: but he maintains that God is one—one *person*. Now if the Father, the Word and the Spirit are *one person* they cannot be *three*. Yet are they *three* in some sense. But in what sense? Let us hear. The Son or the Word is a *manifestation* of the Father—“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”² “The Spirit is an extraordinary power or gift of God,” uncertain which says one. “He,” viz., God, “gives to those that ask, the Holy Spirit,” says another, but other than that he is a gift says not. This is enough. Now if Christ be the *manifestation* of the Father is He the Father? Must He not be a different person from the Father? And if the Spirit be a GIFT of God, must He not be different and distinct from God? How then are these *one*? Are my image, or representation, and gifts *one* with me in any sense? Can they be called such by any usage of correct speech! Either the Father, and the Word and the Spirit must all be the one God—the one *person*

¹ Leslie's Soc. Trinity explained, p. 20.

² John xiv. 9.

of the Father, dispensing and acting in *different* manners, or they are three Beings, or substances, totally distinct and different—the personal Father, the image Christ Jesus, and the gift the Holy Spirit. One or other of these alternatives the Unitarian must adopt. We give him his choice.

If he takes the first, that the Father, the Word and the Spirit are the *one* personal God, differently acting or manifesting Himself, then is he not *three*—there can be no division or distinction of His one person. The *thing* is a *contradiction!* If he takes the second, that the Father is one person, and the man Christ Jesus another person or another thing, and the Holy Spirit something different from both, then are they not *one*. Three *different* beings cannot be one and the same *numerically*. It is a *contradiction!* A person, an image and a gift can, in no sense, be said to be one, except that the person is the image of himself, and is himself his own gift, which, if it be not utterly unintelligible, reduces us to the necessity of believing that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are one and the same person, so that we are driven to the necessity of adopting and maintaining this monstrous absurdity and contradiction, that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are *three* and *one* in the *self-same respect*. Such is the legitimate result of the Unitarian's vague and ill-defined assertions with regard to his Father, Son and Spirit. By attempting to get rid of *mystery*, he involves himself in *mysticism* and *contradictions*. But it is not so with those who maintain the doctrine of one God—one divine nature subsisting in three persons. It is admitted that there are difficulties and mystery not to be unravelled, but these are not *contradictions*. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are not *one* and *three* in the *same respect*. In *respect* of their nature or essence, they are *one*. In *respect* of their *persons* they are *three*. Until we assert them to be *one* and *three*, in the *self-same respect*, we *cannot* be charged with teaching either *absurdity* or *contradictions*.

But to return from this digression: The Unitarian says, the Spirit of God is the power and virtue of God. What, then, we ask, is this power and virtue? Either it is God Himself, or it is different from God—that is, stripping it of all rhetorical drapery, it must be either an attribute, an accident, or quality of God; or, it is a substance or something different from God. When the justice of God, the wisdom of God, and other perfections of the Divine Being are spoken of, we do not deem it necessary to resort to the rules of rhetoric to understand the meaning of such phrases, no one dreams that there is any thing more meant than that *such are the perfections* or attributes of God. That personification obtains in reference to the most of them, we will not deny, but no one is at a loss to understand the manner in which this figure of speech, in such cases, is employed. When a quality or attribute is personified, that is, when personal actions are ascribed to qualities, the implied idea always is, that it is by, or in accordance with, such particular qualities, that some personal agent performs such particular actions. This is the plain and common understanding among men in this use of prosopœia. To ascribe personal actions to qualities in any other way, is absolutely unintelligible. Now, to apply these remarks to the subject before us. When we personify the power of God, the *virtue* of God is too utterly vague an idea for us to grasp—we mean, if we mean any thing at all, that God, that is some intelligent personal agent, by or according to His attribute of power, performs the actions spoken of, so that ultimately we identify God and His power. If we do not, then, must we make God and His power to be different. We here again give the Unitarian his choice, and propose to bring his explanation of the Spirit, as being the power of God personified, to the test of common sense, as the interpreter of some passages of scripture. We shall not consent to his escaping from the

dilemma into which we design to place him, by alleging that the power of God is rather a *mode* of action, or of *manifesting action*. A *mode of God's actions*, is but another phrase for, *God acting after a particular manner*. The truth is, we cannot, in our conceptions, separate the power of God from God himself. Are then, the Spirit of God, that is his power and God Himself, identical? What, therefore, can we make of such passages as the following? "Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak *of Himself*; but whatsoever he shall *hear*, that shall he speak."¹ The Spirit is here represented as speaking, but not speaking of himself, as *hearing*, and speaking what he hears. On the supposition of the distinct personality of the Spirit, this is all plain and perfectly intelligible, and what man of common sense would not, on the very reading of this passage, most naturally thus suppose? It is stretching personification much too far, to represent a quality or attribute, as speaking and hearing, and not speaking of itself.

But say that the Spirit is the power of God, and substituting this phrase for the other, let us see what we shall have? Surely this is lawful, and we shall find, as the judicious Leslie has remarked, that "there is nothing better to confute a *Socinian* than plainly to set down his *paraphrase* and shew how it fills the words of the *text*." When the power of God is come, the power of God will guide you into all truth, for the power of God will not speak of the power of God, but whatsoever the power of God shall hear, that shall the power of God speak. Is not this absolute nonsense? Now this power of God is either God Himself, or it is not. If it is God himself, as must be the case, if it is the one personal *God operating*, then have we this absurdity and contradiction, that God does not speak of Himself, but hears what Christ says, and speaks that—thus God the Father is

1 John, xvi. 13.

made reporter from Christ the image, the latter dictating, and the former repeating. Yet Christ says, "the word which ye hear is not *mine*, but *the Father's* which *sent me*,"¹ exactly the reverse of the Unitarian explanation.

Equally absurd and contradictory is the following declaration of the Saviour, according to this explanation of the Spirit of God: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things."² That is, according to the Unitarian paraphrase: The power of God, which is the power of God, whom the power of God (for the supposition is that God and His power are identical) will send in my name, this power of God shall teach you all things. Then God sends himself, and that *in the name* of (i. e. commissioned by or from) Christ. And yet Christ says, "But when the Comforter is come, whom *I will send unto you from the Father*, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me,"³ exactly the reverse of the Unitarian explanation. But this last quotation must itself be subjected to the paraphrastic alembic. But, when the power of God is come, whom I will send unto you from the power of God, (the supposition still being, that God and His power are identical) even the power of God which proceedeth from the power of God, this power of God shall testify of me. The power of God sent by Christ from the power of God! The power of God proceeding from the power of God!! Is there any thing more incomprehensible in the whole mystery of the *Trine God*? nay, rather let us ask can we conceive of greater absurdities? Other passages might be quoted, which would be found to be rendered just as unintelligible, and nonsensical, by applying the Unitarian paraphrase, as the foregoing, but these may suffice. We remark, however, that if the power of God be the same with God Himself, ac-

1 John, xiv. 24.

2 John, xiv. 26.

3 John, xvi. 13.

cording to the terms of the supposition, then is the Spirit of God (for the Spirit of God, according to the Unitarian, is the power of God) the same with God—God Himself—the very God. This is the result to which the adoption of the first alternative leads. What then are we to make of those passages where they are distinguished?

But, perhaps, the other is preferred. Be it so then, and let it be fairly understood, that by the power of God, that is His Spirit, is meant something different from God. It cannot be an *attribute* of God personified or not personified, nor can it be a *mode* of God's agency, for then must it be, as we have already seen, God Himself, it being a sort of axiom among divines that the *attributes* or *properties* of God are *God*. What then is it? Must we be compelled to travel through the endless detail of hypotheses which men have framed on this subject? Their number and variety are proof that they have nothing solid and satisfactory among themselves. Let them once depart from the plain scriptural declaration that the three in Heaven, distinct and separate *persons*—Father, Word and Spirit, are *One essence*, and they are afloat immediately on a wide and boundless ocean of conjecture, where, though they may think themselves to be “ever learning,” they are “never coming to the knowledge of the truth.” There is only one among them all that we deem worthy of notice, viz., that the Holy Spirit is the *gift* of God. But here we are again perplexed with doubt and uncertainty. What is that gift? One tells us the power of working miracles imparted to the apostles and early Christians:—another, the power of preaching the gospel with success, given to Christ and his disciples:—another, any power, whatever, even so low as skill in a mechanical art, as in the instance of Bezaleel, whom the Lord “filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works.

to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones to set, and in carving of timber to work in all manner of workmanship."¹ Knowledge, wisdom, skill, and ability, to do something or other of consequence, are these the Spirit of God? We presume it is admitted by our opponents. Assuredly we do not wish either to misunderstand or misrepresent them. Well, then, *whose* is the skill and ability or the power? Is it God's? By no means; for the supposition is that the Spirit of God is something different from God. It must then be that of the individual who has received the gift.² Now let us bring this idea to

1 Exod. xxxi. 3—5.

2 We confess ourselves utterly unable to understand even those Socinian writers who seem to have been aware of the difficulty under which we labor, of determining *precisely* what is the Spirit, according to their scheme, and who have undertaken to explain themselves much more minutely than most of our modern Unitarians. We subjoin an extract from J. CRELLIUS, the Coryphæus of Socinians, who attempts to illustrate his views of the Spirit of God, by magnetic attraction, and the influences of the stars upon terrestrial bodies, the seminal virtue of plants, the notions prevalent in his day about the animal spirits, the fruit of the tree of knowledge, light, heat, color, odor and what not. If electricity had been as well understood in his day, as it is now, it would have afforded him a much better idea of *his* Holy Spirit than all the rest put together. He could not have desired a fitter illustration of the virtue which went out of Christ, according to his view of it, than the electrical state of one on the insulated chair. The truth is, that if he has any distinct conceptions at all on the subject, they are, that the Spirit is an *emanation* from God, which can be accumulated and concentrated in a creature, so as that, like the radiation of heat, that creature shall give out the virtue which originally was derived from God. Non est autem mirandum, ex efficacia divina quæ in Christo habitavit, quæque a virtute divina *promanavit*, iterum aliam virtutem atque efficaciam quodam modo manasse. Nihil enim prohibet quo minus ab eo calore, quem calor ignis in alio subjecto excitaverat, iterum vis aliqua in alia corpora dimanet, et in iis sese exerat et quidem tanto major, quanto major est ille ipse calor, qui ab igne proxime fuerat profectus. 90,—asseritur Christum discipulos suos baptizaturum spiritu sancto et igne, hoc est spiritu sancto qui est ignis, seu vim habet *similem* virtuti et efficacia ignis. Hanc autem formam (linguæ ignis) assumere spiritus sanctus non potuit, *si substantia aliqua per se subsistens non fuit*, p. 75. And yet elsewhere he says, respondemus

the test of a few plain passages of the sacred scriptures. "They of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured *the gift of the Holy Ghost*."¹ Why did they not say the Holy Ghost, for *that was the gift*, and thus relieved the Unitarian paraphrast who must read it the gift of the gift; or the power of the power, or the skill of the skill, or something else equally absurd. He cannot say that *gift*, here denotes the act of giving, or God's grant, for that is denoted by the previous expression *poured*: it must denote the skill or ability, whatever it was, conferred upon the Gentiles. But *that very* ability or skill is the Holy Spirit, as the Unitarian affirms. There is no relief for him. He must speak absurdity. Let us try him with another. "God also bearing witness *both* with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, *and* gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to *his own* (the Holy Ghost's own) will."² The gifts are the ability imparted as in the former case; but it is not the power of working signs and wonders and miracles, for this is distinguished from it. It must then denote some *other* abilities and skill. Whatever they are, however, they are the Spirit; and here again is the same absurdity. Our readers who are not acquainted with the Greek, need to be told that *even* may sometimes be used for *and*,³ so that the gifts, wonders, &c. are the same, according to our paraphrast *even the* "gifts"² being only the

spiritum sanctum quidem perse et (ut in scholis loquuntur) abstracte sump-
tum, *qualitatum* revera esse non substantiam, eam tamen qualitatem in ma-
teria quadum quæ perse subsistat recipi posse, et ei iter imprimi ut per
eam deferatur eo quo a Deo destinetur et homini communicetur, p. 80, 81.
We candidly confess this to be beyond our philosophy—a quality subsisting
by itself, distinct from substance and yet not a substance! And this utterly
unintelligible theory, after all, is the Socinian's Spirit of God.—*Tract. de. Sp.*
Sanct. J. CRELLIO FRANCO.

1 Acts, x. 45.

2 Heb. ii. 4. *αὐτοῦ*.

3 The reader acquainted with the original, may see examples of this
sort in Matt. x. 30: xv. 16. John, vii. 19: xv. 20: Rev. ii. 13.

general classification. But this will not do, for *the signs and wonders*, &c. which *the skill* or ability of *Christians* EFFECTED, are *his* Holy Ghost. And still more is he embarrassed for the Apostle says, these wonders, &c. are God's testimony—*God bearing witness*, that is, God Himself speaking as it were in these very things. Mere human skill or ability, that is, *the skill* or ability of a *man*, can never be *God witnessing*. If the apostles had worked miracles by their *own skill* or ability, it would have been no proof that christianity was from God. But, if these miracles were wrought *by the direct agency and mighty power of God*, there can be none better. This the apostle says was the fact, signs, wonders and divers miracles were wrought by God. They cannot, then, be the *same* with *the gifts* of the Holy Ghost. Our paraphrast is compelled to abandon his own criticism. It cannot help him. Nor does his embarrassment cease here, for the apostle attributes distinct velleity to the Holy Ghost, and these gifts are imparted according to his (the Holy Spirit's) *own will*, which, if it is not as plain a distinction between the power or skill in man, and the Holy Spirit, and as plain a testimony to the personality of the Spirit as can be, we know not what can.

We invite our paraphrast to explain how Luke, the learned and inspired historian, can be rescued from the charge of speaking utter nonsense, if the Unitarian's Holy Ghost, (viz. gifts—power in men,) be what he alluded to when he said that “the Holy Ghost said, separate *me*, Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”¹ It is natural to believe that as an historian, and writing an historical narrative, Luke here states simply a *matter of fact*. There was no call or occasion for rhetorical display. What reader would not at first sight

¹ Acts, xiii. 2.

take it for granted, that the Spirit was a person when He is represented as *speaking*—mentioning two individuals by name, and directing that they should be set apart from the rest of their brethren for a specific mission. But how utterly astonished would he be when told, you are altogether mistaken; it was these men's gifts. To personify the power, or skill, or gifts of men in this way is a license of speech which the most stupid and ignorant could not brook. Who ever heard of a *quality* speaking, appointing its plenipotentiaries, directing as to their commissions, and saying not A B or C D, but E F and G H, are to be set apart to this work? If ever personality is implied or can be, it must in such a case. It is the very manner in which some of the sovereigns of earth would speak when about to appoint their charge d'affaires. Nor is this a singular instance. "The Spirit said unto Philip go near and join thyself to this chariot"¹—"While Peter thought on the vision the Spirit said unto him, Behold three men seek thee. Arise therefore and get thee down and go with them doubting nothing, for *I* have sent them"²—"It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay on you none other burden"³—and "take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers"—"Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the words in Asia."⁴ Now in all these passages the inspired writer, let it be remembered, is reciting *historical facts*, and if the Holy Ghost is not a *person* who is represented as giving instructions, as appointing to offices, as naming individuals, and giving direction as to their movements, and expressing his counsels or will, we might, with as much propriety, suppose

1 Acts, viii. 28.

3 Acts, xv. 28.

2 Acts, x. 19, 20.

4 Acts, xvi. 6.

Peter, and Philip, and Barnabas, and Saul to be qualities too—mere personifications! How ridiculous would be such a speech as this! The power or gift of God said, that is, Philip's and Peter's skill and ability! it seemed good to the gifts and skill of the Apostles. But it cannot be the skill and knowledge or will of the Apostles, for it is added "*and unto us,*" distinguishing their judgment in the case from that of the Holy Ghost. Shall we suppose that it was the skill and ability, the gifts of the Bishops of Ephesus which elevated them to their stations or office? And that after the Apostles had preached in Phrygia and Galatia, they lost their skill and ability to preach in Asia? Yet such absurdities must we believe if our paraphrast is worthy of confidence, who will tell us that the Holy Spirit is not a person—not God Himself, but something different from Him, the skill and ability or power to do this or that, which He imparts to men.

But we have not yet done with him. The distinction between the Holy Spirit and human wisdom or skill, is very clearly made by the Apostles when describing the qualifications requisite for their apostolic office. "Wherefore, brethren," said they to the disciples, "look ye out seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost *and* wisdom."¹ Were they so stupid and incapable of speaking correctly, as thus to express themselves, if the spirit and skill or ability in men—for that in the present instance is the same with wisdom—were not perfectly distinct? It is saying very little indeed for their "extraordinary gift of power," if they talked in such a confused and unintelligible manner. Our paraphrast must vindicate their reputation, and shew that they were not absolutely *unfit* to teach, notwithstanding their "extraordinary gift or power," if they could speak at this rate. And he is particularly

1 Acts, vi. 3.

concerned with that of Luke, scholar as he was, and accustomed to observe the phenomena of matter and of mind, who declares most positively as an historical fact, that at the baptism of Christ, "the Holy Ghost descended *in a bodily shape*, like a dove upon him."¹ We will admit that it is all a mistake, to suppose as many do, that the *Spirit's form*, assumed on that occasion, was that of a dove, and that the resemblance which Luke notices regards *only the manner* of descent. But then, *the Holy Ghost* descended in a *bodily* ^{SHAPE}, whatever shape that was. It was some material substance. It is only by the assumption of some material vehicle or substance, that God *can* render himself visible, and it is said by John that on this occasion "he *saw*," as it had been before declared he should "see, the spirit descending and remaining on him."² It was not, and could not have been an optical illusion, for it was not vivid and rapid like the lightning's

1 Luke, iii. 22.

2 John i. 33.

The following extract is given from Leslie's Socinian controversy, in corroboration of the view which has been given in the above passage in relation to the descent of the Holy Ghost.

"It does not appear that there was any shape of a dove at our Saviour's baptism. Though it is I think a vulgar error. For which reason I will speak a little of it here. There was a *bodily shape* appeared; else the people could not have seen it. But what was the *shape* or *appearance*? It was a fire of *glory* that *descended* from *Heaven* and *lighted* upon the *head* of our *Saviour*. But how did it light? Was it like a *flash* of *lightning*, *quick* and *transient*? No. For then, in so great a *multitude* the *people* could not have discerned for what particular *person* it was meant. Did it come down *swift* as a bird of *prey* stoops to its *game*, like an *arrow* out of a *bow*? No. It descended leisurely and hovering as a dove does when it lights upon the *ground*, that the people might take the more *notice*, and to express the *overshadowing* of the *Holy Spirit*. And it not only *lighted* upon the *head* of our Saviour, but it *abode* and *remained* upon Him, as it is said, John, i. 32, 33.

Now that the expression in the text, *like a dove*, does refer to this

flash. Its shape was distinctly seen, and its manner of descent was slow and hovering, like a dove before it lights, and it rested and remained on Christ. Was it an attribute of Deity assuming a bodily shape? Absurd! But our paraphrast must be attended to; it was "the extraordinary gift or power" given to Christ, &c. Strange! Ability or skill in man assuming a *bodily* shape! Who ever heard of such a thing? Who can conceive of such a thing? It was not *in* him but *on* him. Monstrous! what absurdity!

Our readers will excuse us if we detain these "rational manner of the *descent* of that *glory* upon our blessed Saviour, and not the *shape* of it, appears from the *grammatical* construction of the words in our text, which is better distinguished in the Greek and Latin than in the English, where the *cases* of nouns are expressed by *particles* and not by their termination. Now if these words, *like a dove*, had referred to the *shape*, then the word *dove* must have been in the genitive case, the shape of a dove. But it is not so either in the Greek or Latin. It is said in the Greek, that the Holy Ghost descended *σαματιχω ειδει* in a *bodily appearance*, *ωσει* (or *ως* as the Cambridge copy of Beza reads it) *περισσευαν*, but if it had referred to the *shape* it must have been *ωσει περισσευας* of a dove. Thus the Latin, *descendit corporali specie, sicut columba*. That is, *sicut columba descendit*. As a dove descends. It can bear no other construction. But if it had referred to the *shape*, it must have been *descendit corporali specie, sicut columba*, the shape of a dove. Which is not in our English. It is not said in our English the shape of a dove. But that the Holy Ghost descended (in a bodily shape) *like a dove*, that is as a *dove* descends. If it had referred to the *shape*, it should have said in a bodily shape, *as of a dove*, or *like as of a dove*.

Besides, if that *glory* which appeared had been no bigger than a dove, (which is not to be imagined, when it is said the *Heaven* was opened. And the people had taken so much notice, if the *appearance* had been no bigger than a dove, it might have escaped the sight of many; but suppose it,) how should they know it to be a *dove*, more than any other *bird* or *thing* of the like bigness? Especially considering that it uttered no voice, for it is expressly said that the *voice* came from *Heaven*, then not from *that* which abode or remained upon our Saviour.

I have said thus much of it because of the too common practice of painting the *Holy Ghost* like a dove, which gives countenance to the usage in the church of Rome, of painting God the Father like an *old man*, &c.' Leslie's Dialogues, iii. pages 18, 19.

divines,"—these learned commentators on scripture, to examine them a little further as to one or two passages which, on their principles, we find ourselves utterly at a loss to know what they can mean. The Apostle Peter asked, "Ananias why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?"¹ What! Lie to an attribute, a mere personification! Or was it to Peter and the Apostles, whose skill and discernment, whose ability and power, whose "extraordinary gift" Ananias had called in question by keeping back part of the proceeds on the sale of his property? Peter says "Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God."¹ It could not have been to the *gift* itself which Peter and the other Apostle's possessed. We never talk of lying to men's talents, or skill or knowledge. It must be a *person* or percipient being, whom the liar intends to deceive. But let the Unitarian explain himself. This gift was *the inspiration of God* (the *afflatus*) in the Apostles, and therefore was it said that Ananias lied to the Holy Ghost. Not to notice the singularity of the expression lying to an inspiration, or, the identity between the gift and inspiration, we remark, that although the Spirit of God is sometimes put for God Himself, yet it is rather daring to put it for an Apostle. When was Peter before or afterwards called the Holy Ghost? And how comes it to pass that lying to Peter was called lying to God, especially, when Peter says the lie was *not* to him, but to God. What figure of speech can help him here to say, thou hast lied to the Holy Ghost, that is to us Apostles, who have the Holy Spirit and inspiration of God in us? For the supposition is, that the Spirit of God, call it inspiration of God in the Apostles if you please, is something *different* from God. If it be *different* from God, then Peter erred in saying that Ananias lied to *God*. If it be the influence or

¹ Acts, v. 3, 4.

agency of God who inspired, then was the lie indeed to God, but that God, according to Peter's own shewing, is the Holy Ghost, and a person.

One word, as we pass, on the subject of inspiration. The sacred scriptures are "given by inspiration of God." The inspiration of God, is God inspiring, revealing and teaching men to speak and declare his will. It is not a physical or metaphorical afflatus—not a boldness of speech in reference to the perceptions or conceptions of the human understanding. A Newton and La Place, possessed of "extraordinary gifts," endowed with superior talents, have astonished the world with their discoveries in science, and a Homer and Milton have gained the admiration of millions by the sublimity of their thoughts, but they cannot therefore be said to have been *inspired of God*. There was nothing preter-natural in their knowledge and lofty conceptions. The objects and subjects on which their minds and imaginations were employed, all lay within the sphere of human observation and research. But the inspiration of God taught its subjects things entirely unknown and inconceivable to man, as Paul says,¹ and as we shall have occasion to see more fully in the succeeding chapter. It was God Himself, in some mysterious way, giving information to the minds of the prophets and other sacred writers, on themes and matters beyond the sphere of human ken. But this very thing—this very God-inspiring, the Apostle Peter says, is the Holy Ghost. "But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."² It is not *the effect wrought in their minds*—not their *actual knowledge* which constituted their inspiration; but the *direct agency of God in giving that knowledge*. It is this divine agency which identifies in our minds this knowledge with God, as we cannot separate *the agency of God exerted in the communication* of this

1 1 Cor. ii. 7—10.

2 2 Peter, i. 21.

knowledge from God Himself. And it is that same divine agency which gives to the sacred scriptures all authority and infallibility, demanding our full and unwavering assent, *as to the very word of God*. It was as such the Apostle Paul declares the converts at Thessalonica received the gospel preached. "The word," says he, "which ye heard of us, ye received it, not *as the word of men*, but as it is in truth *the word of God*."¹ But this same Apostle elsewhere, as explicitly as above, attributes the inspiration of the sacred writers to the *agency of the Holy Spirit*. "Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; 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."² From all which the following positions may unquestionably be maintained, viz., that the inspiration of the Apostles and sacred writers is not the knowledge or wisdom possessed by the men themselves; that it is knowledge communicated *directly and preternaturally by God Himself* to the minds of the Apostles, &c.; and that this God is the Holy Spirit. To this conclusion we are inevitably led by all who admit that the *inspiration* spoken of in the sacred scriptures was through the direct and preternatural agency of the Divine Being on the minds of the Apostles—impressing as it were with the seal of entire and infallible certainty all the communications made through them.

But from it the Unitarian seeks to escape by denying such inspiration. Hear Dr. Priestley—"The scriptures were written *without any particular inspiration*, by men who wrote according to the best of *their* knowledge."³ Hear a later writer of the same school, "They, the scrip-

1 1 Thess. ii. 13.

2 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

3 Priestley's History of Early Opinions, vol. iv. pp. 4, 5.

tures, are not themselves the word of God,¹ nor do they ever assume that title;¹ and it is highly improper to speak of them as such, as it leads inattentive readers to suppose they are written under a *plenary* inspiration, *to which they make no pretensions.*"² We reserve a more minute examination of such a denial to the next chapter. At present we only remark, that if the Unitarian view of this subject be correct, it is folly to talk of inspiration at all. There is, in fact, no such thing. All human knowledge, all discoveries of human reason are alike an inspiration. Why then call any thing an inspiration of God³ by way of distinction? Why use the word at all? Talk not about a *particular* inspiration and a *plenary* inspiration. We cannot understand you: most unquestionably something more is meant than the general agency of God in the support of their mental powers, which they had in common with all rational beings, when it is said that "the holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God."³ If not the scriptures are pre-eminently calculated to deceive.

The above remarks are made to guard against an evasion of the argument for the personality of the Spirit, urged

1 The reader may make his own comments on such assertions, when he has referred to Heb. iv. 12: 2 Cor. iv. 2: 1 Thess. ii. 13.

2 Belsham's Rev. of Wilberforce, &c. Letter 1.

3 2 Tim. iii. 16. *πασα γραφή θεοπνεύστος και ωφέλιμος*. Every Greek scholar must see that there is an elipsis here which must be supplied by inserting the copula of existence *εστιν* either before *θεοπνεύστος* and *ωφέλιμος* both in the translation in our English bibles, or before *θεοπνεύστος* only, according to some of the Latin translations, or by inserting the words *η εστιν* after *γραφή* according to Beausobre, *Toute ecriture qui est inspirée*. Whatever method of supplying the ellipsis however, is adopted, it does not invalidate the assertion which claims inspiration for the sacred scriptures, though we much prefer that of the French commentator, as being most consonant with the Apostle's design, and assuming it as fact, that some writings—the writings of the holy men of God, are inspired, (*θεοπνεύστος*) in this thing differing essentially from any writings of men.

from Ananias' lying to the Holy Ghost. The inspiration of the apostles was *the direct preternatural agency of God in their minds making known the truth to them with infallible certainty*. On no other supposition can Ananias be said to have lied to God. But our Unitarian paraphrast maintains that inspiration is not God operating: but something distinct and different from God. Thus does he make *Peter* lie most egregiously, in endeavoring to convict Ananias of falsehood!!!¹

There is yet another passage on which we desire to examine the Unitarian comment. "When they shall lead you and deliver you," said the Saviour to his disciples, "*take no thought* beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is *not ye* that speak, *but the Holy Ghost*."² Here the Saviour evidently distinguishes between that which might have been excogitated by the disciples, and something to be impressed on their minds, or communicated suddenly to them, from some source foreign from themselves. "*Not ye;*" "*but the Holy Ghost*." If by the Spirit is meant the "extraordinary power or gift"—the skill or ability of the apostles, then does the Saviour actually speak unintelligibly and falsely. It was the disciples that spoke. There was no communication made to them; *the very thing that they should speak* was *not given* to them; but by virtue of their *gifts and skill* it was, at the moment *excogitated by them*. If this was his meaning, did he not actually deceive as well as speak unintelligibly? For who upon hearing such language would not have understood him as assuring them, that some communication should be made directly to their

1 Our readers perhaps will be surprised if we tell them that rather than abandon their false and ruinous notions, far greater liberties than this have been taken with Peter's conduct in this transaction.—See *Kuinoel ad loc*

2 Mark, xiii. 11.

minds, by that glorious personal agent whom He called the Holy Ghost? "Take *no thought* beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye *premeditate*—whatsoever shall be given you, that speak, for it is not ye that speak but the Holy Ghost."¹ Extraordinary language, indeed, if all he meant was "do not be solicitous about answering your enemies, your talents and skill, your extraordinary gifts will suggest to you instantaneously what to say!" The idea of Dr. Bancroft, that *the Holy Ghost* denotes only the *means*² of intellectual and moral improvement, is too utterly ridiculous to deserve serious attention. It cannot at all apply here. It is even *more* absurd than the supposition, that the Saviour means the *actual* illumination of his disciples, or their minds *actually* improved. The supposition all along is that the Holy Ghost is something different from God. Here it *cannot* mean the *disciples* for it is *distinguished* from them. If it is *these extraordinary gifts* or *the means* of improvement they had, then it may be any thing, or nothing, just as you please! We candidly confess, that from such instructors we cannot learn what it means, and if they are to be our guide, we must abandon the study of the scriptures in utter despair of ever getting any distinct and intelligible idea, whatever, from them. No wonder that these learned divines are so perplexed, and talk so contemptuously of the sacred scriptures and their inspired penmen.³

1 Mark, xiii, 11.

2 "These terms (Spirit, Spirit of God, Holy Ghost) are all used in the bible to express the *means* with which God has been pleased to favor men, to enlighten their minds and improve their dispositions."—*Bancroft's Sermons*, p. 87.

3 We give a few specimens. The Evangelical histories contain gross and irreconcilable contradictions.—*Evanson's dissonance*, p. 1.

I think I have often shewn that the apostle Paul often reasons inconclusively.—*Priestley's His. Corrup. Christ.* vol. ii. p. 370.

Like other men they were subject to prejudice, and might be liable to

One more passage and we have done. "All manner of sin and blasphemy," said the Saviour, "shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men."¹ Sin against God may be forgiven, but not against the Spirit. But if this Spirit is skill and ability in men, "the extraordinary gift or power" bestowed on Christ and the apostles, what then gave such a sacredness to them? Were *they* more holy than God? Did their gifts and powers render them superior to God? Or did He feel more indignant with those that spoke against *them*, than with the bold blasphemers of *Himself*? But here our learned commentator will tell us, that the Holy Ghost does not mean the *apostles'* gifts or ability, but the *power* of God. Strange! What a vague thing this Spirit is! It is ever eluding our grasp, like some *ignis fatuus*. We can never be sure that we have his meaning. This moment it is *power in the apostles*, the next it is *power in God*. But let it be so. What does the Saviour mean? Can it be, that he means to say a man may blaspheme God Himself—with one breath speak against his whole Being and attributes, and yet may be forgiven, but that if he speaks specially against His power, there is no forgiveness for *such* blasphemy? Why should he be more tenacious and jealous of his power than of other of his perfections? And why so indignant when that is singly spoken against, but ready to forgive though it be blasphemed along with others? Is there not something monstrously absurd in the

adopt a hasty and ill-grounded opinion concerning things which did not fall within the compass of their knowledge.—*Priestley's His. early Opinions*, vol. iv. pp. 4, 5.

The epistle to the Hebrews is said to contain "some far-fetched analogies and inaccurate reasonings.—*Improved version of the New Testament*, p. 531.

We are very free to say, that our views of the nature of the sacred writings, and of the use we are to make of them differ from those of our orthodox brethren.—*Unitarian Miscellany*, Sept. 1824, p. 8.

Mat. xii. 31.

idea? Would we not be disposed to laugh at that man as a very idiot (we speak with reverence) who should say—you shall not speak against my power—you may blaspheme *me*, speak against my whole character and my power too, as much as you please, along with my other virtues and faculties, and I will forgive you, but if you say a word against my power alone, it shall never be forgiven? Oh, exclaims our commentator, you are greatly mistaken. By the Spirit of God, is not meant the power of God merely, but God Himself. It is a mere Hebraism, as when we are required not to “grieve the Spirit of God,” it is God Himself that is meant. We object to this evasion here. The supposition is that the Spirit of God is different from God, not God Himself.

We have already disposed of the explanation attempted in the supposition that God and the Spirit are identical. But let us see whether either supposition will help him. The Spirit is God Himself. Then the text asserts palpable falsehood. *All manner of sin* and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men; but the blasphemy of God shall not. Is not blasphemy *one sort* of sin? Indeed such an explanation is no better than saying it shall, and it shall not. The Spirit and God then are not identical. But it is alleged the Spirit is different from God, as a man’s spirit may be said to be different from himself, as it is said of the children of Isreal when they excited the anger of Moses, that “they provoked his spirit,”¹ a very common mode of speech. Are we then to understand by the Spirit of God His irascibility and temper? The thought is too shocking. What then? Will our paraphrast say what? We cannot. But was not the Spirit of Moses, Moses himself in a state of excitement! Or if you prefer it, his *meek* spirit, was it not Moses the meek—Moses manifesting meekness, or acting meekly? What then should we think of such a declara-

1 Psalm, cvi 33.

tion? They did not provoke Moses, but they provoked his spirit; or this other, you may provoke Moses, but you must not provoke his spirit. Every one sees the absolute absurdity of such nonsense. And yet it is precisely the Unitarian comment, stripped of all its learned and subtle disguise, on the unpardonable sin. You may blaspheme God and be forgiven, but if you blaspheme his Spirit you cannot, that is, (we shudder as we pen the thought) you may blaspheme God with impunity, provided He is not in a state of excitement—His Spirit is not roused, but if that should be the case, there is no hope, no forgiveness for you. Oh, where will this wild and reckless expositor of scripture lead us? He is not satisfied with one absurdity after another, but attacks the very character of God, and represents him as an irascible Being, merciful when not excited, but when excited of most implacable spirit! If we have compelled him to speak plainly what he means by the Spirit of God, and he has become alarmed, retreating into his accustomed and cherished vagueness and obscurity of speech, we can only say, that whatever he here means by the Spirit of God, whether gifts or means, intellectual and moral improvement, it must be identical with God Himself, or he attaches greater sacredness to that which is not God, than he does to Him. And if by the Spirit of God he means the one personal God, he admits the personality of the Spirit, but he does it by making the Saviour speak both falsehood and contradiction.

We have gone thus at length into the examination of the Unitarian notions about the Spirit, that our readers may see how utterly vague and incomprehensible, and subversive of the authority and obvious meaning of the scriptures, are their views who deny His personality. They have no rallying point, no landing spot, but are driven into the utmost wildness of conjecture, and become the mere sport of their unbridled imaginations that moment they

reject the plain doctrine of the Spirit's being a distinct personal subsistence of the one Divine Nature. We have felt the more solicitous on this subject, because it forms the very basis of all future discussions. Disprove his personality, and our whole work is founded in falsehood and elaborated in folly. But we have thrown ourselves into the impregnable fortress of divine truth, and we fear not the assaults of scepticism and error. We are fixed on the eternal rock, and can thence hurl back on our assailants, the envenomed darts of their hatred against the truth. Not one inch will we concede. Every charge of inconsistency, absurdity and contradiction, which they make against us, recoils with tenfold force against themselves.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE SPIRIT.

CONTINUED.

The more general modes of evading the proof of the Deity of the Holy Spirit—His proper Deity asserted—The general character of proof to be adduced—Same mode of argument in reference to the divinity of Jesus Christ—An admission—Proofs, I.—Certain works are attributed to the Holy Spirit, which none other than God can perform—1. *Creation*—2. *The giving of Life*—3. *Inspiration*—4. The resurrection of the dead body and its reanimation—5. The working of miracles—6. The power of speaking in an unknown tongue and of delivering predictions—7. Regeneration—II. The very honor due to God ascribed to the Spirit—1. His titles: the God of Israel: Jehovah: the Lord of hosts, &c. &c.: the Most High—2. His worship—3. Rights of sovereignty—III. The attributes of Deity are ascribed to Him, viz., Ubiquity, Omniscience, Omnipotence—IV. The style in which He is spoken of in the sacred scriptures—Unitarian and infidel charges against the doctrine—Thomas Jefferson's sentiments—Texts that involve allusions and references to three distinct agencies—The objection of mystery out of place—The charge of arithmetical contradiction false—Atheistical tendency of infidelity and Unitarianism—The scriptures our only security, and that as they are legitimately interpreted by plain common sense.

THE eternal Deity of the Holy Spirit can be much more forcibly and conclusively argued, after the proofs which, in the preceding chapters, have been adduced of His personality. For, that He is frequently, both called God, and spoken of as intimately associated with God—on a perfect equality with that great Being denominated in the scriptures the Father—every one who reads his bible attentively must clearly perceive. The modes of evading the proof of His Deity, are in general two, and may be distinguished by the epithets *high* and *low*, as they were

applied to different branches of Arianism, and are now to those, in other controversies, who push their principles to their full extent, or moderately assert them. Some, with the Arians, maintain, that the Holy Spirit is a creature, denying His divinity in any and every sense. While others, with the Socinians, assuming the name of Unitarians, prefer the idea that He is a divine energy, metonymically denominated God. Their bond of union, however, consists rather in what they profess *not* to believe, than in what they do. For, denying his divine nature, and maintaining His personality, or denying His personality, and asserting his intimacy with God, they find themselves greatly at a loss, and differing widely from each other, as to what He really may be—whether the prince of angels, a principal spirit, a gift of God, a power of working miracles, a *vis et efficacia*, a divine efficacy, or a means of moral and religious improvement, &c. &c.

Having in the two preceding chapters shewn that the Spirit of God is truly a personal agent—that the sacred scriptures, in many passages, do absolutely speak nonsense and absurdity on any other supposition, we now proceed to shew:

I. THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TRULY AND PROPERLY GOD—POSSESSED OF THE DIVINE NATURE EQUALLY WITH THE FATHER. To prove that He is God, is all that is now actually necessary, for we have already shewn that He is a person distinct from God—the Father: but, that the subject may be fully before our readers, we shall first shew that he is, in the sacred scriptures, contemplated and spoken of as *truly God*, and then notice some passages where *the distinction of His person*, from the Father and the Son, is clearly maintained. Our readers will have observed, that in these discussions nothing has been said in relation to the divinity of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And the reason is, because it is deemed unnecessary. Our subject does not require that we should particu-

larly discuss this topic. It is *the Spirit's* wide and glorious range of operation that we have selected as our theme, and with *His* character that we are principally concerned. The eternal personal divine glory of the Son of God, who assumed human nature into union with Himself, appearing and acting on earth as the man Jesus, of Nazareth, and yet the Lord from Heaven, we take for granted, as it is capable of the most satisfactory demonstration, and is a truth which sparkles on every page of the bible, there having, from the very beginning, been allusions made to the fact, both of His personal existence, official destination and character.

It may suffice here to remark, that the very same arguments and mode of reasoning adopted in relation to the Spirit's personality and deity, will as conclusively demonstrate the personality and divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Word, the Logos, is a person, no more a mere energy of wisdom or power than the Spirit, and that "Word was God, and the same was in the beginning, (a phrase which Grotius admits to be equivalent in the sacred scriptures with *from eternity*) with God."¹

In undertaking to prove the Holy Spirit to be God, we will readily admit, that it is not enough to shew that he is called God, for so are they which confessedly are not God. But if we can make it appear, that *every thing distinctive* in God, and *peculiar* to Him, or *which He claims exclusively* as His, is attributed to the Spirit, then certainly the term God must be acknowledged to have more meaning as it designates Him, than when it is appropriated to those which by nature are no gods—yea, must be considered as implying His divine nature, as truly as it can do, when applied to the infinite and acknowledged Supreme. This we shall do, remarking

1. There are certain works attributed to the Holy Spirit

1 John, i. 1, 2.

which none other than God can perform, and the power of doing which, it does not appear has ever been conferred upon a creature. 1 The first that we notice is *creation*. That creation is a work peculiar to God is plainly asserted. "He that made all things is God,"¹ says the sacred word, and the utter fruitlessness of every attempt of man who may have vainly imagined such a power could be attained, is itself sufficient to prove it a work at least superhuman. The work of creation is especially claimed by God, as the work of the absolute Lord—Jehovah. "Thus saith God the Lord (Jehovah,) He that created the heavens and stretched them out, &c., I am the Lord (Jehovah,) that is my name. and my glory will I not give to another."² "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, the *everlasting God*, the *Lord* (Jehovah,) the *Creator* of the ends of the earth."³ But this work is attributed to the Spirit. "By the word of the Lord were the Heaven's made, and all the host of them by the *Spirit*, (breath) of his mouth."⁴ "by his Spirit hath he garnished the Heavens."⁵ "The *Spirit* of God hath made me."⁶ "Thou sendest forth thy *Spirit*, they are created."⁷ The inference is plain. The Spirit is God.

2. The *giving of life* is another work peculiar to God. He is called "the *living* and true God"⁸—"the living one,"⁹ as possessing life essentially in Himself, and as being the source of life to all animated creation. And the *power of giving* and preserving life, He claims exclusively as his own. "See now that I, even I am He, and there is no God with me, (no creature or idol associated with him in this matter,) I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."¹⁰ Yet this work is attributed to the Spirit of God.

1 Heb. iii. 4.

4 Psalm, xxxiii. 6.

7 Psalm, civ. 30.

10 Deut. xxxii. 39.

2 Isaiah, xlii. 5—8.

5 Job, xxvi. 13.

8 1 Thess. i. 9.

3 Isaiah, xl. 28.

6 Job, xxxiii. 4.

9 Rev. i. 18. ο ζων

“The Spirit of the Almighty hath given me life.”¹ “It is the Spirit that quickeneth.”² This subject will present itself in another chapter for a more minute investigation. It is the fact simply that we here notice as of importance to our argument. And who does not see that if it is the prerogative of God to give life, and the Spirit actually gives life, that Spirit must be God.

3. *Inspiration* is a third work peculiar to God. By this we understand the communication of the Divine mind and will to the minds of men, in some immediate and extraordinary revelation. It must be obvious to every one that it is impossible for a finite mind to search an infinite understanding. We know not the thoughts of our friend or neighbour’s breast, much less can we know the thoughts of God. The prophet declares explicitly that “there is no searching his understanding,”³ and an Apostle has sanctioned the argument just advanced, “for what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? (the man himself alone knows his own heart,) even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”⁴ “Who by searching can find out God?” yet this the Spirit of God is said to do. “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God.”⁵ And these things the Apostle says “God hath revealed unto us *by his Spirit*.”⁵ “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,”⁶ The Spirit therefore is God.

4. THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD BODY AND ITS RE-ANIMATION are a work that none will deny belongs to God alone. Yet this is explicitly attributed to the agency of the Spirit. “If the Spirit of Him that raised

1 Job, xxxiii. 4. Breath—God does not *breathe*. It is not a metaphor, for that has been disproved already, see page 13. It is the very same word just before translated spirit.

2 John, 6, 63.

3 Isaiah, xl. 28.

4 1 Cor. ii. 11.

5 1 Cor. ii. 10

6 2 Peter, i, 21.

up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies *by His Spirit* which dwelleth in you.”¹

5. The WORKING OF MIRACLES too is referred to the agency of the Spirit. A miracle can be the work of God only. It is an effect produced by the suspension of, or in opposition to a law of nature, to which the power that ordained and gave to nature all its laws, alone is competent. The power of working such miracles is every where throughout the New Testament attributed to the Holy Spirit. It is particularly plain in the story of Simon the sorcerer,² and of the converts of John.³

6. The POWER OF SPEAKING IN AN UNKNOWN TONGUE, AND OF DELIVERING PREDICTIONS, our readers must know are, also particularly ascribed to the Spirit—a power which none but God can impart. “The Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.”³ “He (the Comforter, the Holy Spirit,) will shew you things to come.”⁴ “Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied.”⁵

7. But finally: REGENERATION, which is said explicitly to be the work of God, is ascribed to the Spirit. “Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”⁶ What this is, it is our main object to inquire. At present it is of moment only to notice how emphatically God claims it as his peculiar and exclusive work. Yet that it is attributed to the agency of the Spirit, we presume it is scarcely necessary to affirm. “He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”⁷ “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”⁸ Other works are ascribed alike to God and to the Spirit;

1 Rom. viii. 11.

2 Acts, viii. 13—24.

3 Acts, xix. 1—6

4 John xvi. 13, and 1 Tim. iv. 1.

5 Luke, i. 67.

6 John, i. 13

7 Titus, iii. 5.

8 John, iii. 5.

but not so emphatically, which therefore, it is unnecessary to detail. The argument turns on this one point, that the works which are exclusively appropriate to God, are ascribed to the Spirit. Such are all that have been mentioned, so that we conclude, by a very short and satisfactory process of argument, that as it belongs to God exclusively to *create, to give life, to raise and re-animate the dead body, to communicate the divine mind and will, to impart the power of working miracles, of speaking in unknown tongues, and of delivering predictions, and to regenerate the soul,* and these things are all especially ascribed to the Holy Spirit, that Spirit must in reality be God.

II. The same result may be obtained, if we consider that THE SACRED SCRIPTURES ASCRIBE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT THE VERY HONOR THAT IS DUE EXCLUSIVELY TO GOD. It is by means of the titles, the stations of trust and power, and of expressed reverence and respect, which men confer upon each other, that the world estimates honour. These constitute a man's glory. If we estimate the Spirit's honour in the same way, we shall find it the very same with that which God claims as exclusively his due. There is a glory, we admit, which may indeed attach in common to God and to His creature, and from which it would be absurd to argue any thing as to the divinity of the latter. But there is a *special* glory which He claims as exclusively His own, and of which He represents Himself to be jealous, yea immoveably tenacious. This, if we consult His own declarations on the very subject, consists in his *name, and sovereignty, and worship*. "I am the Lord (Jehovah,) that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."¹ This solemn asseveration follows immediately upon His having asserted His sovereignty as the the creator and especial-

¹ Isaiah, xlii. 8.

ly in His appointment of His own son to the office of mediator, as the reader will perceive, if he will attentively examine the verses preceding the one just quoted.¹ As to the titles by which the great and mighty God is designated it is admitted that some of them are appropriated to creatures. Even the term God is common, and though in particular instances of its application to Christ and the Spirit, it might be shown by a reference to the circumstances and manner of its use, that it does in truth denote the living and true God, yet will we waive the argument that might thence be drawn. Of this description is the declaration of Peter, who said to Ananias, whom he had charged with *lying to the Holy Ghost*, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God,"² in that very fact. The identity is obvious, and the term God here, certainly can mean none other than the true God. But, as it is *sometimes* applied to a creature we let it pass; not because we believe the argument inconclusive; but that those with whom we differ on this subject, may see that we are not tenacious of particular passages, nor that the strength of our cause is at all impaired, though we should be denied the use of this and other texts of the same character. Take the following example of his *titles*:

1. THE GOD OF ISRAEL it will be admitted, was a distinctive title, peculiar to the true and Supreme Divinity, for Israel only of all the people of the earth, had retained the knowledge of the one living and true God. This title is given to the Holy Spirit. For Zacharias, the father of John "was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied, saying, blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people as *He* spake by the mouth of his prophets," &c. We have already seen that the prophets spake by the Holy Ghost. And Peter says explicitly, that of the salvation which God, the God of

1 Isaiah, xlii. 5-7.

2 Acts, v. 3.

Israel promised “the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come, searching what or what manner of time the *Spirit* of Christ which was in them did signify.”¹ “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,” said David, “and His word was in my tongue—the God of Israel said.”² The Holy Ghost or the Spirit of Christ is therefore one and the same with the God of Israel, and consequently must be the true and living God.

2. *Jehovah*, is another title, peculiarly, yea exclusively, appropriated to the true God. In many editions of the English bible, it is translated by the term *Lord* printed in small capitals, and it probably was thus rendered, because of the peculiar sanctity of the name Jehovah, and the singular and profound reverence of the Jews for it, a reverence so great as not on any account to pronounce it. This title we have seen, the Lord claims as distinctively his name, saying “I am Jehovah, (Lord,) that is my name.”³ Nowhere is this title conferred on a creature. Yet it is used to designate the Holy Spirit of God. “I heard,” said the prophet Isaiah, “the voice the *Lord* (Jehovah) saying go and tell this people, &c.”⁴ Yet does Paul say, “Well spake the *Holy Ghost* by Isaiah the prophet, go unto this people and say, &c.”⁵ Again: the children of Israel are declared in the Psalms to have *tempted* the Lord (Jehovah) our maker.”⁶ Yet the Apostle Paul, quoting the very words of Jehovah, whom they tempted, says “as the Holy Ghost saith.”⁷ Other passages, almost without number, might be added, but these are sufficient to prove that Jehovah—the incommunicable title of the Infinite Supreme, is employed in the sacred scriptures, to designate the Holy Spirit. Wherefore He must be truly God.⁸

3. There is another title, or rather cluster of titles, in which this very same word forms a part; and as it evidently

1 1 Peter, i. 11.

2 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3.

3 Isaiah, xlii. 8

4 Isaiah, vi. 9.

5 Acts, xxviii. 25, 26.

6 Psalm, xc. 6—9.

7 Heb. iii. 7.

8 In Isaiah, xi. 2, He is called the *Spirit—Jehovah*.

is designed to give yet greater intensity to its import, must be considered as distinctively and exclusively appropriate to the living and true God ; and that is the Lord (Jehovah) of Hosts—the Lord (Jehovah) God of Hosts—the Lord God—the Lord Jehovah. Surely the Lord (Jehovah) God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets. Hear ye and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord (Jehovah) God—the God of Hosts¹ —“He that declareth unto man what is His thought, the Lord (Jehovah) the God of Hosts is His name.”² We need not again quote the passages which prove that the revealing and inspiring God is the Holy Spirit. Stephen takes a general view of the gracious revelations and interpositions of God on the behalf of Israel, and their conduct in return towards Him, and sums all up in these emphatic words, making this God to be the Holy Spirit. “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do *always* resist the Holy Ghost: *as* your fathers did *so* do ye.”³

4. We notice but one more title, viz., *Jehovah Most High*, or emphatically *the Most High*. “Thou Jehovah,” says the Psalmist, “art *the Most High* forevermore.”⁴ “Thou whose name alone is *Jehovah*, art *the Most High* over all the earth.”⁵ Now this illustrious being was the God of Israel, and of him the Psalmist declares that after many proofs of his power and care, the Israelites “sinned yet more against Him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness.”⁶ “They tempted and provoked the Most High God.”⁷ This same Most High, the prophet Isaiah calls the Holy Spirit. “They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit.”⁸ This certainly might suffice. If the one only living and true God claims to Himself the titles of

1 Amos, iii. 7, 13.

2 Amos, iv. 13.

3 Acts, vii. 51.

4 Psalm, xcii. 8.

5 Psalm, lxxxiii. 18. See also Hag. ii, 4, 5

6 Psalm, lxxviii. 17.

7 Psalm, lxxviii. 56.

8 Isaiah, lxiii. 10.

the God of Israel, Jehovah, Jehovah of Hosts, Jehovah God, Jehovah Most High, as being exclusively appropriate to himself, and if the Spirit of God, as we have seen, is designated by them all, then must that Spirit be really and truly the one only living and true God.

2. The Deity of the Spirit appears also from the circumstance, that He receives the very same worship that is due to God. His name is associated with the Father and Son in baptism. “Go,” said the Lord Jesus to His Apostles, “and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”¹ In the benediction too, which was the Apostle’s solemn appeal to the triune God for blessings appropriate to the peculiar agency of each divine person, in the work of redemption, the Holy Spirit is as clearly addressed as either the Father or the Son. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.”² In this prayer of Paul too, reference seems to be had principally to the Spirit as the person addressed: “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, (a phrase used in reference to the Father,) and into the patient waiting for Christ.”³ The Lord here prayed to, is not the Father or Christ. Who then is He, if not the Spirit? But if the Spirit be lawfully addressed in prayer, then must He in very deed be God. It is an honour too great for any creature.

3. As to those acts or rights of sovereignty which the Spirit exercises, and which are attributable to God, as His exclusively, we notice particularly *His prime jurisdiction*, and *His appointing power in the church*. The messages and communications to the seven churches in Asia, were from the Spirit, and all are required to bow to His authority, and hearken attentively and submissively to

¹ Mat. xxviii. 19.

² 2 Cor. xiii. 13.

³ 2 Thess. iii. 5: 1 Thess. iii. 11, 12: and Rev. i. 4.

His *counsels* and *decrees*. “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”¹ Likewise the power of appointing to offices and stations, which is one of the most important and difficult rights of sovereignty, is represented as being exercised by the Spirit of God. The Apostles were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel in Asia, and Paul says of the presbyters of Ephesus, that the Holy Ghost had made them Bishops.² Whether, therefore we consider the *titles bestowed*, the *actual reverence expressed*, or the *rights of sovereignty* He exercises, which together constitute His honour, they are not in the least respect inferior to those of God Himself. They are indeed the very same; so that the conclusion is unavoidable, that as the titles, and worship, and sovereignty which are *exclusively* appropriated to God, are ascribed to the Holy Spirit, He must in very deed be God.

III. We add A THIRD ARGUMENT TAKEN FROM THE ATTRIBUTES OF DEITY WHICH ARE ASCRIBED TO THE SPIRIT. Here too it is admitted, that there are some which are had by creatures in common with Him, from the ascription of which to Him, nothing as to His Deity can be conclusively argued. We therefore deem it unnecessary to detail them, however interesting and instructing it might be to the Christian, who cannot fail to admire the moral character of that illustrious guest who visits, and refreshes his heart. There are others, however, which are peculiar to God—which are exclusively His perfections—yea, and which He *cannot* communicate to a mere creature, no matter how highly exalted that creature may be. These are immensity or omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. As to His immensity or ubiquity: we infer it from the fact that He is said to dwell in Christians, who are to be found all over the earth. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God *dwelleth* in you?”³ And

1 Rev. ii. 3.

2 Acts, xx. 28.

3 1 Cor. iii. 16.

the Psalmist very distinctly recognizes it when he inquires, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence. If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."¹ As to His *omnipotence*: we have already seen that the power of working *miracles* is His gift, which, more justly than in the case of Simon, might have led the heathen to say, "these men are the mighty power of God,"² in whom that power was conferred. Surely the power that can control the laws of the material universe, and suspend and contravene them at its pleasure, can be nothing less than *omnipotent*. The *creation* is an effect of omnipotent power, and *this* we have also seen is ascribed to the Spirit as His work. And as to His *omniscience*, the apostle says, "The Spirit searcheth *all things*, even the deep things of God."³ If, therefore, *omnipresence*, *omnipotence*, and *omniscience* are *exclusively* and *incommunicably* the attributes of God, as undoubtedly they are, and if *these* things are attributed to the Spirit, as *His* characteristic properties, which we have seen is the case, that Spirit cannot possibly be other than the living and true God.

IV. The identity of this personal Spirit with the true God, we yet further argue from THE STYLE IN WHICH HE IS SPOKEN OF IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES. What is ascribed to God *absolutely* in one place, is, in another, to the Spirit; what, it is said, God either does or will do, or has done, is affirmed of the Spirit; and what is said of God is asserted of the Spirit. Of the *first* we have an instance in the *creation*. This, which is confessedly the work of the absolute God, is, as has been already shewn, ascribed to the Spirit. The *inspiration* of Moses and the prophets,

1 Psalm, cxxxix. 7—10.

2 Acts, viii. 10.

3 1 Cor. ii. 10.

which, in some places, is ascribed to God absolutely, is also to the Spirit. We cite no further instances, for it would only be to repeat what has been already advanced. Of the *second class*, are the *miracles* which are attributed to God, and yet are explained in the scriptures to be the work of the Spirit. Other instances have been noticed. And of the *last class* we cite merely that unqualified declaration in the song of Moses, concerning the children of Israel, "The Lord (Jehovah) alone did lead him,"¹ which, nevertheless, is explicitly affirmed of the Spirit by the prophet, "As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest, so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name."² We have thus every possible recognition of the Deity of the Spirit, and the variety and incidental character of such recognitions, we deem to be of no small value in the argument on this subject.

Those who deny the Deity of the Spirit, are very bold in charging on the doctrine we maintain, *absurdity* and *contradiction*. They scoff at the idea of a Trinity. Unitarians and infidels are perfectly agreed here. One of the most subtle infidels that ever lived, the late Thomas Jefferson, who claimed kindred with Unitarians, has held language on this subject as low and scurrilous, as infamous and disgusting, as any that ever escaped from the mouth of the leecherous Voltaire, or of his friend and compatriot, the filthy, drunken, blasphemer, Tom Paine. And it is matter of thankfulness, that God in His providence has exposed the man, through the folly of his descendant, in the publication of some of his letters, which, if they are not apologized for, as the mere pratings of civility, must consign his memory to eternal infamy. Our readers will find some extracts below to shew that we have not spoken with unauthorized warmth and severity, nor done the Uni-

1 Duet. xxxii. 12.

2 Isaiah, lxiii. 14.

tarians injustice in classing them with infidel blasphemers.¹ For, that Thomas Jefferson was a blasphemer of the very lowest grade, no longer can be denied; and that he considered himself, and was acknowledged by living Unitarians of great note, to be *one of them*, his correspondence towards the close of his life will shew. If he wrote in an unguarded manner to his Unitarian friends, never thinking that, when his body would lie corrupting in the grave, his letters should be published, and cause his memory too to rot, that can be no apology. For, either he must have been an arrant hypocrite, or he spoke the sentiments of his heart, and knew those of his correspondents too, to have written in the style he has done, in reference to Christianity and the Christian's God. But, ribaldry and scoffing, though they may come from the mouth of the philosopher and rational divine, are not argument. Nor can the name of Thomas Jefferson, high in the annals of fame, and embalmed as it may be in the grateful recollection of hundreds and thousands of the citizens of these United States, nor all his lofty boastings, and proud predictions, ever shake the

1 "The hocus pocus phantasm of a God, like another Cerberus, with one body and three heads, had its birth and growth in the blood of thousands and thousands of martyrs."—Mem. and Cor. letter to J. Smith.

"The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the Supreme Being as his father, in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter."—Letter to John Adams, 1823.

"But while this syllabus is meant to place the character of Jesus in its true and high light, as no impostor himself, but a great reformer of the Hebrew code of religion, it is not to be understood that I am with him in all its doctrines. I am a materialist; he takes the side of Spiritualism; he preaches the efficacy of repentance towards forgiveness of sin; I require a counterpoise of good works."—Letter to President Adams, 1822.

"I trust there is not a *young man*, now living in the United States, who will not die an *Unitarian*."—Letter to Dr. Waterhouse.

"Of this band of dupes and impostors (the Evangelists and apostles) Paul was the great Coryphæus, and first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus."—Same letter.

Christian's faith. They may, and we fear will, lead many thoughtless and unstable souls down to everlasting perdition: but they can never alter the fact to which the Spirit of Truth bears witness, that "there are three which bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."¹ Taking the sacred scriptures, in their plain common-sense meaning, and, as being designed for common people as well as learned philosophers and rational divines, *that* is their only legitimate meaning, it must be manifest, that the Holy Spirit is both a person, a distinct personal subsistence and God.

The scriptures have not given us a *treatise* on the wondrous mystery of the Trinity, nor, on the divine glory of the Spirit. *Their* object is not that of philosophical disquisitions. They have simply affirmed facts, and their allusions and reference to these facts are made and varied, precisely according to the circumstances under which the subject at the time presents itself. It is in this way men speak in ordinary parlance, when facts are not disputed; and, although the proposition, which may call for proof in any case, may not have been distinctly asserted, yet the *allusions* and *references* to the fact, which shew that it was *actually assumed* and *acknowledged as true*, afford a stronger argument than mere affirmation.

We have, as our last argument, classified mere allusions, and references to the Deity of the Spirit. We might have added many passages, where there is evidently a recognition of three distinct agencies, all and each of whom are called or contemplated as God. But we deem it unnecessary, referring merely for example to the events connected with Christ's baptism,² which the reader may consult, and not wishing to swell the argument from collateral sources. Our object simply is to demand, that, if the scriptures speak of the Spirit as God, allude to Him as such, attribute

1 1 John, v. 7.

2 Luke, iii. 21, 22: See also Acts, i. 7, 8, and ii, 33.

to Him the works and properties which are elsewhere ascribed to God, or which belong exclusively to Him; if they seem to employ as indifferent forms of speech, the expressions Lord, Jehovah, and the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, alluding to those acts, and making those affirmations, which are peculiarly and exclusively done by God, or true of Him, as done by the Spirit or true of Him, and *vice versa*:—and, if the Spirit of God spoken of as a personal agent, and as such is alluded to as God, and called God, while, at the same time, He is distinguished from another, and another equally claiming to be God—all which things in the prosecution of this subject we have seen to be the case how we, or any one, professing to receive and submit to the divine infallible authority of the sacred scriptures, can do else than yield to the impressions, which such things are calculated to produce, and believe, that the Spirit is God, and that God—the one Divine Nature subsists and acts in three distinct persons.

It will not do to cry *mystery* and reject the *evidence* of truth. The simple Being and eternity of God, are just as incomprehensible as the personal subsistences of His nature. Let any one, who rejects the divinity of the Spirit of God, explain to us, how God can have existed from all eternity—a first cause without a beginning—a duration without time—an infinity without extent—an immensity without dimensions—and ubiquity without space—an eternity without succession, and then we shall admit that he may, with some propriety, require us to show how the nature of God can subsist in three distinct persons. It is all irrelevant, to ask *how* three can be one, and one three. We affirm no such arithmetical absurdity and contradiction: but have shewn, that *they* do, who *reject* the scriptural doctrine of the one Divine Nature existing in three persons. Nay, unless they reject every trace and vestage of scriptural information, in regard to His Being, and attri-

butes, and operations, and refuse, for one moment, in the most arrant irreconcilable infidelity, to hearken to the account which God has given of Himself in His own word, they will be compelled, as the philosophical Crellius was, to make God a material substance, radiating power and wisdom and what not. If they once reject the bible, and return to nature's sickly light, they will soon talk as mystically, and unintelligibly, as the heathen sophists did, about the *soul of the universe*, and find themselves as utterly at a loss to tell *who* God is, and *what* He is, as were they, who, in the profundity of their reasonings, doubted whether sun, or earth, or heaven, or all were God. Nor will they stop here, but we shall soon see living instances of unblushing atheism, like master spirits,

Who nobly take the high priori road,

And *reason* downward, till they doubt of God.

There are not wanting melancholy specimens of this nature. The rankest atheism has grown up in the petty beamings of evangelical light and truth. Its loftiest and most polluting tendency has been demonstrated before our eyes. Nor does it require much penetration, to discover, from its recent developements even in our own land, that the rejection of the inspired volume in its binding authority and obvious import is the pioneer of ruin—the preparation for a desolating storm—the very element of mischief, in which “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience,” exerts his energies, and is lashing up the tempestuous passions of men to sweep over the face of human society—raze to the very foundation, every moral and social institution of value, and throw the mighty deep into such confused and horrible agitation, as to require the very voice of God to stay the raging devastations. The scriptures are that voice of God, and they have already hushed the raging tempests that have burst in desolating horror among men. And, *they*

are our only security. Let them be rejected, or, what is equivalent with their rejection, let the spirit of "philosophy, falsely so called," and the alleged decisions of human reason, be made their interpreter, and the standard by which their revelations are to be judged, and imagination will soon become the expositor of truth. The fancy will run wild, and, in the reveries and triumphs of fiction, every thing distinctive, and of value in the bible, the very life and soul of Christianity, will vanish. This the Christian knows, and therefore guards, with ever-wakeful jealousy, against the proud and sceptical exposition of the sacred oracles, where men, of unbelieving minds and hearts, and, not imbued with the spirit of truth, undertake, by their "oppositions of science," to explain away the grand peculiarities of our faith. He will not consent, who has received the bible as the word of God, to be taught by "the perverse disputings of men." What this man, or the other of lofty aspirings, may, in the vanity and scepticism of their unbelieving heart, tell him is meant by the Spirit of God, he heeds not, but yields, most cordially and implicitly to the impressions of the word, in its plain and obvious import. Nor does he this unwisely; for he has, in his own soul, an attestation of the truth. He feels that there is more than metaphor, or a figure of speech, in the language of the scriptures, as to the living Spirit of God. He apprehends Him to be the very sum of all the moral and spiritual blessings he enjoys, and, as life is imparted to his soul;—as his affections, which once were dead to God, become tender and lively towards divine things;—as his moral sensibilities are purified, his heart expatiates in the joys of fellowship with God, and his whole soul is drawn upward in sublimest anticipations. As his faith and hope and love, the powerful principles of human action, are transferred from earth and earthly things, and made to act with more effective energy in reference to

God and heavenly things, he feels perfectly convinced that there is a mighty agent within him accomplishing all—and that mighty agent, none other than God Himself, in the person and character of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of life and purity.

CHAPTER V.

THE OFFICE OF HUMAN REASON

IN THE

INTERPRETATION OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

The difference between scriptural and scientific truth—The subject of the chapter stated—The scriptures assumed to be the word of God—An appeal to the reader who may doubt—Infallibility claimed for the oracles of God—The common infidel objection against this claim—The sentiments of a writer of the seventeenth century—Remarks upon them—The meaning of the terms human reason settled—Erroneous assumptions of the rationalists—Examples of false reasoning—The folly of reasoning as to other worlds from assumptions as to this—No mysticism in the language employed by the Spirit of God—The facts revealed in scripture essentially different from the phenomena of nature—Thence a superiority claimed for the knowledge of the former—The Spirit's revelations essential to that knowledge—Perfections in God probably not yet revealed—Mysteries in His government that will perhaps never be known by us—The very limited extent of human science—Thence the folly of proud and arrogant demands with regard to the knowledge of God inferred—We cannot reject facts when substantiated by evidence—The testimony of God as sufficient evidence as that of sense—The folly of demanding evidence not appropriate to the nature of the subject—Mathematical evidence liable to exception—The folly of applying the data which this world affords as tests of what is truth in others—The Divine testimony satisfactory and decisive—The danger of neglecting it illustrated in the early history of the Corinthian church—The character of Paul's preaching—Reason cannot legitimately act as umpire in matters of faith—Its proper office.

THERE is that, in the truths of the sacred scriptures, which makes them to differ from the doctrines of human science. So far as they are exhibited in propositions, expressed in definite language, they resemble each other. And

so far as human reason is concerned, in the apprehension of them, no difference can be discerned. *One proposition* is just as intelligible as another, provided, that the *language* employed in both is equally perspicuous. Yet does it not follow that the *facts* involved in these propositions are of equally easy apprehension. Some things are, in their very nature, inexplicable, while others are intelligible at first sight. Inattention to this has led to much, and very serious mischief, in the interpretation of the sacred scriptures. That the mind of rational man, which we have above designated by the popular phrase of human reason, has some important office in the apprehension of scriptural truth, every one feels. What that office precisely is, it is the design in this chapter to unfold. The exposition of this subject is rendered necessary, alike from its own intrinsic importance, from the very fatal results which have flowed from its not being well understood, from the proof and illustration of the subject in the preceding chapter, and from the intimate connection which it holds with the entire discussions that we propose.

It must be obvious, that it is of very great moment, in itself, as well as in relation particularly to the subject in hand, we should be able to determine, whether human reason is to sit as judge and umpire, deciding as to what is truth, or whether its entire office is not to *perceive, receive* and *enforce* truth not originally excogitated in the human mind. On the decision of this question depends the use that we shall make of the sacred scriptures, and the benefit we shall derive from them.

It is assumed that they *are the word of God*. If any reader doubts on this subject, we request him to resort to the proofs so abundantly and so invincibly demonstrative to every unprejudiced mind, of the fact that the things spoken and written by the inspired penmen were delivered

“not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”¹ His mind must be dark indeed, and his heart most wretchedly depraved, who can carefully examine the arguments drawn from the miracles performed, and predictions delivered by the apostles and prophets, not to mention any other, without being convinced that what Paul said of himself is true of all. “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I *neither* received it of man, nor was I *taught* it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”²

The subject is undoubtedly deserving of the most serious and interested attention of every rational man, and we adjure the reader, if he has the least doubt as to the fact, to lose no time, and spare no pains, to bring this very important question, involving his own eternal interests, to an issue. Let him dismiss prejudice, and read, and weigh, both sides of the question, and decide according to the amount and force of evidence, after a *full and impartial* examination. We shall not fear the result in his mind. It is nothing but obliquity of *heart* that can resist the overwhelming power of the demonstrations in the case. The claims of the sacred scriptures are so high, and their asseverations affecting man’s personal and eternal interests, so bold, and appalling, and uncompromising, that no man, pretending to act as a reasonable being, *can* dismiss this subject with a trivial attention.

Assuming the scriptures to be *the word of God*, as we do, it is obvious that we claim for them *the infallibility of infinite and immutable truth*. Thence it is contended, there arises an obligation, on our part, in reference to them, which applies not to any other species of evidence. Believing them to be the word of God, we are bound, by all the authority that God can assert, to receive them “not as

1 1 Cor. ii. 13.

2 Gal. i. 11, 12.

the word of man, but as they are in truth the word of God.”¹ This no one can deny. But some will ask, what is the word of God, and how are we to determine as to it in any and every case? Here and there are passages of scripture, which are differently understood by different persons and sects. The Christian world is full of controversy. One party asserts this is the word of God, another it is the word of the devil, and by a summary process they appeal to their respective creeds and confessions of faith, which, after all, are the production of fallible men, and pass sentence of approbation, or of condemnation, according as opinions accord or are discordant with the set form of words. The avowed and practical infidel have alike employed this objection to bolster up themselves in their contempt or neglect of the oracles of God. But if “they have rejected the word of the Lord what wisdom is there in them?”² While they profess to act a rational part, they do act irrationally; and while they boast of being under the guidance of human wisdom, and claim to themselves the name of philosophers, or of philosophical or rational divines, they only furnish melancholy specimens of human folly, and prove that neither common sense or reason will sanction their claims.

A writer of the seventeenth century, in a treatise entitled “*Rational Religion*,” supposes that there are but three modes³ in which the truth, or true sense of the word of God itself can be ascertained, viz., by *the authori-*

1 1 Thess. ii. 13.

2 Jer. viii. 9.

3 Deus quidem Optimus, maximus, absque controversia est iudex supremus, inefragabilis; sed is nunc inter litigantes speciale decretum vore sua proprie loquendo non, pronunciat: sicut nec Filius ejus unigenitus iudex vivorum ac mortuorum ab eo constitutus. Verbum autem Dei scriptum nobis relictum, non est proprie iudex: nam id est norma secundum quam aliquis judicare debet. Sicut lex ipsa non judicat proprie, sed secundum legem aliquid ab aliquo judicatur.

ty of the church, or its visible head on earth—the Pope of Rome, or a council, according to the opinion of the Roman Catholics; or by *the dictation of the Holy Spirit* in the hearts of the elect, as he alleges the protestants, who call themselves evangelical or reformed, and the enthusiasts called quakers affirm; or by *judgment of sound reason* in every man, legitimately and strictly examining the word of God. As to the *first*, we deem it unnecessary to remark. The authority of Popes and councils is no longer respected by the Christian world, whatever may be their aspirings. As to the *second*, it may suffice to state, that we contend not for *preternatural* revelations, since the code of scripture is completed, and that, although we acknowledge the agency of the blessed Spirit to be necessary, in order to our arriving at the knowledge of scriptural truth, yet we are not of those who affirm that agency to be by any *afflatus*, or impression inconsistent with, or not made through the appropriate exercise of our rational powers. Mr. Locke, in his essay concerning the human understanding, has well remarked that “no proposition can be received for divine revelation, or obtain the assent due to all such, if it be contrary to our clear intuitive knowledge. Because this would be to subvert the principles and foundations of all knowledge, evidence and assent whatever,”¹ and fanaticism must inevitably assume dominion

Videtur igitur non posse aliter fieri, quam ut in controversiis fidei seu religionis, veritas, et ipsius verbi Dei seu sacræ scripturæ verus sensus, hoc tempore, per aliquem istorum trium modorum habeatur: nempe, aut per Ecclesiæ ejusve capitis visibilis in terra, scilicet pontificis Romani, sive Concilii, auctoritatem; ut volunt pontificii, qui sibi Catholicorum Romanorum appellationem vendicant: aut per spiritus sancti in cordibus electorum dictamen, ut statuunt plerique protestantes qui Evangelici vel Reformati nominari volunt; ac aliquatenus similiter ii qui Enthusiastæ atque Quakeri nuncupantur: aut denique per rationis sanæ, in unoquoque homine verbum Dei legitime expendentis judicium; ut existimant alii, aliqui Christiani.—*Religio Rationalis*.—A. Wissowatio, pp. 4, 5.

¹ B. iv. c. 18. § 5.

where an influence or revelation of the Spirit, inconsistent with the proper and judicious exercise of our rational minds is made the arbiter of truth. This remark, however, is not intended to apply to any *original* revelation which God was pleased to make to the mind of man; but only to that standard of truth found in the impressions which those divinely inspired have communicated to us in words, the ordinary mode of conveying thought from one to another. He that suspended the exercise of the senses in some of His prophets, and gave ideas of objects and subjects, previously unknown and inconceivable, is not to be limited, as to His power and ways of access to the human mind. Paul undoubtedly obtained ideas when "he was caught up into paradise, and heard *unspeakable* words," which he could not communicate to others, because imparted to him in some sublime mysterious way, "whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell, God knoweth."¹ Such revelations however have ceased, and the communications addressed to us by God, are through the medium of the sacred scriptures, an intelligible language, adapted to the ordinary modes of human thought. Whoso pretends to have received a communication in any *other* way from God, must first work a miracle before we can receive his testimony as the word of God.

The reader has perhaps already inferred, that the *third* and last method of arriving at the knowledge of the truth or true sense of the word of God, viz., by the judgment of sound reason carefully examining and determining what is the word of God, is the only available mode. The truth of this conclusion will depend very much on the meaning attached to the phrase human reason. If by it is meant the regular process of argument, where, by comparing one idea with another, we elicit a third, more correctly called *reasoning*, the conclusion is untenable. But if nothing

more is meant, than that the power, or as Locke defines it, the “faculty whereby man is supposed to be distinguished from the beasts,” the mind itself as capable of perceiving and receiving truth, is the medium of our knowledge of the word of God, we do not object. All truth, of whatever kind, and supported by whatever evidence, makes its appeal directly to man’s rational nature, and it is the perceiving thinking principle itself that receives or rejects. But this is not the idea which is attached to the phrase by many.

When it is contended by some, that human reason is the judge of truth—that the scriptures are but the law (the *norma*) of judgment, and not *God* expressing his decisions, they mean, that there are certain intuitive principles or axioms, which the mind apprehends to be immutably true, and by means of which it forms a judgment, whether the revelations of the scriptures are to be received or rejected. For example, it is assumed that every father is prior to his son, every generation has some beginning of existence, the Most High God and man are unequal, every *body* is finite, every true man is a true person. These propositions, and many other of a like character which might be suggested are apprehended as absolute truisms. Now it is alleged by our opponents, that to the test of such postulates and axioms we are to subject the revelations of scripture, in order to discover their truth or to decide whether they are or are not the word of God. Accordingly, they go to work and throwing the different doctrines of faith into this alembic, they quickly resolve them into mere vapour, and pronounce them altogether devoid of truth. How spurious are such arguments! Every father is prior to his son: but God is the *Father* of Jesus Christ:—therefore Jesus Christ was not from all eternity with God.

Every generation has some beginning of existence: but Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father: therefore Jesus

Christ is not God, who is without beginning of days or end of years.

The Most High God and man are not equal. Jesus Christ was man: therefore Jesus Christ was not equal with God.

Every body is finite. But Jesus Christ had a body: therefore He was not infinite.

Every true man is a human person: but Jesus Christ was truly man: therefore He was not God, but a human person.

Against such an use of reason we solemnly protest. We do utterly deny, that the axioms, which the human mind receives as self-evident truths in reference to the things of *this* world, are to be made the test of truth in reference to those of another. No position can be more tenable, more undeniable than this, that it is only by means of the five senses a knowledge of the external world around us can be had. But who would jeopard his reputation as a philosopher by affirming there are not inhabitants of other worlds provided with more or different means of intercourse with material things around them?¹ The truth is, every rational man cannot but feel the force of the dramatist's assertion,

There are more things in Heaven and Earth—
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

It would be absurd to reason, because *we* have only five senses, therefore there *can be no other* means of intercourse with a material world, and therefore the inhabitants of Jupiter *must* be human beings. We feel how utterly false it is to apply the axioms and reasonings which are true of the things of this world to those of another.

Now, the sacred scriptures are *the word of God*, disclosing scenes and objects, entirely different from what we meet in this world. The *source* of our information, is the

¹ Voltaire, in one of his romances, has happily illustrated this idea, and against it assuredly the infidel will not object.

testimony or communication of God Himself, both mediately and directly. "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake, in time past, unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken, unto us, by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he hath made the worlds."¹ In such evidence we may rest satisfied, for the witness is from the unseen world; and, that there should be no doubt, and no mistake about receiving his testimony, the whole established order of nature *here* is interrupted, suspended, controlled, and changed. The God of nature, whom in this world we adore, is thus proved to be the Lord of the invisible state, and the sensible proofs of His power thus furnished become strong confirmations of the truth of His communications, as the apostle affirms of the gospel, "which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will."² It would be absurd to imagine, that the things communicated from *such a source* would be demonstrable by the principles and axioms that apply to *this* world. Philosophy may have much to do in the application, and prosecution of the great principles of nature's operations as men call it; but certainly she can have nothing to do with disclosures made by the most competent witness, with regard to things spiritual. Faith, or the belief of testimony, is the medium of knowledge in reference to the latter. And if there should be any thing mysterious, and to us inexplicable in the *facts* made known with regard to the spiritual world—if they follow not the order and principles of things in this world, that is no reason why they should be rejected, but rather presumptive evidence of their truth, since, even here *philosophy* herself fails in applying her own favorite and

1 Heb. i. 1, 2.

2 Heb. ii. 3, 4.

peculiar data to the solution of many phenomena occurring. The two worlds differ essentially in their nature, and so must the respective phenomena they present.

On the ground of the essentially differing character of the facts reported in the scriptures, and of the phenomena which this world presents, we claim a *superiority* for the knowledge obtained by faith, above that derived from systems of philosophy. On the same ground, too, we affirm, exists whatever difficulty there may be with respect to our apprehension of them. There is no vagueness or mysticism in the language which the Spirit of God has employed in delivering His testimony. There is, indeed, an *imperfection* in human language, which renders it difficult to convey precisely our ideas: and this arises, no doubt, out of the very nature of things, it being by no means probable that all will attach the very same meaning to the same expression. But, therefore, as it has pleased the Spirit of God to speak to us in human language, to use our own words, we must expect that there will be different and even erroneous impressions sometimes made on different minds. The only effectual guard against this thing, is to "compare spiritual things with spiritual"¹—not to put *our meaning* on any term, but to ascertain, previously, in what sense the Spirit of God employs it. Here is an appropriate sphere for the energies of the human mind to be displayed. But such an office of reason is very different from that of judging and deciding, whether the facts and truths made known, are entitled to credence. If there is any other difficulty in apprehending the meaning of scripture, it may be traced entirely to a different source, either to the circumstance, that the facts or truths they disclose are such as, from the very nature of the case, could not have been discovered, or excogitated by the human mind, and could only be communicated by expressions bor-

1 1 Cor. ii. 13.

rowed from things analogous to them in this world. They are "*the things of God*,"—things pertaining, and peculiar to the infinite Supreme, which were hid in the counsels or purposes of the eternal mind, and, therefore, *could* only become known by us, either, as He should see fit to declare them, or develope them in His providence. Accordingly, the apostle declares the source of his knowledge of divine things to have been the communication of God Himself, and not the principles and deductions of the world's philosophy. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."¹

We are aware that such distinctions are repudiated, by those who affirm human reason to be competent to the discovery of all man shall ever know; and, that, to speak of things beyond *its* ken, is, in their estimation, to rave in the delirium of an enthusiastic and distempered fancy. But such votaries of reason, seem to have taken a very partial and limited view of the various objects and extent of human knowledge. God and His government comprehend the utmost of what exists, and can be known by the most exalted and intelligent of creatures. Yea, with reverence be it said, the knowledge of God Himself can extend no further. But where, let us ask, is the man that can tell the extent of either the divine excellence or operations? As to the perfections of Deity, who will affirm there may not be some, yea, many, of which we cannot even conjecture? There was a period when but a very few of the leading attributes of God were known to men. But it has pleased the Most High to reveal others, of which human reason, in her loftiest flights, and most entranced reveries, had never thought or dreamt. The experience of the world, from the beginning, authorises the belief, that many attributes of God, yet lie concealed from the

notice of poor, frail, and fallible man, which may, in another and nobler world, be disclosed. And the sacred scriptures confirm the belief. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"¹

And as to the government of God, comprehending, alike his created universe—teeming with life in every part, and the order and operation and agencies of his holy providence, can any presume, that he either knows, or shall be ever able to know, the whole? We look abroad upon the works of the Almighty hand, and are apt to think, that if we can discourse a little about the laws according to which bodies affect each other, or their properties and mutual action, we are versed in natural philosophy. We look a little into the constituent, elementary, parts of material objects, and their mutual affinities and action, and think, that if we can but analyze them, we know them altogether. We look a little into the operations of our own minds, and are apt to think that we know somewhat of the character of spirit, and the laws which govern human thought. And, in like manner, a transient view of every other branch of human science, serves but to inflate our vanity and persuade us that we know *much*. But when we begin carefully to investigate the mechanical laws which govern the material universe—the various, complicated and wondrous combinations of atoms, by means of the chemical laws, which regulate the structure and properties of bodies, and the conflicting elements associated in our own being, which are preserved in admirable harmony; and when, in addition to this, we inquire into the essential nature of what we see and feel and think, we find that all our science and philosophy teach but the same humiliating and mortifying lesson, that we do indeed know nothing.

If such is the fact in relation to objects, with which we are most familiar, which greet and cheer and refresh us at

every turn, need we be at all surprised, at being ignorant and incapable of discovering those things which are peculiar to God? It is owing to the pride, perverseness and rebellion of the human mind, that men are so willing to remain ignorant of those things which do properly constitute the *materiel* of human knowledge—which are the legitimate field for the research of human reason, and yet insist upon knowing and comprehending every thing, which in its very nature rises far above the reach of human thought. We must be content to believe many things which we shall never understand. We have, indeed, learned to be so in reference to the most common objects of human knowledge. Every thing which meets our eye, or is perceived by any of our senses, is in its intimate nature incomprehensible. Our very sensations are themselves a mystery. There is something in all we see and hear and feel, that evades the grasp of human reason. Yet, will any one affirm, that to talk of such things—things beyond human ken, is to rave in the delirium of an enthusiastic and distempered fancy? Is it delirium? By no means:—but the fact is directly the reverse. He that suffers himself to doubt, and disbelieve, in relation to the objects which address his senses, who will not admit their reality, because he cannot comprehend their nature, or have any idea of the essence of matter, is, by the common consent of mankind, pitied or ridiculed as insane.

The truth is, men universally, in reference to matters of this world, act upon the principle, that the evidence, which *substantiates* the *fact*, even out-weighs their own personal and peculiar difficulties, or embarrassments, as to its explication. They believe, that the innumerable inexplicable things around them do exist, because their senses report to them the fact. Let them act on the evidence submitted, and believe, as implicitly, that “the things which are *given to us of God*,” do really exist. Is not

His testimony in *this* case, as good evidence as that of our senses in the other? In both it is obviously our duty to believe the report—to let the evidence which either the testimony of God, on the one hand, or that of our senses, on the other, out-weigh all the perplexities and difficulty we may have in the explication of the things reported.

But this is not the spirit of the world. The pride of human reason—the vain wisdom of a false philosophy—the natural aversion of the human heart from the things that are of God—and the high value at which men practically hold the evidence of their senses, lead them to reject and disbelieve the great truths and facts which are based exclusively on a “Thus saith the Lord.” This is the spirit of the world—a carping, captious, cavilling, unbelieving spirit, which demands the demonstrations of science, to force conviction, or the soft silver tones of a flattering eloquence to seduce the heart into faith. It must be wooed and caressed by “the words which man’s wisdom teacheth,” or it will spurn the testimony of God. It must subject the declarations of Him who cannot lie, to the inquisitorial torture of its *hows*, and *whys*, and *wherefore*, and receive ample satisfaction in all, or it will make a merit and a boast of its scepticism, while it is content to receive with each passing hour, things utterly inexplicable, without a moment’s thought, and on evidence, by no means as conclusive as that of the testimony of God.

Every one pronounces him to be guilty of great foolishness, who demands evidence on a subject utterly foreign from the nature of such evidence. Would not all the world laugh at the judge, who would require the barrister mathematically to demonstrate his positions, and refuse the testimony of his witnesses? Equally foolish and absurd, is his conduct who demands mathematical evidence in support of moral truth. Who does not see, that the relations, and ratios, of forms, and quantities are essentially different,

in their nature, from the operations of mind, and must therefore be demonstrated by evidence essentially different? The Epicureans are justly censured for rejecting every truth that would not be supported by the evidence of the senses. And so must they be, who laud the evidence of *geometrical analysis* as superior to that of consciousness, or of the testimony of a competent and credible witness. Dr. Barrow, in his profound admiration and extravagant praise of mathematical science, may have probably, though unintentionally, contributed to fortify the sceptic in his rejection of the evidence available in the support of moral truth, when he said, "the mathematics effectually exercise, not vainly delude, nor vexatiously torment, studious minds, with obscure subtleties, but plainly demonstrate every thing within their reach."—"They wholly deliver us from a credulous simplicity, and most strongly fortify us against the vanity of scepticism; they effectually restrain us from a rash presumption, most easily incline us to a due assent, and perfectly subject us to the government of right reason." These assertions are too bold. The mathematics have their subtleties, and they demonstrate what common sense at once perceives to be absurdities. An infinity of infinities, each infinitely less than the other—curves infinitely approximating fixed lines, but never touching—*infinite* spaces *generating* by rotation—*solids* of *finite capacity*—variable spaces *continually augmenting* and yet *never becoming equal* to certain finite quantities, these are subtleties and mysteries as perplexing as any that can be cited in moral science. The truth is, that there is no subject on which the human mind may not, by the aid of its appropriate evidence, be led on, by regular processes of demonstration, till it is lost in the absolute incomprehensibility of its own deductions. It is, therefore, highly erroneous, and mischievous, to extol one species of evidence above another, and thus contribute to shake men's confidence in

the reality of what may have been legitimately demonstrated by its appropriate evidence. Consciousness, intuition, intellection, deduction, geometrical analysis, moral certainty, all deserve respect in their proper sphere. Let reason be employed in her appropriate province, but when God *speaks* let man *believe*. His testimony is ample and decisive proof. On all subjects to which it appropriately applies, it is, in its very nature, as conclusive as mathematical demonstration can be, and far more than the deductions of reason, or the testimony of the senses. Why should we apply the rules and principles of reasoning, founded on the data which *this* world affords, to that which is unseen and cannot be explored by us? If God Himself, a competent and credible witness, has made report to us—delivered *His testimony*, let us rebuke the spirit of the world, and learn with reverence and gratitude to receive the revelations which He makes of His own will. The spirit of the world, when indulged to the rejection of the divine testimony, is the arrant pride of the rebellious mind. Its suggestions are madness, and its ascendant influence on the mind, is death to all its immortal hopes.

It was this Spirit which characterized and disgraced many who professed the religion of Jesus Christ in the church of Corinth. Accustomed to the profound disquisitions of their philosophers, and to the flowing strains of their orators, and fond, as were the Greeks generally, of rich and polished style, of accurate and ornamental language, of close and energetic argument, in short, of all that could please the imagination and satisfy the understanding, they soon perverted the ministry of reconciliation, and the sacred scriptures, from their grand original design, and sought to make them subservient to their literary gratification and improvement. Aware of this state of feeling, in the first instance, when Paul preached among them, he *purposely* laid aside whatever might be thought to be intended as a

display of wisdom, or eloquence, or mere human reasoning. He employed not the enticing words of man's wisdom—he came not among them with excellency of speech or of wisdom; but trusting to the powerful influence of the Spirit, who revealed the truth to his own mind, he told again and again, his simple and affecting story of “*Christ and Him crucified.*” “For I brethren,” says he, “when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God; for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and much trembling: and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of men'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.”¹ Here the true reason of our conviction of the truth, as revealed by God, is distinctly stated—the *demonstration of the Spirit and of power*. It is the powerfully convincing evidence of truth, had, in “the testimony of God,” which the Holy Spirit has delivered to us by the mouths of holy men and prophets, and which he urges on the mind, that *sways it into faith*.

This, Paul wished to be the basis of their faith, and none other, and as he unfolded the truth, which God had revealed, he claimed their unhesitating assent. His style of preaching does not seem to have pleased all. Some preferred Apollo's gentle and persuasive strains, while others were enamoured with Peter's ardent and vehement delivery. Their factious and contentious spirit, Paul utterly condemned; and he was careful to apprise them, that the gospel which he preached differed in its very nature, from all the dogmas or demonstrations of their philosophers. The ministry of reconciliation was not to be prostituted, and the high functions of that holy office, which unfolds

and urges the word of God on the consciences of men, were not to be discharged as were the professional lectures of their admired scholars. He did not profess to have made any magnificent discoveries, or to have adopted any new philosophy or to have elicited truth by the power of his own logical mind. He resorted not to the schools of the philosophers for his information, nor did he even dream of quoting Pythagoras or Plato, Aristotle or Socrates as his authorities. He took it from the mouth of God Himself, and as he bowed in submissive belief of its truth, so did he require the same faith from his hearers. "I certify you brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it *but* by the revelation of Jesus Christ."¹ He spake by the Holy Spirit of God, and not according to the wisdom and judgment, the reasonings and convictions of the world. This fact he assigns as a sufficient explanation of the authoritative character and style of his preaching—as a satisfactory reason for his claiming the full unhesitating assent of his hearers. "Now we have received," says he, "not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."² It was *by the revelation* of this Spirit, that he obtained his knowledge, and in *no other way*. For the things that he declared were what "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man—the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."³ The whole scheme of redemption, by the eternal Son of God, crucified and slain in the nature of man, was originally beyond the power of human conception. It never could have been excogitated by the human mind. And therefore in undertaking to speak on themes so novel, so extraordinary, so amazing, so inconceivable, however some might deem them extravagant and wild, or others, evincive

¹ Gal. i. 11, 12.

² 1 Cor. ii. 12.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

of the loftiest intellect, yet did Paul make no high pretensions to human wisdom, nor even defend his claims in this respect, but simply "declared unto them the testimony of God," putting honour on the Spirit who had *revealed* them unto him.

Paul's idea of inspiration was essentially different from that of the rational divines, or he has expressed himself in the most bungling and unintelligible terms. So far from supposing that his thoughts, excogitated in his own mind, were the revelation of God, he leads us to believe, that he derived them as certainly and directly from an immediate communication made from God to him as we may be said to derive our thoughts from another when we attend to what he tells us. He did not preach to his hearers the result of his own reasonings.

The things he taught were *gratuitously* communicated of God, and *therefore*, were of such character as to have forever eluded discovery by human reason. They were things which none of us had a right to expect would be, and which man, if left to himself, never could have imagined. Nor should we be surprised at this. For, if we cannot look into the nearest planet, or penetrate into the essence of the smallest atom, is it to be expected, that we should be able to explore the eternal mind? "Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out."¹ "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor."² To divine what it might please Him to give, when we cannot conjecture the purposes even of our nearest and most intimate friends, is entirely beyond the power of man:—especially so, when, instead of anticipating a favour, conscious guilt suggests that all we have any right to expect is "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish."³

From the above remarks it is obvious that reason *cannot* legitimately act as *umpire* in matters of faith. The

¹ Job, xxvii. 23.

² Rom. xi. 34.

³ Rom. ii. 8, 9.

revelation of God, claims assent on its own appropriate evidence, and is not dependent on the deductions or demonstrations of reason. The early Unitarians did not presume in this matter to push their principles as far as their modern successors have done. They acknowledged a revelation from God in some immediate and supernatural way, not through the natural excogitations of the human intellect, and therefore did not presume to exalt reason to the office of judging, and determining what it is in the sacred scriptures we are bound to believe and what not. If they did extol it, they gave not to it the paramount authority. In regulating the distinctive doctrines of revelation, they rather tortured their ingenuity to explain away the obvious meaning of terms, than took the bold infidel and deistical ground of rejecting them as mysteries of which reason could not approve. Hear one of the most celebrated of this school, "As regards reason, this truly is a fallacious way in a matter which is *dependent on Divine revelation* as is the Christian religion." Another and as great a name adds, "Mysteries do indeed overcome reason; but they do not destroy it. They do not extinguish its light but they perfect it. Nay, reason alone, which could not of itself discover mysteries, both perceives, and embraces, and defends them *when revealed* to it. "Truly," says a third, speaking of those too, whom he called Unitarian Christians, "these Christians confess that the appropriate mysteries and dogmas of the Christian religion themselves, are by no means excogitated, or discovered by human reason; but delivered by the revelation of God Himself, through His Son Jesus Christ." And a fourth admits that neither can philosophy itself reveal the Christian religion, nor can our reason ever prevail to try it at law, entirely on philosophical principles; but it behoves it altogether to know it from a Divine revelation.¹ It is too bold a pretence to

¹ Quod enim ad rationes attinet, hæc nimis fallax via est, in re quæ ex

exalt reason as the supreme authority, and make it both judge and law in matters of faith. They that claim for it this office, and receive, and reject the revelations of the word of God, just in so far as they accord with, or are approved by the judgment of their reason are infidels of an high order. It is not slanderous to call them such, nor are they thus malignantly denominated by us, for it is their most appropriate appellation, and it is the most arrant hypocrisy for them to claim and wear the title of *Christians*.

Admitting however that faith is bound to receive the revelations of God, on their appropriate evidence, and not because reason may approve of their mysteries, a question arises as to *what* may be *that* evidence. On this subject there has been strong and learned controversy, having the renowned names of Locke on the one side and Halyburton on the other. We shall not enter into this controversy, but content ourselves with exhibiting a few facts from which we may be led to a proper conclusion. The sacred scriptures are demonstrably the word of God, so that whoso will be at the pains of weighing this matter, may arrive, by a process of invincible reasoning, at this conviction. It is a truth, supported by intuitive evidence, that what God says, is and must be true. It might be supposed that where these two convictions are had there the individual must believe. That he *ought* indubitably to believe

divina patefactione pendet, qualis est Christiano religio.—*Faust. Soc. in Tract de autoritate Jac. Scrip. cap. 1.*

Superant quidem rationem mysteria; sed non evertunt: non extinguunt illa hujus lumen; sed perficiunt. Imo ratio mysteria quæ per se invenire non poterat, sibi revelata, et percipit sola, et amplectitur, et defendit.—*Cultus de Uno. Deo. Patre Lib. sub finem.*

At vero isti Christiani, contentur, ipsa religionis Christianæ propria mysteria, seu dogmata, nequaquam esse et ratione humana excogitata, sive inventa; verum ex Dei ipsius revelatione per filium ejus Jesum Christum tradita.—*Religio Rationalis And. Wissowat. p. 9.*

none will deny. But it is not the fact. Many profess, and no doubt have both, and yet do not believe. Now whence comes this? Is it not the nature of the human mind to be determined in its convictions, by the force of evidence? A man *cannot* believe a proposition which he thinks is not true. Let him however be convinced of its truth, and it is just as impossible for him not to believe. It is obvious therefore, that there must be some other evidence to produce faith than what has been stated. But what can this be? We apprehend that it is to be found in the nature of the second conviction stated above, viz., that what *God* says is true. There is something more necessary to induce confidence, than the mere intellectual conviction, that a man speaks the truth. There must be some feeling of approbation, some love for the *character* of that man, if not of his person. We often misplace our confidence, and believe implicitly the falsehood which some unworthy object of our friendship may assert: while, on the other hand, through prejudice or improper feeling entertained towards another, his testimony is rejected though he speaks the absolute truth. It would seem then that the heart is the great seat of that perplexity and difficulty under which any one may labour, as it respects believing the word of God. Let the heart—the sensibilities of man's nature, be brought into unison with the convictions of his understanding, and there will be no difficulty.

The fact of such difficulty however is not to be questioned, and for its removal some divine influence is in reality as necessary as were the communications of God in making the original disclosure of the facts themselves. The removal of this is attributed to the same great agent that revealed men the Spirit of God, who exerts an influence designed to counteract the depraved perceptions of the mind and vitiated taste of the heart. "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 In exerting this influence the Spirit of God is spoken of in the sacred scriptures, as producing a new life—awakening the mind to new perceptions and energies, and bringing the heart under the power of new emotions. So Paul speaks of his own perception of the truths of the gospel, and of his successful exhibition of them to his hearers. “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: for the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life.”² While therefore it is conceded that human reason or the mind of man is the percipient principle, in the appropriate exercise of which alone, we can have any knowledge of divine things, we are far from granting that it is possessed of original and independent power to discover the things which the Spirit of God has revealed, or is placed in circumstances and found affected so as rightly to perceive and appreciate those things while uninfluenced by the same Spirit. The life-giving influence of the Spirit of God in the human soul, is essential to right and clear perceptions of the truth, so that it is utterly extravagant and absurd to claim for the unrenewed mind of man the right to sit as umpire and judge of what can or cannot be, of what is or is not the revelation of God. The character of the facts, and *the discordant state of the human mind* seem alike to require an influence of the Spirit, in order to a right apprehension of them.

This subject will again occur, when it must receive a more minute examination. It is only referred to at present with a view to urge the necessity, and importance, of laying aside every thing like the pride of human reason, and an overweening conceit of our own worth, and “receive with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to

1 1 Cor. ii. 14.

2 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

save our souls.”¹ We must bring our minds to the contemplation of divine truth, unbiassed by any preconceived opinions, unaffected by any dislike of the character of God, or of the matter of his testimony. That testimony is indeed humiliating to us. It writes “*tekél*” on all our fancied merit, and “*Ichabod*” on all our lofty gloryings. And unless we consent to sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of him—unless we be converted and become as little children—unless our hearts are attuned to the instruction He gives, and we are willing to know and believe implicitly as he teaches, we shall torment ourselves with our vain reasonings, and live and die without the hope that He inspires. We shall not even be able to comprehend His instruction. All things will be perplexing and irritating. His language will be oftentimes unintelligible, even when it is most plain, and we shall find ourselves at a loss in apprehending those truths on which the simple, humble believer feeds, and grows, and thrives. As long as we are affected by a dislike of his character, or of the truth he teaches, we shall find it impossible to understand the scriptures. But, if with a docile mind, and a willing heart, we come to them to inquire that we may “do the will of God, we shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.”² Let us apply all the energy of our minds to the study of the lively oracles, and diligently and accurately investigate the meaning of their language according to the rules of legitimate criticism;—but having ascertained the meaning of the Spirit, let us submit our vain reasonings to His dictation.

¹ James, i. 21.

² John, vii. 17

CHAPTER VI.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD, THE AUTHOR OF LIFE.

The power and Spirit of God not synonymous—Regeneration the work of divine power exerted by the Spirit—A peculiar reason for this being referred to His agency—An order of operation correspondent with the order of subsistences in the divine nature—An example—The Spirit of God the great author of Life in all its varieties—No law of nature adequate to explain the production of Life—The nature of causality—Resolvable into the will and agency of God—Applied to the subject under consideration—Account of the creation—Gen. i. 2—Job. xxvii. 3—Psal. cxxxix. 13, 16—The Mosaic account of the vivification of man—John, xx. 22—The natural history contained in the bible—Reflections.

THE power of God, and the Spirit of God are both spoken of in the sacred scriptures as being concerned in the regeneration of a sinner. The production of faith in the heart, which is one of the constituents and evidences or the commencement of this change, is attributed by the apostle to the exceeding greatness of *His* power (who is the Father of glory) to us-ward who believe according to the working of His mighty power."¹ And yet it is as distinctly and specifically attributed to the agency of the Spirit as being indispensable to salvation—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."² Hence, as we have seen, some have inferred that the power and Spirit of God are synonymous expressions.

The inference, however, is not legitimate. For, according to the views already given of the nature and persons of Deity, it is very easy to render such phraseology per-

¹ Eph. i. 19.

² John, iii. 7.

fectly consistent, and to free the sacred writers from the charge of mysticism, and of useless multiplication of terms which would otherwise lie against them. The power of Omnipotence—that power which is strictly proper to the divine Being, is specially exerted by God, in the person of the Holy Spirit. Should it be objected, that in speaking of the persons of the Godhead, we speak of something unintelligible and undefinable, it may be replied, that so does the physiologist when treating of Life—a thing, the *reality* of which we dare not doubt, but the *nature* and *origin* of which are utterly incomprehensible. This is no valid objection, if, as has been shown, the word of God does teach *the fact*, that God, the one infinite Supreme, exists in three persons. We hope to make it appear in the prosecution of this work, that the Spirit of God, the third person of Deity, is not without reason referred to peculiarly, and specifically in the great work of a sinner's regeneration, a work accomplished by the energies of God. It is unnecessary here to repeat or multiply quotations on this point. No one can have read the sacred scriptures, without noticing the fact, that the Spirit of God is the special and immediate agent in this thing, though the power be divine.

This is not accidental. There is a peculiar reason for it, which, with deference, we submit. Although there is much that is awfully mysterious in the nature of the divine Being; and although the infinite Supreme, Jehovah, the one simple, undivided, uncompounded, and eternal divine essence, lives in three distinct and co-equal subsistences or persons—a *fact* totally inconceivable and incomprehensible by our finite minds; yet must we not fear so to think and speak of Him. For, the sacred scriptures, which reveal this fact, actually go further, and represent the persons of the Godhead, not only as being three distinct co-equalities, but as having an *order of subsistence*, and a correspondent *order of operation*. The Father, as the first person,

is spoken of as the source or fountain—"The Father of lights,"¹ &c.—the Son, as the only begotten of the Father,² or, as proceeding from Him,³ and the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father, and sent by the Son.⁴ Answerable to this mysterious order of the divine subsistencies, is the order of divine operations, which the sacred scriptures recognize. The Father *purposes* or *plans*⁵—the Son *creates* and *executes*⁶—and the Spirit conveys, applies, adorns and fully invests with the benefits designed to be conferred.⁷ Thus to illustrate this by one vast and comprehensive example.

The plan of redemption is represented as having originated with God, in the person of the Father—the whole work necessary to the execution of that plan, as being wrought by God in the person of the Son—and the blessings designed to be secured by it, as conveyed and communicated by God in the person of the Holy Spirit:⁸ so that there is as entire and harmonious an order of operations, as there is of subsistences, and the one perfectly correspondent with the other. Such being the order of the divine subsistences and operations, it follows that regeneration, a constituent and conspicuous blessing of divine grace, devolves particularly on the Holy Spirit, as being His peculiar and appropriate work. It falls within the immediate sphere of His agency, so that it is not without meaning, the sacred scriptures uniformly represent it as the effect of His power, as every attentive and intelligent reader cannot fail in the prosecution of this inquiry to perceive. With a view, therefore, to a more satisfactory apprehension of our whole subject, as well as to corroborate the account given above of the Spirit's agency, we shall endeavor to elucidate and confirm several exegetical propositions which we shall state in their order.

1 James, i. 17.

2 John, i. 18.

3 John, viii. 42.

4 John, xv. 26.

5 Eph. i. 3—10.

6 Col. i. 16.

7 John, xvi. 14.

8 See the text above referred to.

I. THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS THE GREAT AUTHOR OF LIFE IN ALL ITS VARIETIES. He is called "the Spirit of Life;" but with what reason, will we better understand presently.

Even the most inattentive observer cannot fail to have noticed, that there is an endless process of production and re-production going on in the works of creation—and that much and by far the most interesting and important part, of it is connected with the developement of life in innumerable forms. The earth, the air and the seas are teeming with it. To what cause shall we attribute this effect? The infidel philosopher talks unintelligibly on the subject. To say that it results by virtue of a law of nature, is saying just nothing.

We cannot resolve the whole influence of *causality*, in any satisfactory way, without the idea of some intelligent and *efficient agent*. It will not do to say, experience teaches that one event *regularly follows* another. Why does it do so? is a question which will force itself on our attention: and to meet that question, by saying that experience shews it does, is only another way of confessing ignorance and of evading the question entirely. To assign the circumstance of *juxta-position* as a solution of the connection which subsists between cause and effect is felt to be totally inadequate. We see that the needle touched with a magnet turns towards the north, and if we ask, *why* it does so, who will be satisfied with this answer, "because it is attracted by the magnetic pole." All bodies gravitate towards the centre of the earth. But why do they? Will you say because it is a *law* of nature? What then we ask, is this law of nature? Is it a power? Is it a will? Is it an intelligence? None will be affirmed. What then is it? Is it a property of matter? But *how* can matter originate motions without itself? We see that the dog follows his master as the needle does the magnet, an event in some instances as regularly succeeding

the other in the one case, as in the other. But who will resolve the causality in either case into mere juxtaposition? The truth is, that the will and agency of God, which are, from the very necessity of the case, altogether mysterious to us, cannot be excluded from our idea of causality. No other link can supply the chasm, and bind together the cause and the effect.

This we feel to be perfectly satisfactory, and the mind rests in it, as abundantly adequate to the solution of the phenomena. With regard to those of life, no other explanation can at all suffice. To talk of the aptness of organic matter for life, will not do. For we see an endless variety of animate matter—life found in ever varying organizations. In what consists that adaptation? Whence comes this variety? Take whatever view you please of the subject, the difficulty returns into your hands, and the only satisfactory solution is, that the energy of God is continually exerted in the production of life, according to the various modes in which He is sovereignly pleased to dispense it to His creatures.

We need not restrict the remark to any special kind of life. All of its forms, from the loftiest seraph to the smallest reptile, or insect, are the product of Almighty power. This will probably be admitted with respect to God, abstractly considered, as the great fountain of all being; but how, it will be asked, will this confirm the proposition stated, that the Spirit of God is the author of life? The bible gives us some historical details on this subject, but for which we should have been in utter ignorance. From it we learn, that God, in the person of the Spirit, *presides over the whole department of life*, and exerts a special agency in it. He is represented to have commenced His operations immediately on the creation of the inanimate and inorganic mass of our globe. In the account which Moses gives of the creation, it is very distinctly stated to

be the fact, that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."¹ This may possibly be the title of the chapter, and the verses which follow, the details. Or, it may be the record made with regard to the first production of Almighty and creative power. Which ever view we take of it, *the earth*—all the vast *mineral mass* of our globe, was created at once by His Almighty fiat. One word brought into existence the whole globe, with its rocky and earthy stratifications, and their watery envelope. The whole mineral mass was created perfect, but subjected to a law or mode of divine agency, according to which, by the *process of crystallization*, similar formations might take place, just as the trees were created in a state of perfection, and then planted by the word of God into the soil, but subjected to a law or mode of His agency, by virtue of which, according to a *process of lignification*, similar growths might arise. Moses advances not the idea with which we meet in heathen Cosmogony, where

Once was the face of nature; if a facc;
Rather a rude and undigested mass;
A lifeless lump, unfashioned and unframed,
Of jarring seeds; and justly Chaos named.

It is much to be regretted, that this poetic fancy has been adopted by sober philosophers, and christian divines. There is nothing that we can see, either in nature, or the scriptures, to sanction it. The laws of gravitation and crystallization, as put into operation in the substance of the earth—which some have conceived was created in a confused and aggregate mass, are not sufficient to account for the disposing of the different earthy and mineral stratifications, which over-lay each other. The Mosaic account teaches us that rocks, seas, and earthy particles sprung simultaneously into existence, at the word of God, and having been created perfect at once, were placed under the

operation of certain general laws, or modes of the Creator's agency, by which, in successive ages, assimilated masses might be formed. It was *the earth*, and not a *chaos*, that in the beginning was created.

The expressions of Moses, which may very probably have suggested the idea of a chaos to the minds of the philosophic heathen who consulted his writings, and which seem very evidently to have been paraphrased by Ovid according to his view of their meaning, do not give their support to it. He says, that "the *earth* was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep (abyss)."¹ If we suppose that the word "*earth*" is here used to denote the world, as it was when Moses wrote, then the expressions seem to convey the idea of *non-entity* by a very felicitous description. No other idea can be attached to them. Every material existence has *some* form and *some* substance, and to be without either is to have no material being. The other expression *abyss*, for that is the meaning of the word translated "deep," conveys the same vague, and undefinable idea of non-entity. None of his terms favor the idea of a chaos.

But if we suppose that the word "*earth*" denotes the world at the time referred to in the description, there is no more countenance given to the idea of a chaos. The *earth* THEN was, for IT, by the terms of the supposition, is the thing described. It was then without form and void, as a house without arrangement and furniture. The building was up, but it wanted inhabitants, and the means of their accommodation. Such was "the earth," strictly so called, that is, the inorganic and inanimate globe, *at its first creation*. It sprung, at once, with its mineral nucleus, and earthy strata, and watery floods, into being at the command of God, or by the word of His power. The historical account which Moses gives of the successive six days work

1 Gen i. 2.

of creation, if examined, will be found to relate not to the production of the *materials* of the globe, but to the arranging of certain great portions of it, and subjecting it to the laws by which it should ever afterwards be governed, and to the creating of inhabitants, and endowing them with life. In *this* work, all that pertains to the order, beauty, and life of the material world, the Spirit of God is distinctly and formally announced by the historian, to have been the great agent. Having given an account in general of the creation of the body or mineral mass of the globe, he proceeds to a detailed account of the creation of the different tribes of animated being that inhabit it, and prefaces it with a distinct view of the agency of that great Being who presides in this especial department. "THE SPIRIT OF GOD," says he, "moved upon the face of the waters."¹

It was not a great and mighty wind, as some allege the expression, Spirit of God, according to an Hebrew idiom of speech denotes; because, upon the supposition of a chaos, in which "earth and air and water were in one," there could have been no such thing. Nor is the cause at all adequate to account for the crystalline phenomena of the earth. Nor can it be reconciled with the mineral geology that infers from these phenomena a confused mass of elementary principles, suspended in a vast solution—a chaotic ocean, which, after an *undefinable* series of ages, settled themselves. The agents which the mineral geologist here introduces, are precipitation and crystallization, according to certain laws of matter—the chemical laws of affinity, of composition, and aggregation. Wind is not an apt agent in this vast chemical laboratory, nor can it at all be supposed to have prevailed, during the many thousand years, which the mineral geologist finds necessary for making a world. Wind possesses no creative power, nor

¹ Gen. i. 2.

power to dispose, and bring order out of confusion, which the Spirit of God, of which Moses speaks, certainly did. Besides, the motion attributed to the Spirit of God, does not, at all, accord with that of wind. It is self-originated—a spontaneous motion of the agent itself. And the Hebrew word denotes, as has already been noticed, that peculiar kind of motion—a gentle rising up and again declining, which may be seen in the fowl that receives its young under its wings to cherish and impart heat to them. “The Spirit of God *brooded upon*¹ the face of the waters”—a very apt and beautiful figure employed by the historian, to denote the agency of the divine Spirit in the production, and communication of life, to the numerous tribes of animated creatures then brought into existence.

What is thus, in the very commencement of the sacred scriptures referred, in general, to the immediate agency of the Spirit, is attributed to the same, specifically, in different kinds of life, distinctly enumerated. Thus Job, speaking of his own animal life, recognizes his dependence for its support, on the Spirit of God. He defines its period to be “while his breath is in him, and the Spirit of God is in his nostrils.”² Its origination, as well as that of his rational soul—of his whole compound being, he attributes to the same great cause: “The SPIRIT of God hath made me, and the breath (*the Spirit*) of the Almighty hath given me life.”³ The Psalmist, too, refers his origin, and that species of life, which he possessed before he breathed the air of Heaven, to the same Almighty Agent. It is the Spirit of God to whom he makes his appeal, when he says, “Thou hast possessed my reins, thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb; thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”⁴ The production of the body

1 See page 14.

2 Job, xxvii. 3.

3 Job, xxxiii. 4.

4 Psalm cxxxix. 13, 16. compared with v. 7.

of our Lord Jesus Christ, is particularly ascribed to the Spirit of God, which, although miraculously effected, nevertheless devolved on Him, as the great agent who forms and imparts life to, the animal nature of man. "The Holy Ghost," said the angel to Mary, "shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."¹

These facts throw some light on the account which Moses has given us of man's creation. After that God had formed him "of the dust of the ground, *He breathed* into his nostrils the breath of life (the spirit of lives) and he became a living soul."² The breath of life, or *spirit of lives*, here spoken of, is the Spirit of God, the author of those different kinds of life, then commenced in the first man. And the distinctive appellation of *spirit of lives*, is very appropriately given to the Spirit of God, because he is the author of life in *all* its modifications. It is, certainly a very inapt metaphor to denote the mere inflation of the lungs, by the introduction of atmospheric air. The agency of God, in the production of what we denominate life, is here, undoubtedly, in the most formal and accurate manner, recognized by the historian. That agency is by the person of the Holy Spirit.

This explanation of the passage is corroborated by the conduct and language of our blessed Saviour when introducing the wonders of his new creation, and they mutually illustrate each other. The gift of the Spirit of God—some extraordinary degree of His influence had been long predicted, as the principal characteristic of the evangelical dispensation: and of the communication of this Spirit, shortly before his ascension, the Redeemer gave a symbolical annunciation. It was after His resurrection, on the occasion of one of His visits to His disciples, that "He

¹ Luke. i. 35.

² Gen. ii. 7.

breathed on them, and said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*"¹ Not that in His breath, or in the breath of the Almighty, did *literally* consist the Spirit of God; nor, that at that time, any miraculous or extraordinary power was bestowed on them; but simply, that by this symbolical act He intended, as God had done when He created man in the first instance, to announce to His followers, distinctly, the source of that *new* vivifying influence, which under the gospel dispensation was as certainly, and as efficiently to be exerted, as was the influence of the spirit of life when man became a living soul.

We are aware, that the phrase *breath of life* is understood, by some commentators, to denote the different *kinds* of life which man possesses, animal, intellectual, and spiritual, and not to designate the Spirit of God. With them however we are constrained to disagree. That it is a distinctive appellation conferred on the Spirit, we think must be apparent, from the consideration, that however true it is that man is a compound being, possessed of different kinds of life, yet the inspired writer seems only to regard the life of Adam's *animal* nature, for he adds "man became a living soul,"² that is, according to the import of the original term, a *living frame*. The expression shews plainly, that regard was principally had to the animation of Adam's body, and if so, the phrase the breath or *spirit of life* becomes appellative, and designates the Spirit of God, who is the great author of our animal life, as well as of every other species of life, and is, on this account, sometimes explicitly called the *spirit of life*, or, literally rendered, the *spirit of lives*.

1 John, xx. 22.

2 Gen. ii. 7, NEPHESH has various signification. In Lev. xi. 10; it evidently denotes a mere corporal existence—significat proprie id quo animal vivit et velut primario instrumento agit, quod cuique in suo genere agere convenit—*Roberts. Thes. p. 607.*

But we have still more satisfactory proof of this. From the testimony of Job, of David, and of Moses, we have shewn, that the life of *man's animal* nature is produced by the Spirit of God. He is also distinctly recognized, and asserted to be the author of life in all its numerous varieties. On this subject, we think the scriptures afford proof sufficient to satisfy every reasonable inquirer. No one certainly can demand, or expect, that, inasmuch as they are not intended to furnish us with a system of zoology, they should enter into minute details, and assert of this and that particular mode of existence, that its life is originated and supported by the Spirit of God. If we can discover that it is true in relation to several different *classes* of animated being, we may with certainty, infer it to be true in relation to all. But when we explore the scriptures, we shall be surprised to find such a vast mass of information in natural history, that very interesting department of human science, in a book by no means designed to serve the purpose of mere scientific dissertations. The natural history involved in the bible has given birth to numerous and valuable scientific works. What a mass of facts, and what glowing descriptions do we meet with in the book of Job. We shall not cite them, but refer the reader to that beautiful ode the 104th Psalm, which gives as rich a sketch, as it opens an extensive range in natural history. It commences with a view of the formation of the heavens, and of the foundations of the earth, as ordered by that illustrious Being whose glory in impassioned strains it extols. It introduces to us the highest order of living creatures, the ministering angels of God. It unveils the whole of that stupendous system of veins and arteries, if we may so call them, by which the waters circulate through the body of the earth, and preserve it from putrescence and decay. Aerial, terrestrial and marine animals, with the whole kingdom of vegetable life, crowd in

upon our view, with here and there a prominent or conspicuous species. And the whole Psalm concludes with a distinct avowal of the Spirit of God as the great author of this teeming and endless variety of life. "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth."¹

No further, nor any more explicit proof can be desired. The seraph, glowing in the full ardor of Jehovah's glory, is as absolutely dependent for his life, on the agency of the Spirit of God, as is man, formed of the dust of the ground. Nor does dependence cease here. He is the great operative and efficient agent that quickens, sustains and promotes the life of *all*—from man, the image of his maker, to the invisible animalcule. "The eyes of all wait on Him, and He giveth them their meat in due season. He openeth His hand and satisfieth the desire of *every living thing*."²

What a charm does this fact give in the christian's eye to the whole subject of natural history! With what a rich zest of spiritual enjoyment too may he pursue its study! In all that contributes to the beauty, and order of the inorganic kingdom, whether he looks into the air, the waters, or the earth, he may trace the footsteps of the blessed Spirit of God, *the Comforter*, who dwells in his own heart. It was under impressions of this sort, the holy Psalmist, as he lay by his flocks in the open air, gazing on the vaulted heavens and the unnumbered and innumerable worlds that sparkled on his view, burst forth, in these expressions of amazement and delight, mingled with the deepest self-humiliation: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers: the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?"³ It is indeed well calculated to excite the most powerful emotions. As we roam through the wide expanse of creation, and on fancy's rapid wings,

1 Psalm, civ. 30.

2 Psalm, cxlv. 15, 16.

3 Psalm, viii. 3, 4.

visit world after world, and systems of worlds are seen woven together, and all in harmonious motion, obeying the Creator's will, and think, as we are authorized, both from the word of the faithful God and the experience of our own souls—this lofty Being, whose glory fills immensity, dwells in the midst of us, has chosen Zion for his holy habitation, yea takes up his peculiar and special abode in our hearts, dwelling within us, walking with us, and filling us with life and joy. Oh, how are we lost in wonder and delight! As we sink into utter insignificance in our own estimation, we feel an holy impulse within, that lifts us up on high, and causes us to soar above the skies. How exquisitely blissful is it, to hear the voice of this mighty Maker of heaven and earth—of Him that thunders in the sky, and roars in the tempest, and spreads to the utmost verge of space—rebuking the elements, and marshalling His universe, in sweetest, softest accents of love, as from the inmost and most retired recess of our spirits, accost and comfort us, “Fear thou not, for *I* am with thee; be not dismayed, for *I* am thy God; *I* will strengthen thee; yea, *I* will help thee; yea, *I* will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”¹ Oh, there is a communion thus had with Him “that created the heavens and stretched them out,”² of which, the man, who views these things with merely a philosophic eye, can form no idea. The christian may “joy in the Holy Ghost” when he gambols o’er creation.

And when we look into the minuter wonders of organized bodies, and scan the delicate organs, and admirable texture of vegetable beings, or the almost miraculous functions of animal life, and survey the mechanism of our own bodies, how “fearfully and wonderfully” we are made; and the immortal energies of our minds—how lofty are their aspirations? who is not ready to exclaim,

¹ Isaiah, xli. 10

² Isaiah, xlii. 5.

Helpless immortal? insect infinite!
 A worm! A God!—I tremble at myself,
 And in myself am lost!

But every rising fear is hushed, and the heart is lulled to rest, as we reflect; all these are but exhibitions which the ever-living and operative Spirit makes of his wisdom, and power, and benevolence. If our minds are overwhelmed, and we feel lost, the heart rejoices to know, that we are lost in God. We can pity while we fully comprehend the feelings which led the more philosophic heathen¹ to deify the heavens, and the earth, and regard all life, as the soul of the divinity, and bless and adore God, for that bright and steady light of his word, which guides us through all the mazes of nature directly to Himself. Every form of life does indeed introduce to us a present God. We trace the movements of that wonderful Being who in another than the poet's sense,

Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
 Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
 Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
 Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
 Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
 As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
 As full, as perfect in vile man that mourns,
 As the rapt seraph that adores and burns.

But it is in a much sublimer and more delightful aspect the christian beholds Him, than that in which He is contemplated in the cold and heart-chilling philosophy which proclaims

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
 Whose body nature is, and God the soul.

However we may admire the production, we are not satisfied unless we know something of its cause. It is but

¹ Estne Dei sedes nisi terra et pontus, et aer
 Et cælum, et virtus? Superos quid quærimus ultra?
 Jupiter e'st quodcunque vides quocunque moveris.

Luc. Phar. l. 9 v. 578.

cheating the mind and heart to present the effect as absorbed in, or as being part of the cause. Philosophy never satisfies the heart;¹ but guided by the scriptures, we pass from every living thing directly to God the Holy Spirit, the great vivifying agent; and in the agency of One, infinite in wisdom, power and benevolence, we rest as *a cause* most ample, and satisfactory to account for all that we observe. We apprehend His presence; but confound Him not with His productions. We discern an intelligent Spirit in all the living creation, breathing life into all as at the first. And when the thought rolls in upon our minds it is "in Him we live and move and have our being"—this living and life-giving Spirit dwells in me, and sustains, supports, strengthens and sanctifies all my powers. How rich and ennobling is the delight!

Let no one then say, that our ideas, of God, and of his government of grace, and of the method of salvation through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, His son, who died the just for the unjust, and the renewing and sanctifying influence of His Spirit, shut out from our view the beauties of creation, and render the heart insensible to their charms. Redemption is indeed a loftier theme, and the wonders of redeeming love do indeed surpass the whole grandeur of creation. But the introduction, as is done in the plan of redemption, of an ever-present and operative agent in the person of God the Holy Spirit, to impart and sustain life in *all* its endless varieties, who is the very same that ministers to our *highest* and most ennobling life, enables us, throughout the whole extent of what are so sadly misnamed Nature's works, to hold communion with living intelligence, and that in most endeared friendship.

1 This has been inadvertently confessed by the great apostle of modern infidelity, whose remark is as true in its full extent as in reference to the particular circumstances of distraction that induced it.

"Il n'en tira que des lumieres, et n'en recut aucun soulagement."

Our God is not a vague abstraction. The study of nature with such views promotes a blessed fellowship with Him, and does not debauch the mind. With other views, it has often led to atheism. Do we ask why? The reason is, that scepticism and infidelity, which too often conceal themselves in science, and proudly arrogate its name, will not apprehend an ever-present operative Deity. They attribute to *general laws*, what can only be referred to His immediate agency, and thus they exclude from the view, and thrust from the thoughts, the infinite, every-where present God. Like thoughtless, inconsiderate children, they play about the threshold, but enter not into the palace, to hold communion with the king. The blessed Spirit of God, who dwells wherever life is found, is not known, and the mind wanders as through a desolate and dreary universe.

Take God from nature, nothing great is left;
Man's mind is in a pit, and nothing sees;
Man's heart is in a jakes and loves the mire.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NATURE OF LIFE.

The difficulty in arriving at a correct idea of Life—Our ignorance of the essence of matter—The reason of our belief in its reality—False use made of this mode of reasoning—General classification of substances—Different opinions of the general nature of life—Not the play of chemical affinities—Nor the mere properties of sensibility and contractility—Definition of Life—Difference between mineral and vital organization—Between mere motion and vital action—Life does not consist in the mutual action of bodies on each other—The meaning of organization—Life not *organization*—Not a *property*—Not a *state*—Not a *principle*—Gen. ix. 4—Lev. xvii. 11—But a series of relative actions appropriate to the design of the Creator in the individual being.

IF life, as has been shewn in the former chapter, is the result of the Spirit's agency, we may expect some difficulty in attempting to arrive at a correct idea of it; for there is mystery in all His operations. Some things pertaining to it, will, doubtless, remain forever inaccessible to human research; but we may, nevertheless, approximate it in some general idea of its nature. This is perhaps all we should attempt. But in order to this, it will be necessary for us to institute a careful examination into the whole subject of Life. Like all other terms used in spiritual matters, it is originally taken from material objects, and by virtue of some assumed analogy between them, becomes a fit representative of what we cannot subject to the scrutiny of our senses. And, doubtless, much of the confusion and perplexity in which this subject is involved, arise from a disposition to transfer our philosophy in matters of sense, and the sciences dependent on material things, to those of morals and the mind.

We are ignorant of the *essence of matter* in all its com-

binations. It is only by inference that we can prove its real existence: for, those things, which strike our senses, and which contribute, so essentially, to our idea of any body, such as shape, color, texture, weight, solidity, and the like, are mere *properties*, not *the body itself*. We feel, that we may legitimately infer the existence of some *substratum*, in which these, or other properties are combined. To this we give the name of matter, and talk of it with the utmost confidence, as a thing *really* existent; for we cannot easily persuade ourselves, that the great Creator would have communicated to us such organs of sense—been at such pains to prepare their complicated machinery, and adapt them to the mere purpose of reporting falsehood. The common-sense of mankind will not tolerate a doubt on this subject.

He that denies the existence of matter, is thought to be bordering on derangement. Yet some have doubted, and, with no little acuteness of reasoning, denied that there is a material world. The apostle says, “by *faith* we understand (but not by reason) the worlds were *framed* by the *word* of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”¹ With such proof of the reality of matter, we can rest satisfied and allow ourselves to think and speak of it, though our knowledge of it extends no further than to its properties. This mode of reasoning has been applied to the subject of life, and it has been thought perfectly conclusive as to the reality of *its* essence. That there is a subtle material principle which is the cause of those phenomena to which we give the name of life, has been inferred from the existence of what have been called vital properties. Whether this is a correct mode of speaking, in reference to the vital phenomena, will appear in the course of this chapter.

All material substances may be divided into two general

¹ Heb. xi. 3.

classes. They are either animate or inanimate—living or dead. The latter exhibit certain *physical* properties, and are subject to certain physical *laws*: which things are true of the former also, to a certain extent. *Living* bodies, however, exhibit what are sometimes called properties too, but of a different kind, and which often seem to be in contrast with those of *dead* matter. These supposed *properties* are sometimes termed *life*, at others the *vital force*, or the *vital properties* and *powers*. By some it has been described as an *effect*, produced by the action of certain impelling causes, and to be nothing but a *forced state* of existence—the result of organization. By others it has been called a *cause*, itself controuling organization. The reader will at once perceive how perplexed and intricate is the theme of this chapter. It is requisite, however, that we attempt to unravel it.

We perceive a series of phenomena having a constant relation to each other, and succeeding each other in a constant and uniform order: as, for example, in the animal frame, we discover the various processes of respiration, circulation, nutrition, secretion, digestion, growth, &c. We give the name of life to these *phenomena*, and freely admit that there is an agency of the Spirit of God, the great author of life, in their production, which we never can comprehend. It “is in God we live and move and have our being.”

Some, indeed, have endeavored to solve the phenomena of life, and the theory of *elective affinities* among the *molecules* or *elementary parts* of living bodies, has been supposed satisfactory. But the fact is, that the *vital phenomena*, and the chemical affinities, are direct antagonists. We perceive the fair and beauteous form of lovely woman. What graceful movements! What generous warmth! What delicate organization! What exquisite sensibilities! All combine to constitute a most fascinating form. The cheeks

are crimsoned with a ruby blush. The eyes are brilliant with the fires of genius, or sparkle with the animation of delight, or dazzle with the lustre of thought, or shed the mild rays of love. The countenance beams with intelligence, or glows with passion, and the soft tones of sympathizing tenderness drop in mellifluous accents from the rosy lips;—can these be the mere play of chemical affinities? They spring from some vastly superior cause. For let but death intervene;—in an instant sense and motion cease. A clammy coldness takes the place of generous warmth—beauty gives way to hideousness—the eyes lose all their lustre, and, with a frightful glare, shrink into their sockets—the mouth stands horribly gaping, and emits a fœtid odor—a livid hue creeps upon the crimson cheeks, and ruby lips—the flesh becomes blue, then green, then black, and the once elegant and voluptuous form evaporates in infectious exhalations, or dissolves into a putrid sanies, and leaves but a handful of earth and dust. It is *death* which awakens the elective affinities, and they rapidly accomplish the disorganization, dismemberment, and dissipation of the whole frame.

“The human body,” says a medical writer,¹ “maintains a successful warfare with, and effectually resists the incessant and combined attack of all the forces of the elements, often, for more than an hundred years, and then, when the divine principle does at length retire and yield up its fortress, it is in consequence of subjection to a cause widely different from that of being expelled by the triumphant power of its assailants. But when the soul has once fled, then, indeed, the chemical affinities come into play, and the rapidity of their devastation is terrible. In a few days all traces of organization are destroyed, and in a few years two or three gaseous substances distributed through the at-

1 Dr. Ward's Introductory Lecture.

mosphere, some saline solutions as widely diffused among the waters of the earth, and a few particles of earthy matter, are all that remain of the proud fabric of man,"

The theory of sensibility and contractility, as constituting vital *properties*, though apparently solving many more of the phenomena of life, and much more satisfactorily than that of the chemical affinities, will be found also to fail in some important respects. What are called vital properties may be distinguished into voluntary and involuntary. The involuntary may be admitted as properties of matter, but what are the voluntary? What is the will that creates the difference? It is surely something different from the properties themselves: so that more is necessary to the solution of the phenomena of life, than merely to predicate sensibility and contractility of particular modifications of matter, and to make life consist in them.

It is unnecessary to notice all the different theories of life. Each one has had its admirers and its day, but has given place in due season to some more imposing and successful rival; so that, at this hour, notwithstanding all the discoveries that have been made with regard to the more hidden operations of nature, the subject of life remains exceedingly perplexed. And we venture to assert it will never be entirely extricated from this perplexity. In general, theories on the subject have been partial, comprehending but a small portion of the innumerable varieties of life. In treating of such a general subject, it will not do to refer its origin to particular causes which apply only to one, or at most, to few species.

We have already traced the origination of life to God the Holy Spirit, the common fountain of all animated being—the unit of this interminable series. Not presuming to search the mind of the Spirit, nor to know how He exerts His energies, we are content to remain ignorant of life in

so far as it is connected with His agency, and believe that its precise nature is beyond the reach of human scrutiny and cannot be subjected to the investigation of human faculties.

Yet is it of importance, as far as it is practicable, to have precise ideas on the subject, and not be liable to the charge of utter and absolute ignorance. Life is a term which is in every one's mouth, and a thing, of which every one, at first, is disposed to think he has sufficient knowledge: but when asked to define it, who does not find himself greatly at a loss? Some definitions are too limited—others too general. Some describe only particular modifications of it—others generalize too much. It is not presumed that, on a subject where so much time and thought have been expended, *we* should have any thing new to communicate, or be more successful in attempting to give a definition of life. We feel that the utmost we can do is merely to approximate the truth. We hope none will accuse us of vanity, if we venture to define it, and say that

II. LIFE CONSISTS IN THE REGULAR SERIES OF RELATIVE APPROPRIATE CHARACTERISTIC ACTIONS IN AN INDIVIDUAL BEING.

Motion of some sort is essential to our idea of life. Mere organization—understanding by this term the regular arrangement of the particles composing any body, so as to give it its specific character—does not imply life. The whole mineral kingdom is subject to certain determinate rules, according to which, the particles in any mineral substance are *arranged* and *associated*—in some assuming the form of cubes, in others of rhomboids, in others that of a six-sided prism terminated by twelve scalene triangles, and in others of a different dodecahedron with pentagonal faces.

None, nor all of the innumerable phenomena of crystallization, presuppose or suggest the idea of life. The

particles that compose minerals are at rest, maintaining, except when subjected to external violence their relative positions. Whatever motion among them is excited by solvents or in the crystallizing process, is referred to the play of chemical affinities, without the idea of vivification; so that *all motion* does not imply life.

Neither does that motion which is simply appropriate to a body convey this idea. The whole planetary system is kept in perpetual motion, exhibiting to the eye of the astronomer the amazing phenomena of gravitation, but life is not predicable of *these* motions.

Even what may be termed the actions of bodies, do not always imply the existence of life. One object acts upon another, and produces certain motions, and this action, with its corresponding motions, is as various as the different species of attraction whose phenomena arrest the eye of the natural philosopher. The ascent of water by capillary attraction, the motions of the magnetic needle, the electrical excitement. &c., do not convey the idea of life.

The motions of which we predicate life, are confined to bodies of peculiar structure, those only which, strictly speaking, possess organization. By *organization* here we understand the combination and union of solid and fluid matter in a state of perpetual action, tending to the preserving of an individual being, and its reproduction. In the primary and more popular sense of the term organization, it is synonymous nearly with that of arrangement, conveying the idea of some juxta-position of the parts of a body as visible to the eye, and depending simply upon the mechanical structure of its particles. In another and higher sense, it denotes a system composed of parts, possessing appropriate powers and functions essential, or at least conducive to the existence and preservation of the whole. These different parts, are called organs, each having its

specific mode of action, but all combining to resist external violence, and promote the well-being, and perpetuate the existence, of the individual being or system uniting them. It is of these series of varied and relative actions that we predicate life.

Whether organic action, or the actions appropriate in an organized being, be life itself, or the *result* of life, is a question that has agitated and divided physiological inquirers. It is of some moment, in order to understand and ascertain the correctness of our definition of life, that we should determine whether it is the *result* of organization, or a principle having a primary and controlling influence on organization itself, or the totality of that series of actions or motions observable in an organized body. This differs from the inquiry whether life is dependent on or connected with organization. We can conceive of organization and life being so connected, that the destruction of the one must secure that of the other, and the one cannot exist without the other, and yet of their being entirely distinct. But while we distinguish carefully between them, we cannot be legitimately accused with maintaining that life is itself an essence involved in organization.

If life be not identical with organization, it must be either a *property*, or a *state*, or a *principle*, or a *series of actions and motions*. It is not a property of organization, for it will be admitted that death eventuates where organization is yet perfect. Perhaps it is preferred, to represent life under the idea of a *state*, and to describe it as that state of an organized body, in which there is eventuating a process of characteristic actions. We must confess that we are less inclined to object against this view of its nature than the former; but still we deem it objectionable, because however it might do in common parlance, it is not philosophically correct to call it a state, when it is more properly that which characterizes the state or condition.

If it be said that it is a *principle*, we must inquire what is meant by the term in this connection. We use the expression, commonly, to denote something which has a determining or regulating influence on action. This is its meaning in morals, and thus we speak of faith, hope, and love as principles of human action, which, though a vague phrase is well enough understood to denote the determining or regulating influence on human conduct exerted by a belief of testimony, an expectation of good, or an approbation of excellence—all of them feelings, which incite the voluntary being to action. We should not therefore make any very serious objections to the use of the phrase “a principle of life,” in this general moral sense. But when we speak of animal life, and use the term principle in relation to it, as designating something which has a determining or regulating influence on the actions of the animal, or is their original, if we mean any thing very precisely and do not speak altogether in a vague sense, we must mean to designate some *essence*, some *real substance* which has *power to originate* action, or is their appropriate cause. For the existence of such a substance or essence some have zealously contended, while others have as zealously denied it.

The arguments in support of the idea, that life is an essence or substance do not appear conclusive. They are generally drawn from our ignorance, or from analogy, or from scriptural expressions. An example of each may suffice. Dr. Copland remarks, “we are not contending for the existence of a principle which is *material according to the received notions respecting matter*.” This is unquestionably taking refuge in ignorance.

The argument from analogy is little better. “If we are not furnished with powers adequate to the detection of life in its essential form, does it therefore follow there is no such thing? It would be just as correct for the blind man to deny the existence and materiality of light, because *he*

had no delicately formed organ of vision by which to discern it, as it is to conclude that life is not an essence, because we have no sense so delicately formed as to discern this more sublimated form of matter." Yet does not this prove that there is such an essence or substance as is contended for by some who denominate life a *principle*.

Nor does the language of scripture when fairly interpreted, afford more in support of it. It is true that God prohibited the use of blood for food, assigning as a reason that "in the blood is the life thereof," which circumstance has been supposed conclusive as it regards the fact of life's being an essence. We can understand the declaration in these words, and the design of God in making it, without resorting to the supposition, that life is a *principle per se*, or essence. The words of God are, "But flesh with the life thereof, [which is] the blood thereof shall ye not eat."¹ The words, "*which is*," in brackets, are supplied by the translators, and the construction of the original would seem to exhibit the injunction as prohibiting men from cruelty, in taking a piece of flesh from a living animal for food. But if this interpretation be rejected, neither the declaration in this verse, nor in the parallel one in Leviticus, will sanction the idea that the blood *involves any essence which is life per se*. Indeed the latter passage favors the idea for which we contend. "The life of flesh is in its blood,"² is an assertion equivalent with this, that the blood of an animal is the basis and nourishment or support of its life, which is physiologically true. The authority and name of Dr. Hunter, and his theory on the subject of the blood having life in itself, do not shake our confidence in the plain common-sense interpretation of the words of scripture. We subjoin a note which we must take the liberty of saying is a fair specimen of that sort of obscurity which invariably attaches to their speculations.

1 Gen. ix. 4.

2 Lev. xvii. 11.

who make life to consist in an essence or principle anterior to and irrespective of those actions and motions appropriate to the being in which they are found.¹

When Paul speaks of man as compounded of "body, soul (or life) and spirit,"² we can very well understand his expressions without supposing that he meant to teach us, that life is an *essence*, and exists in man distinct from those actions and motions which are appropriate to the great design of God in his construction. Universally, mankind instinctively conceive the idea of death, and that immediately when absolute quiescence takes place in any organic existence. Syncope, and hybernation, and some other affections of animal existence, may cause an approximation to a state of absolute quiescence, and that so near as to render it difficult, by mere inspection, to ascertain whether all the processes or motions in which consists the life of the animal have absolutely ceased or not, but physiological researches have proved that they do not. Paul, whatever may be said about his Grecian philosophy, appropriately distinguishes between the "*body*," or the bone and membrane which form as it were the vegetable basis of our being, the ("*soul*") or life, all that relates to spontaneous motion or sensation, which is properly our animal existence, and the "*spirit*," the deathless soul, which is the intelligent percipient nature superadded. There is nothing

1 "When all the circumstances attending this fluid," says Dr. Hunter, "are fully considered, the idea that it has life within itself may not appear so difficult to comprehend; and, indeed, when once considered, I do not see how it is possible we should think it to be otherwise; when we consider, that every part is formed from the blood, that we grow out of it, and if it has not life previous to this operation, it must then acquire it in the act of forming; for we all give our assent to the existence of life in the parts when once formed. Our ideas of life have been so much connected with organic bodies, and principally those endowed with visible action, that it requires a new bent to the mind, to make it conceive that these circumstances are not inseparable.—*Hunter on the Blood*, part 1, c. 6, p. 58.

2 1 Thes. v. 23.

in the phraseology of scripture to sanction the idea, that life is a *principle* of itself, if the phrase is to be literally understood, and is not metaphorically used. God is said to have life in Himself, yet we cannot think there is in Him a vital principle distinguishable from His own holy volitions and actions, nor can we admit it, in reference to the human soul, and we see no reason why we must believe it to be a substance or essence in the human body distinguishable from the actions that are appropriate in it. The Stahlian doctrine, which makes the rational soul the vital principle in the human body, renders the language of scripture unmeaning and tautological, as well as introduces confusion into the whole subject of vitality.

We are therefore compelled to adopt the last supposition which indeed is most accordant with the common-sense, and the ordinary parlance, of men, that life consists in a series of actions and motions, appropriate to the design of the Creator in the formation of the individual being in which they are found. It is unnecessary for us to apply the definition, in any minute details, in order to ascertain its truth. But we would simply inquire, when we say a tree has died, in what consisted its death? Not in the destruction of the essential substance of the tree, nor in the absence of all motion whatever in it, for there takes place the process of putrefaction or decay; but simply, that there is the cessation of the circulating and assimilating processes necessary for the sustenance and growth of the tree. Does not its life then consist in that series of relative actions and motions appropriate to the design of the Creator in making it? In what, we would inquire, consists animal death? It is not in the destruction of the essence of the animal frame, nor in the cessation of all action and motion, for the process of decomposition is carried on in it. But the sensations and spontaneous motions appropriate to the de-

sign of the Creator in the formation of the animal, have ceased. And hence our idea of its life is easily inferred.

As to the life of the intellectual man—the life of the thinking and percipient spirit, the reader will have discovered that we understand it to consist in those actions appropriate to the design of the Creator in its original constitution. We reserve for another place the illustration and confirmation of this view of its nature.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHARACTER OF THE SPIRIT'S AGENCY.

Whether the Spirit's agency in the production of life is immediate and continuous, or consists in the establishment of certain laws—Gen. ii. 1, 2: Psalm cii. 21.—The creating and preserving agency of God not identical—Quotation from Boston—False assumption—Human language incapable of representing the precise character of the divine agency—Examples in illustration taken from the laws of nature—Re-production attributable to the Spirit's agency rather than to fixed laws—the infidel objection against particular providence—Common sense of more value in understanding this subject than atheistical philosophy—The false assumption of the objection—Testimonies from scripture—Uses to be made of the great truth confirmed in this chapter—To beware of impertinently prying into the mysteries of the Spirit's agency—To learn how rich a zest it gives to the providence of God—How it illustrates the fact of election—And reminds us of the uncertainty of life, &c.

Perhaps it will be admitted, by some of our readers, that life flows from the Holy Spirit's agency, while it is affirmed that His agency is not immediate; but only exerted in the establishment of certain laws according to which it is preserved and propagated. This starts a question which has been ably handled by metaphysical writers. Whether conservation be a continual creation, was the form in which the question was once stated, it being contended, on the one hand, that the *same* agency of God which *originally* produced the material universe is necessary *every moment* for its preservation, so that if for one instant it should be withheld, the whole creation must relapse into its primitive non-entity;—while, on the other hand,

this was denied, by those who seemed to think that God, when he originally created matter, endowed it with certain properties or powers which enabled it to preserve itself. We can see no reason for supposing that the one or the other must necessarily be the fact.

The sacred scriptures certainly represent God as having ceased at the close of the sixth day to exert his *creative* power. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God *ended* his work which he had made."¹ And the Psalmist says, "Of *old* hast thou laid the foundations of the earth."² The great reason or recommendation of the observance of the Sabbath, is represented to consist in the divine example in the work of creation—God operating six days and then ceasing to operate, or resting, on the seventh. We certainly, from these facts, must conclude that the agency of God in creating, during those six days, was different from that which he exerted on the seventh. Yet, it is most true that God has an agency, in *preserving* and *supporting* all things which He has made. It does not however follow that the agency is of the same character. It is the agency of the same Being, we admit, but differently exerted; for we do not concede, that the agency of God can only be exerted in positive creative acts, which we must believe if we identify creation and conservation.

In one of the posthumous works of that excellent divine, Mr. Thos. Boston, he has undertaken to shew that these things are the same, and by the following mode of reasoning: "There is no necessary connection betwixt the creature's moments of duration: *Ergo*, &c. It follows not because I am this moment, therefore I shall be the next, for so I should be an eternal necessary Being, which is proper to God." But although we admit his first position it does not follow that every successive act of God in sus-

1. Gen. ii. 1, 2.

2. Psalms cii. 26.

taining my being is a *creative* act. The following is a fair sample of metaphysical sophistry: "Nothing can give what it has not, we have not our being next moment: *Ergo*, &c. *Exception* our being is still the same in all moments. *Answer*. No otherwise than the water of Et-trick is the same it was this morning. Those things which may be separated are not the same; but my being in the moment A, may be separated from my being in the moment C, being annihilated in B, and created again in C. Now there is the same reason of all. My being this moment is necessary; for *quicquid est quando est, necessario est*; my being next moment is not necessary, for I may be annihilated: *ergo*, they are not the same."

The whole force of their reasoning who maintain that creation and preservation are the *same* specific acts of God, is derived from this assumption, that every *positive* act of God is the same. We cheerfully admit that the up-holding all things by the word of the divine power, is a series of positive acts on the part of God; but does it therefore follow there is a new creation springing into being every successive moment? By no means. For cannot God diversify his acts and agency? Creation is the result of one volition on the part of God, that volition being accompanied with an exercise of his power. Preservation, at any moment, is the result of another volition, it being accompanied with another and correspondent effort of the divine power. If it seem inconceivable to us, and beneath the dignity of the divine Being, to suppose that he would be thus incessantly exercising His energies, we must remember, that human language cannot express accurately the fact in this case. We can have no idea of the *mode* of the divine existence, which is *not by succession*, but AN ETERNAL NOW: nor of the mode of the divine operation, which is, and must be, in some other way than according to the impulses of *continued distinct*

momentary volitions. What we therefore contend for, is, that creating and sustaining agency on the part of God, are different—the former being indeed instantaneous, but the latter continuous, and both exerted in some mysterious way, adapted to His own mysterious nature. In thus affirming we are not to be understood as making mere gratuitous assertions. For what, we ask, are the laws of nature as they are ordinarily termed?

We talk, of gravitation, of various species of attraction, and of all the physical laws of nature, as of certain properties or powers inherent in different modifications of matter themselves. But who does not feel, that this is not satisfactory? When we say that the load-stone attracts iron, what do we mean? Do we mean that one piece of inert matter operates spontaneously on another? Or, that any material thing can have an influence, and effective operation, beyond itself—that some substance at the magnetic pole operates on the needle, which oscillates in my theodolite, hundreds and thousands of miles removed from it—that it can be in two different places at the same time? Certainly not. Some indeed may attempt to explain the influence of one material object on another, and various have been the theories to account for the magnetic, electric, and galvanic, &c. energies which it is altogether unnecessary to cite here; but, whether the laws of fluids tending to an equilibrium resolvable into gravitation, or any one of the mechanical powers, be made the means of solving the phenomena, we must pronounce them all unsatisfactory.

For, suppose that all the different modes of action observable among material substances be resolvable into gravitation, still we wish to know what is gravitation? Why do all bodies tend towards the centre of the earth, and mutually towards each other, according to their respective densities and volumes? How does the sun, at such an im-

mense distance, operate on the earth to hold it in its orbit? Who, on mere physical principles, can answer these questions satisfactorily? To say that it is the *property* of one body, *thus to affect*, and another *thus to be affected*, is saying just nothing. To say that God *originally* gave it this property, and that it still possesses it by virtue of his creative power, is saying no more. For the inquiry is *how* one piece of matter, destitute of spontaneity and intelligence, can operate without the sphere of its own existence?

We may labour and theorise forever, but shall never be able to solve satisfactorily the phenomena produced by the regular action of what are termed the laws of nature, if we exclude the agency of God—the prime mover, the first cause, the supreme intelligence, the only independent Being. It may do in the structure of a dramatic poem to observe the rule of the poet,

Nec Deus intersit nisi nodus

Vindice iudex—

—but if we exclude the agency of God in the support of material things around us we cannot proceed one step, till we are lost in utter and inextricable perplexity. Although we may not be able to understand the precise mode of that agency we attribute to God, yet we feel, that an adequate cause is assigned, in the *fact* of such agency: for all the effects we observe to be transpiring and the diversified modes of His agency, only serve to give us a more exalted idea of his power and resources. To say, that the *continuity* of that agency militates against the dignity of His character, is altogether a mistake, for with God there is no succession. “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,” so that, inasmuch as eternity with Him is an ever-present now, if we attribute to him at any *one* period of our existence, any particular agency, we need not fear, that we shall derogate from his

dignity, if we believe that agency to be continuous through *the whole*, and by a like mode of reasoning, of all other things.

These remarks may prepare the way for a reply to the inquiry from which we have digressed, whether the Spirit's agency, in the production of life, consists merely in an effort of creative power at the commencement, introducing all the different forms of life, which, by *laws* then ordained, should have power to propagate themselves in all varieties; or whether, there is still and continuously, an agency of the Spirit for the preservation and support of life. The laws of re production are indeed established, and continual developements of life are conducted according to them, and have been from the very first period of creation. The fishes, the reptiles, the feathered tribe, the animals, and man, were all created in the full vigour and perfection of their being, not in an embryo state; and the trees and herbs, &c. were all planted in the ground, after they had been created, with the seed already formed, the germ of future growths distinctly organized and ready to commence the evolutions of life in a new individual.¹

But it does by no means follow from these admissions, that the Spirit's agency ceased on the establishment of the laws of re-production. The whole developing process is under His immediate care. For, as what are called the laws of nature, are but *modes* of the divine agency—different indeed from the creative energy, but as real; so the laws of re-production are but modes of the Spirit's agency—different indeed from that originally exerted in the formation of the first living creatures, but not the less real. In the one instance, the agency is direct, and the effect produced without the intervention of means—in the other through the instrumentality

1. Gen. ii. 5.

of what are termed second causes. These causes derive all their efficiency from the divine agency.

III. THE DEVELOPING PROCESS, HOWEVER PURSUED, IN THE PRODUCTION OF NEW LIVING BEINGS, OWES ALL ITS EFFICACY TO THE SPIRIT'S AGENCY. He presides over this immense and interesting department of the Creator's works. "He giveth to all life and breath and all things."

That there is some divine care extended to the works of the Creator's hands, must be admitted by all who acknowledge the truth of the sacred scriptures. Yet are there not a few, who profess to believe, that the providence of God must be administered *only by general laws*; for to suppose that his care extended to the minute creatures, and every individual form of life, and living substance, they think would derogate from his dignity. They can conceive of God's providence extending to systems, or of its being concerned in great signal revolutions in the affairs of men, but as to any thing further they are incredulous,

"The first Almighty cause

"Acts not by partial but by general laws."

But these are vain and ignorant objections. They are founded alike in ignorance of God and of his work. The infidel admits the providence of God in general, that is, it may extend to systems, and by general laws. But what are systems? What too is here meant by *general* and *individual*? Is there any being which is not a system with respect to some others? Man unites in himself several. One system of living beings is involved in another. The whole creation teems with life, and where to begin, or where to end, in our researches, we know not. In fact there is no such thing as absolute magnitude save in God. All greatness, of which we have knowledge, is relative. We estimate the magnitude of one object by comparing it with another. And shall we adopt a standard of our own, and extend or restrict the agency of God according to our

decisions as to what is great or small? There is a world in the worm on which we tread, and yet our earth, the sun and planetary worlds, are but a point compared with

Orb above orb ascending without end !

Circle in circle without end enclosed !

The eye of the astronomer peers through immeasurable and uncomprehended space, and losing sight of earth, and its associate worlds, he exclaims in utter overwhelming amazement,

What extent! What swarms

Of worlds, that laugh at earth! Immensely great!

Immensely distant from each other's spheres,

What then the wond'rous space through which they roll?

At once it quite ingulphs all human thought:

'Tis comprehension's absolute defeat.

If then the agency of God extends to *systems* only, where shall it begin? And where shall it end? But how shall the whole system be preserved, if the different parts are neglected? The truth is the objection is altogether a rash one, and if it be carried out, and the principle be fully admitted, that individual beings are too low for God to notice, we must land in Atheism. For if it be beneath Him to *preserve* it is equally beneath Him to *create*. Let the objector who perhaps is not prepared to run with his objection to this extent, but who scoffs at the idea of God's care over the individual parts of his creation, tell us why He made a flea or even a philosopher. The whole force of the objection lies in this absurd assumption, that small things have a power to preserve themselves, and need no particular care and agency of God, but that great things have not.

It is rather singular that human pride should have betrayed itself so completely! The real secret, however, of all this opposition to God's intimate concern with the things of this world, is not, that these men have in reality

any greater reverence for the Divine Being, nor that they are more jealous of his honour than others, nor that they do design to exalt his character and excellence. Far from it; but because they do not “like to retain God in their knowledge.”¹ It is rather an unwelcome and painful thought that He is ever and every where present, “beholding both the evil and the good.” Therefore they endeavour to impose on their own consciences, and persuade themselves, with the old Epicureans, that He has withdrawn from the earth, and left, with all his creatures, what is called a *plastic nature*, to regulate and preserve them. Thus, for ease of mind they take refuge in practical Atheism, and dignify it with the name of philosophy. “The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.”² “How doth God know, and is there knowledge with the Most High.”³ The Psalmist will be found right, for whatever system men have devised, let them call it philosophy, or science, or rationalism, or what they choose, if they exclude the immediate cognizance, and care of God, from the affairs of this world, and deny any concurring co-operative agency on His part, giving efficiency to second causes, it will be found on a candid and careful examination to be mere folly. Common sense will discover absurdity marked and glaring, where the jaundiced eye of the Atheistical philosopher cannot detect it.

The idea does not seem to have entered the mind of these infidel philosophers, that there can be any particular providence, on the part of God, without a miracle or departing from the general laws of nature.

Shall burning Ætna, if a sage requires,
 Forget to thunder, and recall her fires?
 On air or sea new motions be imprest,
 Oh blameless Bethel! to relieve thy breast?
 When the torn mountain trembles from on high,
 Shall gravitation cease if you go by?

1. Rom. i. 28.

2. Psalm xiv. 1.

3. Psalm lxxii. 11.

Thus ignorantly asks the unbeliever! But let *us* ask—cannot God, previously, direct that the sage shall not require, nor be endangered by *Ætna's* fires? Shall not his steps be so directed, as not to pass by the trembling mountain? The objection seems to take it for granted, that a particular providence is a providence in emergencies which may require the control or suspension of some established law. But there are no emergencies with providence. “He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.”¹ “The steps of a good man are all ordered of the Lord.”² “The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”³ What men may purpose in evil, God oft times means for good, as Joseph said to his brethren, “But as for you ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day to save much people alive.”⁴

The whole language of scripture teaches a steady and efficient care and agency, on the part of God, in the preservation of the world and its inhabitants. “Upholding all things by the word of His power.”⁵ “By Him all things consist.”⁶ “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.”⁷ “In Him we live, move and have our being.”⁸ These may suffice, and they are so plain as to need no comment. The agency of God, and that *continuously*, in the support of all things, is a fact most clearly asserted in the sacred scriptures.

To God, in the person of the Spirit, we have already seen belong the whole department of life, and it is therefore to His continuous agency, that we are to attribute the preservation of the vital functions and energies of all that lives. It was to this Spirit's agency that the Psalmist attributed his con-

1 Eph. i. 11.

2 Psalm, xxxvii. 23.

3 Psalm, i. 6

4 Gen. i. 20.

5 Heb. i. 3.

6 Col. i. 17.

7 Mat. x. 29.

8 Acts, xvii. 28.

tinuous growth in his mother's womb, and all his subsequent existence. And it is directly in reference to this efficient ever operative agency that he speaks when he exclaims "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utmost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."¹ Let us then cease from useless inquiry. "Our life is *hid* with Christ in God."² We need never expect to unravel the mysteries of His agency in its production or perpetuation, nor to understand its nature. How he operates and excites the different parts and faculties of our being, and preserves them in appropriate action it were folly for us to inquire. That His agency however is directly and continuously exerted in relation to those characteristic actions which constitute the phenomena of life, is a truth plainly taught in the word of God. There is nothing to sanction the idea, that his agency consists merely in ordaining the laws, which are to regulate those actions, or in creating an essence or *principle per se*, which is the immediate cause of the phenomena.

Here for a moment let us pause. We feel as if we owed the reader some apology for the train of remarks into which we have fallen. They are designed to prepare the way for an illustration of one of the most interesting facts developed in the plan of redemption, viz., *the regeneration of a sinner*. It is the important use we intend to make of them, that must be our apology for attempting to define life, and illustrate the definition of it. The highest authority has required us to "prove all things," and although such proof be not the reason of our faith, yet for

¹ Psalm. cxxxix. 7—10.

² Col. iii. 3.

full confirmation in the faith of an essential fact, and doctrine, we have allowed ourselves to take an extensive range in our investigation, being thoroughly persuaded that there will be nothing found, in the kingdom of grace, at war with the great and fundamental principles established in the constitution of nature; and that they who reject, and treat with ribaldry this important scriptural tenet, as being mysterious or absurd, act a most unphilosophical part, and shew that they know not of what they speak, nor whereof they affirm.

We cannot, however, dismiss the topic which has in this chapter engaged our attention without adverting to some salutary uses which in our daily walk may be made of it. If life, in all its varieties be the effect of the Spirit's agency; then let us beware how we attempt, with rash and impious hand, to draw aside the veil in which He has inwrapped the mystery of His operations. It has sometimes affected us with the greatest astonishment, to see how presumptuous and self-confident have been the philosophic inquirers who have looked into this subject. They have discovered a few phenomena of life merely, and ventured to proclaim, that they could unravel all its mysteries. If observation and experiment were conducted with a view to ascertain facts, it would be well; but it, when one or two circumstances of life are discovered, men proudly presume that they understand the whole subject, and lose sight of God the fountain of all life, they are greatly to be pitied. Thus to hear men talk of sensibility, and contractility, and irritability, and other phenomena of life, may both interest and profit; but we lose all confidence in the soundness of their judgment, when they undertake to tell us that *these things* are the mere *effect of organization*, and not dependent on the Spirit of God. They assign a cause totally inadequate to account for the effect. We object not to the minutest, and most curious scrutiny. Let us push our investigations as far as possible;

but when we reach the boundaries of human knowledge, where the wonder-working God inwraps His operations in the mystery of His own being, let us, with adoring minds fall prostrate at His feet, and acknowledge his infinite wisdom and almightiness.

Let us also learn from the same general fact of the Spirit's intimate agency in the production and support of life, what a rich zest it gives to the providence of God. The poor heathen thought that God had withdrawn from earth and left things here to direct themselves, or, not feeling satisfied with a God afar off, they attributed in all the extravagance of their polytheism, a deity to every thing that lives and moves. But thanks be to God for the revelations of His word—while we adore Him, as in heaven the One Infinite Supreme, we can recognize His presence on the earth, and trace the operations of His Spirit in ourselves, and in every living thing around us. No dread fatality, no unmeaning chance, no absent God affect us with dismay. We see the directing and sustaining hand of God—of our covenant God, in all that we suffer or enjoy, and can dismiss all fears, and painful anxieties and dread forebodings, from our minds, being assured that He knows our way, and directs our steps, so that with pacifying confidence we can appeal directly to Himself, “Thou wilt guide (us) with thy counsel, and afterward receive (us) to thy glory.”¹

We may also notice how this general fact of the Spirit's agency in the production of life serves to illustrate a doctrine so very obnoxious to many, so little understood by those who oppose it, but so unequivocally taught in the sacred scriptures, viz., the doctrine of election. We use this term because it is the technicality employed in the scriptures, and generally by those who advocate or oppose it. But we are not tenacious of terms. They are things, or facts for which we contend. Miserable indeed are the contests

1 Psalm, lxxiii. 24.

which agitate the world, in which mere abstractions are the occasions of strife. Infidel men denounce all theological controversy as such, and many speculative and scientific religionists afford them too much pretext for it, by their “doting about questions and strifes of words whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmises, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth.”¹ Mere technicalities should be abandoned if they prove the occasion of controversy, but the truth cannot be by those that love it. He cannot certainly be accounted a skilful defender of the truth, who finds it necessary always to make use of the technics of the schools.

If it be fact as declared by the best authority, even that of God Himself, we must not only be bold in affirming it; but it concerns us to see to it, that it has its appropriate influence on our character and conduct. Now by election in the sacred scriptures, is meant nothing else than the *actual* selection of a certain portion of men, from the great mass, by their being made the subjects of a new species of life, viz., spiritual life, and which is not possessed by the rest. It is the *actual exercise and display of God's sovereignty in making believers* alive from the dead, or quickening them from the death of trespasses and sins, in which they in common with all mankind were lying. What is this but God's producing new life in individual cases?

And will you say that He shall not exercise His sovereignty in *this* matter? Then you must say that He shall not exercise it at all in the production of life in *any* form, and that He is bound to confer the same kind of life in every instance. But how does this accord with the fact? Is not the sovereignty of God remarkably displayed in His production of life? He has not made His creatures all angels nor all animalcules, all men nor all mules, all birds nor all beasts, all insects nor all fishes, nor all of the different

1 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5.

orders and classes of the same form, appearance or species, and will you say, that in the production of spiritual life, which is bringing the powers and capacities of rebellious man into appropriate action and enjoyment, He shall not consult *His own good pleasure*? As well might man upbraid, and find fault with God, that he was not made a seraph, or a toad that it was not made a philosopher, as that thou, oh, *sinner*, who hast no right to any thing whatever but the damnation of hell, shouldest upbraid God for having made thy friend or neighbor a subject of spiritual life. When nothing as yet had been created, had not God a right to produce whatever creatures he saw fit? Had non-entity a claim, if we may use such expressions, to be made into any particular creature? Much less has the *sinner any claim* on God for spiritual life. The whole mass of men with respect to this life are precisely in the condition of non-entity with respect to being. Their situation is even worse, if we may so speak, for if by wilful rebellion, they act altogether inappropriate to the design of the creator in their original formation, He certainly can be under no obligations so to influence and affect them, as to bring them to those actions and enjoyments which constitute the life of one in favor and fellowship with God. And thus the apostle reasons on the subject, "O man who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonor?"¹ No fact can be more distinctly stated than this of God's sovereign will determining the spiritual life or existence of the believer. "Of His own will begat He us."² "Who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."³ This is election, and it is impossible for any

1 Rom. ix. 20, 21.

2 James, 1. 18.

3 John, i, 13.

one to deny the fact that believers are indeed elected of God, who admit that they have received influences and are brought to actions and enjoyments differing essentially from unregenerate sinners.

We have assumed for the present the fact, that believers are made the subjects of a new life, anticipating, for the sake of illustrating a great doctrine of our faith, what we hope to establish fully in the prosecution of this work, and what is cordially admitted and zealously advocated by some who nevertheless oppose and take alarm at the very thought of election. The communication of spiritual life to believers is called election, because they as moral agents, having been previously existent, are thus selected from the great mass of mankind and made to differ from them. Predestination differs from election only as it is the purpose of God beforehand to do what in time he actually does, and whoso denies the one must deny the other, or else maintain that God has no purpose, and does not know what he intends to do, till the very moment he does it, which is utterly at war with the declarations of his word, which exhibits believers as "being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."¹

We cannot dismiss this interesting topic without noticing how forcibly it reminds us of the uncertainty of life and the necessity of being prepared for death. We have seen, that all life depends on the good pleasure of God the Holy Spirit, both as to its kind and continuance. Now it is impossible for us to search the mind of God, and therefore it must be impossible to determine the duration of our life. Whether it may be his will to stop the current this hour, or the next, or at a later period who can tell? Think not frail dust! to say the organs of life must first be deranged or decayed. If this be necessary, it can be done instantaneously.

¹ Eph. i. 11.

neously. It has often been. But this is not necessary. Life may cease and yet the organs remain entire. The wheels of a mill will cease their revolutions the moment you confine the water, their moving power, to its head. So the moment the Spirit withholds His agency our life shall cease. It will inevitably, although the organs may remain entire. Boast not of health and vigour—your life depends on God, and what He may choose to do this day or to-morrow you know not. How utterly foolish therefore to neglect the interest of the immortal being, and at any moment be unprepared for death! Can any such be found? Ah me, their number is almost beyond the power of computation. I see an immense crowd of triflers whose eyes are fast closed, and yet are dancing on the brink of an awful precipice. One and another are dropping fast from their midst, while none perceive that their numbers are diminishing. The warning voice is never heard, the shrieks of falling companions die upon their ears, while all “drive headlong towards the precipice of death.” Oh, for a voice like thunder to burst around them with terrific peals! Oh, for an arm almighty to snatch them from the brink of ruin!

Reader, art thou a stranger to Christ and unprepared to die? Thy breath is in thy nostrils, and thou knowest not what a day or an hour may bring forth. Already dost thou reel upon the mountains of vanity, but mercy prevents thy fall. Why trifle? Why an hour's delay, when the next moment eternity may close around thee and envelope thee forever in the horrors of despair. Fly to the Lord of Glory, who gives the spirit of life, and resolve to live forever. May that good Spirit save thy soul from death, and guide thee from the brink of ruin to the realms of day!

CHAPTER IX.

THE IMMATERIALITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

The right understanding of a sinner's regeneration requires a correct knowledge of man's original nature—Scriptural account of the creation of man—Gen. i. 26, 27: ii. 7—The image of God consisted not merely in the spiritual nature of man, nor in his lordship over the creatures, nor in his moral qualities peculiarly and exclusively, nor in any designed representation of the form and appearance, but in the three-fold character of life united in one moral being—Inquiry as to what constitutes the life of the rational soul of man—The immateriality of the soul does not prevent us from all knowledge of it—All our knowledge of God analogical—2 Cor. xii. 4—The properties of the human soul not those of matter—Thought is not a *quality* of simple matter—Nor the result of chemical action—Nor motion—Nor organic action—Nor a secretion of the brain—Nor a superadded quality of especial organization—Dr. Priestly, Dr. Rush, Mr Jefferson's false mode of reasoning—Priestley's argument based on vague ideas of the properties of matter—Dr. Cooper—Inconsistency of the advocates of materialism—Thought and vibration distinct—Perception and thought, acts, not qualities—Specimen of sophistry—No alleged incapacity of spirit to act on matter a valid objection against its existence—Two monstrous absurdities—Simple method of refuting the errors of the materialist—The naturalist bound to account for the unity of human consciousness—Mere mechanism totally inadequate to account for the phenomena of thought—Objections met.

HAVING given a general definition of life, and shewn that the Spirit of God is its immediate author and sustainer, it becomes necessary,

IV. BEFORE WE CAN CONSISTENTLY AND SATISFACTORILY TREAT OF THE REGENERATION OF THE SINNER, TO INQUIRE INTO THE PRIMITIVE FEATURES OF MAN'S SPIRITUAL NATURE. We shall in vain attempt to examine a

life *re-imparted* without some knowledge of it as originally given. Where shall we look for this knowledge with such evident prospect of success, as to the first man when he sprung into life, in all the perfection of his being, directly from the plastic hand of his great Creator?

The account given in the sacred scriptures of the original formation of man, is brief, but nevertheless abundantly satisfactory. That philosophy which rejects the light of revelation can assign no satisfactory cause for the production of the first man. The speculations of some are almost too ridiculous to be even referred to. But the sure word of God, in two or three sentences, gives us the most interesting and satisfactory information. "God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."¹ "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."²

Hence we learn the following facts with regard to man's original, viz., that he was created in the image and likeness of God; that his body was made out of pre-existent materials, the dust of the ground; that the breath of life, which is the Spirit of God, was communicated to his corporal frame, and he became a living soul or frame, that is that his life is the direct result of the Spirit's agency.

We have already seen, that the expression in the original is the breath of *lives*, which, whether it be understood as designating the Spirit of God, or as the life of the creature man, amounts in the end, precisely to the same thing, viz.,

¹ Gen. i. 26, 27.

² Gen. ii. 7.

that man is a compound being, or unites in himself several distinct kinds of life. The Spirit of God would most probably be designated the breath of lives, from the circumstance of His being the author of several forms of life in man, rather than from the fact of His being the *universal* author of life; for it is common in the scriptures for God to be designated from the particular occasions, or relations, or circumstances under which He is at the time contemplated. If, as some will contend, it is man's life, and not the Spirit of God, which is denoted by this expression, then it cannot be denied that man was originally the subject of several kinds of life.

We have already seen that there are *two* distinct kinds of life united in man, viz., that which consists in the appropriate action of the organic parts of the human body—the *vegetable*, or as it is technically called the *organic life*; and that which consists in the appropriate action of the superadded and complicated machinery of nerves and muscles, so essential to sensation and voluntary motion—the distinctive peculiarities of animal life. These are in entire accordance with two of the great classifications which the apostle Paul has made of the constituent parts of man, viz., body and soul. The term which our translators have rendered “soul,”¹ as has been seen, conveys the idea of animal life. This remark may be of use to the reader of the scriptures in more instances than one.

It is obvious, that both these parts of man's being are *material*—formed of the dust of the ground. There is however another, which the apostle calls “*spirit*”² and which he designates by the very term which he employs to denote the Spirit of God. It is in this, that theologians generally consider, we must look for the traces of the divine image in which man was created. As to what constituted that resemblance however, they are not gener-

1 *Soul*.

2 *spiritus*.

ally agreed. Some allege that it was mere spirituality, others the lordship or sovereignty over the creatures with which he was invested, and others again the moral qualities of his nature, knowledge, righteousness and holiness. It is perhaps safest to adopt neither opinion exclusively ; but to trace the likeness in every respect in which true resemblance can be discerned. It is not in one feature only in which we are to trace a likeness, but in the *toute ensemble*.

There is, however, we apprehend, one important respect in which this resemblance in man to God may be seen, which indeed is generally overlooked, but which, we are disposed to think, is of principal consequence. It is not one person of the Godhead only who is represented as speaking at the formation of man, but the whole three. Jehovah, the ever-blessed *Three in One*, said, "let us make man in our image"—not in the image of any one person, nor of each distinctly, but of all *conjointly*. How admirably are the distinct personality and essential unity of the Godhead represented or imaged in man possessing three distinct kinds of life, and yet constituting but one moral being. In him are united the vegetable, the animal, and the moral or spiritual life, each having and preserving its distinct character, but all combined in one responsible individual.

In support of this explanation of the likeness in which man was originally created, we merely observe, that from the consultation which is represented to have taken place among the persons of the Godhead about his creation, it is obvious this image must have been something different from any thing which had as yet been exhibited in the creatures. It could not have been the spiritual part of man's nature, for "He maketh His angels spirits,"¹ and man's spiritual nature was greatly obscured by his body, which was formed of the dust of the ground.

¹ Heb. 1. 7.

It could not have been the mere lordship which He exercised over the creatures, for this was made a matter of special grant, *after that* he had been already created in the divine image.

It could not have been exclusively the moral qualities with which he was endowed, for knowledge, righteousness and holiness are the attributes of the angelic, as well as of the human nature.

It could not have been merely as a designed representation of the form and appearance which it was intended the son of God should assume, for HE is himself styled "the image of the invisible God," and man, in this respect, would have been not so much the image of God, the three in one, as of Christ the second person. We are therefore compelled to conclude, that man was created the image of the great THREE IN ONE, as he was characterized by this peculiarity among the creatures, that he alone unites in one moral individual the three great orders of life, viz., vegetable, animal and spiritual.

There is therefore abundant proof it would seem, from the very account of man's primitive formation, that there were associated in him several distinct kinds of life. Of the two inferior kinds, the organic or vegetable, and the animal life in man, there is no dispute; nor do they here require explanation. Sufficient has been already advanced in illustration of them. But this cannot be said of the third—the life of the spirit or immortal soul of man. This forms the governing and distinguishing part of human nature. It is the tie which binds man to other worlds. It is the immediate seat of all the higher and ennobling attributes of humanity. In the other parts of his nature, he is directly dependent on and connected with this material world. His body is a part of the earth. But his spirit is dependent on God, and in its appetites and cravings, he aspires after the bliss of his communion. It

is in this part of his nature he has sustained the severest shock. Here too the ravages of death are most appalling; but here the energies of the Divine Spirit are exerted to impart the life of God. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."¹ Inasmuch therefore as regeneration is predicated particularly of the soul of man, and, as authorized by the language of the scriptures, it is contemplated as being the re-commencement of life in that soul, it becomes necessary to inquire as to what constitutes the *peculiar appropriate life* of the rational soul of man.

Here, however, as in every other case, when inquiring into the essence of a thing, we must confess our ignorance. We use the term soul or spirit, to denote an existence that is *not material*; but this is the chief account that we can give of its nature. Our blessed Lord himself has done no more. "A spirit," said he to his disciples, "hath not flesh and bones."² Whether He is here to be understood as declaring the immaterial nature of spirit, or merely citing the vulgar opinion on the subject of apparitions, it is of little consequence to determine; for flesh and bones constitute the material part of man, and when to spirit they are denied, the presumption rises that it is immaterial. This however is a point which is much disputed.

If the soul be immaterial, perhaps it is asked, *how* can we ever have any knowledge of it? We have no senses so delicately organized, as to be capable of perceiving spirit. Our senses were all made for the perception of a material world around us. *How* then can we know that there *is* such a thing? And is it at all *possible* for us, to have *any* knowledge of it whatever?

In reply to such inquires, we might ask, whether the testimony of God is not as sufficient evidence as that of our senses, and if He has told us, that we have a soul, that there is such a thing as spirit—Is not that enough? And

1. John iii. 6.

2. Luke xxiv. 39.

as to our having any idea or notion of what cannot be perceived by means of our senses, we may ask whether much of our knowledge is not of this very character? What are all our abstract ideas and general truths? Are they not knowledge, which the mind itself has excogitated from, and by means of, the ideas originally derived through the medium of sense.? What too is our knowledge of God? "No man hath seen God at any time;"¹ yet how few have *reasoned* themselves into a notion that there is not a God? Let the objector declare himself, and say whether God must be a material Being in order to our having any knowledge of Him. The scriptures say "God is a Spirit?"² How then is He known? It will not do to say that our knowledge of Him is intuitive, innate, and such like. *Intuitive* is a figurative expression, and as to *innate*, it is not necessary, at this late day, to expose such an absurd pretence, as that man is born into the world with the knowledge of God, or of any thing else.

The truth is, that all our knowledge of God is *analogical*. We employ our conceptions of things originally material, to represent in our minds God and divine things, in consequence, not of a mere apparent but true *resemblance*, in the nature of things. In like manner we talk of our own souls, and the operations of our own minds, although we have no *direct* or immediate perception of them. "We cannot" says a profound writer, "with our utmost intention of thought, and greatest energy of abstraction form to ourselves any *original* and *purely intellectual* ideas of the workings of our own minds. And the reason of this is, because the most abstracted and exalted operations of the human mind are actions of both matter and spirit in *essential union*, and not particular to either *alone*. We have indeed an immediate *consciousness* of the operations *themselves*, without the intervention of any idea of them; but no perception of them by such *abstract* or separate

1. John i. 18.

2. John iv. 24.

idea of any sort."¹ It is by virtue of a real correspondence or true resemblance between some things in spirit, and what we discern in material things, that our ideas and language taken from the latter class, become certain and satisfactory representations of that, which in the former cannot be directly apprehended by mere intellect. Such is the mode of obtaining knowledge, which God has ordained for us, while in our compound state uniting in our persons both matter and mind, and they mutually dependent.

That pure and disembodied spirit must have other modes of knowledge, we doubt not; but in our present state we know not what they are; nor can we, while mind is made to depend on body. Paul "was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter;" but whether he was "in the body or out of the body,"² he could not tell. Yet his ignorance of the mode of his knowledge did not destroy his convictions of the truth and certainty of what he knew. When speaking even of that knowledge, communicated in some sublime mysterious way, he is compelled to make use of language borrowed from sensible things. HE HEARD UNSPEAKABLE WORDS. No man could make him doubt the reality of what he was made to know by other means than through the mind's sensible perceptions, and consequent and correspondent excogitations.

Why then should it be objected that we can have no knowledge of spirit, because we have no direct, immediate or purely intellectual perception of it? Is all our language, when we talk of perceiving, discerning, comparing, abstracting, comprehending, inventing, intending, &c., where the subject is not material a mere delusion? These expressions denote sensible acts, and are derived from sensible objects, but when employed to denote the acts and

¹ Divine Analogy, p. 23.

² Cor. xii. 4.

operations of the mind, are mere pictures, or shadows, or representations of something analogous, transacted by pure intellect or spirit. Is all this falsehood? Has God formed us so as to be perpetually busied in framing and playing with the mere imagery in our own brains, while there is nothing at all in existence, correspondent with what we apprehend these images to represent? He that denies the reality of spirit, and of a spiritual world, because his conceptions of them are only through the medium of sensible ideas, must either deny that God exists, and has created us, or impeach His character in a vital point, by asserting that He has so constituted us, as to be perpetually gathering, arranging, classifying, and acquiring ideas by which we apprehend as fact, things that never had an existence, or, in other words, that he has made us the mere sport of our self-deceivings. That be far from us. If God, who cannot deceive, has so created us, we rest as perfectly satisfied of the reality of what is thus indirectly and analogically, as of what is, directly and sensibly, perceived. It is no objection, therefore, against the immateriality of the human soul, that we have no *direct* immediate perception of its nature and operations. The very same objection would lead to the denial of our materiality; for we have no more direct and immediate knowledge of the essence of matter, and its *modus operandi*, in any case, than we have of spirit.

But there are other grounds on which men have undertaken to deny the immateriality (and substantiality) of the human soul. It may be necessary therefore to advert to the principal opinions maintained in opposition to the doctrine, that the soul of man, or spirit, is a simple, immaterial, uncompounded substance, capable of very peculiar acts. They may be distributed into two different classes—the one class maintaining that man differs in nothing from material substance, but in his *modification and its effects*—

the other that his intellectuality consists in a *mere succession of ideas and exercises*. Of the former class some are wilful and obstinate infidels—"who believe not the truth because they have pleasure in unrighteousness," and who, to escape from the menaces of conscience as it forwarns of the wrath to come, persuade themselves that mind, conscience, body, all perish at death;—while others admit the immortality of the human soul, or perhaps more properly, the future existence of man, though they believe him to be altogether a material being.

Whatever may be the *essence* of the human soul, its properties are demonstrably not those of matter. These properties it is not of moment accurately to enumerate. We shall, for the sake of brevity, comprise them under that of thought. Thought is not a quality of *simple matter*. For atoms do not think, either in their original state, or in any accumulated mass, or in any organized combination, or in any attenuated substance. If therefore atoms, as such, do not think—and that they do not common sense and observation declare—then thought cannot be derived to them by virtue of any aggregation, organization, attenuation, or other relative position whatever;—for, ultimately, in all cases, the character and qualities of a body, depend on those of the original atoms combined in it.

In like manner we agree, that thought cannot result from any play of chemical affinities, for their entire operations may be resolved, ultimately, into a change of relative position, which can have no more efficacy in enabling matter to think, than the breaking of stones, or the melting of lead, or the burning of earth, can have.

Neither can motion, whether produced by chemical action, or mechanism, originate thought. Change of position we have seen cannot produce it, and into this is mechanical impulse, as well as chemical action, ultimately

resolvable, so that the one is as incapable as the other of enabling matter to think.

As to organic action, though it may give rise to the most diversified and complicated operations, yet is it but the combination of a few simple motions, none of which approach nearer to thought than the flight of a cannon ball, or the play of lightning. Elasticity and vibration are the principal kinds of motion, by means of which the advocates of materialism, account for the production of thought—but the researches of physiologists have proved that the nerves are not tense and solid bodies,¹ fixed at their extremities to *hard* substances, which it is essential to this theory they should be. As to the notion of the nerves being tubes, filled with the animal spirits, through which liquid substance, impressions are conveyed to the encephalon, the change of relative position must ultimately be adopted as the solution, if thought be a quality of matter. Mere motion is not thought, whether it be mechanical, chemical, or organic, for every man feels that there is some conscious power within him, observing and attending to the relative changes which take place there.

The absurd theory of a modern French physician that thought is a *secretion* of the brain, scarcely deserves notice, but like every other scheme of materialism, must be resolved into the change of relative position, which we have seen can never account for the origination of thought. Should it be said that thought is a quality not resident in all matter, but only superadded to certain organic portions of it, it will be sufficient to remark, that to talk of a quality being superadded to matter, and not inherent in it, is a perfect absurdity, and that if the evidence of consciousness is to be at all relied on, so far from thought being a

1. Haller.

property, it is an act, or operation, of something quite distinct from matter.

Among the principal and most ingenious advocates of the materiality of the human soul, was Dr. Priestley, who boldly maintained, that revelation is in perfect accordance with what he supposed to be conclusions authorized by just reasoning. Dr. Rush too has been supposed, in his treatise, on the influence of physical causes upon the moral sense, to have favoured the same idea. But whatever may have been his private views, which, to do but justice to his memory, we are persuaded were controled by his faith in the written word of God as to all its facts and doctrines, there is nothing in that interesting tract which necessarily implies such a belief. That physical causes have an influence on the moral sense or conscience, is a fact which cannot be denied ; but, it by no means follows, that, in order to such influence, man must be wholly, conscience and all, a material being. The reasonings of those who advocate materialism, will be found alike unphilosophical and unscriptural.

Thomas Jefferson has, in his posthumous writings, appeared among the boldest, and we must be allowed to say, the most reckless of modern preachers of materialism. "I can conceive *thought*, says he, to be an action of a particular organization of matter, formed for that purpose by its Creator, as well as that attraction is an action of matter, or magnetism of load-stone." His mode of confirming such an idea, is a specimen of the *argument from ignorance and begging of the question*. "To talk," continues he, "of immaterial existences, is to talk of *nothings*. To say that the human soul, angels, God, are immaterial, is to say they are *nothings*, or that there is no God, no angels, no soul." Who does not see that this is actually begging the question, and yet he candidly confesses in the very next sentence—"I *cannot* reason otherwise," and to apolo-

gize, in some measure, for his having thus confessed his imbecility, he observes, "But I believe I am supported in my creed by the Lockes, &c." and having, as he thought, defended himself with the authority of so great a name, he as ignorantly and impudently brands the doctrine of immaterialism, with the charge of "masked Atheism," and refers to the fathers of the three first centuries, and even to Christ Himself as opposed to such heresy!!!¹ Locke says distinctly, "perception and knowledge, in that one eternal Being where it has its source, it is visible, must be essentially inseparable from it; therefore the actual want of perception in so great a part of the particular parcels of matter, is a *demonstration* that the first Being from whom perception and knowledge is inseparable, is *not matter*." Speaking of the soul he says "it may be proved that it is to the highest degree probable that *it is immaterial*."² There can be no excuse for such ignorance, or deception, and of one or the other is Mr. Jefferson guilty, in citing Locke as a materialist. A man that can believe and cite authorities at this rate is not worthy of respect; nor are arguments such as he has employed, deserving of attention.

Dr. Priestley rejects the idea that matter is an impenetrable inert substance; and because he finds that sensation and thought in man have ever been found in connection with an organized system, *infers*, that those powers necessarily exist in, and depend on such a system. How they result from organization he will not pretend to say, but presumes, that if sensation and thought be not incompatible with the properties of matter, it is quite unphilosophical to suppose that there is any substance, in the human constitution, essentially different from matter. Who does not see, that the argument here is based on a vague

1. Letter to President Adams, in 1830.

2. See his controversy with the Bishop of Worcester.

idea with respect to the nature and properties of matter—as though it were something, quite contrary to the common apprehensions of mankind—not possessing solid extension, and therefore having no relation to space, and in this respect resembling spirit rather than body.

In attempting to maintain his denial of the existence of spirit, he does in fact convert matter into spirit. His argument amounts to little more than a begging of the question. Besides is it not altogether a false inference, to contend, that matter and thought are the same, because they are found connected and dependent? Were the principle adopted what endless confusion would it introduce? There is a connection and dependence between the strings of an instrument of music, and the sounds produced by them when struck; but does it follow that the strings are the sounds? So while we admit (and no advocate for the existence of mind ever denied it,) that there is a connection between the brain and thought, and that even certain vibrations, or motions of the former, may give rise to the latter, it by no means follows that the brain is thought.

The advocates of materialism seem to be aware, that this inference is altogether untenable, and they have therefore asserted, that these vibrations themselves are thought. And so confident and unblushing is Dr. Cooper, that he hesitates not to declare, that whosoever is not convinced of the truth of materialism, now that Collins, and Hartley, and Priestley have thrown such immense light on the subject, is not to be reasoned with. The Doctor himself, after distinguishing between sensations and ideas, making the former to consist in the motions of the brain produced by external impressions transmitted through the nerves, and the latter the motions of the same “arising, or produced without the impressions of an external object,”¹ thinks it *demonstrable* that these motions are vibratory.

. 1. Cooper's memoirs of Dr. Priestley, p. 334, 335.

We cannot help remarking here with regard to the consistency of the advocates of materialism. At one moment they tell us, that thought is a quality of matter, and in the next that it is motion! No doubt they were compelled to this by noticing, what could not possibly have eluded their observation, that perception is an *act*, an event, a phenomenon, something that takes place, and does not lie like a dormant quality unmoved and undisturbed in matter. Admitting that motions do take place in the brain, and even give rise to thought, does it *therefore* follow that motion is mind? The vibrations of the cords of an instrument give rise to sounds, but they are not the sounds. But on the principle referred to, that connection and dependence imply identity, they must be the same.

The truth is that notwithstanding those who deny the materiality of the human mind are not to be reasoned with, according to Dr. Cooper, we must take the liberty of saying, that this assertion of thought being mere vibratiunculæ, is altogether unintelligible. For to use the language of an acute writer, "there may be little shakings in the brain, for any thing we know, and there may even be shakings of a different kind accompanying every act of thought or perception, but that the shakings themselves are the thoughts or perception, we are so far from admitting, that we find it absolutely impossible to comprehend what is meant by the assertion. The shakings are certain throbbings, vibrations, or stirrings, in a whitish half-fluid substance like custard, which we might see perhaps, or feel, if we had eyes and fingers sufficiently small or fine for the office. But what would we see or feel, upon the supposition, that we could detect, by our senses, every thing that actually took place in the brain? We should see the particles of this substance change their place a little, move a little up or down, to the right or to the left, round about, or zig zag, or in some other course or direction. This is all that

we could see, if Dr. Hartley's conjecture were proved by actual observation; because this is all that exists in motion, according to our conception of it, and all that we mean when we say that there is motion in any substance. Is it intelligible then to say, that this motion, the whole of which we see and comprehend, is thought and feeling; and that thought and feeling will exist wherever we can excite a similar motion in a similar substance?"¹ The thing is altogether beyond our comprehension.

That there is a material machinery, capable of being moved and operated on, by certain impulses, for the production of thought, we will not deny—but that these impulses, and the movements of this machinery, are thought and feeling we do. They may be the occasions of these things, but must not be confounded with them. For there is no conceivable affinity between them, however intimately they may be connected.

Am I but what I seem, mere flesh and blood?

A branching channel and a mazy flood?

The purple stream that through my vessels glides,

Dull and unconscious flows like common tides:

The pipes, thro' which the circling juices stray,

Are not that thinking I, no more than they,

This frame, compacted with transcendent skill,

Of moving joints obedient to my will,

Nursed from the fruitful glebe, like yonder tree,

Waxes and wastes: I call it *mine* not *me*.

New matter still the mouldering mass sustains,

The mansion changed, the tenant still remains,

And from the fleeting stream repaired by food,

Distinct as is the swimmer from the flood.

As to the idea that thought is a quality of matter, a little reflection will convince every one that perception itself must, according to this theory, be a quality. But this is an abuse of terms. Perception is an *act* of which the percipient being is conscious. It cannot therefore be intelligibly called, a quality of that which it perceives. All the

1. Edinburgh Rev. vol. ix. p. 153.

qualities of matter may be divided into primary and essential, and secondary or accidental. To the first class belong extension, solidity and figure. To this class thought cannot belong, because many modifications of matter are destitute of it. If it be said to resemble the accidental qualities of matter, such as heat or colour which are not inseparable or permanent, we reply that heat, and light which is essential to colour, are themselves material substances. Should we call thought a material substance as we do light, and heat, we must expect the laws of the material world to operate on it, and that it is liable to attraction, repulsion, condensation, or reflection, as are light and heat which is absurd.

Whatever view then we take of the subject we are convinced that the theory of materialism is alike unintelligible and absurd. What can we make of it, when it confounds the *act* of perceiving, with the *qualities* perceived, and makes the very objects of perception the faculty or act by which these objects are introduced to our knowledge, and especially, when it confounds the motions of the brain with the effects which they produce, and makes mind to be the mere play of vibratiunculæ, produced alike by impressions from without and certain undefined and unoriginated motions from within?

To deny the existence of spirit because of any supposed want of relation to space, is certainly unphilosophical. When it is contended that matter must always have some relation to space, it is supposed that the advocates of immaterial existences maintain, that spirit possesses no such relation, and therefore that it can exist *nowhere*. Who does not see the sophistry of this reasoning? It is not maintained that spirit exists without reference to space, but, that its relation to space cannot be understood or estimated by us as we do that of matter. God exists *every where*. *He* has some relation to infinite space. A profound wri-

ter has supposed infinite space to be the property of Deity. Time and place are necessary to the existence of all created being. The assumption of Dr. Priestley, therefore, is not true that the advocates of spiritual existence deny its relation to space. If it is asserted to be regulated by different laws, *that* authorizes not the denial of such relation. For to do so would be to assume the point in dispute that there *can be* no existence which does not follow the law by which material substances are bound to space, that is, that no other than material substances exist. We know that God does exist, that He is a Spirit, and that He is related to space, and is it therefore absurd, and unphilosophical to suppose that there can be created spirits too, not regulated by the laws which govern material existence?

The same mode of reasoning will expose the fallacy of the argument against immaterial existence from the alleged incapacity of spirit to act on matter. When it is admitted that spirit and matter are essentially different, devoid of common properties, it is with as much want of philosophy as of truth inferred that therefore, the one cannot act upon the other. Since if this proves any thing, it proves too much. For it is admitted, that God is a most pure spirit, and yet *He does* operate on matter—yea, and has created the world and all things *out of nothing*, between which and Himself there are no common properties. The whole force of this argument depends on the assumption, that unless substances are possessed of common properties, they cannot act on each other. This must be proved before the argument is worth any thing. But such proof cannot be adduced, as we have already shewn, that God, in two respects, furnishes a proof to the contrary. If there is any truth and force in the argument, it must prove these two monstrous absurdities and falsities, that it was impossible for God to create

the world out of nothing, and that God Himself is a material being. And indeed this, though denied by Dr. Priestley, is affirmed by others, which, if adopted and followed out to its legitimate results, will lead us to blank atheism; and the infinite intelligence and wisdom, the Divine Mind will become nothing else than the mere motions or *v. bra-tiunculæ* of a concatenated universe, and must be confined to some locality correspondent with the human encephalon!!!

We cannot dismiss this topic without submitting to our readers the following very short and simple method of refuting the error of the materialists. If thought be a property or quality of matter, it must be, either resident in the original elementary undivided atoms that compose a body, or it must be superadded to some organized body. It cannot be a quality of simple matter, for there is a unity in our consciousness, which proves, most satisfactorily, that all the atoms composing our bodies do not think. There ought to be as many consciousnesses as there are atoms in our bodies, if thought, of which consciousness is but one form, is a property of simple matter.

It remains for the materialist who affirms this, to account for the entire unity of our consciousness and mental acts. Should this be attempted, and we be referred to the organic structure of the human body, as a sufficient solution of the inquiry, we may remark that if matter be not essentially conscious, that is, if every atom does not think separately and independently, no *system of atoms* in any possible composition, or attenuation, or division can be an individual conscious being.

Suppose, for example, a line of telegraphic communication, the parts or particles of which system, let us say, are arranged each at 10 or more miles distant, and spreading over a space of 100 or 1000 miles; is it at all possible or

conceivable, that this system, adapted to the transmission of intelligence most rapidly from one extreme to the other, is one individual conscious being? Yet why not on the materialist's supposition? Are the particles too far apart from each other? Then what is the degree of proximity requisite?

Suppose that all these different parts be brought together into such close contact and be connected by such mechanism as that, when one part is moved, it shall transmit its motions from the one end to the other throughout the whole line? Does this juxta-position render the parts less distinct individual beings, or communicate a capacity for thought to the whole connected series? How can their being disposed in such or any other possible system, make them one individual conscious being? Is it not utterly absurd—at war with the common sense of mankind, to attribute thought to the mill, or steam engine, or any other piece of complicated mechanism? Yet if mere mechanism, or the composition and arrangement of parts into one general system so that their motions shall be adapted and communicated to each other, and be transmitted from or to one common centre, is sufficient to account for the production of thought, why do not the mill and engine think? May not the human body as furnished with its admirably adjusted system of nerves, be justly styled a line of telegraphic communication? The impression is transmitted from the surface or extremity, to the encephalon or centre, or other extremity. Does the *capability* of transmitting such impression constitute the body a thinking substance? No more surely when the apparatus is material nerves, or cords, or tubes, whatever they be, than when it consists of boards, or blocks, or lights, or sounds.

A modern projector of telegraphic communication, by means of rods, which he proposes to have sunk in the earth

and sea, leading from London to Paris, or Constantinople, and we may add, to all the other cities of the globe, whether his idea was conceived from the structure of the human body or not, would operate just as certainly on the materialist's plan, to constitute the globe, or the ball of this earth a thinking substance, as the mere material mechanism of the human body, bound together by a system of nerves, transmitting impressions from one point of its surface or part of it to another, constitutes man a thinking conscious being.

But here the materialist will allege, that to the particles of matter united in the human body, God has superadded the power of consciousness. But we may add, that inasmuch as these particles though united in one body are nevertheless as really distinct as before their union, *they themselves* cannot be the subject in which that individual consciousness inheres. That consciousness, or thinking unit can only be the intelligent percipient being at the one end, if we may so remark, of the telegraphic series—something superadded to mechanism, or the human body, which, in all its particles, if we must make use of the expression, is still, itself but one individual conscious being. It follows therefore legitimately that inasmuch as the power of thinking, whatever that power may be, is one individual consciousness, it cannot possibly be a material substance.

If the brute creation should be cited as a proof to the contrary, we would reply that as it regards the characteristic acts of the human mind, there is nothing similar in them, and that even if we should admit the existence of spirit, in connection with the bodies of animals, that will not impose on us the necessity of maintaining their immortality or even intellectuallity. For the immortality of man we affirm is not to be inferred from a mere supposed indestructibility of spirit, but from the constitu-

tution or will and agency of God the Creator, and who that admits the existence of spirit, will undertake to say that there may not be endless modifications of *spiritual* existence, as there are of matter. Undoubtedly angelic and human minds are and must be characteristically as different as are the mind of man and "the spirit of the brute."

CHAPTER X.

THE SUBSTANTIALITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

The human soul not a chain of exercises—The objection against its substantiality drawn from the want of definite conception of its nature not valid—Frightful consequences resulting from the scheme of the exercisists—Destruction of personal identity—Scriptural facts—1. Appearance of Moses and Elias—2. The dying thief—3. Dives and Lazarus—4. Visions—Of Peter—Of Cornelius—5. Inspiration—6. Scriptural facts—7. Scriptural assertions—Job, xxxiii. 18: Eccles. xii. 7: 2 Cor. v. 1: 2 Cor. v. 8: Heb. xii. 23: Mat. xxii. 22—32—Reflections—The common sense of mankind and the scriptures in accordance—What a noble and illustrious being must man originally have been.

THERE are others beside the materialist, whose views seem to militate against the doctrine for which we contend. With some it is a favorite idea, that the soul is a mere succession or chain of ideas and exercises. The principal argument in support of this scheme is altogether fallacious. It is alleged, by its advocates, that we are, and can be, conscious only of our acts and exercises, and that, of any substance in which they are immanent, or by which they are originated, we can have neither knowledge nor conception. But, admitting all this, it does not therefore follow, that there is not in reality some *substance* or base, appropriate to thought,—some real existence the peculiar seat or subject of ideas and exercises. For, should we allow ourselves to pursue the assumption in the above objection or argument, viz., that nothing exists of which we have no conception, we should doubt, and disbelieve the existence of every cause, agent and substance whatever.

The advocates of this scheme, assuredly, do not mean to maintain the absurd and stale objection of the rationalists in religion, that what we cannot understand, does not exist—is not true. Their meaning must be, that they have no appropriate or sufficient evidence of the existence of any thing, beside their own ideas and exercises, inasmuch as they can form no conception of spirit abstracted from such ideas and exercises.¹ If so, then do we ask what evidence have they of the existence of God? Can they form any distinct conception of His Being? What evidence can they have of any of His attributes? Can they have more definite conceptions of these than of their own being?

Assuredly they do not conceive of God as a mere assemblage of ideas and exercises, but must attribute a unity to His Being. On this subject they cannot doubt. But in what does that evidence consist? By no means in a distinct perception or conception of either His being or His attributes. Why then, if they can form no definite conception of *these* things, and bow to the evidence of truth which demonstrates *them*, will they not admit the existence of a spirit, or soul, or immaterial substance in man, if equally appropriate evidence be adduced? Indeed, on this assumption, they must deny the existence of many other things which they nevertheless believe to be true. They must

1 Even the knowledge which we have of our own *ideas* through consciousness is not a direct purely intellectual apprehension of them. We can only speak of them as analogically known even after consciousness has reported them. "Nothing can be more absurd than for a being composed of spirit and body in strict intimate union, to imagine it can frame either *merely sensitive* or *merely spiritual ideas* of its thinking faculty or its acts: And if it has not ideas of either sort *separately*, consequently it can have no *direct* and immediate knowledge of its own mind but by *complex conceptions*, formed from a *consciousness* of the operations themselves and ideas of sense taken together, and as necessarily mixed and blended in order to this knowledge of itself, as its own essence is in fact composed of matter and spirit."—*Div. Anal.* p. 24.

deny the existence of matter too, for they can have no more distinct conception of its substance than of spirit. Yea, and they must deny their own material existence; for of what are we conscious? Not of flesh and blood, nor of the processes of circulation, and secretion, &c. that take place within us, but of our mental acts and our various emotions. Our ideas and feelings are the extent of our consciousness. Will the exercisist presume to reject all other evidence with regard to the structure of his frame than that of mere consciousness of acts, or operations? His knowledge of matter is a mere conception of its properties, but does he reject the evidence which proves that there must be some substance in which these properties reside? Yet should he, to act consistently, and thus, by pursuing the miserably fallacious principle on which his scheme is based, he will be found to deny the existence alike of matter and spirit, of God and His universe. Creation becomes a mere assemblage of qualities devoid of reality, and moral agents—the immortal spirits of men a mere concatenation of events!

We can scarcely bring our minds to dwell upon this scheme long enough to give it a dispassionate examination. It is at war with the common sense of mankind. They turn away disgusted with such reasonings; and well they may, for the scriptures call them all a vain philosophy. Every man as it were instinctively reasons, from the actions that he perceives, to the existence of some agent, or cause, or being producing them. Thus his mind becomes convinced of the existence of a God, and thus too he becomes convinced that *he himself* is something distinct and different from his *acts*. God has so constituted us. This is the law of our minds, and if we are led, invariably, infallibly, universally to the belief, or conclusion, that the thinking *I myself* is something different and distinct from thoughts and acts, is not God chargeable with the error, and His whole creation, so far as the operation of mind is

concerned, a mere machinery for the production of falsehood! Yea, God Himself and all His works are a mere delusion.

Other consequences equally as absurd and monstrous flow from the same scheme. If there is no thinking substance in man—no spiritual conscious being in union with his animal frame, then *what* are ideas and exercises? They must be, either a new production or the operation of something already existent. If the former, will the advocates of this scheme say whether they are spirit or matter? They surely will not say the former, for that is to give up the point in dispute at once. It certainly would be better for them to admit the existence of a spiritual agent, capable of those acts which we denominate ideas and exercises, than to maintain a continued creating process of spiritual existences, which too, must, as continually, be subjected to an annihilating process or be combined for preservation! If the latter, we had better, at once, admit any of the theories we have already noticed, and maintain thought to be motion, or a secretion, or any thing else, since it must be material. According to the theory which we combat, we must either deny the real existence of man as a moral agent, and convert him into a mere piece of material mechanism, or we must maintain, that ideas and exercises are produced continually by the direct agency of God, and that given *series* of these creative acts of God constitutes the individual man. The former we have already disproved. The latter may require a moment's attention.

Who does not see that the consequences which flow from such a position affect alike the character of God and of His government, and the very identity of man. We say the character of God, for it makes Him the author of sin, since all the sinful thoughts, purposes and affections of man are but the effects of the divine power strung together in a given series—not the acts or production of a created volun-

tary agent. And if so, where is the use of maintaining the distinction between innocence and guilt, between virtue and vice, or how can we attribute to man the least accountability? The influence of motives and the sense of responsibility will be alike destroyed, and the whole government of God will be converted into a mere theatrical or other display. We know not well to what it might be compared, except to some of the splendid exhibitions of the pyrotechnical art, where there are quick and marvelous successions or series of different coloured flames, and scintellations, all the production of the great master of the ceremonies. And as to man himself, he is even reduced below the level of the dancing puppet, which, though all its motions are mechanical, nevertheless retains its identity, since upon this scheme man's identity is destroyed. For if to him is denied a thinking spiritual substance, conscious of its own acts, into what can identity be resolved? Ideas and exercises are mere occurrences or events produced by some cause sustaining a momentary being, and then perishing forever. The difference in point of time would destroy the identity of ideas, though there should be in every other respect entire resemblance. They could no more be called the same, than we can denominate the strokes of the bell which announce the hour of six this morning the very same with those of yesterday. And what is true in one case is true in all others.

There never can be sameness in man, on this scheme, but he is perpetually varying—ever and anon a new being, as he passes from one point of time to another. His identity is destroyed, and no proof of it whatever can be cited. For to infer it merely from his consciousness, is to infer what does not exist by the very terms of the supposition. And what is consciousness itself? It too is but an act. But of what? Of ideas? Or ideas of it? Are ideas conscious each of itself, and one of another? Surely the act or event,

which we call an idea, and of which we are conscious, is different from the consciousness which we have of it? If not, why talk of them as distinct? But if so, then what is that consciousness? We must admit the presence of a percipient being attending to, and having knowledge of its own acts, or we must assert and maintain the monstrous absurdity of one idea being conscious of another, for after all our consciousness resolves itself into knowledge and knowledge is thought.

From the above remarks, it must be obvious to the reader, that the scheme which supposes man to be a mere concatenation of thought, without the existence of a spiritual immaterial substance, capable of the various acts of thinking, choosing, comparing, remembering, imagining, willing, &c. is eminently absurd. Indeed it is utterly unintelligible, and that it should be embraced by any, after sober and dispassionate inquiry, is passing strange! We have merely touched the different sources whence we draw the refutations of this scheme, and leave the reader to pursue the subject for himself. We turn from these metaphysical arguments however to another class which serve to confirm the spirituality of the human soul. They are drawn from scriptural facts.

1. Moses and Elias are said to have appeared with Christ upon the mount of transfiguration. Elias no doubt appeared in his entire human nature, for he "went up by a whirlwind into heaven."¹ Moses however died, and his body was laid in the earth, for the Lord "buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth Peor."² As to the appearance of Elijah, there is no difficulty. His body was still material, though sublimated, and capable of being seen by the eyes of men as was the risen body of the Saviour. But it was different with Moses; and we must admit

1 2 Kings, ii. 11.

2 Deut. xxxiv. 6.

either that it was the spirit of Moses which appeared in some assumed material vehicle or form, or, that his body had been raised from the grave. In so far as one class of materialists is concerned, it is a matter of indifference which supposition is adopted. One thing is certain, that centuries after the body of Moses had been mingled with its kindred dust, *he* appeared in this world conversing with Jesus Christ face to face, as a man talketh with his friend. And he still exists somewhere in the universe of God—but what is he? A mere material machine? A concatenation of thought? Who does not see the utter absurdity of either supposition!

2. The second fact we notice is that recorded of the dying thief. He prayed to the Saviour, “Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,” and the Saviour replied, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”¹ Now the bodies of the Saviour and of the thief, were, on that very day laid in the *grave*, so that he must undoubtedly have referred to some other part of their nature than their material bodies. And if so, what could it have been but their immaterial and deathless souls? We can scarcely bring ourselves to notice the miserable criticisms by which those who adopt Dr. Priestley’s views attempt to evade the force of this conclusion, when they say that the Saviour meant, by the phrase “to-day,” which he used, nothing more than this, *I now* say to you, or, that as in respect of the eternity of God, one day is with Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, so Christ meant to say by using the phrase “to-day,” *in eternity shalt thou be with me*. The common sense of our readers is offended by such pitiful trifling. Assuredly they must be reduced to great straits to support their cause, who find it necessary to put a meaning upon the dying Saviour’s words, which actually makes Him speak nonsense, or practice a deception.

¹ Luke, xxiii. 43.

3. We might here cite the parable of Dives and Lazarus, which under all the circumstances related, may, though a parable, be regarded as strictly a matter of fact. Surely the Saviour did not mean to make a *false impression* on the minds of His hearers, with regard to the state of man after the death of the body. "The beggar," he says, "died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."¹ Lazarus is represented as in some way living after death. Surely he did not mean to say, that the angels carried his *body* into Abraham's bosom! And this carrying was contemporaneous with his decease. The two events are spoken of in immediate connection. Who would or could be led to suppose, that the Saviour meant the resurrection of Lazarus' body, which is an event yet to take place?

But if this idea should be adopted by any, the language employed in reference to the rich man is yet more pointed. "The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."² Whether we understand the word hell³ here to mean the place of woe or the state of the dead, it amounts to the same thing. There is no allusion whatever to the resurrection of the body of the rich man, before he was made to experience the torments described. He was buried, and thus disappeared from earth; but *at that time* he was "*in hell*," and *capable* of the very same *perceptions*, and was possessed of the same *sensibilities*, which he had in the flesh—yea, and much more acute. We have information too of Lazarus' being in Abraham's bosom, and his knowledge was distinct and vivid, and exactly correspondent with that which in the flesh is had by means of vision. Should this circumstance, viz., that his perceptions and sensations are described by means of terms which undoubtedly denote the influence and ac-

1 Luke, xvi. 22.

2 Luke, xvi. 23.

3 *adys*—See Dr. Campbell's Preliminary Dissertations, D. vi. p. 2.

tion of the organs of sense, be cited as an objection against the conclusion we deduce from this parable; and should it be thence alleged, that the things described can only be true of the rich man *after the resurrection of his body*, we remark, that whatever may be the *mode* of the soul's perceptions in a disembodied state, on the supposition of its separate existence, we should be led to conclude, that, although the mind's knowledge and perceptions were all originally derived through the instrumentality of its material organs, and the laws of association, and modes of thought dependent on their action, yet it is to be expected that the same general laws of association, and the very same affections of the soul should be observable even in its disembodied state. For here we find that our minds are combining thought, and become excited frequently under the influence of thought, which, though originally derived through the organs of sense, are not in fact sensible ideas, but excogitated in the pure abstractions of the mind.

Beside, we do know that all our knowledge of the operation of our own minds is by means of analogy, so that there is, in fact, no other method left of describing the perceptions of the disembodied spirit, but by means of its actions and affections here through the instrumentality of the organs of sense. We legitimately enough speak of the soul's feeling, seeing, hearing, speaking, &c. in its disembodied state; not that the acts are precisely the same with what we intend of ourselves by such phrases in our *present state* of being, but that there is some sufficient resemblance between its actions in its disembodied and embodied state, to justify us in the use of terms originally describing sensible acts to designate the acts of pure spirit. We have already illustrated and fully dilated on this point, so that we need not here repeat what the reader must be familiar with. That we may not be understood as begging the question, however

in these remarks, we shall presently notice one or two facts which will prove, incontestibly, that the soul of man *has* acted independently of its organic vehicle the body, before the period of its final separation; so that, having established the possibility of its independent existence and action, and, at the same time, that its perfections and affections, though not through the material organs, were so far analogous to the latter as to be best, and indeed only described, by a reference to them, we may legitimately insist upon the proof, which the parable of Lazarus and Dives furnishes of the existence of man in a disembodied state, and consequently of his possessing an immaterial spirit. These facts constitute our next argument. They are

4. The *visions* which the prophets and others had when God communicated to them His mind and will. The instances are many. We might note those of Abraham, of Balaam, of Elisha, of Hosea, of Ezekiel, of Jeremiah, of Amos, of Zechariah, of Peter, of Stephen, of Paul, of John, &c. The reader however may examine the record of them at his leisure. In all, the perceptions which were had are described by *seeing*, whence that particular form or mode of divine revelation took the name of vision, and the early prophets because of its frequency were denominated *seers*. In visions the individual was awake, and his senses all were in ordinary healthful exercise. But the things that he was said to SEE, were NOT perceived by his senses.

The account of Peter's vision is as circumstantial as any, and may afford the best opportunity to us for an accurate investigation of their nature. It is said, that while Peter, who had become very hungry as he was engaged in prayer, was waiting for some food which was being prepared for him "he fell into a trance,"¹ when certain things took place, which are spoken of as though there had been the direct visual perception of them. He "saw

¹ Acts x. 10.

heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts and creeping things, and fowls of the air."¹ In addition to this *he heard a voice*, and spake himself, and that not once only, but the whole scene was *thrice* transacted before him.

Now this was no illusion produced by disease, because the historian has taken care to apprise us of facts which indicated a *state of full and vigorous health*. Neither was it a dream, because he was not *asleep*, but there was undoubtedly some interruption or suspension of the exercise of his animal senses. It is called a *trance*. The perceptions of his mind however were not interrupted. They were busily employed. We ask how? Not merely in the ordinary mode through the impressions made on his senses. The things Peter saw were visible to none but himself, so that they could not have been real material substances. The whole scene was indeed a symbolical display, and whether these symbols were actually any forms or not, we are not in the least concerned to inquire. That which chiefly concerns our argument is the fact, that Peter had perceptions of things which were not present before his senses, so that there must be in man something capable of receiving knowledge, independent of the machinery or apparatus of nerves, &c. which are the ordinary channel of communication from external things. If it be alleged that the knowledge conveyed to Peter's mind, was by the ordinary process in which the imagination combines objects, and brings things before it which do not actually exist, it may be remarked, that the result shewed plainly this was not the case. Who ever heard of men's imagining and combining circumstances that proved to be prophetic, as were the visions of the prophets?

1. Acts x. 10.

Beside, Peter's imagination would have naturally operated in another direction. His feelings and prejudices, his convictions and habits, all were at war with the thought of admitting the Gentiles to a participation of the privileges of fellowship with the Jews. He could not himself well brook the idea, so that if it had been merely the vivid combinations of his own fancy, they would have been altogether of another character.

Nor can it be pretended, that the knowledge conveyed to the mind of Peter was done in some such way as impressions are made on the minds of men in certain diseases. In some cases of mania there is an absolute deception practised on the mind, mere fancies being apprehended as realities. There was no bodily disease at all in Peter's case. Nor was it mania; but sober truth, so that, after a full and candid examination of all the circumstances, if we believe the record itself, we must admit, that impressions or communications were made to the mind of Peter, which would not have been of its own origination, and which certainly were not produced through the medium of his senses. The conclusion therefore which we draw from this is, that there must have been in Peter some percipient principle, capable of acting, and of being acted on, independently of and by some other means than the material frame, or organs of sense.

The vision of Cornelius which preceded, but was connected with that of Peter, may also deserve a remark or two. It is not said simply that he saw an angel, as though there had been an *appearance* before him which was cognizable by his senses; but that "*he saw a vision evidently.*"¹ It is not an unnecessary and unmeaning multiplication of

¹ 1. Acts x. 3. *ειδεν* HE PERCEIVED, see Mat. ii. 16 *τοτε ηρκανος ιδαν οτι ενεπαυχθη* Mat. ix. 2. *και ιδαν ο Ιησους την πικριν αυτων.*

εν οραματι IN A VISION contradistinguished from material existence. See acts xii. 9.

οραματι—clearly, distinctly, without illusion.

words. The idea plainly is, that Cornelius, in a vision, which was not at all illusory, had as distinct a perception of an angel, as if he had seen that angel with his bodily eyes. We must let the language of scripture go for what it is worth, and not *imagine* that it means this or the other thing, or pass off our ignorance and incredulity with the charge of vagueness, mysticism or tautology.

We might multiply instances, but the general fact is all we want, that God has made communications to the minds of men, giving them perceptions which were not derived through the senses, nor excogitated in their own fancies, and therefore that there must be in man some percipient being distinct from his material nature. This argument may be pursued yet further, and rendered even more conclusive, from the fact of,

5, Inspiration. "Holy men of God," says the apostle "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."¹ There were ideas communicated to their minds which they never could have excogitated. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."² The apostle does not speak of things yet to be made known, but of things already revealed. If so, then it may be pertinently asked how came they ever to be known? The answer is given. God hath by his Spirit revealed them. He hath by the miraculous influence of His Spirit wrought in the minds of holy men of old the knowledge which they have communicated to us. It is true that now, since our fellow men have spoken, and written to us about them, we become acquainted with them *in the ordinary exercise*, and cultivation, of those capacities for thought, be they what they may, which we possess. But originally this was not the way in which the knowledge of them was obtained. Wherefore we infer that if even know-

1. 2. Pet. i. 21

2. 1. Cor. ii. 9.

ledge was communicated to the minds of men by God, without its being done through the instrumentality of their senses, or of excogitation—the *voluntary* combination of thought, there must be some immaterial percipient substance in man which was the subject of such knowledge.

6. Our position may be maintained by a host of scriptural passages in which, the immateriality and substantiality of the human soul are evidently assumed. We select a few. When the death of Abraham is spoken of, it is said that “he gave up the ghost, and was gathered to his people.” Abraham’s body was buried in the cave of Macpelah, in *Canaan*, while his father Terah, and grand-father Nahor, and yet more remote ancestors lived, and died, and were buried in Mesopotamia. The gathering of Abraham therefore cannot mean the interment of his body, and must be an empty and unmeaning phrase, if there was no more than body in Abraham—no soul to be introduced into “the general assembly and church of the first born.”

We remark also, that when Stephen died, his last words were “Lord Jesus receive my spirit.”¹ And it was no vague poetical flight of his fancy, for “he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold I see the heavens opened, and the son of man standing on the right hand of God.”² Now these were things not seen by those around, for his persecutors thought that he blasphemed, and “stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord.” Nor are they objects to be perceived through the medium of sense. But Stephen *saw* or *perceived* them, *while yet in the body, as he was destined in a few moments to do in his disembodied state*, and therefore seemed to lose all sight of, and concern for his material being, and committed his imperishable

1. Acts vii. 59.

2. Acts vii. 55, 56, 57.

soul into the hands of his blessed Saviour. Any other idea makes the whole scene perfectly ridiculous. Who can be so weak as to think Stephen spoke of his last breath, a small volume of air? David makes use of a similar expression, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell."¹ Certainly neither he nor Stephen could have meant that attenuated portion of their material nature, which Dr. Priestley has so erroneously called the soul. For all that was body died. It is too utterly absurd to require a single remark, that they meant the last expiration of their heaving lungs. There is then no alternative left but this. By their spirits they understood their immortal soul—the percipient, thinking, conscious part of their nature.

7. We need not multiply instances of this sort; but shall cite a few passages in which the immateriality, and true substantiality of the human soul are explicitly asserted. Job distinguishes between the spirit and animal part of man. "He says that God keepeth back his soul from the pit and his life from the sword."² Solomon says expressly, that at death "the dust" or the body of man "shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."³ Paul also says that "if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved"—if the body dies—"we have a building of God, an house not made with hands,"—a true and separate existence—"eternal in the heavens."⁴

On this point he was perfectly confident, asserting in the most explicit terms, that there is an existence after death distinct from, and independent of the body, "that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."⁵ Can language more plainly teach, than this does, that the spirits of believers exist in a separate state after death independent of the body? The same thing is as clearly taught

1. Psalm xvi. 101.

2. Job xxxiii. 18.

3. Eccles. xii. 1.

4. 2. Cor. v. 1.

5. 2. Cor. v. 8.

in the appellation given to the redeemed in heaven, "the spirit's of just men made perfect."⁵ Why talk of the spirits of men in contradistinction from angels, for that is the reason of the appellation if both angels and men are not possessed of a spiritual nature. And why speak of the spirit's of men *made perfect*, if there is reference to a state of separate existence after death, for assuredly they are not such when in the flesh?

We have but one more passage to cite, and that is the cogent and conclusive *argument*, which the blessed Saviour has condescended to employ, and that with the express design of proving, from the writings of Moses, that there is a deathless substance in man—an immortal soul which survives the dissolution of the mortal body. The Sadducees, it is said, proposed to the Saviour a question, which they no doubt thought he could not answer, and by which they wished to insinuate an objection against a future state of existence. Assuming the point that the same relations existed between the same individuals both after death and in this life, they proposed the case of a woman that had been successively married to seven brethren, and asked "Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven?"¹ To this the Saviour replied, that the objection, which they insinuated, originated in ignorance, alike of God, and of what he had revealed, and was founded on the false assumption, that in the resurrection the same relationships shall exist that do here. And having thus reproved their ignorance and self-conceit, he deduces an argument in favor of a future state of existence from the manner in which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are spoken of in the writings of Moses. "But as touching the resurrection of the dead have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God saying 'I am the God of Abraham, the

1 Heb. xii. 23.

God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' God is not the God of the dead but of the living."¹

Now it is manifest that the inference of the Saviour is valid principally if not exclusively with regard to the present existence of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, at the time the phrase was first used by God, at the time the Saviour Himself quoted it. But their bodies are not yet at this day raised from the dead, so that, if we attach to the phrase "the resurrection," as occurring in our English translation of the scriptures, the idea of a revivification of the body or natural frame, and suppose this to have been the Saviour's meaning, His conclusion is a *non sequitur*. This however was not His meaning. The word *αναστασις* is a general term expressing the idea of a person's rising up that had been lying down, or sitting, or fallen; and is thence very appropriately used to denote a state of future existence, either before or after, in connection with or independent of, the resurrection of the body.² When it denotes the former, the phrase is *αναστασις των νεκρων* the rising up or future existence of those that die. "The dead" merely describes the persons of whom the *αναστασις* is predicated, and the meaning is such an existence as characterises those that have died. Now this is not from the phrase necessarily to be understood as the revivification of their *bodies*. When the term *αναστασις* denotes this latter idea, the phrase used is *αναστασις εν νεκρω* from the dead, evidently directing us to a particular state or condition, from which the subject spoken of is represented to have escaped—that is the state of the dead body.

The precision of the language which the scriptures hold on these points is remarkable, and while the state subsequent to the death of the body, and prior to the resurrection of the dead body, is plainly and accurately distinguished from the state subsequent to the resurrection of the

¹ Mat. xxii 22—32.

² See Dr. Campbell's preliminary Dissertations.

dead body itself, the continuity of existence, from the very moment of the dissolution of the body, is most explicitly asserted. And the Saviour's argument is as irresistibly conclusive as it is simple. God stands in no friendly relationship to, nor does He represent Himself as being careful of, and concerned for, non-entities. But if Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, are not now existing, if there is no othersubstantiality attributable to them than the matter which was assumed into their organized form, and which, as really existed before that organization, (i. e. their conception and birth,) as it does now that their material frames have been resolved into their primitive elements, God does proclaim Himself to be the God of a moral non-entity, as standing in a very special and amicable relation to a few disconnected particles of earth, and evanescent gages, which have lost entirely their compound organized and moral existence. This however is absurd, and therefore as God does style Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they must have a present existence and possess some substantial being other than their material nature which is now resolved into its primitive elements. This is the plain legitimate interpretation of the Saviour's own words, and we defy any one who rejects it to guard against the charge of making infinite truth and wisdom reason illogically and speak absurdity.

The truth here presented as a conclusion, perhaps it may be objected, might have been much better, and more satisfactorily submitted as a distinct assertion, resting on the divine veracity and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. But,—not to notice the impiety of such a thought, inasmuch as the Saviour is infinitely the best judge of what is the most proper method of communicating the truth of God,—to have answered the question directly upon his own personal authority as a public teacher, would have been to sanction the infidelity of the Sadducees, and lead them to boast and

glory that the writings of Moses were silent, or furnished no satisfactory materials for a judgment on this important topic. While therefore the Saviour draws His argument from the writings of Moses, He has fully met and answered the objection of modern divines and infidels, that the doctrine of a future state of existence, is not taught in the Pentateuch, and most forcibly proved that there is an immaterial and imperishable soul in man.

There are a few reflections which the above discussion suggests and which the reader will excuse us for submitting here. Who does not see, that however philosophy, falsely so called, may assert and endeavor to maintain positions at war with the declarations of the scriptures, the common sense of mankind will be ever found in accordance with them? The prevalent impression is, that man has a soul, which is capable of distinct and independent existence. Occasionally indeed we meet with those that have darkened their minds by their own vain reasonings, or that have indulged their sensual appetites and passions to such a brutalizing and stupifying excess as to deny that they had souls;¹ but the multitude is differently impressed. Will it be said that it is a vague, or superstitious notion, engendered by the Bible, then is it admitted, that the Bible teaches the fact, so that its testimony will not be wrested from our hands.

But however we appreciate and extol the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as that which has brought life and immortality to light, we are not prepared to admit it as *fact*, that the idea of spirit is confined to those who have enjoyed the light of revelation. The aborigines of

1 A striking example of this we have in the *Comte de Cayhes*, whose remark, suggested by the concern for his soul evinced by his relations previous to his death, the *Baron de Guimen* has preserved. "I see perfectly that you wish to converse with me on the state of my soul," said he addressing them, "I am very sorry, however, to be obliged to inform you, that I actually have none."

this country, not to mention others, when first visited by our adventurous forefathers, were found to indulge a belief in "the Great Spirit," and in the existence of man after his body had died. Now we must admit from this fact, that either they originally derived the idea of spirit from traditional knowledge, or that the human mind is so constituted, as to infer the existence of some spiritual being from what it beholds in the works of nature, and, though incapable of any direct and accurate knowledge of it, to conceive of that being by means of symbolic or analogous representations, drawn from material things made in its own excogitations. It is a matter of perfect indifference to us which our opponent prefers. That they had the idea of spirit is certain, and it is for the materialist to say whence they came by it. If he says, that God first conveyed to the mind of man the idea of spirit, revealing Himself in some way adapted to his conceptions as originally performing the operations of thought by means of material organs, we are satisfied. For the idea having been once fairly communicated, could be imparted by man to his fellow, and be transmitted and preserved through all successive generations. But if God communicated the idea in the first instance, it must be true. If the other supposition is preferred, that the mind naturally proceeds by the process above described, to form for itself the idea of spirit, then is God who has created that mind, and ordained all its functions, as responsible for the truth in this case, as if he had directly communicated it.

It will be perceived that we do not speak of those excogitations, which are peculiar to individuals, and fearfully delusive and absolutely false, but only of those which the mind of man universally, and, if we may so speak, instinctively apprehends. This general and unvarying and unerring judgment of men, we denominate common sense, the simple apprehension of matters of fact. It is the mind

of man still struggling into truth, notwithstanding all the shocks it receives, and imbecility which is induced by corrupting passions. And that judgment is not everted by philosophy. Infidelity and Atheism have reared high their blood-stained banners, and proclaimed emancipation for the human mind, and prophesied in terms well known to Zion's ear, that the time of deliverance was nigh. But those banners have been struck, and those predictions have been lies, and the very apostles of error have themselves bowed to the majesty of truth.

The passions of men may be excited, and philosophy, or rather the vain wisdom of men of carnal minds, may be employed to sustain and justify such excitement, and while the effervescences of passion continue, there may be, and have been, the embracing of falsehood, and delusion, but soon the minds of men recover their balance. Passions ere long will subside, and in the cool and sober exercise of their judgment, men will embrace the truth, however it may have been vituperated or ridiculed. These sober and settled convictions, which operate efficiently through the mass of men, and at which the mind arrives as it were by a short, and almost instinctive process, will not be found at war with the revelations of the Bible. It cannot be, that God, though He has exhibited in the scriptures things new and marvellous, and inconceivable by man, should find it necessary to violate the constitution He originally ordained. He has adapted, to the ordinary and natural mode of the mind's perception, the communications He has made in that "sure word of prophecy" which has been transmitted to us. It will bear the most rigid scrutiny.

Nor shall we, for one moment, concede that the deductions of sound philosophy, drawn from a faithful examination of nature, will ever disprove Revelations. The best interpreter of scripture, under the guidance of the blessed

Spirit, is common sense. Let us have the Bible, and the minds of men so far cultivated and improved, as to be able to think and judge *dispassionately*, to come to the consideration of the truth, void of prejudice and corrupting and debasing passions, and we fear not the result. The hosts of infidelity and Atheism, will all be vanquished, and their mad boastings of wisdom and philosophy, will prove vain and momentary, as the howling tempest that agitates, but cannot prostrate "the mighty forest." "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds; 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."¹ The very energies of that immortal mind whose existence is denied, as they are directed and nerved by the Spirit of God, shall accomplish the overthrow of all the vain reasonings of a false philosophy.

These remarks naturally lead us to another. What a noble and exalted being must man have been as originally created! What traces of wisdom and grandeur do we still find in him, though like the mighty ruins he lies fallen and broken! When we see the achievements of science, the richness and vastness of human knowledge, and contemplate the untiring energy of thought, though now it is so obvious that man is an enfeebled and corrupt creature, in whom the power of perceiving truth has been greatly impaired, by the influence and prevalence of a depraved state of heart, who is not ready to exclaim, what must he have been when he first sprung from the plastic hand of his Creator?

"Man all immortal hail!"

Who can gauge the full and overflowing mind of the first parent of our race, as enriched and stored with know-

1. 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

ledge which God himself hath put into it? No darkness brooded over it. No disease of heart deranged the medium of its perceptions. With sensibilities attuned to the lofty pitch of heavenly devotion, and nature sparkling in all the glory of her Creator, how must man have gamboled over all her beauties, and searched into her wonders, and been refreshed with the traces of her maker God! If we are now surprised at the attainments of a Newton or Bacon or La Place, who, by severe process of study and research, have unfolded the volume of nature, and deciphered its characters, so illegible to multitudes, what should be our wonder, when we contemplate man—bright and orient in the very beams of the divinity—throwing the lustre of his own illumined mind upon the objects around, and at the first glance discerning their uses and value! The whole treasury of nature lay open before him, and from the incidental account which the Spirit of God has given of his naming the beasts of the earth, and an examination of the names which he at first imposed, we are led to the belief, that originally his knowledge was as extensive as the objects which God had so bountifully scattered round him. He was created in knowledge—not merely with the capacities for it, but with knowledge in actual possession.

But if we are filled with admiration of the resources of man, and the elevation of his being, as we look back to the great exemplar and parent of our race, how much more should we be as we look forward and discern the new world, and its thickening wonders which God in the method of redemption especially, has unfolded to us? Whatever knowledge, innocent man may have had of the glories of the Divine Being, as displayed in nature, they fall far short of those sublime mysteries, into which the minds of redeemed sinners are conducted by the blessed Spirit of God. Who is not filled with amazement, when he thinks of the immense capacities of man, and that he,

of all the intelligent creatures, is destined to arrive at the grandest, and most extended, and exalted, conceptions of the Infinite Supreme. This poor imbecile and almost inert and unconscious existence, wrapped up, at its first formation, in a little organized body, totally dependent on the sympathies of a mother's soul, is to be raised to immediate communion, and most endeared intimacy, with the high and mighty Ruler of the universe!

Oh! who can under-value the soul of man? That man is an enemy of his race, who would persuade us there is no other principle in our nature than what is destined to rot in the grave. Shall we give up the hope of immortality, and quietly prepare for an eternal sleep?—the hope of glory for the dark, cheerless hope of annihilation? The mind sickens and revolts from the thought of its own destruction. And, blessed be God, the volume of his word affords the choicest cordial to refresh its drooping and sinking spirits. There is a deathless soul in man, shut up for a season indeed, in the casement of this mortal body, but destined, to an emancipation both wonderful and blissful—and to become the eternal friend and companion of Jehovah of Hosts, or the wretched slave and dotard of Hell. The spirit within is capable of indefinite improvement, and exaltation, or deterioration and misery. Whether the progress shall be towards bliss or woe, depends upon our faith. Reader, do you consult sense, and reject faith? Are you skeptical and unbelieving? You are exchanging, the only hope of a lost world, for the horrors of Tophet. You have a soul that must dwell forever in the presence of God, or be the companion of devils and damned spirits. Your speculations are vain! Your philosophy may prove your ruin. Oh your soul is of value too immense thus to be endangered, or thrown away. The joys of sense may allure and blunt the powers of perceiving truth—wealth may make her boastful promises and load thee with her

cares—ambition may fire thy spirit and urge thee on to deeds of vengeance or of desperate daring—but thou must *die*. And “what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul.”¹

1 Mark, viii. 36, 37.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LIFE OF MAN'S RATIONAL SOUL.

The subject of the chapter—The importance of accurate knowledge with regard to it—Psalm xxx. 5—The life of the rational soul does not consist in the mere circumstance of its perpetuity—No more reason to infer any thing as to the life of the soul from its perpetuity than as to the life of the body, from the permanent existence of the elementary particles which enter into its composition—The life of the soul does not consist in its spirituality—But in those actions which are appropriate to its capacities—What those capacities in general are—Col. iii. 10: Eph. iv. 24—A description of the condition of our first parent, as originally created—in knowledge—righteousness—and holiness—The loss of life consequent on the first act of rebellion—Regeneration defined—Contrast between sensual and spiritual men—The scriptural phraseology on the subject—Not metaphorical—A caution.

It has been shewn that man is a complex being, and unites, in himself, the three orders of life—vegetative, animal, and intellectual or spiritual:—that he is possessed of a rational soul, which is immaterial in its substance, and not necessarily dependent on organization, nor a mere chain of ideas and exercises, but is capable of existence in a separate state, and is the immediate author of thought and volition, and the subject of consciousness. The nature of life too has been illustrated, and a definition given which it is intended shall be applied to the elucidation of the leading subject of this treatise. These things, it is expected, will be kept in view by the reader, while we proceed to inquire, in this chapter, *in what consists the life of the immortal spirit.*

The language of the Psalmist is ordinarily quoted on

this subject, and it is apprehended by many, that when he says, in reference to God, "In His favour is life,"¹ there is a sufficient explanation given of spiritual life. But, though the heart, which has had experience of the divine favour, may practically, and sufficiently for all the purposes of a walk with God, know something of the life that is "hid with Christ in God;" yet it is desirable to have, as far as possible, clear ideas on a subject of such deep and eternal interest.

It is highly probable, that the sentiment of the Psalmist, as expressed in the terms quoted above, was widely different from that which they are commonly employed by Christians to represent. The inspired writer had been greatly beset, and persecuted by enemies. His very life had been in danger from their malice and menaces. Their opposition and power, their provocations and prevalence against him, he had interpreted, as proof of the displeasure of God who had permitted him, in His holy providence, thus to be afflicted and assailed: and in this belief, he would not fail to be confirmed by the proverb of his day, and no doubt applicable still, that "when a man's ways please the Lord He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him"² A change however had taken place in this respect, in the Psalmist's circumstances. The Lord had rescued him from the hands of his foes, and as his heart overflowed with gratitude for such deliverance, he exclaimed "I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me."³ This interposition of providence on his behalf, he felt to be an immense favour. He attributed it entirely to the grace of God, and felt that to it he was indebted for the preservation of his life. Such we apprehend to be the original, and legitimate import of the Psalmist's words.

But, although they primarily direct our attention to the

1. Psalm xxx. 5.

2. Prov. xvi. 7.

3. Psalm xxx. 1.

mortal life of believers, as protected and preserved by the gracious providence of God, yet we think, that the language does as appropriately intimate the general nature of that life which is peculiar to the immortal soul, of which, the reader will judge, when he shall have carefully considered the remarks which follow.

1. The life of the rational soul does not consist in the mere circumstance of its immortality or indestructibility. Immortality is a quality attributed to the human soul in contradistinction from what eventuates in the perishable body, and it rather denotes the perpetuity of its existence than the nature of its life. The very phrase "*immortal life*," so commonly used, shews evidently a distinction between life and immortality. The body possesses an appropriate life, which does not consist in the presence of a spiritual *principle* in it, as we have already seen. The soul is not the life of the body. Its life is peculiar and distinct but of a temporary continuance and liable sooner or later to extinction by means of that process of dissolution which destroys the entire organization. Hence the life of the body is called a *mortal life*. But the soul is not liable to such a dissolution or separation of its parts. And being devoid of and unaffected by the properties of matter it is destined to continue to all eternity uninfluenced by decay. It is therefore said to be immortal.

We cannot indeed speak with the same precision, and certainty of the immortal spirit, that we do of the mortal body; for we do not and cannot know what is its essential nature, and whether there is any thing in it answerable to organization, or whether it is susceptible of variety in the modification of its essence, so that when we attribute perpetuity, and the absence of decay to it, we take it for granted that its essential being remains unaltered and unaffected. For any thing we know to the contrary, the *perpetuity* of the human soul is as entirely distinct from.

and no more necessarily connected with, that in which consists its appropriate life, as is the existence of the material atoms which compose the human body with *its* appropriate life. These do not perish:—it is demonstrable, that not a particle of matter has been annihilated since the creation. Incessant changes and combinations are going on, but there is no such thing as the absolute destruction of the least portion of the Creator's works. Nature abhors annihilation. The particles which compose our bodies may indeed be separated, and resolved into their primary elements, and be assumed into new productions by entirely new combinations:—yea they may even enter into the composition of other living creatures, but they will not by such process be destroyed. And when death has deranged the entire organization of the human body; and in the alembic of the grave, it has been resolved into its simple elements—these elements still remain. There is, strictly speaking a perpetuity attributable to the body. The particles of which it is composed may lie dormant in the grave, or pass through a thousand successive changes, but shall be re-combined and re-organized in all the bloom and beauty of immortal youth. Of this no one can doubt who admits the truth of the sacred record. That record is short and decisive. “The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.”¹ No one however thinks of identifying the essential existence of the elementary dust with the life of the body. Wherefore we conclude that as the life of the body consists in something distinct from the mere existence of the material particles of which it is composed; so the life of the soul does as certainly consist in something distinct from the mere existence of its spiritual essence. It follows as a corollary from this

2. That the life of the soul does not consist in its spirit-

¹ John, v. 29.

uality. Spirit is but one mode of being, as matter is another; and with equal propriety might it be said, that the life of material beings consists in their material essence, as of spiritual beings in their spiritual essence. The life of the body we have already seen consists in its appropriate action. It is not now necessary to refer to the proof and illustrations by which we attempted to establish the correctness of this definition. Our business here is to apply it to the rational soul of man by which we shall obtain some definite ideas on a subject exceedingly intricate and perplexed. Wherefore we conclude that

V. THE LIFE OF THE RATIONAL SOUL CONSISTS IN THE REGULAR SERIES OF THOSE ACTIONS WHICH ARE APPROPRIATE TO ITS SUSCEPTIBILITIES AND CAPACITIES. To understand this, it is necessary for us to inquire what actions are appropriate; and this can best be done by a reference to the primitive constitution of man. It cannot be expected however, nor is it at all necessary that we should undertake any minute analysis of the capacities of the human soul, which fit it for various action. It will be enough for us to adopt some general classification, as suggested by the character of the actions themselves.

It is said that man was created in the image of God, and whatever may be our opinion as to that image's being the combination in man of the different orders of life, thus constituting a trinity in unity, certain it is that a resemblance may be traced in the moral qualities of his rational soul to perfections of the divine nature. These may be all classed under the three following heads, which it is not a little remarkable are designated as the perfections more especially manifested by the three persons of the Godhead, viz., *knowledge* corresponding with the purposes, and plans, and revelations especially attributable to the Father, who is the great source of all:—*Righteousness* corresponding with the peculiar perfection of the Son, who is denominated the

righteous one and the Lord our righteousness, as he appeared and acted fulfilling all righteousness:—*Holiness*, corresponding with the more especial attribute of the spirit who receives the denomination of the Holy One, the Holy Spirit. The regenerate sinner is said by the apostle to be “*renewed* in knowledge after the image of Him that created him,”¹ and in another place to have “put on the *new* man which *after* God is created in righteousness and true holiness,”² as though regeneration secured the restoration of properties originally characteristic of man.

Without venturing into any thing like minute investigation with regard to the import of these expressions, it may suffice to remark, that they are properties appropriate to the different capacities of man’s moral nature. *Knowledge* implies, and is appropriate to the power of perceiving and understanding the truth—his intellectual capacities: *Righteousness* to his active powers or capacities for voluntary action: and *Holiness* to his sensitive powers or capacities for feeling and emotion. Where there is *knowledge*, there must be truth or fact, and a mind to perceive and apprehend it. Where there is *righteousness*, there must be a law or standard of right and actions conformed to it. Where there is *holiness*, there must be some sensitiveness to take alarm at the approach and presence of any thing improper, and impure, and to preserve the harmony of all the powers, passions and affections of the soul. When man therefore was created, he was possessed of a mind capable of perceiving, and stored with the knowledge of, truth; he was strictly and perfectly conformed to the law of God both in letter and in spirit, in outward act and inward volition; and he was so sensitive to every thing that concerned the honor and glory of God—so fully under the influence of love to Him, as to be devoid of any of those selfish, sordid and

1 Col. iii. 14.

2 Eph. iv. 24.

morbid passions and affections which now oppose themselves to the truth and justice and purity of God.

Our first parents, unlike their progeny, were created in full possession of all the powers of their being, and that in a state of perfection. They were *created in knowledge*. Nature spread forth her rich treasures to their enraptured attention, and immediately on inspection they understood their use and character. The Lord brought the beasts of the field to Adam, to receive their names; and the names he gavethem—if, as it is most probable, the Hebrew dialect approaches nearest to the first language spoken by man—are to this day most appropriate, and plainly show, that he understood their nature. His skill in language, therefore, must have been equal to his acquaintance with natural history. Nor should we conclude that he was ignorant of God and spiritual realities. It was his great employment, and, while he continued innocent, his great enjoyment to rise

From nature up to nature's God.

He knew God, not by any abstract process of reasoning; but by intuition. The whole creation, in all the brightness of its primitive glory, stood forth as the polished mirror, to reflect the perfections of Deity; and man had but to behold, admire and adore. At every turn he met the ever, and everywhere present God. In every plant and shrub he traced the workings of His hand. His converse with nature, was his communion with the Divinity.

And while his mind was exercised, in those contemplations, and with that knowledge, by which a blissful intercourse, and communion with God were maintained, his outward actions, and inward volitions, were in exact conformity with the will of God, or law, which he had given for their regulation. Being *created in righteousness*, his powers were adapted to that law, or, the law was adapted to them. At all events, the adaptation was reciprocal and

complete. Man inclined to obedience, and till the moment of his fall, perfectly conformed himself in all the exercise of his varied powers, to the equitable precepts of God's most holy law. No thought of rebellion entered his mind. No act of rebellion ever appeared in his deportment. No feeling of rebellion, lurked in his heart.

He was also *created in holiness*, with powers so attuned, if we may thus speak, as to be pleasureably affected with the knowledge of God, and obedience to his will, and pained and distressed with the contrary. Thus knowing, acting, and being affected, man was the object of the divine favour, and did certainly and continuously apprehend that favour, as the means of his highest and most ennobling blessedness. Such was the design of his being. Such was the appropriate exercise of his intellectual, active, and sensitive powers. Such was his life. *It consisted in the actings of his mind and will and heart toward God, as his supreme good and chief end.*

VI. THIS LIFE, MAN LOST IMMEDIATELY ON HIS GIVING PLACE TO THE TEMPTER. His belief in the testimony of the prime apostate obscured his perceptions of the truth of God, deranged his conceptions, destroyed his rectitude, and disordered his affections, so that he died, in a spiritual sense, as really, the moment he yielded to the seducer, as he did, in a natural sense, when several centuries after his body dropped into the grave. His peaceful and blissful intercourse with God was interrupted, and instead of rejoicing to hear His voice—that voice which he was wont to hear with delight—and of wishing to meet His beneficent Creator, and receive His gentle embrace, he shrunk amazed, appalled, and flying, vainly thought to shun His presence. Communion with his God, was no longer blissful. The source of that happiness, for which all the susceptibilities and capacities of his being had been adapted, became the fruitful spring of misery. The object

he had chosen as his supreme good, was avoided and rejected as his supreme misery. God and His glory was no longer his chief end, but were lost in the absorbing influence of supreme selfishness. He shuddered at the very thought of drawing nigh to God. Instead of basking in the sunshine of the divine favour, and absorbing the mild rays of the divine glory, to invigorate and enliven his soul, he felt the wrath of God to be like "a consuming fire." Oh, it was a death horrible and agonizing, that eventuated in the soul of man, when first he violated the command of God. "By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin."¹ The rational soul, where every blissful emotion was wont to play, in all the delights of heavenly benevolence, became the foul den of thieves, a cage of unclean birds, whence issued every hateful passion, the vile progeny of Hell. All was lost, and man was instantly transformed, from the delightful friend and lover of God, into his dark and malignant foe. The pestilential breath of Hell, had sullied the fair mirror, from which had been reflected the very glories of God, and on it, now might be traced, in fixed characters, the resemblance of the first rebel. See the hideous portrait—

Love was not in their looks, either to God,
Or to each other, but apparent guilt ;
And shame, and perturbation and despair,
Anger and obstinacy, and hate and guile.

Having seen in what the life of man's rational soul consisted before he rebelled, we are now prepared, in a few words, to state in what consists his REGENERATION. As it is essentially, but making alive again, as the apostle has styled it—restoring a forfeited life; and as the life of man's rational soul consisted, as we have shown, in the appropriate exercise of its various powers or capacities, so,

VII, REGENERATION IS THE RECOMMENCEMENT OF THE LIFE THAT HAS BEEN LOST; THE RATIONAL SOUL OF MAN

I. Rom. v. 12.

BEGINNING TO ACT APPROPRIATELY IN THE EXERCISE OF ITS MORAL POWERS OR CAPACITIES, HIS MIND AND WILL AND HEART BEING DIRECTED TO GOD AS THE SUPREME GOOD AND CHIEF END.

There are spiritual as well as sensible realities. Of the former, we have as real and satisfactory information, as of the latter. The testimony of God, is better evidence than our sensible perceptions. But the testimony of God, which, as it were, draws aside the veil of sense and discloses to our minds, the wonders and realities of the spiritual world, affects not the great mass of men. "They are earthly, sensual, devilish." They are absorbed in the scenes of *this* life, intent on the objects that arrest the attention of their senses. Yea, many are disgusted and painfully affected with the little they do learn from the testimony of God, with respect to spiritual things. Others, however, are filled with delight in the contemplation of them, and feel their minds and hearts swayed by their influence. For, says an apostle, "WE look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."¹ That there is some essential difference between them, is obvious. That difference consists in the want, on the one hand and in the possession on the other, of spiritual vitality. The rational soul perceives, enjoys and acts in view of spiritual realities, as disclosed by the testimony of God.

They control the currents of feeling, and influence the flowings of thought. The spiritual world rises into view in all its wondrous glory, and at no time, however they may vary in the degree of their impressiveness, do they lose the power of reaching and affecting the man, and rousing him to some appropriate action. The whole mind and heart and soul and in all their strength, flow forth to God, as the object of highest delight. "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none on earth that I de-

1. 1 Cor. iv. 18.

sire beside Thee. My flesh faints and my heart fails, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever," is the language of the living soul. It lives in God—mind and heart dwelling on his love.

It will readily be admitted, that the language of the scriptures, favours this general view of the nature of Regeneration. It is not in one or two places only, but frequently ; yea, uniformly, that life is predicated of the renewed man. This life commences with his faith, or belief in the testimony of God, the first in the series of those acts and exercises in which it consists. The Saviour says, that "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."¹ As the great object promotive of that life, He calls Himself the "bread of life;"² "The resurrection and the life;"³ "The way, the truth and the life;"⁴ "The prince of life."⁵

They that believe on Him, are said to be partakers of life, while those on the other hand who refuse to believe, are spoken of as dead, or devoid of life. "These things" says the Evangelist John, "have I written unto you, that ye might believe upon the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through His name."⁶ "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life."⁷

The unrenewed and unbelieving, are represented as refusing to come to Him, who alone can impart life. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life,"⁸ and as being actually dead. "The time is coming, and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."⁹

The transition from an unbelieving to a renewed state, is described by various expressions, but all involving the idea of life. "We know that we have passed from death

1 John vi. 53.

4 John xiv. 6

7 John iii. 36.

2 John vi. 48.

5 Acts iii. 15.

8 John v. 40.

3 John xi. 25.

6 John xx. 31.

9 John v. 25.

unto life,"¹ "But God who is rich in mercy for the great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath *quicken*ed us together with Christ;"² "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who, according to his abundant mercy hath *begotten* us again unto a lively (living) hope;"³ "Which were *born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;"⁴ "Ye must be born again;"⁵ "Your life is hid with Christ in God;"⁶ "I will put my spirit within you, and ye shall live;"⁷ "He that hath the Son, hath life."⁸

It is unnecessary to multiply passages. The above will suffice, to show how commonly the sacred scriptures attribute life to the renewed man, as connected with, or promoted by his faith. Paul says, distinctly, "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;"⁹ and "the just shall live by faith."¹⁰ Will any one say that all this is metaphorical? We admit that occasionally some metaphysical allusion may be made, by the term life, to the great moral transformation which is effected in guilty sinners by the Spirit God. But it is an outrage upon language to say that in all the passages quoted, life is metaphorical. With equal propriety might we say that life itself is a metaphor; that in fact there is no such thing.

We have already seen in a general point of view, from a strict and careful examination of the nature of life, as far as we can approximate it, that there is a state of things induced in the human mind, by the Spirit's agency, which corresponds exactly and literally with our definition of life. Why then shall we reject the idea of life, and persuade ourselves, that as applicable to our moral nature, the term is

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| 1. 1 John iii. 14. | 2. Eph. ii. 4, 5. | 3. 1 Peter i. 3. |
| 4. Peter i. 3. | 5. John iii. 7. | 6. Col. ii. 3. |
| 7. Ezek. xxxvii. 14. | 8. 1 John v. 12. | 9. Gal. ii. 20. |
| 10. Romans i. 16. | | |

merely metaphorical? Must we take it for granted, that there *can* be no *real life*, but what we find associated with, and dependent on, material organization? Who does not see that the supposition is altogether unphilosophical and gratuitous? God is a spirit, and yet He is "the *living* and true God." The blessed Saviour, too is called emphatically, "The living one;" "I am he that liveth (*ο ζων*) and was dead; and, behold I am alive for ever more."¹ And it is expressly stated, that "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He also given to the Son, to have life in Himself."² Is all this metaphor? But if not, and if life is predicable of a pure spirit, as is God, why should we deem it necessary to believe, or suspect for one moment that there may not or cannot be such a state of things induced in the human soul, such acts and emotions elicited, as may be best understood by accepting in its obvious import the language of scripture, which speaks of a believer's *life*. The thing is unquestionably possible. No one can successfully contend for the restriction of life to the narrow limits of the material creation. If he admits that God lives, really and truly, and that *His* life is not metaphorical, then must he admit that there may be a real life peculiar to the human soul.

But in so saying, we are *not to be* understood as *teaching*, or *admitting for one moment*, any more in reference to *spiritual* than *natural* things, that *life is an essence*, a principle, or a substance, existing *per se*, and being *itself* the cause of those actions we denominate vital. Let the reader bear in mind the idea and definition of life already advanced, and not attribute *to us* the mistaken assumption which pervades the writings of some, that life is an essence, or principle *per se*. In this very thing, we honestly believe is to be found the origin of much of that dispute which is now tending to sunder brethren, who ought to be

1 Rev. i. 18.

2 John. v. 26.

united in heart and effort for the salvation of souls, as well as the source of a vast deal of that obscurity which has enwrapped in almost impenetrable mist, the subject of a sinner's regeneration, and we doubt not, contributed to bewilder, perplex, ensnare, and ruin the souls of many. If any will represent regeneration as the creation of a new principle of spiritual life, we call upon them previously to prove that life is a principle at all. This must be done before any inference, with regard to the nature of regeneration, as being the communication of a principle of spiritual life can be analogically deducible. But this subject deserves more particular consideration, and is reserved to the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

REGENERATION NOT A PHYSICAL CHANGE.

MAN not naturally possessed of spiritual life—Beginning appropriately to act he begins to live—This beginning the *new birth*—Regeneration not the *infusion* of a new principle of spiritual life—Ignorance and erroneous views of some Theological writers with respect to the nature of life—Thence erroneous and vague language with regard to regeneration—Quotations from Skepp—Witsius—Charnock—Hopkins—A late attempt to screen old Calvinistic writers from Dr. Cox's charge that they held and taught the doctrine of a physical regeneration—Quotation from Turretine—Dr. Owen's explanation—Dr. Witherspoon's admission—An example of strange discrepancy between them—Quotations from Dr. Owen—The influence which his *false physiology* had on his philosophical views of Regeneration—Also of Greenhill—Boston—The Stahlian doctrine and Hunterian theory of life both lay false foundations for analogical illustration—A particular examination of the attempts to repel the accusation with regard to a physical regeneration—Quotations from Dr. Edwards—No new sense—Nor holy principle—Nor spiritual instinct sufficient explanations of the nature of regeneration—All liable to objection—Some objections against the doctrine.—1. It exceedingly obscures the grace of God—2. renders the apostle's declaration difficult to be understood, Heb. vi. 4, and 5—3. robs the Spirit of the glory of being the immediate author of christian graces—4. has a deleterious influence on personal piety—5. destroys a sense of moral obligation—6. is based on a false assumption.

THE life of the rational soul, it has been seen, consisted originally in the relative series of those actions appropriate to its necessities, and capacities, in the perception, approbation, pursuit and enjoyment of the divine favour, as its true and supreme felicity. This life has been lost.

Men are naturally opposed to God, as shall be shewn more fully hereafter. Regeneration is the commencement of spiritual life. That life must have its commencement in some *act* or *exercise* which is the first in the new series. Faith, which is simply belief of the truth as made known by a credible witness, is that act or exercise of which, where God is the witness, life in the sacred scriptures is predicated. “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”¹

It will not be questioned on the one hand, that till a man believes he is destitute of spiritual life; nor, on the other that he no sooner believes than he lives. “He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”² It is certain that there is and must be, in the very nature of things, a point of time when the rational soul first believes the testimony of God, with that sort of faith which causes those acts appropriate to the design of God in its creation. This is not found to be contemporaneous with the very first actings of our intelligent nature. They are directly contrary to the will and consequently to the design of God, so that man is not naturally or according to the mere developements of nature, possessed of spiritual life. Nor will he ever be without some influence and agency of the Spirit of God, other than that which He exerts as He is the God of nature. “You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world.”³

Whenever the Spirit of God excites and secures in the mind and heart of man, those acts and emotions which are appropriate to his rational soul, i. e. when they are directed to God, as his supreme good and chief end, he is re-

1. Mat. iv. 4.

2. John iii. 36.

3. Eph ii. 1, 2.

newed, regenerated, born again. And such he must be regarded simultaneously with the very first or commencement of them, at whatever period in the history of his being that may take place. He may have existed for years previously: but his acts, in the days of his unregeneracy were not appropriate to his moral relations, or to the design of God in his creation. Till he *begins* thus to act, i. e. to *act right*, he has no life: but as he thus begins, he begins to live.

This *beginning* to live, or first going forth of the soul in appropriate actings towards God, is with great propriety and beauty, denominated THE NEW BIRTH. For what is *birth*? Is it not the commencement of a new series of processes or developements in the being's existence? It is not the commencement of *existence*: nor of life absolutely; but of those actions and motions—that life which God designed should be developed in man in this world. Entirely new processes and actions take place simultaneously with the infant's entrance into the world. Its transit from its mother's womb, is the date of its life; but not of its absolute living existence. Cotemporaneously with this transit, new characteristic actions and emotions, or processes commence; it is therefore said to live. As the air immediately on exposure rushes into the infant's lungs, which had been in a collapsed or shrivelled state, while it lay in its mother's womb, new characteristic actions commence. The cellular spaces of the lungs are dilated; the bosom heaves; the cavity of the chest is enlarged; the blood flows; the oxygen or vital part of the atmospheric air is absorbed by the blood as it passes through the lungs; heat is disengaged by this process; the heart begins to propel the blood; circulation commences; and thence in regular series proceed the processes of digestion, absorption, nutrition, &c. whose aggregate, constitute the life of the animal being.

No one imagines that when the air inflates the infant's

lungs, and it begins to cry, as it struggles into birth, there is introduced or *infused* into it, a new *principle of life*. Yet have all its characteristic actions and processes been suddenly changed. Birth is the very first which originates and secures all the rest in the great aggregate of vital phenomena. If therefore, we cannot so understand birth in physiology, as originating a new principle, or as being a new creation, we cannot lawfully infer any thing of this sort as to spiritual life, when we run the analogy. All that we can infer from the expressions *Regeneration, being born again, renewed, &c.* which are terms employed to denote the change that takes place in the rational soul, is, that they denote its *beginning* to live, or commencing its appropriate life. If natural birth is not in *reality* a new creation, neither is spiritual birth. As our terms are necessarily taken from material and sensible things, we must beware that we do not attribute more meaning to them than they can in truth bear. As the infant passes from one state or mode of its being to another, when it is born, so does the new born soul pass from under condemnation, into favour with God. Birth in both cases is the mere transition.

It is going altogether beyond the analogy in the case, to assert that there is in Regeneration the *injection, infusion, or implantation or creation of a new principle of spiritual life*. If the expressions are used in a *vague metaphorical sense*, as we suppose they are by multitudes, we shall not object very strenuously against it. But if it is employed, as it is unquestionably by some, to unfold to us the *philosophy of Regeneration*, or to explain the *immediate* effect of the Spirit's operations, we do unhesitatingly and unequivocally denounce it as unauthorized by the language of Scripture, the analogy of nature, and the deductions of science.

Perhaps the reader may be startled at the boldness of this declaration, and may at first sight, be disposed to think

that the above account of regeneration involves essential error. But wherein lies the essential error? Is it essential error, to affirm that the expressions, *new creature, created anew, His workmanship*, are metaphorical? They most undeniably cannot be literally interpreted: for to *create*, is to produce something out of nothing, to give that a being which had none before, and which in the nature of things, none can do but God. If they must be literally interpreted, then do we err, as will be seen, along with one of the great fathers of the Presbyterian church, and whose fame will long be dear to the hearts of the American people, and then it will certainly follow, that Regeneration is the result of an effort of physical power, on the part of God. But more of this presently.

The writings of many Theologians contain expressions which betray at one time, utter *ignorance*, and at another *erroneous views* with regard to the nature of *Life*. It seems to be taken for granted by not a few, that *physiologically*, Life is a *created essence*, and itself a *cause* of those actions and processes in our *animal* frame, which we call *vital*; and speaking *analogically*, therefore as our terms are borrowed from material things, the impression is almost indelibly made, that they considered regeneration literally to be the infusion, implantation or creation of some inherent principle, essence or substance which is specifically the *cause* of those actions we account spiritual or holy. Regeneration, accordingly, in their estimation, consists in a simple effort of God's physical or creative *power, producing* this essence, substance or principle of spiritual life, which itself becomes and is designed to be the immediate *cause* of those actions and exercises denominated holy or spiritual.

The falsity of the idea that life physiologically considered, is an essence or principle, has been already exposed. The reality of its existence has never been proved. The

most specious of all the arguments in support of its being a real essence, "a first principle in nature," is but an apparent influence which in fact is a mere hypothesis or a begging of the question.¹ The whole philosophy, therefore, which would explain Regeneration as the injection, or creation of a new *principle* or *essence* of spiritual life, being based on a false theory as to natural life, must be erroneous, and must lead to consequences both dangerous and heretical. Well therefore did the apostle charge us to beware of a false philosophy.

It is true that when the subject is presented in this way, and the advocates of what we must pronounce a *false philosophy*, are charged with maintaining the doctrine of a *physical Regeneration*, or Regeneration by the physical

1. "It is no evidence," says Dr. Copland, "of the non-existence of this principle, that it does not become visible to our senses, in an uncombined form : it is, however, sufficiently demonstrable by its effects, in alliance with matter, in which state it presents proofs of its being equal to those from which we infer the existence of matter itself." *Richcrand's Elements of Physiology—Appendix*, p. 2. Who does not see that he takes for granted the existence of the cause, which is the very thing to be proved, for he calls the phenomena of life, *effects* of a vital principle? If they are called *effects*, we have shown that their cause is something different from a created essence "a vital principle which *allied* to matter *controls* its changes and forms." The phenomena of life are the results of the divine Spirit's agency, according to established laws or modes and not of a created essence which possesses in itself a controlling influence over all the properties of matter, with which we are acquainted. The following while it furnishes a specimen of the same mode of false reasoning just noticed, will serve to illustrate in its fullest extent, the false physiology which lies at the basis of false theology.

"As however we can form no just conceptions of such a principle, but by its effects, and as we have no experience of these effects unconnected with matter, so we are warranted in the conclusion, that the vital influence is associated with the molecules of matter, forming the impregnating secretions, and the sensible bulk of the ovum. This is its lowest state of activity or *energy* and its influence is chiefly manifested, under such circumstances, in preserving the elements of matter with which it is associated from entering into the combinations to which the chemical affinities of these elements dispose them."—*Idem*.

power of God, there are those who utterly disclaim such an idea. But either their language is utterly and absolutely unintelligible, or it does imply the idea of a *real creation by an act of mere physical power on the part of God!* We say *physical* in the proper meaning of that term;—not material but as real and substantial, as in the *first* production or creation of the human soul. We must certainly mistake the obvious meaning of words, if some theological writers do not use the word *create* in reference to the regeneration of a sinner, in its plain and literal import, and conceive of life as being an essence or substance, possessing the power of a *cause* in and of itself. We cite a few quotations for the reader to examine.

“Second instance of the Spirit’s work *upon the soul* in effectual calling, in which the soul is *wholly passive*; and that is, in the act of quickening the soul by giving and effecting a *real vital* union to Christ, as the head and root of all spiritual life and grace; from whom every member of his body, being thus spiritually and *vitally one in him*, receiveth all the necessary supplies of *nourishment* and edification suited to the *new creature life and motions*: and as the Spirit of God and Christ knits or ties this *vital knot* of everlasting union betwixt the soul and Christ; so he himself becometh the eternal *vital bond* by which the two being “joined to the Lord become one spirit,” as *truly* and *properly* as the union between husband and wife, by God’s ordination make them one flesh.”

“As there must be *life in the principle or habit*, before it *can* be in the *act*; so there must be union to Christ as a head before there is life in the member: for as well may we imagine a branch cut off from the old wild olive to have good juices in it, received from the root before it is grafted in, as to pretend that any have a life of grace or faith before spiritual vital union to Christ. How this is effected, and exactly when it beginneth I will not pretend to be positive

in, it being much more hidden and mysterious than the way of the spirit of man, *in its first entrance into and quickening the body* before it is born into the world, the which, whatever men pretend, is to mortals inexplicable.”

“We are sure we are *passive* in our being quickened by and from our life-giving head and spiritual Adam *as we were in our first union to, and quickening in our natural parent*: for as a life-giving Spirit he first *conveyeth life from himself into us* by his Spirit which he giveth to us; and this very life is our union, even as life is the bond uniting and tying soul and body together, so life and union are coeval.”

Who does not feel bewildered after passing thro’ such a labyrinth of perplexity? There is such a confounding of literal and metaphorical expressions, and at the same time such *false physiology* and *false philosophy* suggesting the analogical illustrations, that we are glad to escape. Nor are we to be deterred from the rejection of such “vain philosophy”¹ by an appeal to the *mystery* of the Spirit’s operations, for this is too often done to prevent the exposure of mere *mysticism* and obscurity in the conceptions and language of those who discern not where the mystery lies.

Witsius defines Regeneration to be “a supernatural act of God by which a new and divine life *is put into* (inditur) an elect man spiritually dead, and that from the incorruptible seed of the word of God *impregnated* by the mighty power of the Spirit.”

“It is that *intrinsic constitution of the soul*, in which by virtue of the Spirit’s uniting it with God it is born fit to put forth those actions which are pleasing to God in Christ; whether actions of this sort may follow from that principle, or, as fruit in the seed, may even there for a little while lie hid.”²

1 Skepp’s Divine Energy, pp. 238, 239, 240.

2 Regeneratio est actio Dei hyperphysica, qua homini electo, spiritualiter

The same vagueness of speech is here observable, and it seems to us very clearly to be the result of an attempt, physiologically to explain the nature of regeneration, and express some mystic notion about the *infusion of a vital principle into the soul*. He speaks of a *life put into the soul*, of the *intrinsic constitution of the soul*, of its being *impregnated* while a germ and there for a while *lying hid*, and that too, not when he might have been expected to abound in metaphor, but when theologically and philosophically *defining* regeneration.

Dr. Charnock says that “the new creature is a *vital powerful principle, naturally moving the soul* to the service and obedience of God, and doth *animate the faculties* in their several motions, as *the soul doth quicken the members of the body*.”

“’Tis the form whence the perfection both of understanding and will do flow; ’tis not therefore placed in either of them but *in the essence of the soul*. ’Tis by this the union is made between God and the soul: but the union is not of one particular faculty, but of the whole soul. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit, ’tis not one particular faculty that is perfected by grace but the *substance* of the soul.¹”

The above is capable of but one construction. We see in it clearly the philosophy of this celebrated divine. It is impossible to employ terms more expressive of the idea of Regeneration’s being a physical change. He talks of grace operating in the *essence* of the soul, and perfecting the *sub-*

mortuo, nova ac divina vita *inditur*, idque ex, semine incorruptibili verbi Dei, *fecundati* per immensam spiritus virtutem.

Est illa intrinseca animæ constitutio, qua virtute Spiritus eam cum Deo unientis, apta nata est eas exscereas actiones, quæ Deo in Christo gratæ sunt: sive actiones ejusmodi mox ex isto principio consequantur, sive in ibi uti *fructus in semine, aliquantisper delitescant*. Wilsius de Œconomia Fæd. Dic. lib. III. cap v.

1 Charnock’s works fol. ed. vol. ii. pp. 51, & 46.

stance of the soul as though grace were itself a creature injected by the power of God into the soul!! And yet, elsewhere, this same writer contradicts himself; as indeed it is not uncommon to find such contradictions, when faith and common sense, in some moments of inadvertence, make war upon and triumph over a vain philosophy. He says that this new creation "is not a destruction of the substance of the soul; but that there is the *same physical being* and the *same faculties* in all men and *nothing* is changed *in its substance* as far as it respects the nature of man: 'tis necessary therefore that this new *creation* consist in gracious *qualities* and *habits* which beautify and dispose the soul to act righteously and holily."¹

The inconsistency and contradictions in the language of this writer, can only be accounted for on the supposition just stated, viz: his faith and common sense occasionally getting the better of, and breaking through the mysticism of a false philosophy. It is plain that he considered Regeneration to be something done in or upon the soul by the Spirit of God, and that by the mere exercise of His physical power, which, though he could not say it changed the *substance* of the soul, nevertheless being introduced into the soul anterior to, and irrespective of its voluntary exercises, becomes the immediate *cause* of holiness or spiritual actions, as really as the creation of the substance of the soul precedes, in the order of nature and of time, and proves the cause of those actions which *it* performs. This is unquestionably a physical Regeneration, i. e. a change produced *on* or *in the soul*—we care not whether by addition or subtraction, injection or extraction—something done to the soul back of its thoughts and feelings or voluntary exercises, and which, as Witsius intimates, may *fecundate* it and fit it for doing those things which are pleasing to God, though for a little while it may lie hid.

1 *Charnock's works*, fol. ed. vol. ii. pp. 51, 41.

Dr. Hopkins expresses himself much to the same effect. "The divine operation in Regeneration," says he, "of which the *new heart is the effect*, is *immediate*; or it is not wrought by any *means* as the cause of it; but *by the immediate power and energy* of the Holy Spirit. It is called a *creation*; and *the divine agency in it is as much without any medium as in creating something from nothing.*"¹

An attempt has been recently made to vindicate Charnock, Owen, Turretine and others from the charge alleged against the old Calvinistic divines by Dr. Cox, that they believed and taught the doctrine of a physical Regeneration.² But it is as we humbly conceive altogether a vain attempt. They do indeed speak of Regeneration as a *moral change*, and describe it oft times with great accuracy, when speaking of the moral exercises. Here their faith and piety triumphed over their philosophy:—but whatever may have been their declarations and illustrations, as long as they did assert and teach that Regeneration is a *literal creation*—something done *in or upon* the soul by an *immediate exercise of physical power* on the part of God, thus and there producing an effect, which is anterior to any holy exercises, and becomes itself the direct cause of such exercises, we cannot possibly see how they are to be exculpated from the charge. Their language frequently involves the idea of physical Regeneration, or they have expressed themselves most awkwardly, and without any definite meaning.

Speaking of the first moment of conversion, Turretine represents the man as perfectly passive, as is the ewer into which water is poured. And he compares the regeneration of a sinner, not to natural birth but *conception*, observing that, "as in natural generation the children themselves *cannot beget themselves*, nor confer any thing to their own nativity, but are *merely passive*: so in superna-

1 *Hopkin's System of Divinity*, vol. i. p. 536. 2 See *Bib. Rep.* vol. ii.

tural regeneration, no one can regenerate himself."¹ The idea of an infusion or injection of gracious qualities into the soul, his language evidently implies when he teaches, that the orthodox make the man that is to be regenerated, *merely a passive subject* of the regenerating spirit and of the new qualities, which *by Him are infused*, though afterwards, *these new qualities being already injected*, the man demeans himself as the preactive instrument of his own actions.²

Dr. Owen writing on the subject of regeneration, makes the following remarks: "This (i. e. the new creature,) is *produced in the souls of men* by a *creating* act of the power of God, or it is not a *creature*: and it is *superinduced into the essential faculties* of our souls, or it is not a *new* creature; for whatever is in the soul of power, disposition, ability or inclination unto God, or for any moral actions, by nature, it belongs unto the *old* creation, it is no *new* creature, and it must be *somewhat* that hath a being and *subsistence of its own in the soul*, or it can be neither *new* nor a *creature*."³

Of Dr. Owen we have an exalted opinion, and acknowledge ourselves much indebted to his writings, especially in having early imbibed from them a taste for the study of the Scriptures, in preference to tomes of theology in matters of

1 Sed de primo momento, quo primum convertitur, et novam vitam per regenerationem accipit, in quo mere passive se habere ad modum subjecti recipientis, non veri principii agentis contendimus.

Et ut in generatione naturali, liberi ipsi seipsos *gignere* non possunt, nec quicquam conferre ad sui nativitatem, sed mere passive se habent: ita in regeneratione supernaturali nemo seipsum regenerare potest. Turret. Inst. Vol. ii. pp. 592, 595.

2 Hominem vero regenerandum facient subjectionem mere passivum Spiritus regenerantis, et novarum qualitatum, quæ ab ipso infunduntur. Quamvis postea infusus jam novis qualitibus, se habeat ut instrumentum activum liberum suorum actionum. Turret. Inst. vol. ii. p. 592.

³ *Owen on the Spirit*, vol. i. p. 349, 350.

faith. But we cannot defer even to him, where his language is wrapped up in the folds of a false philosophy, or conveys no *definite idea* to the mind. In the passage above quoted, he clearly and zealously insists upon the phrase *new creature*, being *literally* understood. Dr. Witherspoon on the other hand in his valuable practical treatise on Regeneration, at the very commencement, pronounces the scriptural phrases "being born again," "the new creature," "his workmanship," &c. to be *metaphorical*, thus evidently denying there is a *literal* or *real creation*.

He does indeed speak of an "inward and essential change," but it is very evident, that he does not by these terms denote any other change than may be traced in the voluntary exercises: for he considers that it may be as appropriately designated by repentance as by regeneration. "It appears," says he, "that regeneration, repentance, conversion, call it what you please, is a very great change,"¹ and that change he describes in detail, in the *actual developments of character which take place*, i. e. *in those feelings and actions*, which constitute the character.

He does not pretend to prove, or assert, the existence of a *principle of life*, or any thing else *back* of the voluntary exercises themselves, *as the cause*, or origin, of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. But this Dr. Owen does, as the above quotation proves, and to intimate that the expressions, "new creature," "being born again," and "His workmanship," are metaphorical, the latter denounces in the severest terms, saying that it "is but a way to turn the whole into a fable, or at least to render the gospel the most obscure, and improper way of teaching the truth of things, that ever was made use of in the world."² Thus widely and radically did those two excel-

1. Witherspoon's works, vol. i. p. 102.

2. Owen on the Spirit, vol. i. p. 351.

lent men *differ* in their *philosophical views of Regeneration*, while nevertheless, they both were agreed as to the *scriptural facts* in the case.

But we have not yet done with the views of Dr. Owen, and the proofs, that the language of some old Calvinistic writers implies an assumption, that the agency of the Spirit in Regeneration, consisted in producing, *creating something in the soul*, which something, is itself *the cause* of holy and vital acts and exercises.

“Allow,” says he, “a new *spiritual principle*, an *infused* habit of grace, or gracious abilities to be required in and unto Regeneration, or to be *the product of the work* of the Spirit therein, that which is born of the Spirit being Spirit, and this part of the nature of this work, is sufficiently cleared.”¹

“This *θεα φύσις*, this divine nature, is not the nature of God, whereof in our own persons we are not subjectively partakers. And yet a nature it is which is a principle of operation.” “The principle itself *infused* into us, *created* in us, is called the new man.” “It is called the new man, because it is the *effect* and *product* of God’s *creating* power, and that in a way of a new *creation*.” “This is the constant course and tenor of the scripture, to distinguish between the grace of regeneration, which it declares to be an immediate supernatural work of God *in us, and upon us*, and all that obedience, holiness, righteousness, virtue, or whatever is good in us, which is the *consequent, product and effect* of it.”¹

“As it is in our natural lives, with respect unto God’s providence, so it is in our spiritual lives, with respect unto His *grace*. He hath in the works of nature endowed us with a *vital principle*, or an act of the quickening soul upon the body, which is quickened thereby. By *virtue hereof* we are *enabled* unto all vital acts, whether natural

1. Owen on the Spirit, vol. i. pp. 349, 351, 352, 353.

and necessary, or voluntary according to the constitution of our beings, which is intellectual. "God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Giving him a *principle of life*, he was *fitted* for, and *enabled* unto all the proper acts of that life. For a *principle of life* is an *ability and disposition* unto acts of life." "It is so as unto our spiritual life. We are, by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, furnished with a *principle of it*, in the way, and for the ends before described. *Hereby* are we *enabled*, and disposed to live unto God, in the exercise of spiritually vital acts, or the performance of duties of holiness."¹

There could not be plainer, or more decisive passages desired, to shew the influence which a FALSE PHYSIOLOGY had in determining the philosophical views of this excellent man, with regard to the nature of regeneration. Who will undertake to affirm, with such testimonies in view, whatever admissions and explanations he may elsewhere have made; that he did not practically consider that regeneration was the *creation by an act of power* on the part of God, of some *vital principle in the soul*, which gave it ability and energy to act. The parallel which he runs between the concurring agency of God's providence in the support of natural life, and the assisting influence of the Holy Spirit, in the acts of spiritual life, does not relieve the subject. We find it absolutely impossible to understand what he says or means, if he did not teach the sentiment, *that Regeneration consisted in God's creating by His physical power, a vital substance or principle in the soul, which is the immediate cause of holy and spiritual acts*—not changing the substance of the soul itself, but superadded, "INFUSED" into it.

We suppose that such also were the views of Greenhill, as expressed in the 14th conclusion of his Morning Exer-

1. Owen on the Spirit, Vol. II. pp. 280, 281.

cise, on the question, "What must, and can persons do towards their own conversion?" They are indeed much more vaguely expressed, and partake more of a metaphysical than physiological tinge; but still, they involve the idea of a created principle of life, which is the immediate source or cause of power or energy in the soul of man, to perform spiritual acts. "Man's will," says he, "being first converted to God, and by God Himself, converts itself also unto God, *acta agit*, as a child's hand in writing, being acted by the master's hand, it writes. Hence, man may be said to turn himself, for the will being *healed* and *made good*, of unwilling willing, it hath an *intrinsic* principle of willing good, and so *dominion* over its own acts, whereby it turneth itself to God."¹

Such too were the philosophical views of Boston as to the nature of Regeneration, who, nevertheless in his practical exhibition and illustrations of that great change, writes with great force and propriety. "Regeneration," says he, "is a real thorough change, whereby the man is *made* a new creature." "The *life given* in regeneration, whatever decays it may fall under, can never be utterly lost." "Believers, regenerate persons, who fiducially credit him and rely on him, have put on Christ. If that be not enough he is *in them as the child in the mother's belly*." "He liveth in them *as their very souls in their bodies*." "As the child is *merely passive* in generation, so is the child of God in regeneration." "Man in his depraved state is a mere *non entity* in grace, and is brought into a new *being*, by the power of Him 'who calleth things that be not as though they were: being created in Jesus Christ unto good works.'"²

To this we add the language of Shaw: "Therefore we may conceive of the original of religion in a more inward

1. The Morning exercise at Cripple gate, Sep. 1661, Ser. 2.

2. Boston's Fourfold State, pp. 155, 156, 195, 171.

and spiritual manner still. It is not so much given of God, as itself is something of God in the soul; as the soul is not so properly said to give life as to be the life of man. As the conjunction of the soul with the body is the life of the body, so verily the life of the soul stands in its conjunction with God, by a spiritual union." "Something of Christ *in the soul*—an infant Christ as one calls it."¹

It is easy, in these expressions, to trace the same physiological principles which were embraced by the old divines generally. Although some are more obscure than others in their conceptions and language, yet the Stahlian doctrine of the soul's being the life or quickening principle of the body has contributed no little, by laying a foundation for false analogies, to involve the subject of regeneration in mist and darkness. The substitution of the *Hunterian* theory of life did not and cannot afford a better ground for analogical illustration.

It is unnecessary we presume, to refer minutely to the many disgusting and ridiculous items of resemblance, which are noticed, in the writings of some old Calvinists between natural generation and regeneration—all being suggested and insisted on through the influence of a false physiology. The reader will excuse us for furnishing him with one:

"Q. What is Regeneration?

"A. Its the *production* of a new and spiritual being, by the *introduction* of a new and spiritual forme. As therefore *Isaac* before *generation* was a *non entitie* in nature, so every child of the promise before Regeneration, is a non entity in *grace*; and as in creation there is a *formation*, or the introduction of a new forme which gives being, distinction and operation; so is it likewise in Regeneration. This forme is nothing else than truth of *grace infused*. As

¹ Shaw's Immanuel, pp. 6, 7.

in nature the corruption of one thing is the generation of another; so in grace, the corruption of the old man, is the generation of the new. And lastly as in natural generation no forme is introduced but by various preparations and previous dispositions; so in Regeneration, much legal and evangelical preparation ushers in the new birth." The curious reader may find more of the same character in the residue of the quotation which we give in a note below.¹

We are not a little surprised therefore that after such testimonies it should be so peremptorily and pertina-

1. The nature of Regeneration will appear more distinctly by comparing it more particularly with natural generation; and 1. In the terms of convenience or similitude. 2. In the terms of difference or dissimilitude. They agree 1. In the causes. 2. In the *manner of production*. 3. In the matter produced.

For the first, in both these is 1. A principal cause; and thus God is the regenerate man's father, the church is his mother. 2. There are subordinate instrumental causes; such are Christ's ministers, who are therefore sometimes called fathers, and sometimes mothers. 3. The *constitutive* cause; a *seed* which is *partly natural*, namely the word—partly spiritual, the influence and efficacy of the Holy Ghost—without which the material seed or letter is ineffectual.

2. They agree, 2. In the manner of production. In both there is,

1. A *conception*; Christ spiritual, (as well as personal,) is ever conceived by the power and overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. This holds true in other generations—unless the seed of the word be received and retained, there can be no new man, no good and honest heart.

2. There is a *formation*. God's act is wonderful in the formation of our outward man, but far more stupendous in the formation of our inward man, which is no mean part of the mystery of godliness.

3. *Quickening*—which is perceived by spiritual motion.

4. *Longing*: Sometimes the parents long, sometimes the child; here both parent and child; how doth God, Christ and his ministers long for the natural man's conversion? Never did a teeming woman long more for fruit, or deliverance, than these do for a new born babe in Christ. But this is not all, the babe himself longs also.

5. *Travaile with pain*. Oh the pangs of our spiritual mothers!—do not increase them by sticking in the birth!—Oh the fear and danger of miscarriage, both before and after this spiritual childing! &c. &c. See the *Morning Exercise at Giles in the fields*, May, 1659, pp. 443, 444.

ciously denied, that old Calvinistic writers indicated their belief, that regeneration is a physical change. If they did not mean to intimate a change of something back of, or anterior to, the voluntary exercises, and that in the constitutional nature of the soul, let it be shown intelligibly and plainly what they *did* mean. As yet this has not been satisfactorily done.

A late writer in the Biblical Repertory is too bold, and assumes what he can never prove, when he represents the old Calvinists as meaning nothing more by the *physical* influence of the Spirit on the soul, which he admits they often speak of, than His *direct and immediate* influence. They unquestionably spoke of a *creative* exercise of power, but that is by no means synonymous with a *direct and immediate* influence. There are various ways in which men directly or immediately influence each other, where moral suasion or the presentation of the truth does not take place. Would it not be ridiculous and an abuse of terms to describe such an influence as physical? How vain is the attempt to rescue old Calvinists from the charge of maintaining a physical regeneration, in the proper grammatical meaning of the term, the reader will be able for himself presently to judge.

“*All* the old Calvinists,” says the above writer, “and the great majority, we hope and believe, of the new school also, hold that the *result* of the Holy Spirit’s operation on the soul, is a holy principle or disposition.”¹ This language is vague and equivocal. It is even more obscure than that of Charnock, Owen and others. *They* tell us that the Spirit’s agency or operation is strictly and properly *creative*, and that He *produces* or *infuses* in the soul a *principle* of life, explaining that, as far as we can understand, by “a fitness, readiness and habitual *power* for

1 Biblical Repertory, vol. ii. pp. 265, 266.

all vital actions," which the soul did not in its natural state possess: i. e. as we must believe from their physiological illustrations, some spiritual essence *superadded* and diffused through all the faculties of the soul.

The writer in the Repertory, however, seems to speak of another sort of "holy principle or disposition," the *result* of the Spirit's influence, which, as he denies it to be *physical*, must be regarded as of a *moral* character. If we are to understand the word *principle* here, as we do when we *commonly* talk of principles of action, we shall not contend about it; for, that it results from the influence of the Spirit, that the regenerate man acts upon a holy principle,—that is, for example, that his actions are *regulated and determined by a supreme governing purpose to live to the glory of God*, we shall not deny, but on the contrary strenuously affirm. But this is not what the writer means by a *holy principle*; for he afterwards quotes from Charnock, Owen and Edwards, to the latter of whom is given the strongest testimony of approbation, as expressing the doctrine he is endeavoring to support. The language so highly approved of is as follows:

"So this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of understanding but it is a new *foundation* laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding. So that new holy disposition of heart that attends this new sense, is not a new faculty of will but a *foundation* laid in the nature of the soul for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of will."¹

We candidly confess, that, when such a phrase as "the nature of the soul," is made use of, we immediately conceive that the spirit, or substance of our intellectual being, apart from, and irrespective of, any of its acts and exercises, is designated; and the more especially, when we are directed, by this phrase, to the *foundation, source* or *immediate cause* of those acts. It is true the expression is

¹ Bib. Rep. vol. ii p. 269.

vague, and susceptible of different constructions; and we would not wish to attach any other meaning to the language employed by another, even though his terms may be incorrect and inappropriate, than what he himself is willing they should bear.

The writer does not certainly mean that it is a *principle of life infused into the soul*, for this undoubtedly would be making Regeneration a physical change, that is as we understand the expression, a change in man's *essential nature* effected, if not by converting the very essence or substance of the soul, at least by the introduction of something *newly created and superadded*. This, however, he strenuously denies, and *complains* that old Calvinists have been charged with holding such a sentiment.

Does he mean that there is superadded to the common, ordinary or *constitutional* principles of human action, such as habit, affection, passion, &c. any that is new and *peculiar*? If so, the being no longer belongs to the human family. For to give a man a principle of action in this sense, which he does not possess in common with the whole human race, is to make him a being of another order. Beside, if a man has had communicated to him any principle of action which is the result of a *creative* energy, his *identity* is destroyed. Were we to see a being with a *sixth sense* and a *capacity* to act in some way altogether inconceivable, but answerable to that new sense, we could not regard him as a human being. Whatever capacity to act has its *foundation* laid in the *nature of the soul*, is unquestionably *constitutional*, and must be regarded as an essential part of its being: so that, if by a *holy principle* the writer means a *capacity of nature*, or an adaptation of the soul by the communication to it, of some *constitutional* facility or tendency to holy actions, we cannot possibly avoid the conviction—reprobate the idea as he may—that he nevertheless teaches, or at least his language implies the

doctrine of a physical change. And this is the impression which, in despite of every attempt to attribute to his words another meaning, the above language of Dr. Edwards, as quoted in the Repertory, makes upon our minds. We cannot conceive of *language* better calculated to make just such an impression, than to talk of "a *new* spiritual sense, or a principle of *new* KIND of perception or spiritual sensation."

Dr. Edwards explains his own meaning. "By a *principle of nature*," says he, "I mean that *foundation* which is laid in *nature*, either old or new, for any particular kind or manner of exercise of *the faculties* of the soul; or a natural habit, or foundation for action, giving a person *ability* and disposition to exert the faculties in exercises of such a certain kind: so that to exert the faculties in that kind of exercises, may be said to be his nature."¹

"We have never," says the writer in the Repertory, "met with a stronger, or more formal statement of the doctrine which we are endeavouring to support."² It is unquestionably more philosophical and precise than Dr. Belmy's "holy *taste*," and Dr. Dwight's "*relish* for spiritual objects," which, if they are not mere *metaphorical illustrations*, as we strongly suspect, must have been suggested by Dr. Edwards' Philosophy of Regeneration, which lays "the foundation" of *holy* acts in "a new *spiritual sense*."

"But we presume, that the impressions, which such language makes on our mind, and the inference which we cannot avoid drawing from it, that some of the old Calvinists did virtually, if not avowedly, teach the doctrine of a physical Regeneration, will be pronounced improper and incorrect. We have, therefore, applied ourselves, with especial care to ascertain, if possible, what is precisely "*the*

1. Treatise concerning religious affections, pp. 231, 232.

2. Bib. Rep. vol. ii. p. 269

holy principle," to which the writer refers. His meaning is illustrated by a reference to habit, which is one of the *natural* principles of human action, and he supposes that "something" is done by the Spirit to the soul which places it, *with respect to holy acts*, in a similar condition, with that in which it is, in respect of *those acts* which *habit* renders easy, with this exception only, that there is a *proneness* to holy acts in the one case, the *like* of which does *not* exist in the other.

"A single circumstance," he says, "is here wanting, which is found in other 'habits,' and that is, there is not the tendency or proneness to those particular acts to which this state of mind is adapted. This difference, however, arises not from any difference in the 'habits' themselves, but from the nature of the faculties in which, so to speak, they *inhere*. A principle in the will (in its largest sense, including all the active powers), is not only a *state* of mind *adapted* to certain acts, but *prone to produce* them."¹

From the above explanation, it is evident the writer considers, that in regeneration, some *power* is communicated to the soul, which enables it *of itself* to perform holy acts—there is "something" which is *inherent* in the faculties of the soul—"an *attribute* of the man under all circumstances." This is the immediate cause of holiness, according to this view, and it has its foundation in *the nature of the soul*, in "something" in the man himself, which is the ground of certainty, that when called to holy acts, he will perform them with an ease and rapidity impossible, in the very nature of things, to those unrenewed. At one time, it is spoken of as "a disposition or relish or taste for holiness," and before there was any holy act"—and the subject is illustrated by the analogies of taste, the love of children, the social principle, &c., which, unquestionably are *constitutional*. At another time it is spoken of, more

1. Bib. Rep. vol. ii. p. 272.

explicitly still, as possessing this character, and is actually called "*the instinctive love of holiness*," and that not metaphorically, but philosophically; and the subject is illustrated by analogies drawn from what the writer calls "the maternal instinct," and the instinctive love of justice, abhorrence of cruelty, admiration of what is noble, which God has *implanted* in our "*nature*" and which he speaks of as being *innate*. In this he strictly follows Dr. Edwards, who, when he explains what he means by a disposition's being natural, says, it is "from a kind of *instinct* implanted in the mind, in its creation."

Now the production of these assumed instincts, and "the instinctive love of holiness," in which it is said the mind of Adam was created, is only to be attributed to a *creative* act of Almighty power. We are compelled, therefore, from such analogies employed, to infer, that "the instinctive love of holiness" re-produced in Regeneration, is, and must be referred by the writer, to a *creative act* of the same Almighty power; and if *creative*, then there has been the actual production of something, some *subsistence* which did not previously exist, which is to all intents and purposes, explain it as you may, a *physical* change—a change wrought by Almighty power, in simple created nature.

We are not anxious to arrive at such a result, and as the idea of a physical change is disavowed, it certainly would be uncourteous, not to say unchristian, to intimate that it is maintained. But language is sometimes incorrectly used, and modes of speech are adopted, which, infallibly in their legitimate import and construction, excite ideas contrary to those intended to be conveyed. This will always be the case, when the speaker has not himself a distinct and vivid conception of the thing he intends to teach; and, no doubt, much of the dispute in the christian church, arises out of the imperfection of language, rendered much more operative of mischief, as it is employed by persons of

undisciplined minds, unaccustomed to accurate analysis of thought, and not careful to understand, first what it is they want to express, and next the precise and legitimate meaning of the words they employ for that purpose. It is because we are aware of this thing, and fear lest *we* may err, that we feel so solicitous to know *what is meant* by “the holy principle,” which it is said is the result of the Spirit’s work—lays the *foundation* for, and is the immediate and appropriate *cause* of holy acts.

It is no new substance, it is no vital essence, it is no new *creation*. It can be no new *sense*, nor *instinct*, in the proper meaning of these words. Nor is it any *real subsistence infused* into the natural capacities or susceptibilities, or essence of the soul, for were it any of these, then would it be a physical change. Is it meant, that it results conjointly from the very constitution of the human mind, and the fact of the *Spirit’s* gracious agency in that mind, that when a sinner repents, and believes, he has begun a life, in which his acts and exercises are all regulated, through the impulses of the susceptibilities and capacities of his natural mental and moral constitution, as *they* are affected and excited by spiritual objects?—that is, that his natural susceptibilities and capacities to love, to fear, to hope, to joy, to sorrow, &c. &c. are all governed and determined in their exercise, by the exciting influence of spiritual things, so that he now proposes to himself a new end, is governed by a new purpose, has new *characteristic* exercises and emotions; *new*, not by virtue of any foundation in the soul by a previous creative act of God, but *new* from the character of the objects which have assumed exciting, and controlling, or directing influence?

If this be what is meant, we shall not dissent, though we think the language which has been chosen altogether unhappy, and calculated to mislead. That this *may be* the writer’s idea, we have been led to conjecture from the follow-

ing remark, in reference to what he calls "the tendencies" of the soul, and which he says lie back of the exercises, and are such as sufficiently account for their nature. "They may, says he, result from the relative state of all the essential attributes." Let this be granted in reference to moral acts and exercises, and we are satisfied. Only require us to believe that the Spirit of God, by his own mysterious agency—without explaining that agency to consist in *physically creating or infusing grace*, or in any other way than as mind operates on mind—brings the mind and heart of the sinner into appropriate action, and continually holds them under the directing influence of spiritual things—that is so excites the natural susceptibilities and capacities, and sustains them, by his immediate agency, under the quickening and governing influence of spiritual realities as to elicit, in perfect accordance with all the established modes and laws of human thought, those acts and exercises which are required by the law of God, and we know what we are to believe. We apprehend the *facts* in the case, though we will not pretend to explain or account for them. But do not tell us, that the Spirit introduces into the heart a *vital principle* or *sense*, a *spiritual instinct* or *holy principle* to be the *immediate cause* and formal reason of holy acts, laid by creative power in the *nature* of the soul. For then are we required to embrace a *philosophy* which we do not understand, which we believe to be false, which is totally unnecessary, which is unsustained by legitimate analogy, and which militates directly against the plain declarations of fact in the word of God. Our *willing and doing* are referred *directly* to the agency of God. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"¹—not the

1. Phil. ii. 12, 13.

new sense—not the holy principle—not the vital essence, but the immediate agency of God, the Author of Life, in a way perfectly consistent with and through the already created and established constitution of our nature—our own volition and act being the result of His influence and agency, just as another's choice and decision may result through our persuasion.

Were not the idea of a change wrought in the constitutional nature or properties of the human soul, by a simple act of creative power on the part of God, so generally and deservedly reprobated at the present day, it might be necessary to submit something further on this subject. A few remarks, however, are all that we deem requisite.

1. If Regeneration is effected by the same power of God which He exerts in *creating*, and if this previously *creating act* changing the nature of the soul, is the immediate foundation or cause of holy exercises, then is there little or no *grace*, so far as we can see, in the transaction. For if God, by a mere act of *creative* power, introduces into the soul of man, a principle which possesses power to secure holy exercises, where is the grace in the affair? It is an act of *power*, but the grace is of much the same general character with that manifested in the mere creation of an intelligent being. It is, however, amazing grace, to toil and strive, and by the blessed Spirit so excite and urge, or win upon the rebel heart, as to bring it to consent to God, and make choice of Him as the chief good. By grace we are saved.

2. Moreover, we cannot understand how it should ever become *impossible* to *renew* to repentance, the most abandoned and Hell deserving apostate that ever existed. The apostle unquestionably speaks of an impossibility of this nature existing in some cases. For says he, "It is *impossible* for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy

Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if *they* fall away, to renew them again to repentance ”¹ If Regeneration was a mere *creative* act, there could be no difficulty in any case; nor could there be any on the part of Omnipotence, in introducing a “holy principle,” if Regeneration consists in forming a “spiritual instinct.” When, however, the natural existing susceptibilities and capacities are the medium through which the Spirit of God is to operate, and they have become callous, and the sensibilities, in reference to divine realities, all extinct, there is no longer any thing to which to appeal, or any principle, which, in consistency with the established modes of human thought and feeling, can be roused into action, so as to issue in repentance. We see a force and terror of import in the apostle’s expressions, under this aspect, which they never can possess if a *physical regeneration* is the basis or immediate cause of repentance, and other holy exercises in man.

3. Beside, if Regeneration is a *creative* act, producing in the soul “something” which is the immediate cause of holiness, then are not the graces, repentance, love, &c. the *immediate* fruits of the Spirit. The quotations already cited from Dr. Owen, shew plainly that the influence of the Spirit of God in regenerating the sinner is, in his estimation, a *mere act of creative power*, which gives to the nature or soul *power, ability, disposition and inclination* to holy acts. We present some further extracts, where this “something” is spoken of as an *inherent righteousness*, which is the basis and immediate cause of holy exercises. He assumes that there is “in and required unto regeneration, the *infusion* of a new *real* spiritual principle *into the soul and its faculties*, of spiritual life, light, holiness and righteousness, disposed unto and suited for the destruc-

1. Heb. vi. 4, 5.

tion or expulsion of a contrary *inbred*, habitual principle of sin and enmity against God, *enabling* unto all acts of holy obedience, and so, in order of nature, antecedent unto them." In support of this view he quotes Davenant, who is much more explicit in referring us to *inherent righteousness* as the cause of holy exercises. "By inherent righteousness we understand, says he, the supernatural gift of sanctifying grace, opposed to original sin, and repairing and renovating, in every faculty of the soul, that image of God, which, by original sin, was defiled and dissipated, Original sin filled the mind with darkness—*this infused grace* enlightens it with heavenly light. *That*, stained the human heart with obstinacy and hatred of God and of the divine law—*this infused righteousness* softens the heart, kindles and inflames it with the love of good. Finally, that infects all affections and the very appetite itself with rebellion—*this renovated holiness* forces into order the disturbed affections, and brings under its dominion the rebel lust itself, and, as it were, puts it under the yoke."¹

He also quotes Origen as authority, who says of faith—that as the root which has received the shower, it inheres in the soil of the soul.²

Now this view of the subject, as we conceive, robs the Spirit of His glory, and introduces a false philosophy, to

1. Per inhærentem justitiam intelligimus supernaturale donum gratiæ sanctificantis, oppositum originali peccato, et in singulis animæ facultatibus reparans et renovans illam Dei imaginem, quæ per peccatum originale fœd-ata ac dissipata fuit. Originale peccatum mentem tenebris implevit—*hæc infusa gratia* lumine cœlesti collustrat. Istud cor humanum obstinatione et odio Dei ac divinæ legis maculavit—*hæc infusa justitia* cor emollit et amore boni accendit et inflammat. Postremo, illud affectus omnes atque ipsum appetitum rebellione infecit; hæc renovata sanctitas in ordinem cogit perturbatas affectiones, et ipsam rebellem concupiscentiam dominio spoliât, et quasi subjugum mittit. DAVENANT de Just. Habit. Cap. 3.

2. Fides tanquam radix imbre suscepto hæret in animæ solo. ORIG. lib. 4, in Epist. ad Roman.

obscure his immediate influence. The apostle says, that "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."¹ "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth."² Now these are all voluntary exercises of the human mind; and that ever a sinner is brought to exercise and exhibit faith, love, repentance, &c. is attributed by the apostle to the *immediate* and *special* influence of the Holy Spirit. It is philosophy, based on a false physiology, which comes in and says the Spirit secures the exercise of these graces *by infusing grace, or by putting into the soul a principle of life, or by creating a disposition for holiness*, which principle or disposition is the immediate cause of those holy exercises of mind and heart, technically called the graces of the Spirit. As to the *precise* nature of that influence which the Spirit exerts, we will not presume to speak. It is *through the truth, by the gospel, by the word*, and must therefore be adapted to the nature of man, as a voluntary agent. We cannot explain the nature of that influence which one mind exerts on another, and therefore it would be absurd to expect, that we should understand the influence of the infinite mind on ours. But this we do know, that however powerful and invincible, in matters of ordinary interest, the former may be, it does not in the least degree affect obligation, or destroy the voluntariness of those actions which result from conviction. Neither does the Spirit's influence in convincing and converting the sinner from the error of his ways. We admire the wisdom, benevolence, grace and power of the man who subdues his enemy, and wins the heart to love, which once was rankling with hatred against him, and never attribute, in such a case, to the successful suitor, the *infusion* or *creation* of any principle, by an act of physical power, as the

1. Gal. v. 22, 23.

2. Eph. v. 7.

immediate cause of this change in all the feelings of the heart. And shall we give less glory to the Holy Spirit, who changes the heart of stone into an heart of flesh, and by his winning and subduing influence elicits those exercises of faith and love and repentance, &c. which form the character anew, and mould it into the likeness of the Son of God? Shall we thrust the Spirit back, lose sight of his grace, and attribute to him the mere exercise of *creative* power, in this marvellous work of converting and sanctifying the soul? Shall we give glory to the renovated man, and inflate him with pride, by leading him to believe, that a *creative* act of God has lodged in him a *cause* of holy exercises, and that for his gracious affections and their continual exercise, he is not at every moment indebted to the special agency of the Spirit of God? That be far from us. It is to the marvellous, gracious and immediate influence of the Spirit, who begets and sanctifies us through the truth, that we refer all our holy exercises.

This remark is intended to apply not only to the first, but to all the subsequent exercises of faith and love and repentance. It is true, that those whose language intimates a physical regeneration, which lodges in the soul a *cause* of holiness, do also teach the continued agency of the Spirit, in preserving that cause in existence and operation; and in this agency they make the work of sanctification to consist. But the agency of the Spirit, in this whole work, is contemplated under the aspect of an exercise of *physical* power on the part of God, corresponding with that which he exerts in maintaining in existence the creature he has produced. Thus Dr. Owen says, that "the work of holiness, in its beginning, is like the seed cast into the earth, viz: the seed of God, whereby we are born again. And it is known how seed that is cast into the earth doth grow and increase. Being variously cherished and nourished, it is in its nature to take root and to spring up, bringing forth fruit. And both these, even the

first planting and the increase of it, are both equally from God by His Spirit.”¹ Speaking of the graces of the Spirit he says that “He brings them forth from the stock which he has planted in the heart.” Thus the whole agency of the blessed Spirit, in the work of eliciting and preserving in exercise the christian graces, is made to possess no other character than that, which as the great agent in creation and providence he exerts. We cannot but think that this militates alike against the special and gracious character of the Holy Spirit’s work in regeneration and sanctification. For it differs not in character from His creating and preserving power, which He exercises throughout his boundless universe. We candidly confess that we cannot discern either the *grace* or *specialty* of that work of the Spirit in subduing a rebel, which resolves His influence into the same agency that He exerts as the Creator and Preserver of all things. If the sinner is born again, and preserved in holiness by the mere exercise of physical power, producing and sustaining a *new creature* in the soul, the interference of the Spirit in this wondrous work is of no higher character than that of giving being to, and supporting his creatures. It may be a display of his wisdom and power, but the *grace* of it is exceedingly obscured.

That we have not misrepresented the character of that agency attributed to the Spirit, by the advocates of a physical Regeneration, will be apparent from the following similitude, which Dr. Owen has traced between the growth of a tree, and the sanctification of a believer, and which, instead of understanding as an analogical illustration, he has *literally* interpreted, when noticing the Scriptural prediction, “I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, as the willows by the water courses.”² “These

1. OWEN on the Spirit. v. ii. p. 76, 79. 2. Isai. xlv. 3, 4.

trees and plants," says he, "have the principle of their growth in themselves. They do not grow immediately from external adventitious aid and furtherance ; they grow from *their own seminal virtue and radical moisture*. It is no otherwise in the progress of sanctification and holiness. It hath a root, a seed, a *principle of growth and increase in the soul* of him that is sanctified. All grace is immortal seed, and contains in it a *living growing principle*. That which hath *not in itself* a life and power of growth is not grace."¹ Here then the renovated man has in himself a life and power of growth, or else according to Dr. Owen, he has no grace. And to this seminal virtue, communicated in regeneration, must we refer the power of growth. The agency of the Spirit is only concerned in so far as by some general law, it contributes to its development ! Who then can consider the Spirit, if this be the case, as the *immediate* author of holy exercises ? The believer by *the seminal virtue* in him grows and thrives, having *power in himself*, the Spirit's agency merely supporting and preserving the new creature in him ! But this is in direct contradiction of Paul's experience, who, though a converted man, said "in me, that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing,"² but who "through the Spirit did mortify the deeds of the body."³

4. We cannot neglect, also, to notice the deleterious influence which the doctrine of physical regeneration must necessarily have on personal piety. The christian's consolations and activity are alike impaired by it. For he is put upon a search after some mystical effect of the Spirit's work on his soul, which as the appropriate and immediate cause of his voluntary exercises and actions is to determine his character, in the sight of God, rather than to the exercises and actions themselves. These he may indeed observe as reported by his consciousness, but still his mind is

1. Owen on the Spirit, vol. ii. p. 87. 2. Rom: vii. 18. 3. Rom. viii. 13.

kept distracted and divided, for he is labouring to ascertain the existence of a *new creature* in himself, which is the cause of holiness. Of the existence of this new creation in him, he never can have direct evidence, through consciousness or in any other way; and labouring under the impression that regeneration consists in the production of this new creature in him, by the direct exercise of physical power on the part of God, he may be kept for a long season overshadowed with gloomy doubts and suspicions with regard to his character in the sight of God, and his right to enjoy christian consolations, or mistake the excitements and hallucinations, which are, often the result of nervous irritability, and most extraordinary, for the operation of God's Spirit.

The instances of both sort are not rare. We have traced the practical effects of this view of Regeneration in both respects. Persons possessed of natural talents, and whose gifts might be employed with great advantage to others, hesitate and refuse to take a full and decided stand on the side of Christ, and resolutely to act in the business of religion, through a fear that possibly they are not regenerated, and consequently, that their acts are and must be sinful, and will be by no means continuous. The *cause* of continuous holy exercises they suppose to be lodged in the regenerate man himself, not in the immediate gracious influence of the Spirit pledged to faith, and having no satisfactory proof that there ever has been any thing of this sort in them, they feel that it would be better for them to *wait* for further evidence and not commit themselves, or jeopard the cause of piety, by undertaking to discharge the distinctive duties of religion. And this state of things has been often induced and confirmed by the conduct of professors, and parents, and church officers, who have refused to accredit a person as a follower of Christ, on the first announcement of his evidences of christian character, and recommended him

to *wait* some months till time would show whether he had not been deceived. Thus is he, as it were, intimidated at the very commencement, and taught to look with a suspicious eye on all evidences of piety given by himself and others in the voluntary exercises and actions. The current of gracious feeling in the soul is thus checked. The vigour and zeal of the young convert are paralyzed, and in many instances, he sinks down into a dull and monotonous formality, from which perhaps he is seldom or ever afterwards delivered. The church is robbed of the full benefit of his zealous efforts. The world is deprived of the full benefit of his example. And his own soul is held in doubts and despondency, afraid to say that he is a christian, and unwilling to say that he is not.

It does not comport with the design of this work, to trace all the different deleterious results on practical piety, which the idea of a physical regeneration secures. We wonder at the marvellous grace of the Spirit of God, who keeps the heart alive where it is held under the influence of such distracting and perplexing error. And we hope that ere long the christian community will be furnished with some practical treatise designed to expose and guard against the injurious influence of such false philosophy, upon religious experience. Its crippling and benumbing effects have long been felt in the churches, where there has been intelligence associated with piety. And where ignorance has obtained, the wildest and most fanatical delusions have flowed from it. Weak-minded and superstitious persons, considering regeneration to be an act of physical power, and altogether unobservant of their own conscious exercises, have mistaken excitements of feeling and reveries of imagination for the impulses and visions of the Spirit. We once were called to see a lecherous female, who supposed herself near death, and was exulting in the conviction that she had been born again produced by the ease of body and revery

of imagination, induced by the use of laudanum, and whose belief of the Spirit's direct and powerful agency on the soul was not to be shaken, but who lived long enough to return to her wicked ways and prove it all to have been a delusion.

5. The injurious consequences that practically result from this error, are almost endless: but no where are they more mischievous than in destroying the sense of moral obligation, which would urge the unconverted sinner to *immediate* repentance. It is in vain to talk to sinners about *God's right* to command them to do this or that, or *their* obligations, if they see that they are actually required to exercise the prerogative of Jehovah Himself. Every man feels at once, that here obligation ceases, and his heart is fortified against every call that would urge him virtually to do so. Now the exercise of *creative power* God claims as *exclusively* His own. "Thou art worthy O, Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power: for THOU HAST CREATED ALL THINGS."¹ Yet, He does most undeniably require the sinner *to make to himself a new heart*, and to perform those exercises of faith and repentance, which, according to the error we combat, are *the results* of a new creation in the soul. "Repent," says he, "and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed; and MAKE YOU A NEW HEART, and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"² If therefore, regeneration, or the making of a new heart, be a *creative* act of God, an act of His physical power, then does He command the sinner to exercise His high and divine prerogative.

It is all to no purpose to tell the sinner about his sin, and loss of power, and derived corruption and God's right in the case;—he FEELS that he is required to do an *absolute im-*

1. Rev. iv. 11.

2. Ezek. xxxiii. 30, 31.

possibility, and therefore a *most unreasonable thing*; and he is ready, either to dismiss the subject from his thoughts and repose in unconcern, or inwardly accuse and censure God as tyrannical and cruel in His demands. He may sigh and groan over his misfortune, and the misery of his condition, but he has no sense of guilt in his present delay or refusal to repent and turn to God. And the advice, so often furnished to one in this case, which puts him with an impenitent and unbelieving heart, upon the use of the means of grace, as though that will issue in due season in this new creation, is calculated to bind him fast in the damning guilt of unbelief and impenitence. Multitudes dream away a whole life waiting God's time, as they say, to form the new creature within them, and at last sink down to Hell under the awful guilt of a despised gospel and a rejected Saviour. Reader, do *you* urge this plea? It is the syren song that will lull your soul asleep till you sink in the arms of death, if you do not turn a deaf ear to all its dulcet notes.

6. We add but another objection, which is, that the idea of a physical regeneration, is suggested by a false assumption with regard to the nature of human depravity. It is taken for granted that the soul of man, in its very physical constitution is corrupt—that it is itself simply as a creature anterior to, and irrespective of, all moral exercises whatever, *sinful and only sinful*. Thence it follows, that before ever it can put forth holy exercises, it must be remodelled, **CREATED ANEW**, by the same plastic hand of the Great Creator, which, originally, by an act of physical power, gave it being.

Could we resolve the operations of the intellectual and spiritual world into some system of mechanism, then might this idea derive support, as it has done from a sort of mechanical philosophy; but it receives no countenance in the word of God. It is, indeed, found involved in the technics of Theologians as suggested by a false philosophy, and has

crept into various creeds and confessions of faith, and there lies buried in certain unintelligible and indefinite forms of speech; but it is not taught *as a fact revealed to us* by the sure and unerring testimony of God. The subject, however, is so very intricate and important, as to require a minute and careful examination, which shall be attempted in the following chapters.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FACT AND GENERAL NATURE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

PERFECTIBILITY claimed for man, without renewing grace—Scripture testimony, Eph. iv. 17—19: ii. 12: Rom. i. 28—32—This description not exclusively applicable to the heathen world—Facts noticed—Rom. i. ii. and iii. 9—19—The history of the world—Melancholy exposition of human depravity—Quotation from Dr. Dwight—Attempts to account for human corruption through the influence of example unsatisfactory—Christian example has an irritating effect—An inquiry as to the nature of depravity—Whether selfishness is the essence of sin—There can be no evidence of being savingly interested in the death of Christ, when selfishness prevails—An inquiry why selfishness is sin—Man is at war with the constitution of God—What is the nature of selfishness—Various modes of speech with regard to human depravity—The exact point of disputes at present agitated on this subject—Some appropriate cause of human depravity—Traced to the wilful perversion, on the part of man, of God's constitution.

SOME votaries of reason and sighing sentimentalists have claimed perfectibility for man, denying his depravity, and rejecting the direct influence which is offered from God, to render him perfect, even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect. With what degree of truth such things are done, it may be well to inquire. Correct views, with regard to the fact and nature of human depravity, are indispensably necessary to the right understanding of the doctrine of Regeneration.

So far from man's being the pure and upright being that *needs no change*, he is described *as the enemy of God*, and as having *all his moral powers in a characteristic and deranged exercise*. Mind and heart are alike affect-

ed, by the dreadful alienation which has taken place. Thus the apostle Paul in one place describes the unrenewed world as walking "in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness,"¹ and in another place, as "being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; having no hope, and without God in the world."²

In the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, there is a very full and accurate sketch of the corrupt state of unrenewed men, although it is adapted to the state of society in general, rather than to the circumstances and characteristics of *individual* corruption; yet it is manifest, that the *mass* of men—the *whole race* is depraved, and that this depravity is developed in different individuals, in every variety of corrupt passions, actions and habits. "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."³

This description of human depravity, is supposed, by some, to refer to the *heathen* world, and therefore, it is

1. Eph. iv. 17—19.

2. Eph. ii. 12.

3. Rom. i. 28, 32.

said, it should be received with considerable allowance, when applied to mankind as modified by *christian* institutions. It is certain, however, that it is as applicable to the state of society in pagan countries *at this day*, as it was in the apostle's to pagan Rome—the proud mistress of the world. And even though the influence of christianity may have greatly restrained the *exhibitions* of human depravity, yet are they to be seen close upon the footsteps of the church of God. All the courts of justice, and all the great principles upon which investigations before them are conducted, are based on the fact, that man is depraved. His word will not be believed, but he must solemnly asseverate on oath. Nor will the oath be admitted, when personal pecuniary interests stand affected. These are the *practical comments of men, in their collective wisdom*, on the depraved character of individual man.

And such too is the practical comment of men on each other, even when their theories on the subject are directly opposed to it. What are all the impeachments of motive—assigning of false intentions—suspicions—jealousies, and the like, which are so current in society, but manifestations of the practical sense or conviction which is entertained of the universal depravity of man? The truth is, man is a fallen creature, and let him be found where he may, till he is renewed by the Spirit of God, he is under the dominion of depraved affections.

The same apostle who has given us such a melancholy sketch of the moral character and condition of the gentile world, has also given us a full portrait of man by nature, when situated under the external influence, and enjoying the advantages, of a clear revelation of the will of God. In his second chapter to the Romans, he proves that Jews, to whom had been committed the oracles of God, and who knew his will distinctly, were under the same condemnation with the gentiles; and in the third chapter confirms

his conclusion, by many passages taken from the Old Testament scriptures, asserting entire depravity as the universal characteristic of man, whether Jew or gentile. "We have," says he, "before proved both Jews and gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."¹

Of the fact of universal depravity, no man can doubt, who admits the truth of the sacred record. The thoughts of the imaginations of the heart are evil, and that continually. The aboundings of that evil have been so great, at different times, that God has found it necessary to come down, in all the terrors of his vengeance, to consume the transgressors. He swept the old world with the desolating fury of the deluge. He poured down lightnings from the skies, and consumed the cities of the plain. Nation after nation has he overthrown, and all their memorials have been obliterated with them. Empire after empire has he dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel, when their iniquity was full. The history of the world is one unvarying and melancholy exposition of human depravity.

Should any one doubt the fact, notwithstanding all this array of proof, that men are corrupt beings, we present the

1. Rom. iii. 9, 19.

following sketch of the face of modern and christian society, as drawn by a faithful and masterly hand. "No ingenuity on the one hand, and no suffering on the other, has, in any country, been sufficient to overcome this propensity, and so far to change the character of man as to exterminate even a single sin. To this head ought to be referred all the means furnished by law, of safety to our persons and our property; the bolts, bars and locks by which we endeavour to defend our houses and their contents, our persons and our families, especially in the night, against the inroads of theft and violence; the notes, bonds and deeds by which we endeavour to secure our contracts, prevent the mischiefs of fraud, and compel dishonesty to fulfil its engagements; the gaols and dungeons, the chains and galleys, by which we endeavor to confine villains and prevent them from disturbing by their crimes the peace of society; the post, the pillory and the gibbet, by which we punish some culprits, and labour to deter others from repeating their perpetrations. All these and the like things are gloomy and dreadful proofs of the corruption of the world in which they exist. They exist wherever men are found of sufficient capacity and in proper circumstances, to attempt a regular opposition to crimes, a continual preservation of peace, and a general establishment of personal safety. The sinfulness, therefore, which they intend to resist, is equally universal."¹

A variety of suppositions have been resorted to, in order to account for human depravity. We shall not pretend to examine all. Every sober and diligent inquirer will very soon perceive, that the most specious of them all, which resolves the whole into *the influence of example*, is utterly fallacious. For there are too many melancholy facts to shew, that the very worst specimens of human depravity are found, precisely where the examples of christian purity and

1. Dwight's Theol. v. 1, p. 433.

devotedness have shone with the most brilliant lustre. From the bosom of the family where God has been honoured, and his name most reverently adored, and all his counsels and commands have been received and obeyed, has issued the youth of dissipated habits, of wanton profanity, and of the boldest and most shocking impiety. And in christian lands, travellers commonly remark, that the vices of the vulgar are more appalling and degrading, and evincive of much greater depravity, than in pagan countries, where the influence of christian example is not felt.

The truth is, that the specimens of piety which the church furnishes, have an irritating effect upon the ungodly world, just as the apostle has apprised us the law of God, when apprehended in its spirituality and extent, had on his lustful heart. Such is the indisputable fact. "I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them,"¹ says the Saviour, in reference to the effect which evangelical example and piety had upon men of ungodly minds. "Sin," says the apostle, "taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence."² Now, why should such results flow from such causes? Why should christian example have a corrupting effect? Upon the principle of the objection, it should have a contrary. And it would and must have a salutary tendency, were not the hearts of men naturally depraved, so that there is nothing in unrenewed man on which such example can operate, and to which it can appeal with success. The heart is in the contrary direction. Men naturally and universally incline to evil. We see it in the infant, as soon as it is capable of knowing evil. Fierce passions rage in the little breast, and, as it advances, its deportment verifies the observation of the wise man, that "the wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."³

1. John xvii. 14.

2. Rom. vii. 8.

3. Psalm lviii. 3.

“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child,”¹ and the life is but its development.

But what is the nature of human depravity? The christian church has been agitated by different philosophical systems, which have been adduced in illustration of scriptural facts. System after system has perished, like the withering grass and fading flower, but “the word of God shall stand forever,”² and the *faith* of the church in the *fact* of human depravity, remains unchanged. The best motives and the worst designs have been entertained by philosophical inquirers on this subject. Happy is it for the church that her faith stands not in the wisdom of men.

Whether depravity is to be found exclusively in the will, or equally in all the faculties—whether it has its origin in a modification of our essential nature—whether it is created in us, or derived by natural descent—whether it consists in acts and exercises, or in something back of them which lays the foundation for them, in the very nature of the essential soul—whether it is some deranged and inappropriate exercise of our moral powers, and to be referred to the character of the controlling objects, or of the governing moral principle—are questions that have been seriously agitated. Some of these may attract our notice in another place. For the present, we confine our attention to the last.

Whether selfishness be the essence of sin, is, after all, a mere metaphysical question the decision of which does not affect the sinner’s consciousness of guilt, nor is necessary to his conviction. Assuredly, every form and manifestation of selfishness, must be sin in a guilty corrupt creature, such as man. The design of the death of Jesus Christ, “who died for all” was, “that they which live should henceforth live unto themselves;”³ and He “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from *all* iniquity.”⁴ No man has

1. Prov. xxii. 15.

2. Isai. xl. 8.

3. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

4. Tit. ii. 14.

any proof that he is recovered from the dominion of sin, till he finds his selfishness destroyed. Whatever he may think, the death of Christ has taken none effect on him. His selfishness is proof of entire depravity.

The dominion of selfishness is deemed, by some, alike the proof and essence of human depravity.

But here we venture to ask, why is it? God aims at His own glory, and for it all things are and were created. He demands the homage of his creatures, and will have every knee bow, and every tongue confess to Him. We are not disposed to think that *this* is sin in Him. And why not? God is holy, benevolent, just and true; and in seeking His own glory, can never injure, or be guilty of injustice to others. Were he a capricious, fickle, tyrannical and malignant Being, such a design in him—we speak it with reverence—would become as morally wrong as it is in us. His seeking his own glory would be apprehended as evincive of those traits of character, which tend to destroy all confidence in the Being possessing them, and are destructive of the peace and happiness of the universe. As it is now, however, we are inspired with the most delightful confidence, by means of the very circumstance—that all things are ordained and ordered for the glory of God. The whole difference would lie in the nature or character of God; not in the mere exercise of his volitions.

In like manner we may reason of man. The mere circumstance of his desiring his own happiness, is not in itself necessarily evincive of depravity. Many of the appeals which God makes to us, are based on the assumption, that man will, and may legitimately do so. But God has subordinated our interests to His glory, and has made it incumbent on us to prosecute them, in entire and absolute submission to His will. “Whether, therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do; do all to the glory of God.”¹

When we inquire into the matter of fact, the melancholy discovery is quickly made that man is found at war with the constitution of God. He substitutes his own selfish interests, wishes and will, for God's, and thus madly attempts to ascend Jehovah's Throne, and impiously disputes the equity of His constitution. He is under the all-commanding, and controlling influence of a purpose of rebellion. It may not indeed be his conscious intention to resist the God whose existence he admits, and whose character he imperfectly apprehends, but in point of fact there is the feeling of dislike for, and opposition to, His claims, which determines and regulates his thoughts and purposes and actions. He seeks his gratification and happiness, in ways and things directly at variance with the requisitions, and prohibitions of God. Whenever the latter are opposed to the dictates of his selfishness, they must give way, and thus God Himself must be subordinated to his will. It is *this subjection of man's feelings, purposes, affections, thoughts, desires and acts, to his selfishness, that constitutes the depravity of his nature.* Every act and emotion, evincive of it is sin.

By selfishness we do not understand the instinctive desire of the man after happiness. God has ordained it, that by the mere impulse of instinct, we have respect to our well-being. It is the law of self preservation, enstamped on the universal creation. Some have seen fit to denominate it self-love, and others differently. We are not tenacious of terms. It is the fact of which we are in quest; and leaving disputed and ambiguous phrases out of view, we presume our readers will generally admit, that the mere longing of the soul after bliss, when it does not fix on any specific or forbidden and dangerous objects, is no more *sinful in itself*, than is our mere craving of food, when we think not to gratify it, by appropriating to our use any poisonous or other substance. "There are certain character-

istics of human nature," says Dr. Dwight, "which considered by themselves, are innocent. Such are hunger, thirst, the fear of suffering and the desire of happiness; together with several others." "The desire of happiness, and the fear of suffering, are inseparable from the rational and even the percipient nature."¹ The desire of happiness, considered abstractly from every object on which it may be allowed to terminate, is not in itself sinful; nor is it necessarily selfishness. It is in letting this instinctive desire terminate on, and impel us to the choice and pursuit of, any thing improper and inconsistent with the will of God, that we are to discover the proof and workings of our own depravity.

The impelling and controlling influence of this desire, as it terminates on sinful objects and becomes the merest selfishness, has been variously designated, and its origin referred to various efficient causes. By some it has been called the *bias of our nature*, and by others the *inclination of the heart*, the *temper of the mind*, a *principle*, the *disposition*, the *tendency*, the *habit*, the *propensity* of the soul. Much of the dispute which agitates the christian community on this subject, we think will be found to grow out of different ideas, attached to such very vague and indefinite expressions. They are manifestly all analogical expressions, and therefore ought to be employed with great caution, and, as far as practicable, with great precision. One man understands by disposition, something laid in the very structure of the soul or constitution of our being, which possesses, *anterior to all acts and exercises, efficient power* to secure and produce acts and exercises of a particular character; and accordingly he employs such loose metaphors as the source, the fountain, &c. when speaking of moral actions. Another understands, by it, an *immanent* choice, the *fixed* purpose or preference, a *permanent* state of mind,

1. Dr. Dwight's Theol. vol. i. p. 462.

which results, according to the very laws by which God governs the mind, from the first decisive act of the will, denying that there is any thing in the essence or constitutional properties, or nature of the human soul, apart from its established modes of action, which possesses efficient power to secure acts of depravity.

Here lies the main ground of dispute, as we suppose; and it is one of such a very serious nature, as to require the minutest and most interested attention. For it involves the character of God, and the responsibilities of man, and that most vitally. It will not do to dismiss the subject with a cry of philosophy or metaphysics, and retreat into the refuges of ignorance. A vain and false philosophy may be ingrafted on the facts of revelation, and some may find it difficult accurately to discriminate between them. Where men have identified their philosophy with the facts of scripture, and are unable or averse to discriminate, it is as natural as it is common, to denounce the rejection of the former, and raise the cry of metaphysics, philosophy, when, in truth, it is but an effort to separate what have been improperly united. That there is some appropriate cause of human depravity, all admit.

Of the *precise* nature of this, it is obvious that we must be ignorant, as we are of all causes whatever. This is not, in itself however a sufficient reason for our denying that there is, or may be such a thing. When we see effects *uniformly resulting*, we attribute them to the influence and operation of some efficient agency. We begin with God Himself, and apprehend His divine agency as the prime cause, and thence proceed, through all the different uniform phenomena, or results arising, which fall under our observation, apprehending some immediate efficient agency, which remains uniformly the same. This we call by various names, sometimes a *law*, sometimes a *constitu-*

tion of God, sometimes a principle:—It is indeed of little consequence which.

We find the human mind, in its exercise, following certain general regular modes of action. Thoughts rise spontaneously there, according to certain laws of association. We cannot prevent our minds from being thus affected though we may counteract the impressions, which thoughts arising, may make upon us. Now we may call this feature of our nature, a law or constitution of God, or what we please; still we cannot doubt, that there is something which has determined and established these modes of action. God created the human mind, and in the first instance adapted it to specific modes of action. These are the laws by which He governs mind. He gave us the power of thinking and feeling and acting as we do. *Our* modes of thought are not those of angelic minds. Shall we say, that there is no appropriate cause of this difference? that there is no law, or reason, why the mind should act in particular modes? In other matters we will not consent thus to act: nor is it proper to do so here. Wherever we discover uniform results—a series of correspondent actions, all standing in the same relation to one specific substance, we insensibly assume the existence of some unvarying cause.

We see the phenomena of attraction, for example, in ponderous bodies, and attribute them to gravitation, as their immediate cause. Is there no such thing? Who would believe the metaphysician that would tell us so? Some power is apprehended by us, almost instinctively. This, power, we have already seen is *the agency of God Himself*, into which all our inquiries on this subject, ultimately conduct us. If in the operations of mind, or *its* modes of action, we are led to the same result, what then? [†] We are not at all startled by it; but, on the contrary, disposed more to admire and adore the every-where present and operative

Supreme. His agency in our minds supporting and invigorating them for their appropriate action, we will not pretend to scrutinize,—no more than we will His agency in the action of one material substance on another. But that there is some *sustaining* and *supporting agency* of God in the human mind, by virtue of which it performs certain actions, according as He has been pleased in His sovereignty to ordain, we cannot deny. The *varied modes* of that agency, we appropriately call the *laws of mind*; and when its operations are conducted, in accordance with the mutual dependence and subservience of those laws, there is an harmonious action, as indicative of purity, as productive of felicity:—Just as the operations of nature, following without perversion or distortion, the laws which God has ordained, exhibit the excellence of the divine constitutions.

We admit that the parallel is not complete, and that there is this essential difference between the agency of God in sustaining mind and matter, that, in the former instance, there is a POWER OF VOLUNTARY ACTION, which, it is required shall be exerted in accordance with the divine will. We are aware, also, that it may be objected, according to the views just expressed, that human volitions themselves, are as much the result of a divine agency, as other mental acts. But we are persuaded that the objection originates in a misapprehension of the nature of that divine agency, which is conceded in the operations of created mind.

It is not *such* an agency as to make the act, distinctly and exclusively the act of God; but such a *sustaining*, and uniformly *co-operating* agency, according to certain established modes of thought, as gives energy to the voluntary being, but at the same time, does not affect or destroy the voluntariness of his acts, nor *immediately* originate them. Thus, for example—it is a mental act to ATTEND—the mind possesses a *power* to bring its thoughts to bear and fix themselves on a particular subject: that is, God co-operates

by His sustaining agency, while the mind acts. It is another mental act to *perceive* or take up an idea of that which is presented to the consideration of the mind;—it is a third to *compare* together different objects, and different ideas, so as to elicit some result or conclusion, or make a selection and choice from among them, not to mention others. Now the *power* of created minds to do these things, is resolvable only into the concurring co-operating, or supporting and sustaining agency of God. This agency is uniform, and entirely irrespective of the objects that present themselves or the moral character of the acts.

But man is not only capacitated for certain mental acts, but also, for being impressed or affected from various sources and by various means, and in a great variety of modes, which impressions or affections have an exciting and impelling influence on the mind. Thus, if a man is affected with a love of moral excellence, or a desire for the glory of God, the current of his thoughts will take a correspondent course. His mind will act itself in all the varied modes of thought in attending to, perceiving, comparing, and choosing those objects and ideas, that are holy and conducive to the glorification of God. On the contrary, if he is affected with a love of sin, and a desire to promote his selfish interest and glory, the whole current of the thoughts will be turbid and impure. The different capacities and powers of the man will be exercised on objects, and in ways, quite foreign from the *design of God in his creation*, and made known to him in His law, and cannot fail to present a melancholy specimen of moral derangement, that is, in other words, in all the established modes of action, through which God imparts His energy in supporting the mind of man, man will be found, as the immediate originator of his own acts, to be perverting the constitution of God, and acting altogether inappropriate to the great

design for which he was created, *making God to serve with his sins.*

Such is actually the exhibition which every unrenewed man makes. He acts under the influence of aversion from God, of hatred of holiness, and of love of sin. The current of his thoughts, the words of his mouth, the feelings of his heart, as well as the deeds of his life, all shew that there is no friendly and cherished intercourse between God and his soul. “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God,—God is not in all his thoughts.”¹ “The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, niether indeed can be.”² Here lies the proof and essence of human depravity. There is a deranged action of all the moral powers in man—they are all under the dominion of an absorbing selfishness, which has consigned God and His claims to forgetfulness and contempt. “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God—God is not in all his thoughts.”³ Oh wretched, frightful state of human debasement!

1. Psalm xiv. 1.

2. Rom. viii. 7.

3. Psalm x. 4.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF SIN.

AN Inquiry whether God is the author of sin—Influence of theoretical principles on human belief—Should be carefully resisted when conflicting with plain scriptural statements of fact—Scriptural account of the nature of sin and testimony as to its immediate origin—Some agency on the part of God, in the sinful conduct of men admitted—Infidel objection against the purity of God from His permitting men to sin—The possibility of sin incidental to the giving of a law does not imply it must actually exist—Fearful results that may transpire in the Government of a Being who cannot prevent sin—The injurious implications to which the admission subjects God—Some suggestions as to God's permitting sin—The rich array of motive to induce obedience thrown around man—Sin an *occasion* for amazing revelations as to the divine character—And of thus multiplying motives of obedience—This does not imply that it is the *necessary* means of the greatest good—No impeachment of the purity of God for His agency in sustaining and supporting the sinner.

WHETHER God is the author of sin, is a question, often asked, by those whose views of the divine nature and excellence, it might have been supposed, would have effectually guarded against even a momentary doubt or suspicion on the subject. But, it is by no means uncommon, for theoretical and philosophical principles, to be so pertinaciously and zealously advocated, as to blind their votaries, and engender notions at war with the plainest revelations of the word of God. "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie,

and do not the truth.”¹ It is utterly *impossible*, that a Being of infinite and spotless holiness, should in any way, be *the author of REBELLION against His own righteous and equitable sway*. The idea indeed has been entertained, and it is one which the unrenewed and depraved heart, secretly cherishes, and tries to believe.

But *human consciousness* resists all theory, and every man, till blinded by his prejudices and false reasonings, is practically convinced, that he himself is the immediate author of his own voluntary acts of disobedience. We say voluntary acts of disobedience, for this is the idea which the scriptural account of its nature gives us of sin. “Sin is not imputed where there is no law.”² “Where no law is, there is no transgression.”³ The violation, in thought, in word, or in deed, either by acts or refusing to act, of any precept of God, is sin. This is the uniform view which the scriptures give us of its nature; and, at the same time, they as uniformly teach what human consciousness every day and hour confirms, that *we are ourselves the immediate, efficient authors* of our own volitions. God does not by any *creative* or direct positive efficiency produce them, for then would He be the guilty cause of all rebellion against Himself.

Such as are bold in their rebellion, and devoted in their attachment to sinful pleasures and pursuits, have not hesitated to lay the blame of their sins on God. But there sounds forth from the very mouth of God Himself, this solemn and admonitory word, charging man with the wilful perversion of His established constitution and modes of agency. “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee.”⁴ “Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine

1. 1 John i. 5, 6.

2. Rom. v. 13.

3. Rom. iv. 15.

4. Psalm l. 21.

iniquities.”¹ Nor will any one, who has right apprehensions of the divine excellence, and whose heart entertains the least feeling of approbation or respect for God, allow it even to be insinuated, that He can be the author of sin. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away with his own lust and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.”²

When it is said that “God did tempt Abraham,”³ it is obvious the inspired writer meant only to say, that God *made trial* of him, having, by the arrangements of His providence, the words of His promise, and the precepts of His mouth, put the faith of Abraham to a very severe test. But, in all this, God was not the author of sin; nor did He solicit Abraham to sin; so that, the apostle James’ word does not, in the least respect, conflict with other testimonies of the sacred scripture; while, it does, most amply and satisfactorily repel the charge, and vindicate the character of God from the aspersions of those who would teach, that He is the author of sin. “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee?”⁴ These, and such like testimonies, ought to sway our *faith*, so that, whatever philosophical principles would lead us to a result so entirely inconsistent with *them*, we ought at once to discard them as false and dangerous guides.

Such a result however, we do not apprehend, can be legitimately deduced from the principles advanced in the former chapter, with regard to the agency of God. It is not to be questioned, that while the scriptures vindicate the character of God, and will not for a moment, admit the idea that He is the author of sin, they nevertheless attribute to

1. Isaiah xliii. 24

2. James v. 13—15.

3. Gen. xxii. 1.

4. Psalm. xciv. 20.

Him, some agency in relation to it. "Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?"¹ asks God by the mouth of the prophet, which, although it may be understood of physical evil, yet, as such evil is often brought about through the sins of men, there is *some* agency of God in the matter.

Moreover, that the counsel or will of God, takes cognizance of sinful acts, *that will hereafter be done* by men, and that, long before the events, or even the agents had any being, cannot be denied. In proof of this, are those predictions, which regard the guilty conduct of men. We select the instance of Joseph's being sold by his brethren, and the accompanying and consequent transactions. "As for you, *ye* meant *it* for evil, but God meant *it* for good, to save much people alive, as it is this day."² Another, yet more decisive, and marked instance, is that of the crucifixion and death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It was, without doubt, the purpose of God, that His Son should die a cursed death, and yet, that purpose was effected *through the guilty agency of men*. "Him being delivered *according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, have *ye* taken and with *wicked* hands have crucified and slain."³ "For of a truth, both Herod and Pontius Pilate were gathered together, to do whatsoever Thy (God's) hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done."⁴ It cannot be denied, that in bringing about the *same event*, God and man, respectively, have had their purposes and agency. The *purpose*, however, is very different, in the mind of God from what it is in the mind of the guilty perpetrator. It does not necessarily imply moral turpitude in the former, but it does in the latter. Man means his own selfish gratification, and at the expense, and to the injury oft-times of others. But God has designs of

1. Amos iii. 6.

2. Gen. i. 20.

3. Acts i. 23.

4. Acts iv. 27, 28.

benevolence, and so orders and over-rules all, as to bring about a greater good. Such are the daily developments of His providence.

This idea may be carried to the utmost extent, and it furnishes a satisfactory answer to the carping, cavilling objections of the infidel, who thinks, and alleges, that if God *could* have prevented men from sinning, it necessarily implies some moral turpitude in Him, to permit them to do so. That they do sin, is not to be denied. Nor will it be disputed, save by some raving Atheist, who has lost the power of discerning between right and wrong. Now suppose, to shield his reputation from the infidel slander, we admit that God could not prevent men from sin, is there any thing gained in this respect by the admission? For we may ask with unanswerable pertinency and point, *can* he then *subdue* or *control* it? It is much easier among men to *prevent crime*, than to *reform the criminal*. Assuredly, if God *could not* have prevented sin, we cannot confidently expect that ever sin will be subdued, and nothing presents itself to our view, but dread uncertainty in this matter, or a dark and dismal prospect of eternal scenes of rebellion and revolt in the government of God.

The *possibility* of sin being committed by moral beings, must be admitted to be incidental in the nature of things to the giving of a law, designed to regulate their voluntary conduct. "Where no law is, there is no transgression," nor can there be. But the actual existence of sin is a very different matter. It does not follow that because it is *incidental*, therefore it *must* exist. Whether voluntary beings shall not be allowed to sin; i. e. whether there shall be such a powerful array of motive, and such an influence thrown around them at all times, and all circumstances of temptation be so carefully prevented from arising, as that they shall always choose to obey, is a question, which we think it would be presumptuous in us to resolve in any

other way, than as God Himself has been pleased to do. Some voluntary beings have persevered in their obedience, and kept their first estate. Others have sinned and fallen. If God had determined to prevent the latter, who will say that He had not sufficient skill and power to do so? Admitting that He had, we cannot see that He was under any obligations of benevolence to do so: but denying that He had fills us with dread forebodings, as to the final issues of His government.

Of the apostasy and fall of two orders of intelligent creatures, we have knowledge; and one seduced the other. Shall this thing spread? Shall the contagion of rebellious example extend itself to other worlds, and decoy from their allegiance the happy innocents, that now adore and love? Or shall the new orders of creatures, which God, in the plenitude of His wisdom and benevolence, may see fit to create, fall from their steadfastness and felicity, and the mighty empire of Jehovah become a vast amphitheatre of woe? Who can contemplate such an idea with composure? It is shocking to all the sensibilities of the heart! And yet, if God cannot prevent sin, what security have we, that eternity shall not be one frightful series of rebellion, and that world after world shall not, like this wretched earth of ours, become the theatre of crime, requiring floods and flames, and even the very annihilating efforts of Omnipotence, to stay the progress of revolt?

If, in this way, we seek to defend the divine character from the malignant aspersions and insinuations of infidelity, do we not impeach it in others? Our confidence in the government of God will be destroyed, and we may as readily repose in the lofty professions of some rebellious prince, that rears the standard of revolt, and anticipate success in resisting the commands and counsels of Jehovah, as in the declarations of a God that cannot so administer his government as to prevent rebellion. The very admission implies

an imbecility or imperfection of character, or paucity of resources, which might tempt to rebellion, or at least inspire distrust. But no such admission is necessary. The vindication of the moral character of God requires it not. For there is a view which can be given of the whole subject, calculated to exalt both the divine character and government. If He can, as He will, without doing violence to the voluntary agency of man, subdue his rebellious heart—if he has so adapted the motives and inducements to subordination and submission, as to reach, effectively, the hearts of his enemies, how much more easily might He, in the first instance, have so established the principles of his government, and adjusted its administration, as to have prevented revolt among innocent creatures? Must we believe that this was impossible?

But if God could have prevented sin, how comes it, it will be quickly asked, that a Being of boundless benevolence, who delights not in the misery of his creatures, and of infinite holiness, who abhors all workers of iniquity, should have allowed it to gain entrance, and to spread such wretchedness among his creatures? In reply to this inquiry, we remark, that the government of mind is essentially different from that of matter. To moral agents, God has been pleased to grant the power of discerning between right and wrong, and to choose and act, according as their minds and hearts shall be determined and affected by considerations and motives presented. Such is his divine constitution. Such power is essential to moral agency. Human beings are moral agents. To act for them, or to *force* them to act against their will, would be contrary to His own infinitely wise and sovereign constitution. All that is necessary to vindicate the divine purity in this matter, is, to shew that he has presented in the universe around, in the circumstances and condition of man's being, and in the provisions of his moral government, a sufficient array of

materiel for motives and inducements to obedience. Who can doubt this, that will, for one moment, allow his mind to contemplate the richness, vastness, wisdom and benevolence of the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth?

Throughout the whole of animated and vegetable nature, we may range with delight, admiring and adoring the wisdom and goodness of God, who has made all, and adapted them to the purposes of human comfort and felicity. Nor is inanimate nature silent in the praise of the Most High. Every where and in every thing, we may see reflected the sparkling glories of His wisdom and goodness and might. And as it regards the law which He has given to regulate our hearts and lives, it is wondrously adapted to the nature and circumstances of man, in all his varied interests and relations. The observance of its precepts is conducive to felicity. The violation of them is productive of misery. "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just and good."¹ "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and *in keeping of them there is great reward.*"²

These things are not mere speculations, but matters of fact, continually proved and illustrated before our eyes. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest; whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."³ "Evil pursueth sinners."⁴

1. Rom. vii. 12.

3. Isai. lvii. 30—31.

2. Psl. xix. 7—11.

4. Prov.

No one can have lived long in the world, or looked carefully on the conduct of divine providence, without having found, that just as men depart from the commandments of God, do they involve themselves in misery. "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him ; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."¹ Here, then, is an ample array of motive to induce obedience. But all this has been exceeded—infinately exceeded, by the displays of mercy and grace, of righteousness and truth, through Jesus Christ.

It would seem that to innocent beings, a much more limited development of the excellencies of the divine character has been made, than is through the plan of redemption, as devised by infinite wisdom, and executed through Jesus Christ. The angels of heaven are represented as desiring to look into it.²

We have, therefore, ample ground, on which to vindicate God from the infidel objection against the benevolence of His character, drawn from the fact of His having permitted sin. It is not that the Lofty Sovereign of heaven and earth is capricious and tyrannical, and delights to sport with the misery of his creatures. It has afforded occasion for the richest, fullest, and most amazing and affecting exhibitions of the glories of His character; for thus increasing and giving intensity and energy to those motives, by which He operates on the rational mind, and binds it in *willing* subjection to his sway. Suppose that sin had never existed; we should not have known that there is *mercy* with God, nor any thing of that benignity and grace which prompt to *forgiveness*. Some of the most amiable features of the divine character, would have been forever concealed from the view of his creatures.

On the supposition that God *could not have prevented sin*—i. e. that its ACTUAL EXISTENCE, is *necessarily* incident-

1. Isa. liii. 11.

2. Pet. i. 12.

tal in a moral system, the plan of redemption seems to be nothing more than a *present* expedient of His divine wisdom, to perfect His moral government. God appears in it to be rather labouring to remedy the defects of His previous plan, than as overwhelming His rebellious creatures with new and surprising demonstrations of His excellence. Nor can we have any confidence that His system of moral government is *yet* perfect. For if sin is necessarily incidental to a moral system, and God's first plan proved so defective as that rebellion quickly arose among his creatures, what security have we, that his second plan will prove much better? It may, indeed, be the result of experience, and be somewhat improved; but whether that experience is sufficient to enable God to guard against all future contingencies, is a question that might excite some painful solicitude among his creatures. And if, according to the view some take of that improved plan of God's moral government, we are to learn that He has relaxed from the rigour of His law, He certainly will stand convicted of rashness and cruelty, in having, in the first instance, given such a law; so that the motives to rebellion would rather be increased than diminished. All confidence in His character, as a moral governor, would be effectually destroyed, and this would not fail to introduce endless revolt, and the utmost licentiousness among His subjects.

But as it is—by simply permitting sin, without doing any violence whatever to the creature—i. e. by allowing him, in his rebellion, to act according to the determinations of his own mind, having given him full power to suspend his decisions, and weigh the tendency and value of every motive, as it presented itself to his attention—the Lord has been pleased to make sin an *occasion* for increasing the motives to obedience, without the least implication of His wisdom or goodness, or the character of His moral constitution.

Unnumbered worlds of holy creatures, may be eternally established in their allegiance to God, by means of the demonstrations which He has been pleased to make, in two orders of intelligent creatures, among which He has allowed sin to enter, viz: of the sovereignty and immutability of His purpose and justice on the one hand—in the condemnation of apostate angels; and of the depth of His benevolence and compassions on the other hand, in pardoning through Jesus Christ, rebellious men, and of the inexorableness and severity of His truth and righteousness, in punishing guilty sinners of mankind, who dared to sport with the procedures of Heaven, and to reject the only counsels of peace. As the chant of the redeemed, and of the mingled choir of saints and angels round the throne, ascends to God, all holy intelligences, who hear or know it, cannot fail to extol, and exult in, the infinite grace and mercy of the Sovereign of the skies, and feel that it is well and best for them to obey. And as the smoke of their torment who, with apostate angels, have been hurled down to the bottomless abyss, ascends for ever and ever, an obedient universe, will see inscribed on all its thickening curls, the WAGES OF REBELLION, and feel themselves more firmly determined in their allegiance. As the highest conceivable exhibition of the bliss of allegiance, and of the misery of rebellion, will thus be presented, there will be the greatest security, that the government of God shall remain unassailed by the proud schemes of daring rebels to become independent.

We have represented the *actual* existence of sin as the *occasion* which God, in His infinite wisdom and benevolence, has seized for multiplying the motives to obedience. And this, after all, let our philosophical discussions be what they may, is the sober matter of fact. Whether He could have adopted any other expedient of equal or greater efficiency, it were presumptuous for us to inquire. It is

folly and madness to talk of what God might or might not have done, where He has not been pleased to reveal his will. Secret things belong unto the Lord; things revealed belong to us.

But in stating, as simple matter of fact, that God has made the actual existence of sin, an occasion for wondrous and glorious revelations of His own character, and for the increase of moral influences, which shall issue in lasting and most blissful results, we are not to be understood as affirming, that sin, the greatest evil, is the *necessary means* of securing the greatest good. We are utterly incompetent to such a judgment. In a few words then, God's goodness cannot be impeached, in allowing a creature, with knowledge sufficient to direct it, and power sufficient to act, and motives sufficient to deter from evil, to take its own course. To have imposed restraints, other than those of a moral nature, would have been to destroy its moral agency. If, without His positive agency to bring about such a result, the creature chooses to do what He forbids, and declares shall prove disastrous and ruinous, there can be no impeachment of His character. His benevolence does not bind Him to destroy the creature's moral agency, or even to *increase* the motives to obedience, for they are already *sufficient*. If, notwithstanding the creature's actual rebellion, He is pleased to recover and establish it in willing, and blissful, and grateful subjection to His sway, and to secure this result, pours forth the richest and most inconceivable floods of His own glorious grace and benevolence, we should adore and wonder. It is vanity, and may prove the death eternal, to attempt, as with omniscient eye, to search as to what He could or could not have done.

Having thus vindicated the character of God, from any moral impurity of purpose, in so far as He may have permitted sin, and shown that the permitting of sin does not in

the least impeach His benevolence, it will by no means be difficult to vindicate whatever other agency He may have in it. That agency consists in His sustaining power or co-operation, to use the very strongest term, with man in those acts of his mind, and feelings of his heart, and outward deeds, which constitute sin. By this, we mean, that continuous exercise of divine power, which is necessary for sustaining, supporting and strengthening the human mind, i. e. for preserving the faculties or powers of the creature, which constitute it a moral and responsible agent, and qualify it as well for rebellion, as for obedience. We do not believe that moral responsibilities press on those that have been born idiots or insane. God has seen fit to withhold that agency of His, which in its full extent, as vouchsafed to the sons of men, contributes to the development and exercise of the different moral powers, which characterize men as rational, and constitute them accountable creatures. Does His exerting and continuing that agency, according to established laws in the support of the rational mind, i. e. in preserving to it, its characteristic properties which constitute it a moral agent,—necessarily imply any moral turpitude on his part, even though that mind should exert itself in acts that are sinful? If this position be maintained, results will follow that cannot fail to startle even him who advocates it.

The father watches, with anxious eye, and breaking heart, his untoward child, and though his whole conduct is but one tissue of ingratitude, rebellion and crime, yet does he, in the exercise of his benignity and compassion, contribute from his bounteous hand, towards his support. In some sense he co-operates with his depraved child. But is the father on this account guilty? Does any moral turpitude attach to him, for extending that care and bounty, which, of right devolves on him towards the child, whom God has made dependent on him? The guilt and ingrati-

tude of the child, can never destroy the relation which has been constituted by the great Creator between it and its parent. That parent is a monster, who makes the guilty conduct of his child a pretence or an excuse for utterly deserting him. And shall we then think, that moral turpitude attaches to the divine Being, because He continues to support and invigorate the powers of his rebellious and ungrateful creature, whom He has made dependent on Himself? Is God under obligation—is it necessary for His moral purity—instantly to withdraw His support and providential agency from His creatures when they sin? Then will it follow that the instant a creature sins, it must be annihilated; for its continuance in being depends on the divine power and providence, and does but contribute to the perpetuation of its guilt.

It will be admitted, that the agency and co-operation of God would have been proper and requisite had man continued in a state of innocence and virtue. The preserving and supporting power of God, according to the law by which he ordained at first, that that agency should be exerted, would have been rightfully exercised. How then comes it that God is under obligations instantly to withdraw that agency, when the creature rebels? Do the guilt and ingratitude of the creature, destroy its natural dependence on the Being that created it? The truth is, that this allegation, against which we contend, if it proves any thing, proves too much. The Lord has unquestionably, by His power and providence, upheld the world for thousands of years, and yet during all that time, it has been the great theatre of crime. Sin has reigned and triumphed over the successive generations of men, that have sprung up on it, and has reared innumerable memorials of its sway. One mighty tyrant after another, has appeared and flourished as actor on the stage, and his track has been marked with war, and rapine, and blood. Sword, famine and pestilence

have followed in his train, and every hateful crime has stood like chosen attendants near his throne. And yet it is said that God raised him up. Of Pharoah there can be no dispute; nor of Nebuchadnezzar; nor of Cyrus and others. Yet no one presumes to impeach the purity of the divine character, because of that agency, which the divine providence may have had, in the preservation of corrupt and tyrannical despots. We ask why not, if the objection is of force? Whether is the agency of God's providence, in the support of the world, and of the huge monsters of crime, that have enslaved and tyrannized over it, any less liable to remark, than that which is ordinarily exerted in the sustentation of the sinner's mind?

Whatever view, therefore, we take of the divine agency so far as it is concerned in the production of sin, whether in the permitting of it, or in the exercise of forbearance towards the sinner, or in the preserving in being and continuing in wonted vigour, the powers of the moral being, no taint, nor the least imputation of moral turpitude can attach to God. Whence then it may be inquired originates human depravity? If God cannot be pronounced the author of sin, how comes it into being? An answer to this question, will require that we advert to the history, and general principles or constitution, of that government which God exercises over men.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ORIGINAL OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

No historical information as to the origin of sin in other worlds—The *history* of it in this—Its immediate effects on the character of our first parents—The entire change it effected—That change did not affect the general agency of God, nor the physical nature of our first parents—The influence of this change on successive generations—Various opinions as to the origin of human depravity—Inquiry as to what *original sin* consists in—The phrase a very vague one—Several inquiries started—*Sin* cannot be predicated of being merely—Necessary to pay particular attention to the general characteristics of the creature, in order rightly to estimate the character of the holiness attributed to it—Holiness has respect to the exercises of the will—Whether there is any inherent cause of sinful actions in the soul—Dr. Owen's views—Boston's—Calvin's—Vink's—If created nature or existence be sinful, then is God the author of sin—No physical property lost or acquired by Adam's sin—No physical defect or efficient principle of physical being produced by it—But it rendered holy exercises in him *morally impossible*—Physical depravity renders sin necessary—Dreadful practical results of such a doctrine—To the will of the sinner is to be assigned the immediate cause of *sinful actions*—Quotation from Dr. Owen—Inquiry as to the prime origin of sinful actions—Whether the legal or natural results of Adam's sin—The difference between a law, a covenant, and a constitution—The death and corruption of Adam's progeny, results of the divine constitution, ordained for the moral government of the human family—Certain plain facts, which cannot be denied—Folly and sin of objecting to the divine constitution—The law of development to be traced in every department of life—Applicable to our moral nature.

OF the *introduction of sin* into *other* worlds, we have no knowledge—no *historical* data whatever—nothing to conduct inquiry; and it would, therefore, be foolish to attempt it. Of its entrance into *this*, however, we have both

an *historical* account, and satisfactory knowledge of the moral constitution under which it occurs.

The simple statement is, that God prohibited the common parents of the human race, from eating the fruit of a certain tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; doubtless called such, *not because of any natural virtue* which its *fruit* possessed, to quicken man's intellectual powers; for then would not its fruit have been withheld; but because it was made the *test* of man's obedience or subjection to God, his governor. His abstinence from, or participation of its fruit, would indicate or furnish knowledge as to his moral character, whether he was good or whether he was evil.

By means of an appeal, made directly to the senses and the heart of Eve, through the subtlety of the tempter, she was induced to violate the command of God. This result, however, was obtained through the natural exercise of her voluntary powers—i. e. according to the laws which God had ordained, to regulate their exercise. Motives and arguments, for and against, were presented to, and balanced in her mind. How long the process continued, we know not; but, eventually, “when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant (desire) to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.”¹ This *act* changed the *entire character*; for all the subsequent acts and exercises, the purposes, thoughts and sensibilities of their souls, became contrary to God. Whereas, before, there was the controlling influence of *the love of God*, a consciousness of their attachment to Him, a knowledge of their relation with Him, to diffuse bliss throughout their souls, and regulate all their acts and emotions; there now succeeded an awful apprehension of His displeasure, a consciousness of their

Gen. iii. 6.

own ingratitude, rebellion and guilt, and a knowledge that they should inevitably meet the retributions of His justice, whose commands they had violated.

These *feelings*, these *exercises* of mind and heart, were altogether *new* and painful, and quite contrary to those which originally characterised them. Instead of the harmonious actings of mind and heart toward God, as the fountain of their bliss, there was a terror of God, and a desire to escape from Him and to shun His notice, indicating, altogether, a very deficient state of heart toward Him. Their interests were *no longer subordinated to the glory of God*, and sought as thus subordinate; but exalted as *supreme*, and prosecuted to the neglect, and even contempt of the divine honor and authority.

Such is the general nature of human depravity. It consists not in the destruction of any moral capacity whatever. It was the same heart that once loved God supremely, which now feared and shunned Him. It was the same mind that delighted to contemplate and commune with Him, which now fled from His presence. No *constitutional* change had been sustained, but all his acts and emotions were deranged. Mind and heart alike had been thrown into disordered action, through apprehensions and emotions which followed from the ascendant influence of his selfishness.

It is obvious that such derangement must continue, as long as the causes operating to produce it—that is, as long as God remains the same—determined to punish sin; and man having forfeited his claims and relationship, and friendly communication with Him, seeks his happiness in the world. The causes of this deranged and corrupt exercise of the mind and heart of man, lay not in the *internal essence and structure*, or *constitutional principles and properties of the soul*; but in the character of God as moral governor, and in the altered relations and circumstances, which the first act of rebellion induced, as these

things most naturally operated on his alienated mind and heart, through the regularly constituted modes of thought and feeling.

God continues still the *same providential and preserving power*. His hand sustains the poor, disordered mind. He does not instantly dash the wretched being from His hand, and cause him to return to his original *nonentity*; but He supports him, and imparts the very same sustaining agency to invigorate his acts and exercises, as when those acts and exercises were his goings forth to Him, and were regulated by His friendship.

But He does not choose to undo what has been done, and bring the rebellious mind back from its disordered action. He is under no obligation to do this. And the consequence is, that refusing so to do, the causes of deranged action and emotion still subsisting, there continue to take place unceasing developments of a disordered or depraved heart. In all this, however, there was no introduction of any physical essence, or substance, or principle, &c. into the nature of man, nor the loss of any such thing. This may suffice with regard to our first parents. It was the instant cessation of the mind's actings, as to all the activities, and enjoyments of spiritual life; i. e. the appropriate goings forth of mind and heart to God, as the supreme good and chief end. Such is the history of the fall of our first parents.

It concerns us to trace the influence of this change in the moral character and sensibilities, on the successive generations of their offspring. The sacred scriptures teach us, that the human race are all descended from one common original, and that they transmitted their *character* to all their offspring. It is certain that mortality has been inherited from Adam, and that mortality was the consequence of sin—the first sin. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”¹ However we may speculate on the causes of human

1. Rom. v. 12.

corruption, or whatever theories we may frame, with regard to the nature of the human mind, and the character and responsibilities of a moral agent, it cannot be denied, that all are sinners. "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not."¹ Death has, in every successive generation, "reigned over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."²

The world has not furnished one instance of a perfectly sinless and holy creature, having appeared among the sons of men, since the apostacy of the first pair, save that of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Ever and anon the same developments have been made. "The wicked go astray from the womb, speaking lies." All the way through life—in every stage of human existence, there are actions which demonstrate the depravity of man. Whence this state of things? Various opinions have been advanced, as to the origin of this depravity, some referring it—to the *influence of education and example*—others to the *animal body*, with which the soul is connected—others entirely to the *outward circumstances of man's condition* in this world—others to some *modification of the nature of the soul, derived by natural descent*—and others still to some *physical taint or impurity, lodged in the very constitution of our nature, which operates as an efficient principle in the production of depraved acts*. The falsity of the first supposition, has already been exposed. Whether the second be *fact*, can never be proved; for certain it is, that the connexion of matter and spirit, in a moral being, does not necessarily render that being a sinner, either immediately or ultimately. The other opinions will all be determined, if we can resolve the inquiry, as to that in which original sin consists.

1. Eccles. vii. 20.

2. Rom. v. 14.

It is exceedingly difficult, in speaking on this subject, to use terms not liable to be misunderstood. The shorter catechism uses the phrase, "the corruption of our whole nature," to describe, as it would seem, that which, in the day when it was framed, was "commonly called original sin."¹ What is meant by the "whole nature," all will not agree. By this phrase, one thinks is taught the idea of there being something *sinful* simply in created nature; i. e. that the soul and body of the infant yet unborn, are, *in themselves*, prior to all moral acts and exercises, *sinful*. Another, taking it for granted that the catechism cannot possibly mean to teach such a doctrine as that of *physical depravity*, understands the phrase, as designating the general character of those actions, committed in all the appropriate circumstances of the being.

1. Such appears to be the grammatical and obvious construction of the answer to the 18th question in the Shorter Catechism. In the answer to the 25th question of the Larger Catechism, the ambiguity is not relieved. Different punctuations convey different ideas. We shall not attempt to decide, whether original sin is described in the Catechisms, as of a *triangular* character, consisting *conjointly* in "the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature," or in the first or last exclusively. It is certain that some Calvinistic writers do treat of it, as comprising the whole three; and it is as certain, that expressions occur in the formularies of the primitive Scottish church, and the confession of faith itself, which seem to limit it to Adam's transgression. The Assembly, in 1590, appointed a committee, consisting of Messrs. *John Craig*, *Robert Pont*, *Thomas Buckingham* and *Andrew Melvine*, to prepare a Catechism "Anent the examination before the communion." This Catechism, drawn up by the Chairman of the Committee, was the next year presented to the Assembly, and adopted; and in the subsequent year, the following act was passed in relation to it—For swa meikle as, at the special Desire of the Kirk, ane Forme of Examination before the Communion was pennit and formit be their Brother Mr. *John Craig*, quhilk is now imprintit, and allowit be the Voyce of the Assembly. Therefore it is thought needful that every pastor travel with his Flock, that they may buy the samen Buik, and read it in their Families, quhereby they may be better instructit." In that Catechism, so highly approved of, and designed to be used so extensively in

The phrase *original sin* is very vague. It may denote, either *the first sin*, whether that be the first in the whole series of sins, committed by our race, viz: the first transgression of our guilty primogenitors; or, whether it be the first sinful act, in the series of transgressions, committed by any one of their descendants. Or, it may denote the *original* of sin; i. e. the fountain or source whence other sins proceed; and that, whether it be in reference to our *first parents*, the source of *all the sins in this world*, or in reference to any and every *individual*, the source of *all the sins committed by them*. Or, it may denote *the sin of our original*, whether it be the sin of every man's parents, connected with his origination, or the sin of our very first existence. Or, it may denote something which has the power to originate sin, and which is necessarily involved in our very being, from the first moment of its origination. In this last sense, as the Catechism intimates it was, in the days of the Westminster divines and previously, it is often used as the vulgar synonyme, for "the corruption of our whole nature." Who does not see, how perplexing and

the answer to the 4th question, which is, "What things came to us by that fall; (of Adam;) there is an evident distinction made between natural corruption and original sin. The answer is, "Original sin and natural corruption." In "the confession of faith, and doctrine believed and professed by the protestants of Scotland, Aug 1560," immediately after speaking of the transgression of our first parents, in eating the forbidden fruit, it is added, "By *which transgression*, commonly called original sin." The first sin of Adam was, in 1560, "*commonly called*" in Scotland, original sin." In 1590, still they distinguished between original sin and natural corruption. In the 6th sec. of the 6th chap. of the Westminster confession of faith, we read that "Every sin," *both original and actual, being a transgression* of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law. If original sin be represented as a *transgression of law*, it is not a *sinful nature*. "The Sum of saving knowledge" holds the following language on the subject: "Our first parents being enticed by Satan, one of these Devils, speaking in a serpent, did break the covenant of works, in eating the for-

endless must be the disputes which will prevail, where a phrase, capable of such varied signification, is employed? It is not found in the word of God, and therefore can claim no respect, as coming from inspired lips. It may, indeed, be consecrated in the technicalities of Theologians, but common sense would unquestionably suggest the propriety of abandoning it, when it is so liable to be misconstrued and misunderstood. We shall not, therefore, be at any pains to determine, whether it means the *sin which is first in the series*, or the *sin that originates others*, or the *sin of our origin*, or the “*something*” in our being, which has power to originate sin, or is the original of sin.

It may be profitable to inquire—Whether our very being, as we are born into this world, is itself sinful? Whether sin has its origin in any physical defect of our being, or other physical cause whatever? Whether there is any connexion between the first sin of Adam and our sins? What is the nature of that connexion? And what light may be thrown on this subject, by a careful examination of facts, in relation to the developments of human depravity? A so-

bidden fruit; wherefore they and their posterity, being in their loins, as branches in the root, and comprehended in the same covenant with them, became not only liable to eternal death, but also *lost all ability* to please God; yea, did become, *by nature*, enemies to God, and to all spiritual good, and *inclined* only to evil continually. *This is our original sin*, the bitter root of all our actual transgressions, in Thoughts, Word and Deed.” Here original sin would seem to be represented as our being, by nature, enemies of God, and having lost all ability—something in the very being which we inherit by natural descent, and which is the root of all actual sins. Augustine, who is quoted, with approbation, in the Biblical Repertory, says,—“Original sin, therefore, ought not to be considered an infused habit, nor a habit acquired by repeated acts, but an *innate disposition*, derived from the voluntary transgression of the first man.” The reader will notice the sentiments of Calvin and others, quoted on this subject; nor can he fail to perceive how very vaguely, and confusedly, and contradictorily Calvinistic confessions of faith, and Calvinistic writers spoke, on the subject of original sin, when they incidentally undertook to define or to describe it.

lution of these inquiries shall be attempted in the remaining of this, and several succeeding chapters; inasmuch as the subject of depravity, when understood, serves indirectly to illustrate the nature of Regeneration.

It is strange that ever it should have been made a question, whether sin may be predicated of being or simple existence, since sin is undeniably an *act* of a *moral* character, and, therefore, *can* only be committed by one, who is possessed of moral powers; i. e. one who is capable of acting according as the law requires or prohibits. So far as *personal* unholiness or sin is concerned, we mean that which is contracted and exhibited by the individual person of whom it is predicated, the truth of this remark is obvious. For the very nature of sin implies an exercise of will. There *can* be neither *obedience* nor *disobedience*, where there is *not an exercise of will*. That will may be secured through the impulse of various feelings and motives, and they may determine its character; but all personal holiness or unholiness—i. e. the holiness or unholiness which characterizes a moral agent, involves, in its very nature, an exercise of will.

It is indispensably necessary, that we pay particular respect to the general characteristics, as a creature, or constitution of the being, when holiness or unholiness is predicated of it. An ox, or goat, as set apart and slain, according to the rites of Levitical sacrifice, was accounted holy. So also were the pots and vessels of the sanctuary. Other things were accounted unholy or unclean. But no one will pretend, that the holiness or unholiness which is predicated of such things, is the *same in character* with that of rational, moral creatures, such as man. Nor will it be affirmed, that the holiness which was predicated of Israel, collectively as a people, *set apart* from other nations, is of the same character with that, which is attributed to the saints personally, as individual moral agents.

The holiness or unholiness of an individual moral agent, which we have called *personal*, has respect to the exercises of the will, as induced by the feelings of the heart, and the influential motives. These are the things which properly fall under the cognizance of law, and which the law is designed to regulate. Law, in general, is the declared will of a legitimate sovereign, designed to regulate the conduct of his subjects. It addresses itself directly to the capacities of their rational and moral nature, and requires from them a voluntary compliance with its demands. Its character is not changed, where God, our Creator, is the law-giver; so that it is obvious, to every intelligent reader, that holiness, or sin which is its opposite, has a direct and immediate reference to those voluntary acts and exercises, which the law is designed to secure or prevent.

The law has neither respect to, nor is designed to regulate, simple being or created existence; but *presupposes the existence* of moral agents. How very absurd, therefore, is it, to predicate sin of that which does not fall under the cognizance of law at all! Simple existence, cannot, in the very nature of things, be sinful; for there is no law designed to prevent existence. And such is the common sense of mankind. No one ever thinks or feels, that it is a sin, that he exists, or that he was born, or that he was conceived: for these things, being beyond the control of man's will, and being properly the results of God's agency, if *they* are sinful, the sin must be his,—which is a thought too impious to entertain.

But while this will perhaps be admitted by the most zealous advocate of what is “commonly called original sin,” there are forms of speech, and modes of illustration, adopted by some, which, if they do not imply that mere human existence or being is sinful, do certainly, that there is in the very soul of man “something,” which has the power to originate acts of a sinful nature, and conse-

quently, being their appropriate cause, may be itself denominated *sinful*, and viewed as affecting, by its very presence, the moral purity of the soul. Whether this *cause* of sinful acts, lodged in the very soul, is to be traced up to any *defect* of physical constitution, or to the actual inbeing or inherence of any habit, principle, bias or taint, which is the appropriate and immediate cause of sinful acts, or both, it is difficult precisely to determine, from the language and illustrations employed.

Dr. Owen evidently speaks of sin, “as a *principle*, or something which has the efficiency of a *cause*, and which *exists in men anterior to any acts performed by them*. He calls it “*Indwelling sin*,” and has written an interesting practical treatise, which, where it is not rendered absolutely mystical, and unintelligible, through the influence of false philosophy, may be found profitable in the experience of christians. His remarks are founded on the figurative expressions of the apostle Paul, who, when speaking of his continual warfare with sin, personified it as *sin that dwelleth in him*, and represented its influence as *a law in his members*. Such expressions the Dr. seems to have understood, and interpreted in their literal sense, which can in no way be sustained, but on the supposition of a physical depravity. We give the reader his current comment on the apostles’ language. “Sin that dwelleth in me. It is present with me. It is in my members; yet it is so far in a man, as in some sense it is said to be the man himself. ‘I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.’ The flesh which is the seat and throne of this law, yea which indeed is this law, is in some sense the man himself, as grace also is the new man. Now from this consideration of it, that it is an indwelling law, inclining and moving to sin as an inward habit or principle, it has sundry advan-

tages increasing its strength and furthering its power. As, First it always *abides in the soul*, it is never absent.”¹

It is obvious to every reader, that from the above quotation, Dr. Owen, understood what he called “indwelling sin,” to be itself an operative principle, having power to determine and control the acts of the soul, and in this respect, to be the very opposite of the vital, or holy principle, which he taught, is implanted in regeneration. This is rendered perfectly indisputable, from the definition which he has given of “indwelling sin,” considered as a law. “It is,” says he, “a *powerful, effectual indwelling principle*, inclining and pressing unto actions, agreeable and suitable unto its nature.”² But while, in one place, he speaks of sin *positively* as an indwelling law or principle, *something operative*—having power to produce actions “suitable unto its nature,” which is unquestionably, a *physical depravity*; in another place, he contemplates it *negatively*, as a *natural* impotency, or defect in our being, thus also maintaining a physical depravity. He denominates it a natural impotency, “because” he says “it consists in the deprivation of the light and power that was originally in the faculties of our minds or understandings, and because it can never be taken away or cured, but by an immediate communication of a new spiritual power and ability, TO THE MIND ITSELF, by the Holy Ghost in this renovation, so evincing the deprivation OF THE FACULTY ITSELF.”³ Language more appropriate could not be employed to teach the doctrine of *physical depravity*. It is unnecessary to quote any further from him on this subject.

We add some things to the same purport from other of the old Calvinistic writers. “Every person” says Boston, “that is born according to the course of nature, is

1. Owen on Indwelling Sin, chap. ii. p. 29.

2. Owen on Indwelling Sin, chap. i. p. 15.

3. Owen on the Spirit, vol. i. Book iii. chap. iii. p. 418.

born unclean: if the root be corrupt, so must the branches be: neither is the matter mended, though the parents be sanctified ones; for they are but HOLY IN PART, and that by grace, not by nature; and they beget their children as men, not as holy men: wherefore as the circumcised parent begets an uncircumcised child, and after the present grain is sown, we reap corn with the chaff; so the holiest parents beget unholy children, and cannot communicate their grace to them, as they do their nature."¹

Here he evidently predicates sin of simple existence, as propagated by natural descent. Elsewhere he speaks of "the sin of our nature," in contradistinction from voluntary acts of transgression, and describes it in terms plainly expressing a *physical depravity*. "Of all sins" he says, "it is the most extensive and diffusive. It goes through the whole man, and spoils all. The corruption of nature, is the poison of the old serpent, cast into the fountain of action; and so infects every action, every breathing of the soul. It is the *cause of all particular lusts*, and actual sins in our hearts and lives. It is virtually all sin: for it is the seed of all sins, which want but the occasion to set up their heads: being in the corruption of nature, *as the effect in the virtue of its cause*. The sin of our nature is, of all sins, the most fixed and abiding. It remains with men, in its full power, by night and by day, at all times, fixed as with bands of iron and brass. It is the great reigning sin."² "All of every man is corrupt; it is a leprosy that has overspread universally; a leaven that hath leavened the whole lump. It has overspread, 1. The soul in all its *faculties*. 2. As for the will, call it no more will, but lust. It is *free* to evil, but not to good. 3. As to the af-

1. Boston's fourfold state, pp. 39. 40.

2. Boston's fourfold state, pp. 105, 106.

fections they are quite disordered, Further, this corruption has spread even to the body.”¹

The above are specimens of the whole school, and they do, if language has any definite meaning, plainly teach the doctrine of *physical depravity*. This is manifestly the doctrine Calvin taught; and the view he took of original sin, when he defined it to be, “*an hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through every part of the soul*. Yet from him, (Adam,) bath not punishment alone marched upon us as a pestilence, (grassata est,) but the *pestilence (lues) instilled from him, resides in us*, for which punishment is justly due.”²

Still more decisive and pointed are the following, when commenting on the Apostle’s declaration, “that all have sinned.” “That is,” says he, “they are involved in original sin and polluted with its spots, and for this reason, infants also themselves, while they, bring their own damnation with themselves from their “mother’s womb, are obnoxious, *not for another’s but their own especial vice*. (suo ipsorum vitio.) For although they may not have produced the fruits of their own iniquity, yet have they the seed included in themselves: yea, *their whole nature, is some such seed of sin*; so that *it* cannot but be odious and abominable to God.”³

1. Boston’s body of Divinity, vol. 1, pp. 307, 308, 309.

2. Videtur ergo peccatum originale hæreditaria naturæ nostræ pravitas et corruptio, in omnes animæ partes diffusæ: Ab illo tamen non Sola in nos pœna grassata est, sed in stillata ab ipso, LUES in nobis residet, cui jure pœna debetur. Calvini. Instit. Lib. ii. cap. 1. Sec. 8.

3. Et apostolus ipse disertissime testatur, ideo mortem in omnes pervigatam, quod omnes peccarint, id est, involuti sint originali peccato, et ejus maculis inquinati. Atqui ideo infantes quoque ipsi, dum suam secum damnationem a matris utero afferunt, non alienio sed suo ipsorum vitio sunt obstricti. Nam tametsi suæ iniquitatis fructus nondum protulerint, habent, tamen in se inclusum semen imo tota eorum natura, quoddam est peccati

VINK, in his sermon published in the morning exercises, entitled "Original sin inhering," has given exactly the same view which Boston after him and many other theologians of that day have done. We select a few passages: he says, "1. 'Tis called *original sinne*, because 'tis *in* every one from his original; it may say to every one, *as soon as thou wert I am*: or 2. Because it is *derived* from Adam the *original* of all man-kinde, *out of whose blood, God hath made us all*: or 3. Because 'tis the *original* of all other *sinne*; it is the seed and spawn, out of which they all grow; *this* is that *lust*, which when it *hath conceived, bringeth forth sinne*. This sin runs parallel with our being men, or partaking of man's nature in this world. *This sin*, and our nature in us, are *twins*, in life and death. Our whole *fabrick* is so overspread with this leprosie, that it can never be sufficiently cleansed, till it be wholly taken down. 1. This sin cleaves to the soul: and 2. It infects the very body also."¹

It is unnecessary to crowd our pages with other extracts.² Those adduced, shew plainly, that original sin is spoken of, by some old Calvinistic writers, as an *operative or efficient cause of sin*, which is lodged *in the very soul of man, from the very first moment of his origin*, anterior to all voluntary acts whatever, and therefore can only be *physical*; i. e. must consist in *some constitution of simple nature or created being*, which is the appropriate, immediate, and necessary *cause of sinful actions*. This is

semen: ideo non odiosa et abominabilis Deo esse non potest. Cal. Inst. l. ii. c. 1. Sec. 8.

1. See Morning Exercise, at Giles in the fields, pp. 155, 156, 157, 158.

1. The reader may find many in the first volume of a work entitled, *Views of Theology* published in New York, in which the author has undertaken to prove that in some theories and reasonings of divines, depravity is exhibited as a *physical* attribute.

philosophy. It is an inference drawn from certain facts, and sustained by false analogies. Who does not see, that it as deeply implicates the character of God, as it certainly relieves the sinner from obligation? If simple *created nature*, or EXISTENCE is *sinful*, then is God the direct and immediate author of sin, for it is His exclusive prerogative to *create*. This however, He cannot be.

Nor is it sufficient to vindicate the purity of God in this matter, to say that Adam, having corrupted himself by his own act, propagated to his progeny a corrupt nature, and that by virtue of fixed and established laws, ordained to regulate the agency of God, *in the production* of successive creatures. For it does not appear, that Adam lost or acquired *any physical property* by his rebellion; nor that his nature, consisting simply of his created substance and its constitutional properties, sustained any *physical change* by his sin. His voluntary exercises were sadly deranged, and became awfully depraved, but that depravity formed no part of his *substance*, nor belonged to his *constitutional properties*. It attached to his *character*, as a moral agent. How then could he transmit, by natural generation what did not inhere in his own constitution. It does not appear that Adam's sin, produced in his own soul, any *physical defect*, or lodged there any *new efficient principle or physical being, possessing power to control* his voluntary actions.

We shall have occasion presently to trace the influence of certain great *moral* principles, as they operated to regulate his actions, and to shape his character: but certainly, no one will affirm, that the *first sin* of Adam, *inherited in him*, changing his very *physical* constitution, and becoming an *efficient cause* of all his subsequent sinful actions. For that sin was an *act*, not a *substance*, and had no other *existence*, than as an *event* which transpired in his history,

but which changed his moral relations, and rendered those exercises in which his holiness consisted, *morally impossible*; and if to him *physical* depravity accrued not, from him it cannot be derived. If such a thing were possible, and actually did take place, who can undertake to blame men for sinning? Their sins would be the proper, and necessary result of their very constitution, in the production of which they had no agency. They would sin of necessity, and could no more be criminal for their sinful actions, than for craving food or any other act which results from an established law of nature. Let men believe this to be the fact, and what dreadful practical results would follow! How does the voluptuary grasp it with delight, as the sop to quiet his conscience! And where might it not be practically plead as an apology for the worst and vilest deeds? If the cause of men's sins lies in an "indwelling principle," as Dr. Owen calls it, "inclining and pressing unto actions agreeable and suitable unto its nature," it possesses the precise *character of a law of nature*¹ as he himself has defined it. And if men sin according to a law of nature, the divine agency is implicated, and human obligation is destroyed.

If, therefore, we cannot predicate sin of simple created existence; if mere *physical being* is *not sinful*; and if there cannot be found, in any physical defect of our being, or in the presence of any positive principle of our constitutional nature, the immediate cause of *sinful actions*, it may be asked, whence do they originate? We have already shewn that their immediate and appropriate cause, is to be assigned to the will of the sinner, who chooses and acts contrary to the requisitions of God. To this, the common sense and

1. The *principle* that is in *the nature* of every thing, moving and carrying it towards its own end and rest, is called *the law of nature*. Owen on indwelling sin, p. 15.

conscience of mankind give full assent. The authority of Dr. Owen, on this point, is explicit and satisfactory. "The will," says he, "is the principle, the next seat and cause of obedience and disobedience. Moral actions are, unto us, or in us, so far good or evil, as they partake of the consent of the will. He spake truth, of old, who said, *Omne peccatum est adeo voluntarium, ut non sit peccatum nisi sit voluntarium*. "Every sin is *so voluntary*, that if it *be not voluntary* it is *not* sin."¹ The present inquiry, however, carries our attention to the more remote, or *prime* origin of our sinful actions.

It must be obvious to every one, that the rise or origin of all sinful actions, as committed by men, is to be dated in the *first* sin of Adam. That *some* connection therefore exists between that sin, and the transgressions of his offspring, none are disposed to deny, as to the character of that connection however there is much dispute. It is of moment to determine whether, our sinful actions are the *legal*, or only natural results of Adam's sin. And in order to this, we must inquire—whether our sinful actions flow from any operative *principle* of our *physical nature*, or any constitutional properties derived from Adam by the process of natural generation—whether they are to be considered as *penal results*, i. e. the specific punishment provided by law for crime committed—or whether it became morally certain, that, from the established constitution of God, our great primogenitor having sinned, his descendants would do the same.

The first inquiry has been already disposed of. As to the second, it may be proper to remark, that there is a difference between a constitution, a covenant, and a law. A law requires or prohibits conduct, and determines the suffering or consequences—or, to speak more technically, the pen-

1. Owen on indwelling sin, p. 174.

alty that shall follow or be inflicted for its violation. A covenant is a formal agreement between two or more contracting parties. A constitution determines the grand principles which shall restrain, direct, and characterize the whole administration of a government. The transaction of God with our first parents has been variously designated—some accounting it *a law*, others *a covenant*, and others *a constitution*. When God prohibited our first parents from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, under penalty of death, He would seem to have done no more than to have *enacted a law*. But as it is obvious it affected the condition of their descendants, and is explained in the sacred scriptures, as a transaction that was to have a bearing on them, it assumes a character somewhat different from that of a simple law. It was a constitution, which God, in His adorable sovereignty, ordained, for the administration of his government over men. This, we presume, will not be denied, even by those who prefer to call it a covenant. Had our first parents stood the test, and obeyed, we have reason to believe their offspring, after them, would have been confirmed in holiness, and in the enjoyment of everlasting life. This they did not; and through their failure, death and corruption are the results which follow, in every age and generation, among their descendants.

It is certain that the death of Adam, both spiritually and corporally, was the penalty inflicted on *him* for his first transgression. Now that which in him was unquestionably the punishment of *his* sin, does actually eventuate in the history of his offspring. Death and corruption affect them all. No one will pretend to say, that in such cases, God has departed from the original constitution which He ordained, or that He acts in violation of His own law. Most undeniably, it is agreeable to the constitution which He ordained with our first parents, that their act of rebel-

lion against Himself, should be followed with the death of all their progeny. A parent is punished most severely in the sufferings of his children, especially where he sees that suffering will be secured by his own improper conduct. And this tremendous result, which it will not be said was incompatible with the rectitude of the great moral governor, was held forth to Adam as that state of things which would be induced by his sin. The death and depravity of his offspring therefore may be very appropriately called the suffering of *his* sin, or the penalty annexed to that great moral constitution, which God had ordained with him as the head and parent of the human family. It is not necessary to transfer the act of Adam to his offspring, and account them personally *criminal* for it, in order to account for their suffering: nor is it necessary to attribute to their *created nature*, anterior to, and irrespective of all moral exercises, some *physical depravity*, or inherited *lues*, which is offensive to God, and provokes His wrath personally against the babe unborn. All that we think it of importance to know, or inquire after here, is, that by virtue of the relation which God constituted between Adam and his offspring as their head and parent, as well as the great principle which He ordained should mark the administration of his government over them, the sin of Adam, rendered the death and depravity of his descendants *not physically necessary*, but *morally certain*. Those principles we desery in the great laws of reproduction and assimilating development, which characterize his universal providential agency in this world.

We desire not to perplex our readers by introducing terms, which have been the occasion of doubt and altercation, and would perhaps, through their varied signification, be misunderstood.¹ We aim, in our investigation

1. We trust the candid *christian* reader, will give us credit for sincerity,

simply at the knowledge of facts; and however intricate and involved this subject may be accounted by many, yet some things are sufficiently plain.

That we inherit from Adam an animal frame, which is subject to disease and liable to dissolution, from the very first moment of its existence, cannot be denied. His body was the root from which according to the law of reproduction, established by God, have sprung the bodies of all his offspring. The mortality of those propagated from him, is the result of his sinning against God. Had he obeyed the command of the Most High, he would not only have lived himself, but all his descendants would have inherited from him an animal frame adapted to immortality. As it is, disease and death are our inheritance. Here it is manifest, that the act of one man has been followed by its legitimate or ordained results on others. Evidently therefore, his conduct has served, at least in respect of our *material being*, to shape our character and condition. The thing is not put to *our* choice, nor made dependent on *our* actions. We are born into this world a dying race. "Death *reigned* over them that has not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."¹

Does any one object to this sovereign constitution? Objection would be vain and foolish, for we are under it, and *die we must*. The sentence has gone forth, and we may even feel the ministers of death *already creeping* in our veins, and giving tokens that they are prepared, at any moment to execute it, and turn us to the dust. It would be miserable consolation for vain man to persuade himself,

in this declaration. It is greatly to be lamented, that a refusal to employ technicalities, should be denounced as Jesuitism, and a studied effort to conceal heresy. What can be expected from the exercise of ecclesiastical authority, by those who are ready to denounce an honest desire, and endeavour to unfold the truth, by such epithets?

1. Rom. v. 14.

that God has acted unjustly in establishing such a constitution.

But few, if any, have the hardihood even to venture the thought, that the divine Being is blameworthy, for having created man mortal—nor for having made that mortality to depend on the conduct of the parent of all our race. They see, in some measure, a reason for the thing, in this universal law of God's providence, that the developments of the first man; i. e. those that emanate from him, must bear an essential resemblance to himself. It is the universal law which regulates the developments of life in this world.

Throughout the interminable ranges of vegetable and animal life, the seed and ovum developed in a new and individuated being, has first been a part of the body of its parent, and the offspring, in due season, exhibits the image of the parent. Shall we object to this constitution of God, and say, that when He creates, he *ought not* to make one being dependent on another, but give to each one an original, separate, independent existence. "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like the wild ass's colt."¹ Such is the sovereign constitution of God, and to it we must bow.

The derivation of our mortal bodies from Adam, constituting the whole human race but one vast series of being, individuated by regular process, and developing the first pair of our progenitors, is so unquestionably matter of fact, that there can be no denial, that in so far, at least, as our bodies are concerned, we have not only been begotten in the likeness of Adam, but also, that as their condition, and the circumstances of their origination, depended on his own character and acts, so he has transmitted to us an animal nature, that is liable to disease and death.

¹ Job xi. 12.

We can trace this law, or process of reproduction, almost in every thing. So obvious is it, that persons, entirely unacquainted with medicine, will talk about diseases, inherited from generation to generation. The physician unhesitatingly affirms, that the state of animal health in the parents, affects the condition of the child, descending from them. The same diseases are developed in parents and children, and when they disappear in one generation, re-appear in the next.

Our Saviour has noticed the principle in the vegetable world. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit."¹ "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and the fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit."² But all this is met, most unphilosophically, by saying, that the principle applies only to our material nature. This, however, cannot be proved. The whole force of analogy is against it.

Will it avail any one to allege, that as the human soul is immaterial, and as moral corruption is properly and only predicable of our rational and moral nature, we are not to imagine, that the same principle will apply to it? And why not?

If we discover any grand principle, pervading all the other parts of the divine government in this world, running alike through the animal and vegetable creation, is it not presumable to suppose, that it extends to and embraces the other parts? Is it not the business of philosophy to generalize? To trace the operation of general laws and principles, in their various applications? Is it not the boast and glory of the Newtonian philosophy, that, by means of a few acknowledged principles, a thousand varied phenomena can be explained? How does it illustrate and elevate the wisdom of that philosophy, which, having determined the

1. Mat. vii, 18. 2. Mat. xii, 33.

cause of the falling of an apple from a tree, took it as a guide, and starting into the immensity of space, explored the universe, and saw it all moving, and preserved in harmonious order, by virtue of the same law—systems after systems, whirling, with all their suns, and planetary, and satellitical, and cometary, and astroidal worlds, with as unerring certainty, as the apple tended to the earth, and then returning, unfolded the mysteries of the tides, the motions of the winds, the oscillations of the pendulum, and a thousand other phenomena, that present themselves around this globe?

When we have ascertained a principle of divine government, we should not fear to pursue it in all its legitimate applications; nor through any of those grand illustrations, which, as it were, stand forth in bold relief, in the providence of God. Such a principle, we think, is discernible in the great law of reproduction, and of assimilating development, which marks the providential agency of God. Its bearing, on the subject of human depravity, we shall endeavour to trace. But, in the mean time, would caution the reader, against supposing that we advocate the idea of any seminal principles, physically innate or latent in the soul, which are derived by natural descent. What the Confession of Faith says of our first parents, viz : that “They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this (the first) sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation,”¹ is sufficiently intelligible, without resorting to the supposition of there being, in our very constitutional properties, an operative principle, which is the efficient cause of sin, and renders it physically necessary.

1. Westminster Confession of Faith, c. vi. sec. 3.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DERIVATION OF DEPRAVITY.

An inquiry as to the origination of the human soul—The idea of all human souls being concreated with Adam's examined—Does not relieve the doctrine of Adam's representation, and the imputation of guilt—The facts in the case as far as they are ascertainable—The creation of the human nature of Adam, of Eve, and of Christ throws no light on the subject—The law of development observable in the production of human beings—Various analogical illustrations of this great principle of the divine government—Its application to the circumstances and condition of human beings—1. A constitutional nature is derived from Adam, which is subjected to a forfeiture of privileges and immunities that could have been secured by his obedience—Subject to disease and death—Inquiry whether eternal life is included in that forfeiture—2. Men come into existence, under circumstances which render it morally certain, that they universally will sin, as soon as they are capable of moral agency—An inquiry whether there is in man's nature, an efficient cause, whose operation renders it certain, that men will sin—Quotations from Rivet—Owen—The distinction between natural and moral inability—Some remarks on the whole subject.

It may perhaps be thought extravagant, and trespassing into the regions of conjecture, to treat of the origination of the human soul. Yet as men have speculated on this subject, and there is reason to suspect, that some of their speculations have been assumed as verities, and have exerted, both a practical influence on their conduct, and a controlling influence on their belief in some important matters, it cannot be pronounced presumptuous, to attempt, as far as reason and scripture, and the observation of facts may aid, to ascertain the truth.

The idea that *all human souls were created simultaneously with Adam's*, and are introduced into human bodies according as they are prepared for them in ordinary generation, as indeed, all the schemes with regard to pre-existence and transmigration, whether adopted by ancient philosophical heathen, or advocated by more modern authors, scarcely deserves attention. There is no proof, as to *the matter of fact*, to be drawn, either from human consciousness, from the history of the world, or from the declarations of scripture. Analogy would lead us to a very opposite opinion. Nor are the *reasons* assigned for the *probability* of its being the *fact*, at all satisfactory.

It is unsafe to reason from our ignorance. Because we do not know a thing is not so, therefore it may be; and because, we do not know but that such a thing may be, therefore it is, is a most fallacious species of argument. And, as to the *difficulties*, in which, the successive production of rational creatures, confessedly depraved, seems to involve the divine agency, and *the occasion* which it is supposed to furnish for *animadversion on the divine character*, they are not at all obviated by the supposition of the *pre-existence and simultaneous creation of human souls*.

Nor can it at all relieve the theory of representation and the consequent imputation of guilt. In the ordinary affairs of life, we do indeed act on the principle, that the constituents and representative, are *both in being*; yea, and that the latter has been constituted such by the will of the former. If, in the relation between parent and offspring, there seems to be a departure from the principle recognized in other representative relations, a very satisfactory reason can be assigned for it, in the circumstance, that the offspring are brought into existence, through the instrumentality of the parent, and are, for a considerable portion of their existence, dependent on his care. The *act* of the representative or agent in ordinary cases, *affects* the constit-

uents; and, it is admitted justly enough, because the latter have employed, deputed, or, if we may so speak, by their own selection and commission, and instructing of him, have, as it were, identified themselves with him. No one however, pretends that the *act* of a *parent* affects the child, *because of any consent* or instruction, actual or implied, given by the child previously. The law however, guards carefully, against the parents being affected—save in those moral respects, which human law cannot obviate—by the act of the child, except in those cases where it was done by the authority or with the consent and approbation of the parent. To contend therefore, for the pre-existence of human souls, in order to vindicate the conduct of God, as the great moral governor, in making *the character and condition* of human beings, dependent on the *act of Adam*, the primitive parent, and thus to account for the derivation of depravity, will be of no avail. It is pushing the idea of representation too far, and does indeed secure nothing in the respect for which it is mainly intended.

There is no proof, nor can there be, that the world of human souls, *supposed* by some, to have been created when God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul, consented to, and approved of the act of God, in making him their great representative to act for them, in the high concerns of their eternal destiny. It will not do, it is not safe, to run analogies too far. They may illustrate, and shadow forth, or help to some conception of, a thing of the full and accurate apprehension of which we are incapable. To press them further, is dangerous: and it is perhaps, more than mere conjecture, that not a little of the obscurity and mysticism, on the subject of human depravity, arises out of confused notions of Adam's representative character—his representation of the human race, being viewed *as essentially the same* with the various forms and modifications of it, with

which we meet in common life, and which are sometimes adduced in illustration of it.

Unquestionably there must be some features in the relation which existed between Adam and his progeny, which are not to be traced in those resemblances of it occurring in ordinary life, and we therefore ought not to allow ourselves to conceive of it entirely by what we see, but carefully endeavour, by an observation of facts, and the great principles which mark the government of God, to ascertain it. *Suppositions*, resorted to, or necessary to *sustain a theory*, might safely, in every instance, be questioned. Undoubtedly they may be safely rejected, and such is the character of the supposition which we at present contemplate. It is recommended mainly, because it is thought to throw some light on the representative character of Adam, and relieve the doctrine of derived depravity, from the apparent ground which it affords, to object against the purity of God the Creator.

In this latter respect, it fails as entirely as in the former. For, if it cannot be supposed that God creates a being physically impure, and that *therefore*, all human souls, must have been created before the fall, and that they *become* impure *by virtue* of their being *introduced* into bodies propagated from the guilty parents of our race, how is the justice or purity of God relieved? Are they not as deeply implicated, as upon the supposition of their progressive formation, if not more so? As *rational* beings, they must have been under the government of law; and if they were, the justice of God could not have remained unimpaired, had He, by an arbitrary constitution, made the future character and condition of innocent creatures already existing, yea, and their eternal destiny, dependent on the conduct of one being, differently situated, *under a different moral constitution*, and subjected them because of his rebellion, to misery and degradation, by

means of their being brought into connection with diseased and dying bodies procreated from him? This we cannot do. If it be alleged, that the same objection can be urged against the idea of the soul's being created, after the formation of the body, in a pure state, and in that state being introduced into it, it may be replied, that much if not all, of the perplexity on this subject, arises out of the false assumption, that the soul itself is physically depraved. It will not be affirmed that the body, simply as a body, is in itself sinful; and if not, why must we suppose the soul as soul, or any modification of mere being whatever, to be so? Should we admit that the soul originates, like the body, according to some fixed law of God's providential agency; so that the father may be said to beget a son, in his own likeness, as truly in reference to the spiritual, as to the material part of his nature. If there be nothing sinful in simple created nature, the agency of God in the production of a human being, body and soul, though it is morally certain, that the being will sin, does not make Him the author of sin. If *simple created nature however, is sinful*, then it does certainly follow that He is; which is a result so palpably erroneous, that we must promptly abandon every theory or supposition, from which it legitimately flows.

It is, perhaps, safest and best, in a question of this nature, to confine ourselves strictly to matters of fact, so far as accurate observation will teach us what they are. What then are the facts? The following cannot be denied; viz: that the human soul acquires all its knowledge, and acts, exclusively, through the intervention of its material vehicle, the body—that we are not conscious of any knowledge or recollections, derived from a previous state of existence, independent of our bodies—that there are certain susceptibilities of the human soul, which are in unison with

various animal affections, possessed by us, in common with irrational creatures—that the affections and actings of the human soul are displayed in the developments and growth of our animal bodies;—and that these affections have a powerful influence, and are, indeed, invariably, in some of their modifications, involved in the origination or production of sinful acts.

Further, when we trace back the growth of *the human body*, we find that it is impossible to determine the period at which *it* became a separate existence. For a long period, it existed in the body of its parent, yet was it capable of certain actings, distinct from those of its parent; although its existence was altogether dependent. Its growth, which, in a state of dependence, was gradual, and even its material organs, for the origination of thought and for those actings, requisite to accomplish purposes and obey volitions, were progressively developed. “My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”¹

There is here distinctly recognized the agency of God, as extending to the whole of man’s being—not his body only, but also his immortal mind, in the production of both which, God is explicitly recognized by the Psalmist as being concerned. “Thou hast possessed my *reins*,” says he, “and hast covered *me* in my mother’s womb.”² The expression “*reins*” is most frequently employed in the Psalmist’s writings, to denote the rational mind. “My *reins* instruct me in the night season.”³ “The righteous God trieth the heart and *the reins*.”⁴ As, therefore, the

1. Psalm cxxxix, 15—16.

2. Psalm cxxxix, 13.

3. Psalm xvi, 7.

4. Psalm vii, 9.

agency of God is extended alike to the production of both body and soul, and both are gradually developed *in their actions*, it is certainly not so evident, as to be assumed without dispute, that the human soul is created, instantaneously, by some insulated and immediate, or independent effort of divine power, and brought, *with all its various capacities*, into connexion with the human body.

The presumption, arising from analogy, is against this idea; whether we suppose that that effort of divine power, in creating the human soul, is simultaneous with conception, with quickening, or with the first inspiration.

The process of the divine Being, in creating the first man, can afford no light here. Adam's body was at once moulded from the clay, into the perfect stature of a full grown man; with the entire development of all the organs requisite for animal action. And his soul in full possession of all its capacities, was also formed and communicated, simultaneously, with the very first inflating of his lungs, so that *he* came into being with all his animal, intellectual and moral powers, *in a state of full development*—with *actual* knowledge, righteousness and holiness; i. e. *acting from the first* with intelligence, conformably to the law of rectitude, and under the influence of benevolent emotions. This can be said of no other of the human family, save of Eve, "the mother of all living." The fact therefore seems plainly to be, that, whatever agency God is pleased to exert in the production of human beings, it is *according to some established law, ordained at the very creation of our first parents*, which law remains unaltered by their fall, and which agency would have been exerted *in the very same way*, had they continued innocent.

The production of the human nature of the Son of God, was a departure from, and in opposition to the established law of procreation, and, consequently, being as *perfectly miraculous* as was the translation of Enoch and Elijah,

that they should not see death, the sacred scriptures have been very careful to let us know *what* was the *mode of the divine agency in it*, and by what proof the *fact of its miraculous origination* has been established. Miracle upon miracle attested the extraordinary character of that child, which had been *spontaneously conceived* in the womb of Mary, and was brought forth by one, that expressed her own astonishment, saying, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man."¹

Now the agency of God, which is *ordinarily* exerted in the production of human beings, proceeds or is exerted upon this principle, universally characteristic of His government in this world, that, in the development of one being, there is originated another and a separate being, who, by regular process of growth shall exhibit essential resemblance, and that this development shall take place *in the actual exercise* of appropriate appetites and capacities. Throughout the whole of animal existence, the law obtains, that the voluntary exercise of appetites and functions, on the part of the parents, leads to the evolution of an offspring, *possessing the same constitutional, and acquiring the same characteristic properties.*

We may discern some analogical illustrations of this, in those creatures, to which we do not attribute volition. So uniform is the agency of God, in the propagation of vegetative life—for the law of vegetative procreation is but another expression for the divine agency—that the horticulturist can, with unerring certainty, predict the properties of a fruit, the embryo of which he has taken care to impregnate. The seed or germ does not possess, in itself, any power, which has efficiency to cause its own developments. Some men talk about a *vital principle* in it; but they talk unintelligibly to us. All that we can venture to affirm,

1. Luke i, 34.

from an actual observation of facts, without introducing *inferences*, which may be false, is, that the seed is a modification of being, adapted to certain uses and intentions by the great Creator, and capable of being brought into a regular series of actions or motions, developing, under the influence of appropriate exciting causes, the constitutional, and acquiring the characteristic properties of the being, from which it has been evolved.¹ And we may trace the same great principle, even in inanimate nature. In chrystallization formations take place, according to a progressive agency of God, which are perfectly assimilated to the first productions of Almighty power, when the rock or mineral, to which class they belong, was instantaneously produced. And through the whole processes of ossification in the animal, and lignification in the vegetable kingdoms, we trace a similar agency of God, not instantaneously, but progressively exerted, in bringing into being, creatures assimilated to those from which they have been evolved.

Shall we then think it strange, that the great Creator should pursue the same plan of operation, in the produc-

1. The vegetable physiologist can discern the different parts of the seed, which form, as it were, the basis of future actions and motions, and which, by germination, circulation, and other processes, may be developed in the tree, whose life, perchance, will form an aggregate of a thousand years. These are the *corculum*, or embryo, the *cotyledones*, *albumen*, *plumula*, *rostellum* or radicle, *hilum*, *testa*, &c. all of which are adapted, when acted on by the appropriate stimulus, or exciting causes, to those motions, through which the development takes place. A *vital principle* in these things, is a mere hypothesis. Observation shews, that in *impregnated seeds*, which are those we call living or vital—i. e. capable of evolution, the *corculum* is closely connected with the *cotyledones*, on which it depends for the first supplies of nutriment, while in *unimpregnated seeds* it is deficient or abortive, so that the relative position of the parts of a seed being appropriate, it is adapted to the purposes of development. This is all we mean in common parlance, when we call it a *living seed*. We designate it, merely as adapted to the purposes of development and growth—a general quality. We never say *it lives*, till the germinating process actually commences.

tion of successive creatures, in whom moral qualities are to be displayed? Why shall He here depart from the grand fundamental law of His agency, which obtains throughout this world? Is He under obligations to create every moral being, by a perfectly separate act of power, in full possession of all its qualities at once, and in a state of absolute independence on all others? We do not find that he is in reference to man; for his existence is derived from that of his parent, in whom, for a season, he unquestionably lived. His faculties are gradually acquired, and he can never be absolutely independent. Whatever may be said of the exclusive applicability of the above observations, to our corporeal nature, it is certain, that all our characteristic, *moral* qualities, are *actually acquired* through the growth and development of our *material* being.

Assuming it then as fact, that the agency of God, in the formation and support of man, is exerted according to the law of development, which secures the evolution of a similar being from its parent; the sin and fall of Adam being admitted, we may see how his posterity become affected by his sin.

1. They inherit a constitutional nature, which has been subjected, by virtue of the CONSTITUTION of God,¹ to a for-

1. The word covenant, as used in the Old and New Testament, is preferred by many. It must be obvious, that it differed in some circumstances, very materially, from what we call covenants among men. "The word, in the Old Testament language," says a very able writer, "by which God hath chosen to express his instrument of government, and which our translators always use, is *covenant*. The word signifies, generally, all kinds of deeds, whereby rights of any sort are conferred, and is very frequently used for covenants, or mutual agreements between man and man. This might have been reckoned decisive, if the New Testament writers had not cleared up the difference. Where the Hebrews had but one word for all kinds of deeds, the Greeks have two—*συμβηκη* and *διαβηκη*. The first, as the word plainly imports, is used to signify covenants, or mutual agreements, wherein two or more are engaged; the other is never used, but to denote the deed of one, a constitution or established order, a grant, or deed of gift; and particularly a *testament*, by which inheritances or legacies are conveyed. And

feiture of those privileges and immunities, which would have ensued or been prolonged, on the obedience of our great primogenitor. There can be no doubt, but that the circumstances and condition of the human race, are very different *now*, from what they *would have been*, had not Satan seduced our first parents from their allegiance to God. Whatever may be men's theories about the paradisaical state of Adam, or the ultimate effects of his fall, on the hopes and destiny of his offspring, the fact cannot be denied, that their condition, at present, is very unlike to what it certainly would have been, had he not eaten the forbidden fruit.

They are the subjects of disease, of suffering, and of death, from which they would have been exempted, according to the promise of immunity and life, implied in the original threat—"on the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Adam was constituted, as it were, the fountain, whence life or death was to flow to his descendants. Our fortunes were placed in his hand; and whatever, on the one hand, of enjoyment he was rendered susceptible, and of resources for it with which he was furnished; or, on the other hand, of misery, and the means by which it could be produced, constituted the estate or inheritance which should be parcelled out among his descendants and heirs. On them, the consequences of his rebellion fall, and they are subjected to the very same forfeitures which he incurred. He in-

whoever will, with any care and attention, consider what in our translation are called *God's covenants*, will find them all of this latter kind, either authoritative constitutions, which those to whom they were given were obliged to submit to, or grants and deeds of gifts in their favor, which went always together, and constituted at once the rule of judgment for the sovereign, and duty for the subject.—Riccartoun's Works, v. ii, p. 70—71.

In the large sense wherein BÉRITH is taken, a man's end or purpose may be called his covenant, as Job xxxi, 1. "I made a covenant with my eyes." And so God calleth his purpose or decree, concerning the orderly course of nature.—Owen on the Hebrews, vol. ii, p. 85.

curred the forfeiture of that life, which, in innocence, he possessed, and the interruption and loss of that communion with God, which he enjoyed. Bodily disease, and suffering, and an indisposition to maintain and seek an intercourse with God, quickly affected him, and these things have been experienced by all his progeny.

Whether eternal life was actually included in that forfeiture, which would be exacted from him and his offspring, have by some been doubted.¹ It is certain, that eternal death in their *own persons*, has not been incurred by many of the human family. Had eternal death in a man's own person been *actually the very punishment* ordained, it would have been forever impossible for man to have been saved.

1. In order therefore, to attain any thing like proper conceptions of the great change which was made in the circumstances of mankind, by our first father's transgression, we must, in the first place, be sure of the right import and meaning of that denunciation which produced it, and particularly of that which he must certainly fall under upon his eating the forbidden fruit. Many have carried this so far, as to extend it even to that which has been since called *eternal death*; the punishment we find denounced against the despisers or neglecters of Jesus Christ and his great salvation; therefore called *eternal*, because there remains no possibility of relief. Others stop as much short, confining it entirely to the death of the body, and reducing it to dust. There are only two ways on which we can certainly determine this important question, viz: the judgment given upon the delinquents by the judge, who was the framer of the law, and therefore understood it perfectly, and our own experience of what we either do, or may feel, in ourselves, in this our present state, which was fixed and determined by that judgment. There has been a third way attempted, and much insisted on; viz. reasoning upon the circumstances of the case, and the consequences which seem naturally to arise out of them. So far as these are found agreeable to, and supported by the other two, we may conclude them just; otherwise no great dependence can be had on them, however they may appear to our apprehensions of things, which are at best but a bad rule to judge by.

As death is allowed by all to import an end put to life, and as the denunciation was peremptory, "In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die," *Thou*, and not another, we must conclude, could import no less than the

All that we can say, with certainty on this subject,—and it is abundantly sufficient to fill us with horror in contemplating the natural condition of the human race, and to induce us to accept and prize the great salvation offered through Jesus Christ,—is, that man was subjected to a forfeiture of all that life, which, in a state of innocence our first parents possessed, and for any thing he knew, or could do, to better his condition, it must and would have been eternal. To Jesus the blessed mediator, do we owe the resolution of our painful doubts, and horrible suspense on this subject. The justice that exacted a present forfeiture of life, and inflicted a present suffering, might be presumed to require that they should be eternal, since it was, manifestly, morally impossible that man could re-instate himself in the condition from which he fell, or un-

loss of all that life, he was then in possession of, which we may call the paradisiacal life, and no further. It seems therefore incumbent on those who extend it to eternal death, to make it appear that Adam, in paradise, was possessed of that kind of life, which is called **ETERNAL**, the life which is in Christ Jesus; which I believe nobody will say. They build much on the nature and demerit of sin: and I would not willingly say any thing, that might be constructed into the least tendency toward extenuating the nature of that horrible evil; but by the issue of this first dispensation, and several other instances in the record, we must conclude, that it belongs to the Great Sovereign to affix what penalty he pleases to his laws. The conclusions drawn from the nature of vindictive justice, are rather too bold for man to make, without better authority than the record gives us. But there is one insuperable prejudice, that attends this supposition. That had eternal death been the penalty, Adam himself at least, must have died eternally; and if the denunciation given upon the transgression, extends to all his posterity, as appears by the event it did, not one of them could have been saved, without dispensing with the unalterable divine constitution, or somehow changing the tenor of it: an absurdity which can never be admitted on any consideration whatsoever. That original life must be destroyed; nor can the original law be satisfied by any means whatsoever until that is done; but when it is done, and that law thereby fulfilled, there is nothing to hinder the Creator to raise whom he pleases to eternal life. Riccaltoun's works, vol. ii. p. 72—75.

do what had been done. Vague hopes, wretched delusions, distracting fears, gloomy forebodings, horrible anticipations, were the exchange that our first parents made for the peace and joy of a calm life of communion with God. And the very same things are characteristic of that condition into which we are born. By virtue of our connection with Adam as descending from him, we are subjected in fact to the forfeiture of all the privileges and immunities pertaining to a state of innocence. It cannot for a moment be alleged, that we are treated as we would have been, had we been the children of innocent parents.

2. But this is not all. In consequence of the sin of Adam, men come into existence under the influence of causes and circumstances, which render it *morally certain*, that they universally, will sin, as soon as they are capable of moral agency. As to the facts here stated, there is no dispute. But what are these causes? An *innate powerful efficient principle*, says one. The *internal constitution*, says another. A *corrupt habit*, says a third. The *operative disposition or propensity*, says a fourth. The *very nature itself*, says a fifth. It is of little moment to dispute about words. The whole dispute here, it seems to us, turns on the decision of the following question. Is there in simple nature, as created by God, and derived from Adam, and prior to all acts, an *efficient cause*, whose operation renders it certain that men will sin? It is admitted, that, in so far as it relates to the appetites and passions of our nature, there is some foundation laid for *them* in our very being. We hunger, we thirst, we love, we fear, because such is our nature. God has so constituted us. There is a cause for these things in our *physical constitution*, just as there is in the irrational animals.

Some animals are carnivorous; others are graminivorous. They are instinctively inclined to the food which is adapted to their appetites. In all this, there is a foun-

dation laid in their very physical being. There is a sort of *necessity* superinduced upon the actions *from the very constitution* of the animal. It is an operative cause, laid in the very nature, which renders the result irresistible and infallible. Must we believe that men are inclined *in the same way* to sin, and that therefore, because of an *innate propensity to sin*—the foundation laid in the very nature—*that nature*, apart from, and prior to, any of its *moral actings* is *sinful*? That is to make God the author of sin, and to make men sin by *physical necessity*. The idea of God's creating men *physically incapable* of holiness and yet requiring holiness in them, and damning them to eternal misery for not possessing it, is too monstrous for any one avowedly to advocate.

Yet this idea seems to be wrapped up in the technics and illustrations of some. "The scripture certainly" says Rivet, "oft-times insinuates to us, that original sin is not a mere privation, but *something* somehow *positive*, that is, it is wont to inculcate that it is affirmative."¹ Paul's personification of sin, *he* interpreted literally and philosophically; so that, when the apostle exhorts christians, that they "let not *sin* reign in (their) mortal body, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof,"² he supposed his "words indicate, that there is *some habitual lusting* in man *whose proper acts* are actual lustings,³ which habitual evil the apostle calls sin." Still less ambiguously does he seem to inculcate the monstrous sentiment above expressed. "They, therefore, have not significantly enough

1. Scriptura certe quoties peccatum originale nobis insinuat, non meram privationem, sed aliquid quodam modo positivum, id est affirmativum, solet inculcare. SYN. PUR. THEOL. DISP. XV. p. 169.

2. Rom. vi, 12.

3. Quæ verba indicant, concupiscentiam quandam habitualement esse in homine, cujus proprii actus sunt concupiscentiæ actuales, quod malum habituale apostolus peccatum appellat. SYNOP. PUR. THEOL. DISP. XV. p. 169.

expressed the force of this sin"—he had just above called it "a stain; and most filthy corruption of all the parts of man, as born into this world;" (*labes et fœdissima omnium hominis partium*)—"who make it to consist only in the want of original righteousness; because, by it, *our nature* is not only devoid of any thing good, but also fertile and fruitful of every thing evil; so that *it cannot be idle*. Hence some of our men have said, that the *fuel* of sin is not without ACTUAL sin; yea, that it *is* actual sin; which, although said without authority, yet ought not to be calumniated by our adversaries, since they meant nothing else, than that this sin both exists in act, and is also actuating and operative, so that it cannot rest even in infants, but excites vicious (guilty) affections."¹

"But the subject of this subsistence or inhesion, (i. e. in which original sin subsists and inheres,) when this sin is considered, not in respect of the whole species of which it is predicated, but of the individual of which it is native and inherent, is not the body in man alone, nor the soul alone, but body and soul together; and so the man entire, as to all the faculties of body and soul, as to his entire self, and the whole of himself."²

1. Non igitur significanter satis vim hujus peccati expresserunt, qui eam tantum in justitiæ originalis carentia constituerunt; quia per illud natura nostra non tantum boni inops est, sed etiam malorum omnium adeo fertilis et ferax, ut otiosa esse non possit. Hinc quidam e nostris fomitem peccati non esse absque actuali peccato, imo peccatum actuale esse dixerunt, quod *αυτος* quidem dictum, in calumniam tamen non debuit ab adversariis, trahi, cum nihil aliud voluerint, quam peccatum hoc et esse actu, et actuosum etiam et operosum, ut ne in parvulis quidem quiescat, quin vitiosos motus excitet. SYNOP. PUR. THEOL. Disp. xv.

2. Subjectum autem *υπαρξιας* vel inhæSIONIS, quando peccatum hoc consideratur non respectu totius speciei de qua prædicatur, sed individui cui adnascitur et inhæret, est non solum hominis corpus, neque sola anima, sed corpus et anima simul, adeoque homo totus quantus, secundum omnes corporis et animæ facultates, secundum se totum, et totum sui.—SYNOP. PUR. THEOL. DISP. xv. p. 167.

In the above language, which we have quoted from one, whose name is of great authority with the advocates of physical depravity, it is very manifest, that the writer assigns the *origin* and *certainly* of sin among men, to some *cause existing in the very soul itself*, so that men sin by *necessity of nature*. And this nature is derived by natural generation!

The same view is also given of the subject by Dr. Owen. He speaks of the impotency of *the mind itself*, as we have seen, saying that it is *natural*, "because it can never be taken away or cured, but by an immediate communication of a new spiritual power and ability, *unto the mind itself*, by the Holy Ghost, in its renovation, so *curing* the depravation of *the faculty itself*."¹ That impotency which he assigns to the mind, as the *cause* of sin, is clearly *the result of its constitution by nature*, for he places it *in the very faculty itself*, and distinguishes it from what he correctly enough calls its *moral impotency*. If *such* is the cause of sin, man is truly to be pitied, and only to be pitied, not culpable; for God, his Creator and Judge, has made him, *so that he can do nothing but sin*; and that through the very necessities of his nature! To this, we must object; because we do not learn, from the scriptures, that man is destitute of *natural ability*; but, that the inability attributed to him is of a *moral* character, and because we can discern sufficient causes in operation, to render it morally certain, that all men *will* sin, without summoning to our aid, the philosophical supposition and theory of *a physical depravity*, or of there being an efficient cause in the very constitution of the soul, rendering it, anterior to all its voluntary acts, *sinful in itself*.

We shall take occasion, when noticing the developments of human depravity, to designate some of those causes in operation, which render it morally certain, that men uni-

1. Owen on the Spirit, vol. i, p. 418.

versally will sin, as soon as capable of moral action. At present, it is of consequence merely to state, that they are not to be found in the physical structure of man's being, as propagated by natural generation simply. His depravity consists in the misdirection and inappropriate exercise of his faculties; not in *wrong faculties inherited*. And many causes may operate to secure such a direction and exercise of his faculties, without inferring from false analogies, suggested by a false physiology, that it must be an operative principle in the very soul, apart from and anterior to its exercises. Temptation alone is sufficient under present circumstances. We never dream of such a cause as this, operating, in Adam and Eve, to make them sin at first; and yet it was, doubtless, morally certain, in the eye of God, that, as exposed to temptation, and destitute of experimental knowledge of evil, they would sin. Where, then, is the necessity of summoning philosophy to our aid, in order to detect some hidden and mystical principle in our very nature, propagated, by natural generation, as the cause of sin?

We scarcely deem it necessary to explain the meaning of moral certainty, as every reader must be aware of it. It is morally certain that the sun will rise to-morrow, and that we will die; but these things are not physically necessary. We can see, too, in our individual history, as well as in the history of the world, various moral causes in operation, which induce a certainty, as it respects results, by no means physically necessary. The truth of the above remarks will be more obvious, when we shall have carefully investigated the subject of *human ability*; to which we invite the reader's candid attention in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

OF THE NATURE OF HUMAN ABILITY.

THE term ability used in two senses—All human *energy* to be referred to the co-operating agency of God, John xv. 5. 2 Cor. iii. 5. Psalm lxxviii. 35. iii. 5. xviii. 1, 29–34—To the will is assigned the office, of bringing into immediate exercise whatever of energy may be exerted—The co-operating agency of God, is always in accordance with certain established modes of action, adapted to human capacities—No obligation where there is no capacity—The requisite capacities for faith, repentance, &c. possessed by man—Quotation from Dr. Owen—No change produced by the fall in the established laws, by which God governs the mind—Dr. Owen's views, as to the impotency of men's natural capacities—Objected to—An essential difference in the circumstances, under which Adam and his descendants come into existence—Quotation from Dr. Howe—Man needs no new capacities for rebellion—Has fallen under no constitutional imbecility—The strength of human faculties lies not in themselves—The inability of men moral—The distinction between natural and moral inability very commonly made—Recognised in the Scriptures—Heb. ix. 5; Mark ii. 19; John xxi. 25; Mark vi. 5; Mat. xxvi. 39 and Luke xxii. 42; Jer. xvi. 1; Isai. i. 13; 1 John, iii. 9—Of daily occurrence—Quotation from Fuller—Howe—Erskine—Dwight—No room for the current sneers, &c. directed against the distinction between natural and moral ability—Rom. viii. 7; Gal. v. 17; Rom. viii. 15–18 examined—The inability attributed to man in the sacred scriptures, that of *will*—Any other view of the subject renders faith exceedingly difficult, as it exposes God, in his professions to sinners, to the charge of insincerity—Hos. xi. 7–8; Luke xix. 42; xiii. 35; Jer. viii. 5; xiii. 27; xvi. 12; xxii. 21; Ezek. xxxiii. 11—The impertinence of philosophy.

THE subject of natural and moral inability, has been so often and so ably handled, that but little would be requisite from us, were we not aware that it is one, altogether

new to some of our readers, and misunderstood by many others. The terms *ability* and *power* may denote, either the *effective force* or *energy*, or the particular *faculty* or *capacity* for *exerting* that force.

It is to the *co-operating agency of God* that we refer all our *energy*. "Without me," says the Saviour, "ye can do NOTHING."¹ "Not that we are *sufficient of ourselves* to think *any thing* as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God."² We have no right to restrict these declarations to *mere acts of holiness*. The Saviour says we can do NOTHING without Him, not even eat, or drink, or sleep without His sustaining agency. "The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto people,"³ as well the unrenewed as the renewed. David referred all his corporal energy or natural strength, to God's co-operating agency. "I laid me down, and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me."⁴ "I will love the Lord, *my strength*."⁵ "For by thee I have *run through* a troop; and by my God have I *leaped* over a wall. It is God that *girdeth me with strength*, and *maketh* my way perfect. He maketh my *feet* like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my *hands* to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine *arms*."⁶ Language cannot be more definite in its import than this, and much to the same purport, in the word of God, which refers all our effective force, or energy, or strength, or *ability in this sense*, to the co-operating and sustaining agency of God. It is *in Him* we

1. John, xv, 5.

2. 2 Cor. iii, 5.

3. Psalm lxxviii. 35. The pronoun "*his*," which occurs in our translation, is wanting in the Hebrew. VENEMA notices, that the Hebrew word for power, is used *absolutely* here, denoting men spiritual and carnal equally. Spiritualem æque ac carnalem; cujus utriusque fata læta in hoc Ps. fuerunt celebrata. Ven. in Psal. ad loc.

4. Psal. iii, 5.

5. Psal. xviii, 1.

6. Ps. xviii, 1,—29,—32, 33, 34.

live, and move, and have our being. No man can move a hand, an arm; a foot, or limb, without God. Nor can He; according to the apostle, think a single thought, without His supporting and strengthening agency.

But in so saying, every one understands what is meant. Not that God does the thing, so that it is *His* act;—not that He moves the limb, or thinks, or creates the thought; but that, in accordance and co-operation with our volition or will, He vouchsafes, agreeably to fixed and established modes of His agency, the requisite aid for its accomplishment. To the *will*, or the capacity to choose or refuse, is assigned the office of bringing into immediate exercise and display, whatever of energy or effective force may be exerted. If we *attend*, it is an exercise of mental energy, induced in obedience to an act of the will. If we *reason*, if we *desire*, if we *love*, if we *hate*, these are still voluntary exercises, which depend on the sustaining and co-operating agency of God. That will itself is governed or determined by means of various motives, as suggested, or impressions as made by objects and considerations, addressed and adapted to our rational and sensitive nature.

We are not here concerned to inquire, what gives prevalence to motive. It is the fact, that the will is entrusted with the exhibition and display of that energy, which God imparts through His co-operating agency, that mainly demands attention. Now this co-operating agency of God giving energy, is always in accordance with certain established modes of action, for which our capacities are adapted, and is imparted altogether irrespectively of the character of the objects or matters, on which the will decides. This is what we mean by ability, or being able, in the *common-sense* use of the term. A man says that he is *able* to walk, when he does not *actually* walk; and in so saying, means simply, that he is possessed of those muscular capacities,

through which, if brought into exercise by his will, or choosing to walk, there could, by means of the co-operating agency of God, be put forth the effective force or power, requisite in the case. The same thing may be said, in reference to every other species of action, for which we are furnished with the appropriate capacities. The *degree* of energy may be found to vary; but generally it will be according to the vigor, and decision, and singleness, with which the will calls the requisite capacities into action.

Suppose, however, that a man is destitute of some one or more of those *intellectual* and other *capacities*, which are characteristic of human nature; say, for example, that he is, and ever has been devoid of reason—in that case, he would be accounted *unable* to arrive at the knowledge of God, or any thing else, *from the want* of the *requisite* mental *capacities*. No one would ever think, that, under such circumstances, ignorance would be *criminal*. Mental derangement may properly be considered, a result of Adam's first sin; but the destitution of the natural capacities, which are essentially requisite to the acquisition of knowledge, can never be charged on the unhappy *native idiot*, as his personal crime. It is an axiom in morals—a self-evident truth, that no one is or can be under actual obligations to exercise *capacities*, which he never possessed. Who would venture to affirm, that we are bound to acquire knowledge through the exercise of a *sixth sense*? Or, that the infant, newly born, is under obligations, at once, to rise up and walk? Or that we should fly, or exercise angelic faculties, or display angelic energies? Were we commanded to stretch forth our hand, and pluck the moon from her place, every one would see, at once, the absurdity of requiring us to do a thing *naturally impossible*.

It is true, that the Saviour did require certain things, which seemed to possess somewhat of this character; as

when he commanded the man, with the withered hand to stretch it forth, and the paralytic sufferer to rise, take up his bed and walk; and being so commanded, they were under obligations to obey—to do the very things required, which may be said to have been physically impossible. But when these commands, and the circumstances under which they were given, are attentively considered, they will not be found to invalidate the position stated. It will be admitted on all hands, that, in these cases, the Saviour exerted *physical power*, by a direct, *miraculous* exercise, which made its appeal to the senses of men, and was designed to confirm the fact of his own divine mission; so that it is altogether illogical and unallowable, to cite them as proofs, or exact illustrations of the sinner's inability, for there was no guilt in the case. But this plea is unnecessary, in order to sustain the position advanced.

For let us inquire what it was the diseased persons were morally bound to do. They were bound to put confidence in Christ, and believe that He would co-operate with their efforts of will, and give them the energy, requisite to do what He required. They had mental capacities for such an exercise. Evidence, sufficient to convince the mind of His ability and willingness to co-operate with them, was furnished. They were convinced by it. That conviction brought the power of motive to bear upon their wills. They did will—forthwith the energy, requisite to stretch out the hand, and rise up and walk, accompanied the effort of mind and will, and they were healed; so that even these miracles in nature, which were intimately connected with the conduct of men, as voluntary and responsible agents, do not violate the fundamental principle of all moral government, viz: that moral responsibility implies a capacity to act. If men were *destitute* of all capacity to know and understand and do the will of God, it would be *physically* or *natural-*

ly impossible for them to call into exercise *that mental energy*, requisite to arrive at the knowledge of God, and to obey his commands. In such case, the common sense of mankind proclaims, there could be no more obligation to act, nor guilt incurred by not acting, than a *deaf-mute* would be chargeable with, who did not *vocally sing* the praises of God.

Now to apply the above remarks to the case of the sinner's ability to meet the ordinary claims of God. It will be admitted, that God *does not require* his creatures to do what they have *no capacities* for doing. He does not require the ox to reason, or the ass to speak. Neither does he require men to do those things, which are not adapted to their intellectual and moral capacities. He commands us to believe—but we are furnished with minds, which are capable of perceiving and examining the evidence of truth. To believe Himself, is an exercise which differs *characteristically*, but not essentially, from our believing a neighbour or a friend. No other intellectual capacities are necessary in the one case, than in the other.

He commands us to repent;—and we are furnished with sensibilities, which are capable of being excited in sorrow, by means of appropriate objects or considerations, presented to our senses or our minds. To repent of our sins, for having displeased Him, may differ, *characteristically*, from the sorrow of a child, for having displeased its parent; but the constitutional capacities for feeling, are essentially the same in both cases. He commands us to love Him, fear Him, hope in Him, &c. but none of these are exercises, for which we are not furnished with the requisite constitutional capacities. Why then are they not exercised in the way that God requires? Why does not man believe, and repent, and love, and fear, and hope in God? “All this,” it is admitted, “is his duty, because his maker requires

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it from him; but," it is added, with confident asseveration, "the work far transcends his ability, and can be accomplished only by the mighty power of God."¹ That is, God requires man to do things, which it would be unreasonable and absurd to expect him to do, unless He Himself does it for him! Be it far from us, thus to traduce the character of God. We are persuaded that those who make such assertions, see not their bearing in this respect. What, then, can be meant by such declarations?

That men are destitute of the *natural ability*, i. e. the constitutional capacities requisite to believe and repent, &c. none will explicitly affirm. For, "it must be observed," says Dr. Owen, "that there is, or may be, a two-fold capacity or *ability* of receiving, knowing, or understanding spiritual things in the mind of a man. 1. There is a *natural power*, consisting in the suitableness and proportionableness of the faculties of the soul to receive spiritual things, in the way that they are proposed unto us. This is supposed in all the exhortations, promises, precepts, and threatnings of the gospel; for in vain would they be proposed unto us, had we not rational minds and understandings, to apprehend their sense, use, and importance; and also meet subjects for the faith, grace, and obedience, which are required of us."² God requires no exercise, for which we have not capacities. The inability, therefore, which is predicated of unrenewed sinners, must be, either something which has destroyed those established laws or modes of the divine agency, according to which He co-operates with, and gives efficiency to human volitions; or it must be something which affects the will itself—not the faculty itself, but its exercise—and prevents it from summoning to its aid the agency of God, in and through the appropriate capacities. This latter is denominated moral inability.

1. Essay on the Inability of Sinners, p. 12.

2. Owen on the Spirit, vol. 1, p. 409.

That the great established laws, by which God governs mind, and according to which He regulates his own co-operating and sustaining agency, have undergone a change by the fall, we presume will not be affirmed. That the sin of man however, has greatly deranged the divine constitution, and that, in many respects, there can be doubt; but in so far as it relates to the agency of God Himself, His constitutions remain immutable. The laws of nature are fixed and uniform, and whatever change has taken place in them, consequent on the sin of man, as in the sorrows of gestation, the pains of parturition, and the sterility of the earth, there is no evidence, that those which affect the development of his mental *constitution* have been changed, however great may have been the moral changes, affecting the development of its exercises. He still supports and invigorates the rebel mind, preserving inviolate the laws that He ordained, to regulate His agency. His moral constitution has not been annulled. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."¹ We are not at all justified in supposing, that God changed the fixed laws of either the mental or moral constitution, which He had ordained, and that therefore, in consequence of a lack of energy, or refusal to co-operate on His part, the capacities of men are left imbecile and inefficient.

It is true, that such an idea has been entertained, and by some it is boldly asserted, that even the natural capacities of men have suffered, not only by virtue of their deranged moral exercise, but directly from the cessation of that divine agency, vouchsafed at the first. Dr. Owen says, "It were easy to evince, not only by testimonies of the scripture, but by the experience of all mankind, built on reason, and the observation of instances innumerable, that *the*

1. Mat. v. 18.

whole rational soul of man, since the fall, and by the entrance of sin, is *weakened*, vitiated in *all its faculties and all their operations*, about their *proper and natural* objects. Neither is there *any relief* against these evils, with all those *unavoidable* perturbations, wherewith it is possessed, and actually *disordered* in *all* its workings, but by some secret and hidden operation of the Spirit of God, such as he continually exerts in the rule and government of the world."¹ If these positions can be maintained, we see not but that we are all no better than maniacs, destitute of every thing requisite to bring us under the government of law. We should rather be provided for as idiots and insane, and the government established over us by God, be that of simple force and power, instead of that benevolent and equitable constitution, in which He addresses and adapts His laws to our rational nature.

But such a state of things is not more frightful, in relation to the condition of men, than it is fraught with appalling implications, in reference to the character of God. If He has changed the modes of His agency, and withdrawn His support and co-operation from His creature man—without which he can have no energy nor act—and thus has left the human mind a perfect wreck of imbecile, deranged and vitiated capacities and powers,—who is the author of such confusion but Himself? Individual man assuredly is not. He has become the sport of misfortune—the prey of wretchedness. God has withdrawn from him his natural ability, and he can be no longer held accountable. He may will, but all to no purpose. God will not co-operate with him. He has brought him into being with palsied powers, and abandoned him to his own weakness. He is an imperfect creation, an intellectual deformity, a moral monster. How truly is he to be pitied! He labors under a dire

1. Owen on the Spirit, vol. 1, p. 391.

necessity of nature. He *would* do better, but, *in many cases, cannot*. God will not help him, and although He has thus *created* him, yet He is determined to condemn him eternally, and that for no fault of his own!! Can these things be?

The truth is, God is neither so capricious, nor so improvident, as to establish a great constitution, ordaining modes of His own agency, with regard to the acts of His creatures, and then, because their great forefather suddenly raised the standard of rebellion against himself, ruin the natural vigor of his offspring, destroy their capacities, and send them into this world, absolutely disqualified and incapacitated to avoid those things, for which He has declared He will punish them eternally. Men's natural capacities remain the same, and God is still willing to co-operate with them, according to his own established laws, or modes of agency, provided that they will choose to exert them. As to any special, extraordinary influence to induce them to do so, that is altogether a different thing, and falls not under our present consideration.

It is necessary here to observe, however, that in estimating the abilities of men, as called to sustain the responsibilities of moral agents, they neither are, nor can be, placed in the circumstances of their first progenitor. Adam was created, as has already been remarked, with his capacities in a full state of development; but we are brought into being under the operation of laws, which secure their *gradual* evolution. Nor does it appear that this process, so far as the agency of God is concerned, would have been different, on the supposition of Adam's obedience. It is, indeed, subjected to the operation of certain new moral influences, and takes place under entirely new circumstances, as induced by his sin; but that God has withdrawn; or changed His agency, in the support and preservation of

man's capacities, both mental and moral, which He had originally ordained, does not appear.

We shall see, in the succeeding chapter, how it comes to pass, that in the process of this development, under the circumstances which rebellion has induced, man *naturally* becomes a sinner. At present, our inquiry particularly relates to those capacities of action, when developed, according to which God is pleased to co-operate with his creatures, and in the possession of which, consists our *natural ability*. None of these, nor any of that co-operating agency of God, which is regulated by the fixed and established laws of nature, has man lost. To suppose the contrary, would be to disqualify him for God's moral government, and make the author of our being, the author of our rebellion.

To prove the possession of such ability, its *actual exercise* is not necessary. "For," says Dr. Howe, "it may well be thought sufficiently to solve the rights and privileges of the first cause, to assert, that no action can be done, but by a *power derived from it*; which, in reference to forbidden actions, intelligent creatures may use, or not use, as they please, without ever asserting, that they must be irresistibly determined also, even to the worst of actions also. Besides, that it seems greatly to detract from the perfection of the ever blessed God, to affirm He was not able to make a creature of such nature, as, being continually sustained by Him, and supplied with power every moment, suitable to its nature, should be capable of acting; unless, whatever he thus *enables* he *determines*, (that is, for it can mean no less than *impel*,) it to do also."¹

The above remark is unquestionably as true, in reference to one class of acts as another. No one will maintain, that God exerts a positive *efficient power determining to sin*. Yet has man indisputable *ability to sin*. He needs no

1. Howe's Works, v. ii, p. 501.

new capacities for rebellion. His *natural* capacities to know, love, fear, and act, &c. seem to have lost none of their *energy*, so far as they are exerted and directed towards improper and forbidden objects. He has power to sin. Now it is *through the exercise of these very capacities*, that man is to exhibit *holiness*. Shall we say, that God withholds his agency from man, in so far as holy exercises are concerned, but co-operates with him in sin? That He gives him *strength* for the *one*, and will not for the *other*? That he has so utterly abandoned his creature, that *holiness* has become *naturally impossible*, and that one generation after another, are *irreversibly* condemned to the suffering of eternal vengeance, for doing what it was impossible for them to avoid, being *impelled* by a positive efficient agency of God! Or, are we to suppose, that natural ability is something different from the capacity appropriate to the action, sustained through the agency of God, co-operating with the will of man? Are we to believe that there is, in fact, a vigour and energy *in the soul, or the very faculties themselves*, independently of the co-operating agency of God, which was originally imparted by God, but has been withdrawn? That the human mind labors under *constitutional imbecility, lacks energy in itself*, and, *therefore*, never can believe, repent, or perform other holy exercises, till, by Regeneration, there is communicated some "*new power or ability to the mind itself*, by the Holy Ghost, so curing the depravation of its faculties?"

This, if we can understand the views of Dr. Owen, and others, seems to be what they are contending for, when they deny to unrenewed man all ability, and represent regeneration as a *creative act*, giving to the *soul itself* power and ability. But this is in direct contradiction to Christ and Paul's testimony. "I can of mine own self do nothing."¹ "My

1. John v. 30.

strength is made perfect in weakness.”¹ And it is just as contrary to the whole analogy of God’s providence. There is no essence, which is either the cause of vital phenomena, or possesses power, in itself, to produce them. They are but modes of the Spirit’s agency, as ordained and established in the sovereignty and wisdom of God. The strength or vigor of human faculties, also, lies not in themselves, but depend on established modes of the Creator’s agency. The exercise of them, however, is immediately dependent on the will of man. Whatever, therefore, tends to prevent the will from calling them into exercise, may be said *effectually to disable*. It is, however, a *moral* inability—an inability, arising out of considerations suggested to the mind, and inducements operating on the will, which will certainly, for the time being, prevent the exercise of the natural capacities.

It is, on this account that it is spoken of, oftentimes, in such strong terms, as though it were as *real* an inability, as if the very capacities themselves were wanting; while, at the same time, no one is disposed to apologize for it, or extenuate its guilt in the least degree. Every person understands this subject, and distinguishes thus between natural and moral inability. The giddy and thoughtless child is punished, who says he *cannot* get his lesson; it being well understood, that either a dislike for his book, or some other considerations, prevent him from applying his mind to it. The servant is accounted guilty, in many cases, who makes the same plea. The parent sees a thousand exemplifications of this same thing; and if he were, in all cases, to admit the truth of the child’s declarations as to ability, he might soon cease to command.

The Scriptures, too, continually recognize the distinction between natural and moral ability, always regarding the inability, which consists, in the refusal of the will, to call

1. 2 Cor. xii, 9.

the requisite capacities into action, as highly criminal, wherever and whenever God commands. When God commanded Samuel to go, and anoint David king over Israel, he replied, "*How can I go*; if Saul hear it he will kill me?"¹ While Samuel's unbelief and fears prevailed, his will was prevented from giving its consent to go, and he felt as if that were a thing utterly impossible, which the Lord required? *How can I do it?*

The apostle, after having enumerated the articles of furniture in the inmost chamber of the temple, "the holiest of all," concludes the description, by mentioning "the cherubims of glory overshadowing the mercy seat," but adds, "of which we CANNOT now speak particularly"² His meaning is plain. Such was the nature of the argument, in which he was then employed, that he could not consent, at that time, to digress into a particular consideration of matters, foreign from it. It was wholly an inability of will; i. e. a refusal on his part, to make the requisite exertion of his capacities for that end, induced by considerations and motives, prevalent in his mind at the time.

Our Saviour asks, "CAN the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they CANNOT fast."³ This is wholly an inability of will. The thing, in itself, is not impossible; but the season is one, which is generally so joyous, and is wont to be so connected with festivities, as to render it *morally impossible* to fast. Men are rendered reluctant, unwilling to do what they are able, and under other circumstances, they might be induced to do.

In like manner, the Evangelist John says, that "there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world

1. 1 Sam. xvi, 2.

2. Heb. ix: 5.

3. Mark ii, 19.

itself COULD NOT contain the books that should be written,"¹ This was not a natural impossibility.

It is said of the Saviour, on a certain occasion, that, in going into his own country, "He COULD there do no mighty work."² No one will pretend that this was a natural inability—that the Saviour lacked energy or capacity; but such was the unbelief of the people, that it did not comport with the plan of God's gracious dealing with men, for him, under such circumstances, to exert his power. It was wholly a moral inability. He also prayed "*if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me."³ The impossibility in the case was wholly of a moral nature; for another Evangelist quotes his language, in words that must prevent dispute; "*if thou be willing*, &c. remove this cup from me."⁴

Of the same description, is the inability under which God represents Himself to have laboured. "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind COULD NOT be toward this people."⁵ "The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I CANNOT away with."⁶ And thus we say, an holy God *cannot* do an unholy thing; a just God CANNOT do an unjust thing. A faithful God CANNOT lie.

Of the same nature, also, is the inability to sin, which is predicated of those that are born again. "Whoever," says the apostle John, "is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he CANNOT sin, because he is born of God."⁷ It is *morally impossible*, that the believer should deliberately and wilfully, or habitually sin against God, and yet no one will pretend that he has not ABILITY to do so.

1. 3 John xxi, 25.

2. Mark vii, 5.

3. Mat. xxvi, 9.

4. Luke xxii, 42.

5. Jer. xvi, 1.

6. Isai. i. 13.

7. 1 John iii. 9.

Every one understands the distinction in all ordinary matters. There is no language more common, than that in which it is practically recognized; and it is very extraordinary, that men will be so blind, in reference *only* to the sinner's ability. We can in no way more charitably account for it, than on the supposition, that they do virtually suppose the energy to act, lies in the very faculties themselves, and that in the unrenewed, the natural faculty, the—capacity of nature, is impaired, debilitated, or lost; but that, in the renewed, it is conferred again, by an act of mere creative power on the part of God. The distinction between the natural and moral ability of men, is by no means a novel one. It is as old as the Bible, and there are not wanting sound Theologians, who have recognized and taught it.

“It is true,” says Fuller, “that many have affected to treat¹ the distinction between natural and moral inability, as more curious than solid. ‘If we be unable say they, we are unable. As to the nature of the inability, it is a matter of no account. . Such distinctions are perplexing to plain christians, and beyond their capacity.’ But surely the plainest and weakest christian, in reading his Bible, if he pay any regard to what he reads, must perceive a manifest difference between the blindness of Bartimeus, who was ardently desirous that *he might receive his sight*, and that of the unbelieving Jews, who *closed their eyes*; lest they should see, and be converted and healed; and between the want of the natural sense of hearing, and the state of those *who have ears, but hear not*. So far as my observation extends, those persons who affect to treat this distinction as a matter of curious speculation, are as ready to make use of it as other people, when their own interest is concerned.” “Now, if the subject be so clearly understood and acted upon, where interest is concerned, and never appears difficult

1. The Essay on the Inability of Sinners, already quoted, is a striking example of this.

but in religion, it is but too manifest, where the difficulty lies. If, by fixing the *guilt* of our conduct upon our father Adam, we can sit comfortably in our nest; we shall be very averse to a sentiment that tends to distract our repose by planting a thorn in it.”¹

Dr. Howe, frequently recognizes it, in his appeals to the conscience, and in one place, particularly remarks: “Notwithstanding, the soul’s *natural capacities* before asserted and inferred, its *moral incapacity*, I mean its wicked aversation from God, is such as none but God Himself can overcome. Nor is that aversation the less culpable, for that it is so hardly overcome, but the more. ’Tis an aversion of *will*; and who sees not, that every man is more *wicked* according as his will is more wickedly bent? Hence, his impotency or inability to turn to God, is not such as THAT HE CANNOT TURN IF HE WOULD; but it consists in this, *that he is not willing*.”² He quotes also, from Dr. Twisse, the following, which is very explicit:—“The inability to do what is agreeable and acceptable to God, is not a *natural* but a *moral inability*. For no natural faculty is wanting to us through original sin, according to that saying of Augustine, “It hath taken from none the faculty of knowing the truth. The *power* still remains *by which we are able to do what we will*. We say that the *natural ability* of doing what it pleases them, according to their will, is transmitted to all, but not the *moral ability*.”³

1. FULLER’s Gospel worthy of all acceptation, pp. 122, 123.

2. Howe’s Works, fol. ed. vol. i. p. 540.

3. Impotentia faciendi quod Deo gratum est et acceptum, non est impotentia naturæ, sed morum. Nulla etenim nobis deest facultas naturæ per peccatum originale, juxta illud Augustini: *Nulli agnoscendæ veritatis abstulit facultatem. Adhuc remanet potentia qua facere possumus quæcunque volumus.* Vind. l. 3. Errat. 9. Sec. 6. *naturalem potentiam* quidlibet agendi pro arbitrio ipsorum, dicimus ad omnes transmitti, non autem *potentiam moralem.* Vind. Criminat., 3. S. 1. dig. 2. C. 3.

In the interesting essay of Thomas Erskine, Esq. on faith, which has been so deservedly recommended in the *Christian Advocate*,¹ to the careful perusal of its readers “as admirably calculated, both to impart instruction, and to promote Godliness,” the distinction is formally noticed. “Man, in his depravity,” says the writer, “has *all* the *faculties* which a child of God has in this life. And he has a *natural ability* to use these faculties *as he will*. The inability, therefore, of a polluted creature to receive an impression of holy love, is *not a natural inability*. IF HE WOULD HE COULD; his inability is *moral*, it lies in the *oppositon* of his *will* and affections, and this is his *crime*.”—“No one is commanded to delay believing on Christ, until he is influenced by the Spirit; on the contrary, the command to repent and believe the gospel is universal; which *proves that it is in the NATURAL POWER of all men to do so*, and that their inability is a *moral*, and therefore *criminal inability*.”²

Dr. Dwight, is very pointed in his remarks on this subject. “Indisposition to come to Christ,” says he, “is therefore the true and the *only* difficulty, which lies in our way. Those who CANNOT come, therefore, are those, and those *only* who *will* not. The words *can* and *cannot* are used in the scriptures just as they are used in the common intercourse of mankind, to express *willingness* or *unwillingness*. Thus, we say, we *cannot* lend or give, or assist or pay a debt, when we mean nothing more than that we are disinclined to these affairs.” After citing many examples from the Scriptures, some of which the reader will have already seen, he adds, “In all these and the like instances, there is plainly nothing meant, but inability of disposition, or a strong disinclination to the thing proposed.

1. See *Christian Advocate* for Nov. 1828.

2. Erskine's *Essay on Faith*, pp. 170—214, Andover edition.

This is both the natural and universal language of men; found, equally, in their conversation and writings. Children speak this language, almost as soon as they begin to speak at all; and, on every such occasion, utter it more naturally than any other language. If the Scriptures would be *intelligible* to the great body of mankind, *they must speak in the same manner*. In this manner, therefore, God has directed them to be written.”¹ And we may add, in like manner must every christian minister present and speak the truth, if he would reach the consciences of his hearers, and not soothe them in their wilful rebellion against God, by representing their depravity to be the dire result of some fatal calamity and necessity of their physical nature, propagated from Adam to all his progeny, through their natural descent from him.

There is no room for the sneers, and attempts at wit, with which many, in some parts, assail this very obvious and important distinction. The names already cited,—not to mention an host of others,—might induce those who do not understand the subject, to examine it a little more seriously and attentively. We do not mean to say, that these names are cited as a reason, why the distinction should be admitted. That is to be found in the word of God, and the truth of things, and there alone. But we do claim, that if men of lofty minds, from Augustine down, have seen and admitted the truth of such a distinction, there should be a little modesty on the part or those, who denounce its advocates as tyros in divinity, mere sciolists, stripling theologians, and excite popular and *political* prejudices against them, by branding them as new *lights*, raising the cry of New England Theology, and exciting suspicions as to *Unitarianism*. It is the Theology of the Bible, and there is not a single passage in it, when faithfully translated, and

1. Dwight's, Theol. v. iv, p. 25.

interpreted as the language of common sense, that will be found to contradict it.

When Paul says of the “carnal mind,” that it “is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed CAN* be,”¹ he is not speaking of the essential mind, but that mind’s exercises, as any Greek scholar will at once perceive; so that, instead of furnishing an objection, this passage is a strong confirmation of that for which we contend; as the reader will perceive, more satisfactorily, in a following chapter.

When the English translation makes the same apostle say, “the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye *CANNOT* do the things that ye *would*.”² It will be seen by every one, acquainted with the original, that the word *cannot* is not used by the apostle himself. He merely states the fact, that those in whom the conflict between the flesh and spirit is waged, *do not* the things they would. Such is the activity of the conflict, that a present purpose of will is succeeded and counteracted by another, before it is executed; but of what character the will is, nothing is said explicitly. To the context we must look for that. The Greek particle, translated *so that*,³ sometimes denotes design; and if, in this sense, it is to be here understood, the apostle’s meaning is, that the influ-

1. Rom. viii, 7.

2. Gal. v. 17.

1. *ἵνα μὴ αὐθελήτε ταῦτα ποιεῖτε*.—*ἵνα* Conjunctio casualis significans: ut *τελικώς*, indicans causam finalem, vel finem. Ita usurpatur. John xvi. 1, Mat. xix, 13, Marc i, 38, Luc i, 4.—Vide Schleusneri Lex:

3. Notat Apostolus non eventum sed causam finalem, agitque vel. 1. de voluntate tantum prava, quod hanc Spiritus frænct, nec sinat facere quæ prava libido suggerit, vel quæ carni adlubescunt; vel 2, de voluntate tantum regenerata, quod hanc non sinat caro facere quæ vult bona—vel potius, ut suadet antithesis, de utraque: Quia inquit Caro et Spiritus contraria concupiscunt, hinc fit, ut non semper ea quæ vultis, tam in bonis, quam in malis etiam facere possitis.—Vide Poli. Synop. ad loc.

ence of the Spirit in the believer, is vouchsafed to counteract and frustrate his sinful inclinations. This we prefer, as being most agreeable to the apostle's assurance, expressed in the previous verse. If it denotes merely the result eventually, nothing more can be inferred from it, than that the influence of the Spirit, which generates an holy inclination, is counteracted by corrupt desires and affections, so that it does not issue in the accomplishment of that to which he was inclined, or which he willed. The word here translated "would," denotes not only the choice, or purpose, but that choice or purpose, as influenced by the affections, or feelings of desire. Our object is not Biblical criticism, in this work, and, therefore, we are not careful to decide, which, if either of the two constructions should be exclusively preferred. Neither view militates against the truth, which has been advanced in this chapter. Admitting all that those who cite it, as found in our translation, think it affirms, it proves too much, even for them. For the assertion is made, not of the unrenewed, but renewed, and they must, therefore, maintain, that the latter, notwithstanding the influence of the Spirit, are utterly unable to do what they would. It is for them, to reconcile this with other passages, and ward off the accusation of slanderous the work of the Spirit; and also to explain the absurdities which they make the apostle speak. With these things, we have no concern.

Neither can any thing, unfavorable to this view of human ability, be inferred from the apostle's experience, when he says, "That which I do *κατεργάζομαι*—the word is taken in a bad sense—the evil thing which I effect,) I allow not (approve not) for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If, then, I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know

that in me, (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform (*κατεργάζεσθαι*—the effecting—perfecting) that which is good, I find not..”¹ It is evident, that the apostle cannot here use the word “will,” to denote a simple *volition*; for no one ever acts or does any thing, without some volition. The word is sometimes used, to denote the main and efficient—the leading and controlling *purpose*;² and in this sense we suppose the apostle used it, in the context first quoted. His meaning, is, therefore, very plain. If he does not voluntarily and deliberately *purpose* to do evil; but on the contrary, if it is his fixed, and abiding, and studious purpose, to do what the law of God requires, it shows that the moral being—the *I*, whose character was to be estimated by this, its leading feature—did fully approve of the law of God, and that, therefore, of whatever deviations from it he was guilty, they were to be attributed to the influence of sin, which he *personifies*, and not to the deep and fixed principles of his renovated character. His will, in the main, was right, but it was resisted, counteracted, and oftentimes overpowered by various considerations, of which, he did not cordially and deliberately approve, nor of that which they led him to do. Here, again, we derive a confirmation of the views advanced, from the very objections urged against them.

1. Rom. viii, 15-18.

2. Such is the doctrine of the Catechism and Confession of Faith. By the corruption of man’s nature, the answer to the 25th question of the Larger Catechism, says that “he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly *inclined* to all evil.” The plain grammatical meaning of these words is, that *as* man is *indisposed*, which term describes altogether a *voluntary state of mind*, he is disabled, and *so* made opposite to all good. Nor is the idea at all different, when it is said in chap. ix. Sec. 3 of the Confession of Faith, that “man by his

The inability attributed to men, in the sacred Scriptures, is *wholly* that of *will*.¹ Man will not do what God requires, and is abundantly willing to co-operate with him in effecting. All the solemn appeals, that are made in the sacred scriptures, to the consciences, sensibilities, and judgment of men, proceed on this assumption. And, indeed, we see not how it is possible to understand the many solemn, and tender, and heart-thrilling remonstrances of God, on any other. If man is *physically disabled*, and it requires an act of *creative* power, to give him the requisite capacities and ability, to meet the requisitions of God, so that he *cannot* believe, he *cannot* repent, he *cannot* obey, till *power is first put into his faculties*; God's withholding that creative power, is a procedure directly at war with His professions. All His remonstrances, and expostulations, and exhibitions of sorrow and concern, are a mere farce! He stands accused and convicted of *insincerity*, and no wonder that sinners should find it difficult, and impossible to believe in such a case.

But the ever blessed God is faithful and true. And when we consider, that the whole inability under which men labour in respect of God's requirements, arises out of the aversion of their wills—their determined and obstinate refusal and resistance of Jehovah's claims—how amazing do His grace and condescension appear, in that He undertakes by considerations addressed to their reason, and conscience, and heart, to persuade them to be reconciled, and turn to him in a life of holy obedience! Every word is big with

fall into a state of sin hath 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." It is inability of *will* that is here spoken of, and none else. The operation of *this sort of inability* which is *moral* can never upon any fair principle of interpretation, be construed into a denial of *natural ability*.

1. See Mat. xvi. 25; xxiii, 37; Mark viii, 35; x, 43, 4; Luke ix, 24; xxiii, 20.

import. All is radiant, and glowing with truth. No cloud of dark and fiend-like suspicion, settles on His throne. It is our boast and glory, that "the strength of Israel will not LIE.¹ And thus believing; having our minds divested of every foul and malignant conjecture, that possibly God is not sincere, our souls are melted within us, in all the tender throbbings of heartfelt repentance, as we hear Him WEEP, EXPOSTULATE, BESEECH and SWEAR before and unto us, to induce us to believe and live.

Can it be for one moment admitted, that God does not mean exactly what He says? Say, incredulous and skeptical reader, is it all a vain show, when He delays his judgments, protests that he is lothe to inflict them, and that it is the very grief of his heart, that men will not turn to him, that they may live? Has he some private design you cannot understand, at war with his declarations, which destroys your confidence, when He so feelingly complains, "My people are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the Most High, none at all *would* exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."² Is all this grief a mere theatrical display? Was all the heart rending sorrow of the Son of God a mere exhibition, when, with flowing tears, and a soul almost overwhelmed, He exclaimed, as he looked upon the guilty population of Jerusalem, "If thou hadst known at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!—but!—now—they are hid from thine eyes."³ "Oh, Jerusalem! Jerusalem! *Thou!* which *killest* the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee—how often *would I have gathered thy children* together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings; but YE WOULD NOT."⁴

1. Sam. xv, 29. 2. Hos. xi, 7, 8. 3. Luke, xix, 42. 4. Luke, xiii, 34.

What mean, too, such interrogatories and declarations as these? Does God intend to deceive, when He lets us know, that the *whole* blame of the sinner's rebellion, is to be laid to the charge of his obstinate will? "Why is this people of Jerusalem slidden back, with a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit; they REFUSE to return."¹ "Woe unto thee Jerusalem! *will* thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?"² "Behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me."³ Is it all a mere sporting with their misfortune? a vaunting and triumphing over their misery, when God says, "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear; this has been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyest not my voice."⁴ Did He employ his prophets to utter falsehood, when they went to guilty men, and, in God's name, plead with them to repent. and say unto them, "as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for *why will* ye die, O house of Israel?"⁵ Who can, who dare insinuate these things? He had need to tremble, who exhibits God's word to men in such way, as to render all such appeals, and protestations, and oaths, as of no value. Any system of philosophy whatever, that conflicts with these, and numerous such like proofs and exhibitions of SINCERITY, ought, at once, to be discarded. It is sapping the very foundation of our faith. It is reproaching God, and slandering Him in a vital part of His character. It creates much of the difficulty of faith. It ruins the souls of men. Miserable philosophy! how hast thou dared to lift thine impudent face, and give the lie to God; and, having done so, sacreligiously summon to thine aid, the mysteries that attend His throne!

1. Jer. viii, 5. 2. Jer. xiii, 27. 3. Jer. xvi, 12. 4. Jer. xxii, 21.

5. Ezek. xxxiii, 11.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SPECIFIC CHARACTER OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

THE specific and formal character of human depravity—1 John ii, 15, 16—James iv. 4—Romans viii, 7—The Scriptural view of this thing—The thoughts and wishes of wicked men, evincive of enmity against God—2. They dislike the word of God, and those ministers and professors, who are most pungent and faithful in urging it upon the conscience—3. They dislike serious and fervent prayer, &c.

FROM the remarks already made, on the subject of the derivation and moral certainty of human depravity, we may discover in what it *specifically* and formally consists. We have seen, that it did not consist in the loss of any one of his physical powers, or any constitutional susceptibility. He remained, after that he became a rebel, possessed of the very same *natural* capacities, but their *exercise* had become fatally disordered. We speak not metaphorically, as though disease had tainted and altered *the faculties themselves*, but that the laws, which regulated his thoughts, and all his actions, only operated to evince, that, instead of the feeling of love to God, being the supreme and governing principle of his soul, there was the dominion of entire selfishness, and the display of an aversion from God, or enmity against him. In this, consisted the very essence of his depravity. He became *totally* depraved.

His descendants all come into being, under the influence of causes, which render the same derangement, in the exercise of their powers, morally certain. They no sooner

acquire the knowledge of God, and of His law, than they turn away from both, as not being the objects of their preference and delight. Their thoughts, and purposes, and affections, are engrossed by sensible and sinful objects. The world, and the things of the world, bear away their hearts.

This is the account which John, and James, and Paul have given us of this thing. The love of the world, is placed in strong contrast with the love of the Father, by the former. "If any man," says he, "love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."¹ Here the apostle comprehends, under three grand classes, all human corruption—every thing which is opposed to God. He says *all* that is in the world, which has not its origin in God and from God, but is produced by the influence of the world, is the *lust* of the flesh, the *lust* of the eyes, and the pride of life. Now, these things are not created essences, not disordered *faculties*, but *actings* and goings forth of the soul, towards objects altogether inappropriate, and not designed by God, to engage the supreme affections of the heart. To let the heart run out towards them,—to bestow the affections supremely on them,—to pursue after them with ruling desire and purpose for their enjoyment, is mad rebellion against God.

Accordingly James, when speaking on the very subject of the lusting of the heart, asks, as though the knowledge we have is from *consciousness*, and not by mere *inference*, "Know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" and concludes, in the most pointed and peremptory manner, "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God."² We cannot conceive of enmity against God, consisting in *constitution* or mere exis-

1. 1 John ii, 15—16.

2. 1 Jam. iv. 4.

tence, abstract essence, or mere nature. It is, in its very nature, really and formally the *workings* or the *acts* and *exercises* of a *rational* and *feeling* creature; so that, when these apostles resolve, all that is in the world, which is not of the Father, into *lustings*, and represent those *lustings* to be in enmity with God, we are infallibly directed, in making our estimate of human depravity, to have *exclusive* regard to the *acts* and *exercises of the human soul*.

This course Paul also has clearly sanctioned. “The *carnal mind*,” says he, “is enmity against God.”² It is not the *constitutional mind*, not the *abstract essential being of the rational soul* of man, not that unknown and unintelligible *substratum* in which, if we may so speak, are resident the *properties* of mind, of which he is speaking, but the *minding* the *actings* of the rational soul in the way of thought, care, purpose, desire, affection, will, &c. These, he says, in exact accordance with John and James, when induced by carnal things—when under the influence of the things of this world, are directly and essentially at war with God. They are specifically and formally rebellion against Him; for His law requires us to love Him with *all* our *heart*, with *all* our *soul*, with *all* our *mind*, and with *all* our *strength*, and it is, in the nature of things an absolute impossibility, that *such* *minding*—such a bestowment of our thoughts, purposes, affections, desires, cares, &c. on the things of this world, *can* ever be obedience to God. He has prohibited them, and *they* are essentially, and only, and totally *disobedience*, rebellion, enmity, against Him. They neither are, nor ever can become, submission to His will and holiness of heart. It is just as *impossible*, as that darkness should be light, and the *not doing*, should be the doing of the very thing required; and this is what the Apostle means, when he adds,

2. Rom. viii, 7. Φρονημα της σαρκος, εχθρα εις Θεον—Φρονημα—QUOD QUIS SENTIT ET SAPIT, SENSUS, COGITATIO, DESIDERIUM, STUDIUM, AFFECTUS, CUPIDITAS, VOLUNTAS. Schleus. Lex.

“IT, (i. e. the *minding* of the flesh,) is *not* subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be.” If he meant the *mind* of man, *essentially and abstractly* considered, all hope of conversion is forever extinguished. For even the philosophical theory, that provides for the introduction into it, of a newly *created* “something,” which is the cause of holy exercises, cannot leave the carnal mind totally unchanged as to its essence. If it does not, but teaches that the mind abstractly and essentially considered, is changed by a new *creative* act, the identity of the moral individual is destroyed. There is no other construction that can legitimately be put upon the Apostles’ meaning than that just advanced. To mind the things of the flesh, is to rebel against God, and it is morally, and eternally impossible, that ever IT *can* be accepted as obedience to the law of God.

This is the view which the Divine Spirit gives of the conduct of those, who prefer the world to God. The love or friendship of the world, is enmity with God. Our blessed Saviour does not admit the *possibility* of a man’s being the friend of both. “No man *can* serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”¹ And this account, is, by no means, given in too strong terms. For, although wicked men may not be conscious of malignant feelings against God, and may even deny the fact, in reference to themselves, that *they* are enemies of God, and wonder at, and abuse any one who would preach such a doctrine; yet do they give abundant indications, in their conduct and conversation, that they do indeed hate God.

The Saviour testifies of the world, explicitly, that it hated Him. Of the fact that it did so, His life, and the tragical circumstances of His death, have given unanswer-

¹ Mat. vi, 24.

able proof. Nor has the character of the world altered in this respect. There are multitudes yet, who are ready to raise the cry, "away with Him: away with Him: crucify Him. We have no king but Cæsar."¹ We will acknowledge no supremacy over us, but that of the government.

1. *How evincive of enmity are the thoughts and wishes of wicked men in reference to God!* How they dislike holiness! They would much rather that God were not so holy. Indeed, they are not to be persuaded, that He is that awfully just, and holy being, which many declare Him to be. They would have been much more at ease, if He had not spoken, in such decided terms, against selfish and sinful indulgences. They would have been gratified, if He had never commanded them to lead a holy life, to take up their cross, to deny themselves, and to crucify their affections and lusts.

If God could look with indifference upon their conduct, and allow them to lye and curse, and swear and profane His Sabbath, and gratify their malicious, and lascivious, fraudulent, and avaricious desires, they could love Him: but as it is they do "not like to retain God in their knowledge." The God whom they prefer, must let them do as they please; but as for that Holy and Just One, who will damn them eternally, unless they repent, and lead a holy life, they cannot love Him. Such a being they cordially hate, and they manifest that hatred, by their abuse of those ministers, and that preaching, which exhibit the holiness and justice of the divine character, and the immutability of His law. Whatever love of God they think they have, it is not of the true and living God; but of an *ideal being*, one whom they *suppose* to be God, not of Him who has so solemnly asseverated, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will re-

¹ John xix, 15.

prove thee, and set (thy sins) in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."¹

2. The same thing is also evident, from wicked men's *dislike of the word of God, and of those ministers, and professors of religion who are most pungent, and faithful in urging that word upon their consciences*. What a task is it for unrenewed men to read the Bible! They dislike to learn that they "must be born again," and love God with *all* their heart; that they must *repent* of their sins, and abstain from *EVERY appearance* of evil. They would much rather, have had a Bible, that would have left their ambition, and covetousness and lusts, and appetites, *free from all restraint*: that would have said nothing about holiness, nor been so "*uncharitable*," as to consign to Hell, all that do not *cordially* believe on Jesus Christ. If they are at any times, forced to take it into their hands—unless that, as men of taste and curiosity, they consult it for its poetry and history—they approach it with as much reluctance, as does the poor slave of superstition, the spot which he has heard is visited by some departed spirit. There is nothing *cordial* or voluntary in their consultation of its pages.

And, as for that sort of preaching which presses home its truths upon their consciences, they cannot endure it. The ministers of Christ that preach in this style they detest. Gladly would they tarnish their reputation; or excite such suspicions; foment such prejudices, and magnify any such pretext as might neutralize their influence. Their hearts rise up in opposition to those that bring the light into their dark minds, and probing their consciences, make them see, and feel, that they are *guilty* and *accursed* in the sight of God. "Every one," saith the blessed

1. Psalm, l, 21, 22.

Saviour, "that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." There is in fact, no class of men, so cordially despised, and hated, by impenitent sinners; and none whose characters they seek more earnestly to vilify and destroy. The whole tribe of blasphemers, liars, drunkards, unclean wretches, and fraudulent persons, receive not half the abuse, nor are half so cordially detested as are the faithful ministers of Christ, who testify against men's sins, and call upon them to REPENT, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. But with such, the blessed Saviour hath identified himself, declaring whoso despiseth *you*, despiseth *me*.

3. To these facts, innumerable others might be added, evincive of the same thing, that men are, by nature, enemies of God. We advert to their *dislike of serious and fervent prayer, and of religious meditation and conversation*. The theatre and ball room, the novel and the play, attract attention, and furnish delight. But nothing in their eyes can be more sickening or disgusting, than a *prayer meeting*. The exercise of prayer, has nothing attractive to the impenitent sinner. He may read, or recite, or frame a prayer, to keep his conscience at ease, or to relieve the burden of his self-reproach; but *the going forth of the heart* to God, in secret unrestrained delighted communion with Him, is a thing to which they are utter strangers. No altar is reared in their house. No morning and evening incense is offered at the domestic shrine. The closet is unfrequented. The public prayers of the church are tedious, and the minister who transgresses for fifteen or twenty minutes, in this delightful employment, is sure to receive censure, and be pronounced a pharisee, or accu-

sed of having, by such conduct disgusted them with religion, and prevented them, perhaps, from frequenting the house of God. To meet, in some retired spot, for the purpose of *social prayer*, and spend an hour in *christian conference*, in the estimation of many, betokens derangement or weakness of mind, or infatuation. The avocations of business, the interests of the family, and a thousand other things are accounted of far more importance with many; and they are never at a loss for some excuse, in withdrawing from the fellowship of the saints. “Behold, what a weariness is it,” are they ready to exclaim. Few things seem half so fatiguing and disgusting as the dull monotony of some simple honest soul, that pours out its prayers and praises to God. And why so?—how could there be such aversion from prayer and religious exercises, if the heart was not averse from God !

Prayer ardent opens Heaven, lets down a stream,
Of glory on the consecrated hour
Of man, in audience with the Diety.

Assuredly if there was not a cordial aversion from Him, on the part of men, prayer would minister to their delight. It is their hatred of God and of divine things, that makes religious worship so irksome and disgusting, especially where there is nothing in the outward forms, attractive, or imposing to sense. Why else, if they did not hate God, would they be so ready to raise the cry of fanaticism and enthusiasm, against those whose hearts are imbued with the spirit of prayer, and whose spiritual conversation shew that they *feel* the truth and force of what they profess to believe? Why else, would it be, that God is not in all their thoughts?—That they find no delight in the meditating on the glories of his being, and the truths of His word? Why else would their business, their pleasures, their friends, their houses, their lands, their funds, their families, any-

thing and every thing but God, and his Christ, find such a welcome place in their hearts? Why else, should the lustful song, the lewd lascivious jest, and ribaldrous profanity, be more pleasing than a conversation about the state of their souls? Why else should the blessed Jesus stand knocking and pleading in vain to gain admission to their hearts? Why else should they reject such a friend, disobey the solemn command of God, take part with all their sins against a dying Saviour, give the lie direct to a God of truth, and crucify afresh the Lord of glory? Ah sinner, the secret is told against you. It can be concealed no longer. Jesus saith of a wicked and impenitent world, "ME IT HATETH." This resolves all the mystery of your conduct, and this it is which creates all the obstacles in the way of your conversion. Charge not your impenitence on any constitutional depravity, wrought into the substance of your being—nor lay the blame of your rebellion upon the purpose and agency of God. Your sin and depravity lie at your own door. The world and its joys hold your hearts. You bestow on them your affections, purposes and cares, and they are sinking you deeper and deeper in the pit of perdition. You have commenced an iniquitous course. Unless you repent, and give to God the thoughts, and affections, and cares, which you now bestow upon the world, eternity shall but sink you deeper and deeper in crime:—

Beneath the lowest deep, a lower deep,
Still threatening to devour you, opens wide.

It is in the character of your own mental acts, and exercises, that you are to trace the proofs and workings of your own depravity. As to any thing which lies back of these things, as it is impervious to human view, imperceptible by human sense, beyond the sphere of consciousness, and utterly incapable of being subjected to investigation or anal-

ysis, you know nothing. You need not think to lay the blame there. As well might you do it in reference to bone and muscle, flesh and sinews, and say that they, *in themselves*, are sin, as to resolve the guilt of your own *voluntary acts* into the essence and constitution of your being. You are conscious of various acts and affections, and that you possess a power to restrain and regulate them. For the exercise of this power, you are held responsible, and will be judged. And, in your *preference* of this world, and dislike of God, thus giving your hearts to inferior things, and things opposed to Him, when He requires you to LOVE Him, with *all* your hearts, lies the sum and substance of your depravity. That there must be a nature to act, is not denied, but that there exists any necessity for you to sin, arising from constitution or any thing else, and depriving you of the power of voluntary agency as a free and accountable creature, cannot be proved.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MORAL CONDITION OF DECEASED INFANTS.

IMPOSSIBLE to conjecture the precise period at which we become capable of moral action—Circumstances unfavourable to holy developments induced by the rebellion of our first parents—A remedial scheme provided—Life can be imparted through Christ to rebels brought into connection with Him—The law of development obtains here—The Spirit's agency in establishing that connection—1 Cor. xv, 45---49—A connection may be formed between Christ and the soul at any period—The death of an infant no proof of final condemnation—A presumption to the contrary—But not decisive—The wisdom and goodness of God manifest in leaving this subject as it is—A purpose of election establishes no actual connection between Christ and the elect— Luke i. 35 and ii. 40 examined—Nothing to be inferred from it as to physical holiness—But the fact is established by it that the nature of man previous to any of its moral developments may be the object and subject of the Spirit's care and agency—The actual exercise of faith, &c. can only be predicated as absolutely necessary in those whose moral powers have been sufficiently developed—Infants equally with adults indebted to redeeming love—The death of infants a bright feature in the Saviour's triumphs—The lessons of rebuke and consolation and duty it furnishes.

THE view of human depravity, already given, not only throws light on the responsibilities and character of MEN; but also on the probable condition of such as die in infancy. At what precise period of human existence, the susceptibilities of our nature are so far developed, as to bring the individual so directly under the law, as to be held accountable for his own acts, or to possess such knowledge, as to render those acts sinful, it is impossible to conjecture. It cannot how-

ever be late in life. At a very early period, the child learns to submit to the will of its parent. Its corporeal imbecility, its limited knowledge, and its cherished and absorbing affection for the parent, all, doubtless, contribute to affect it, with a sense of the propriety of such submission. Yet it is placed in circumstances altogether unpropitious to holy developments; and, if it is allowed to remain in this world, will, like all that have gone before it, choose to do evil.

One act, in opposition to the will of the Great Creator, we have seen, spreads death through all the family of man, involves in sin innumerable myriads, originally made dependent on the first rebel, and strikes into eternity itself, a blow of utter desolation, to the hopes and happiness of human kind. Where are the consequences of rebellion to end? Who can estimate the bearing of one act? How murderous and ruinous the attempt, to pervert the laws of the divine government! What will be the misery and confusion, the devastation and horror resulting, where the rebel, in the holy Sovereignty of God, shall be allowed to push his enmity forward, eternity, in all the tragic scenes of Hell, shall unfold. Blessed be God, that He has provided a remedial scheme, by which, in perfect consistency with every principle of His moral government, man may be recovered, alike from his rebellion, and its ruinous tendency and results. Through the redemption which there is in Jesus Christ, the rebel can be recovered to the love and enjoyment of God—to the possession and exhibition of holiness—and to the forfeited, and even enhanced glories of man's original condition. The eternal Son of God, by virtue of his assumed humanity, the redemption which He has wrought, and the sovereign ordination of God, is become a new Head of influences. There is life to be derived from the blessed Jesus. *"Our life is hid with Christ in God,"* and Christ has become *"our life."*¹ All the life that ever

1. Col. iii. 3. 4.

is to be, or can be enjoyed, by fallen and degenerate men, is entrusted in the hands of Christ. It must flow from Him to them, and for that purpose, there must be some connection established between Him and them. But, as the law of development was that, on which the propagation of life was to be conducted from Adam down, so it has pleased God to provide, on the same principle, for the exhibition of the wonders of spiritual life. By virtue of our union with Christ, we live, and grow, and thrive. He is the vine, and we are the branches. He is the head, and we are the members of the body. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye," said the blessed Saviour, "except ye abide in me."¹

Now, it is by the Holy Spirit, which proceedeth from the Father, through the Son, and whom the Son giveth to whomsoever he will, that a connection is established between Him and the guilty soul of man. Through the agency of that Spirit, the man's thoughts, affections, and cares, are brought off from this world, and bestowed on Christ, in faith, and repentance, &c. and thus commence the evolution and exhibition in them, of those fruits of the Spirit, or gracious exercises, which form the character of the renovated man, and assimilate him to the great prototype in heaven. "The first man Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam, was made a quickening Spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which was natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."²

However, the immediate reference of the apostle here, may be understood,—whether to the entire character of the

1. John xv, 4.

2. 1 Cor. xv, 45, 49.

redeemed, or to the ultimate perfection of their being, when put in possession of their glorious resurrection-body—it is of little consequence to determine. It is the *great principle recognized by him*, which concerns us; and that is, that the blessed Saviour stands at the head of an entire family of rational beings, in whom are developed his own likeness and life, and that by virtue of their connection with Him, just as our first father Adam stood, as it were, the fountain of our race, and has transmitted his own likeness and mortality, to those descending from him by ordinary generation. As yet, there is not the perfection of this great redeeming process; nor will there be, till, at the consummation of all things, the glorified spirits around the throne, shall repossess their risen and sublimated bodies. But the redeeming process is going on, and we may descry its wondrous developments, continually taking place, in all its incipient and early stages.

If it pleased God to commence almost simultaneously with the being's existence, and to bring it under the operation of the great laws of redemption, which, by virtue of a connection established with Christ, shall secure holy developments, can any one object? Surely none are disposed to do so, when, in *this world*, those developments are made, as in the case of those children, who seem to have been sanctified from the womb. Shall we then object to its being done in another world? The circumstance of death's eventuating as soon as birth, or, at any subsequent time, before the moral powers shall have been developed, so far as to bring the child directly and personally under the authority of law, can certainly be no objection against the reality of an union being constituted, between Christ and the soul of that child, through some special care or agency of the Spirit.

The death of the infant, is no more proof of its final condemnation, than the death of the believer. On the contrary,

as the infant has neither done good nor evil, the presumption arising from its death, would rather seem to be, that inasmuch as its powers, if it had remained in this world, *would have been developed in sin*, so its removal to another and essentially different world—where all its modes of acquiring knowledge, and also of acting, will be essentially different—will most probably conduce to instantaneous and lofty exhibitions of holiness.

It is true, that the presumption may be applied the other way. Inasmuch, as God visits on the infant the consequences of the sin of Adam—subjecting it to disease and death, and placing it in a world, and under the operation of laws, which operate, with certainty, to secure its voluntary sinning, as soon as capable of moral agency; and inasmuch as one of the consequences of such rebellion against God, is, that a change will take place, either sooner or later, in the outward circumstances and relations of men in this world, by virtue of which, much more rapid and frightful developments of iniquity shall be made,—why may we not conclude, that, in the exercise of His sovereignty, God sees fit to *anticipate* such things, and transfer one and another, forthwith, as they come into this world, to a new scene of existence, when the full and final results of Adam's apostacy are displayed? Especially so, it might be added, since the promise of grace, in the covenant, seems to contemplate none other than the children of believers. "I will be a God to thee, and to *thy* seed after thee;"¹ and since there can be no more inconsistency with divine justice, to place an infant in circumstances, where it will become a sinner *sooner* than *later*, provided there is not to place it in any such circumstances at all? We confess, therefore, that nothing ought to be rashly and positively asserted on this subject, either way.

1. Gen. xviii.

It would seem as if God had not seen it proper, to give us any decisive information on this subject; and we can see great wisdom and goodness too, in His keeping us in absolute ignorance on this point. Were the former presumption an established truth, and reverently received among men, there is no knowing what mischievous consequences might result from it, nor how far men, to render their darling babes eternally happy, might be tempted to become the murderers of their offspring. And were the latter an established truth, with what heart-rending agony would every sensitive soul see the infant consigned to the tomb! It is well, that Providence has thrown an impenetrable veil over this thing. Yet, if we may be allowed to indulge a fond conjecture, the presumption seems strongest, that the death of an infant is a *procedure of mercy*, rather than of vindictive justice. For, as the great rule of procedure on the judgment day shall be, that God “will render unto EVERY ONE, according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil,”¹ the righteous and the wicked shall receive their award and allotment upon a principle, which it is manifest, in the nature of things, cannot be adopted, with regard to those dying in infancy.

Admitting for a moment, that infants dying in infancy shall be saved, it is obvious that—if the view already given of the law of God’s government in this world be correct—it is, and can only be, by virtue of some connection established between Christ and them. A mere *purpose of election* establishes no such connection, though it may have respect to it, and secure it ultimately: but the sacred scriptures do not speak of men as elect, and safe in Christ till they are *actually* united unto Him. The mere purpose of God to bring into being the offspring of man gave them no being, nor established any connection between

1. 1 Rom.

them and their great progenitor. It was their *actual* evolution from him, agreeably to the law established for the propagation of the race, that rendered them existent; and all their life was derived through him. In like manner there must be, the *actual* union with Christ, in order to the derivation of life from Him, since He, and He only, is a fountain head of life for any of the degenerate race of Adam. This union is effectuated as has been hinted by the communication of the Holy Spirit. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."¹ The agency of this spirit in respect of the *adult* will be readily admitted. Why should it be denied in reference to the infant?

That there is, in fact, a care and agency of the spirit adapted to the condition and circumstances of the *infant* mind, there can be no doubt: and that too to receive holy developments. For, there is the example of the babe of Bethlehem, whose conception was not after the law of ordinary generation, and who therefore stood in circumstances, and was the subject of influences, which,—without violating the fundamental principle of the original constitution ordained for man—could not have been imparted to any of his proper and natural offspring. When it is said to man, that "that *holy thing*," which should be born of her, should be called the son of God, some peculiar agency of the Holy Spirit in its production is no doubt referred to, as the reason of this. It is evident too, that it has reference to the future exhibitions of character to be made by Him. "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."²

The holiness of the human nature of Christ, in its infant state, is attributed to some immediate, and special

1. Rom.

2. Luke 1, 35.

agency of the Holy Spirit. The same is also said of it in its earliest developments. "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, (by the spirit) filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him."¹ It is altogether gratuitous to say, that that agency of the spirit consisted in forming the humannature of Christ free from any physical defects, or derangement, and that *therefore* the child Jesus was holy. If holiness is attributed to that nature in its unborn and embryo state, we certainly cannot suppose, that it is, in the same sense, in which it was after its birth, and growth into youth and manhood, or else we must suppose, that holiness as a personal characteristic, consists in something *irrespective* of the acts and exercises of a moral being. For the holiness of a being, with its powers developed, and actively excited, must be very different from that of one yet destitute of such powers

Things inanimate, it is true, have in scriptural parlance, sometimes been called *holy*, as the inmost chamber of the temple was called the holy of holies; but then it was because of some especial and peculiar relationship, which it had to God. He dwelt in it. It was *set apart*, as pre-eminently and exclusively appropriate to God. In this sense, the yet unconscious human nature of Christ, may be denominated *holy*, for it was the habitation of God, and singularly and exclusively appropriate to Him, differing in this respect, essentially, and entirely, from that of any of the descendants of Adam. And this peculiar relationship of his human nature to the divine, rendering it pre-eminently and singularly an object of the divine care, and securing developments at the earliest possible period, in holy exercises, i. e. in those graces or virtuous affections appropriate to the nature of man, and denominated, in the renewed sinner, "the fruits of the spi-

1. Luke ii, 40.

rit," the blessed Saviour has distinctly recognized. "But Thou," says He, "art He that took me out of the womb; Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly."¹ Here the holiness which manifested itself in the gracious exercises of the precocious child Jesus, is attributed, not to any peculiarity of constitution, not to any especial native efficiency of his moral powers, not to any modification of his created being, not to any necessities of his nature, but to the very special, yea, miraculous presence and agency of God, which, it was declared to Mary, should be peculiar to him.²

While, therefore, nothing can be inferred from the language of scripture, in reference to the "holy child Jesus," in confirmation of the idea, that holiness is the result of physical constitution, it certainly does convey the idea, and that very clearly, that there may be, and actually is, a care and influence of the Spirit of God, adapted to the infant mind, which will secure holiness, and that in the earliest developments of its constitutional capacities. Con-

1. Psalm, xxii.

2. We confess ourselves utterly unable to understand the following explanation of this thing as given by Dr. Owen. "The human nature of Christ, being thus formed in the womb by a creating act of the Holy Spirit, was *in the instant of its conception sanctified* and FILLED with grace according to the measure of its receptivity: being not begotten by natural generation, it derived no taint of original sin or corruption from Adam, that being the only way and means of its propagation: and being not in the loins of Adam *morally* before the fall, the promise of his incarnation being not given until afterwards, the sin of Adam could on no account be imputed unto him." OWEN ON THE SPIRIT, v. 1, p. 274. Here is a specimen of philosophical theorizing utterly unintelligible to us. Equally vague and unintelligible are what we hear from him on the same subject in another place, when he says that that "holy thing" was *radically filled* with all that perfection of *habitual* grace and wisdom, which was or could be necessary to the discharge of that whole duty which as man he owed to God." Owen on the Hebrews, vol. iii, p. 40.

sequently, there cannot be any valid objection against the unconscious infants being so made the object and subject of the Spirit's care, as to be brought into such connection with Christ, the second Adam, the fountain of a renovated life, as to secure, alike its holiness and salvation. Wherefore, the question of its translation by death to another world, where it shall not be affected by the operation of causes which here contribute to corrupt developments, cannot be agitated, so as to prejudice its security—we mean on supposition of the Spirit's bringing it into connection with Christ.

Is it necessary that the human mind and heart, must have been previously in *every case*, actually exercised in faith, and repentance, and love? Then can there be salvation for none other than adults, or those whose moral susceptibilities have, in this world, been developed so far as to enable them to apprehend and believe the truth. For most unquestionably “there is no other name, given under Heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus;”¹ and we must therefore maintain either that infants are not subjected to the consequences of Adam's sin—when their very death is indisputable proof of the fact—or that in the economy of grace, there is provision made, in some way, as God, in his holy sovereignty, hath seen fit, to bring them into connection with Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit and to share in the benefits of His redemption. The former as we have seen, is directly contrary to fact, so that we rejoice to give to our blessed Saviour all the glory of the rescue of immortal souls from perdition, at whatever period of their existence, they are removed from under the operation of those causes, which have been brought into action, by the rebellion of the first man, and would, if not frustrated by the grace of God, infallibly and eternally ruin the whole race. The infant's song in Heaven,

1. Acts

will be as truly and cordially to the praise and glory of *redeeming love*, as that of the hoary headed sinner converted, on the very verge of life, from the error of his ways. And, although we presume not rashly to decide, where God has not clearly revealed; yet, cherishing the hope of meeting among the redeemed in Heaven, the countless myriads of our race, who lived but to die or have been carried from the womb to the grave, what exalted views, of the overflowing riches of divine grace, may we not entertain? And what lessons of rebuke and consolation and parental duty may not be derived?

It were delightful to conjecture, the rapid and wondrous developments of *the infant mind*, unclogged with bodies, and placed in circumstances so propitious to holiness. But it would be all conjecture. We cannot presume even to imagine, *how* the babe in Heaven acquires knowledge, or to deny, but that a few hours' employment in the blissful exercises of that happy world, will render it vastly superior, in knowledge and experience, to the aged saint that goes, at the end of a long life, laden with wisdom, and filled with the love of God, to mingle his rejoicings with the redeemed on high. It is sufficient to know that all will be right and glorious, and that, perchance the gloomy feature of ruin and desolation, which over-spreads this guilty world—the early death of one half that are born into it—shall be found, in the infinitely wise and wondrous counsels of Jehovah, converted into the bright aspect of bliss and glory. How great the triumphs of grace! The most sickening and painful forms of human mortality contributing to swell the numbers and triumphs of Heaven!!!

As the vast Ocean heaving from its very depths, throws wave on wave, and rises and breaks, and scatters its foaming surges on the shore, so Time rolls its flood along, and, as it sweeps o'er the guilty race of man, generation after generation, are carried forward, and dashed upon the breakers,

of death, but to be caught by the under-current and borne into the bosom and blessedness of eternity.

While satan rages and appears to triumph, there is a mighty conqueror that triumphs over him, and rescues the victims of his malice. He that has the power of death has been himself destroyed. The very reign of death, secures from every people, kindred, tribe and tongue the largest additions to the family of the redeemed. How few in comparison with the countless myriads on high, will remain among the wilful rebels, that refused to submit to the government of God, and shall be shut up in the penitentiary of Hell? How will the temporary triumphs, but eternal disappointments of the God of this world, contribute to illustrate the wisdom and grace of the divine government, and the folly and madness of rebellion? How delighted will be the believer's experience in Heaven, there to be made, under circumstances inconceivably glorious, to see how easily the God of truth and justice, has discomfited falsehood and iniquity! How will the darkest features in the mysterious history of man, be developed in the brightest exhibitions of grace and sovereignty? And, how will the very curse, in all its odious features, prove through the exceeding riches of divine grace, in his kindness by Christ Jesus a blessing to the ruined family of man?

And even here, before we reach that bright world, where our delighted eyes shall survey the rich and varied prospect of bliss unfolding its unceasing wonders to our view, what lessons of rebuke and consolation may we not draw from the infant's death? Reader, are you a *parent*, and yet unreconciled to God, through the blood of Jesus Christ? And have you lost a darling babe, that in the midst of sufferings, and exquisite agony of body, has been torn from your fond embrace, and hurried to an early grave? Then learn in it, the rebuke of Heaven. That child, on which perhaps your fond heart was set, and which

already had began to bind, and rivet those affections which should have been given to God, has been removed from you in mercy to it. Had it been allowed to remain in your embrace, it would have imbibed your rebellious spirit. The love of its heart for you, would have given you a power and influence over it, which would have secured the earliest developments of sin, and placed it in an attitude of direct rebellion against God. You would have proved the murderer of its soul, and stamped on it, your own character, so infamous in the sight of God, and involved it in the condemnation under which you lie.

But God in taking it away, has in effect said, "You are not fit to have the care of this child. You would have infused into it, your own unbelieving, and rebellious temper, and armed its little heart, in hostility against me. It would have learned from you, to break my Sabbath—to profane my name—to despise my law—to rebel against my authority—and proclaim itself a candidate for Hell. But I have had mercy on it. I have seen that you are not fit to have it live with you, and have therefore brought it home to Heaven, that it may be brought up under the immediate eye and care of my dear Son, away from the contagion of your example. Read in the death of your child the vengeance of Heaven, and its frightful record against you."

But are you a believer, and did you cast your dear little one over upon God, when you brought it to the baptismal font, and there in the arms of your faith and love, presented and devoted it to God, to be washed in the blood of Jesus, and sanctified by his Spirit, to be redeemed from all the consequences of the sad and ruinous apostacy of our race? And has that child, for which you have plead the promises of the well-ordered, and everlasting covenant, been removed from you, and been taken from this world of sin, before it could itself sin, how rich is your consolation! God has in effect said to you. "I take you at your

word—I have heard your prayers—I have received the offering of your faith, and have removed your child to other scenes, where it shall not come in contact, or be contaminated with sin. I know how great would have been your solicitude; how many heart-rending anxieties, you would have had on its account, and that, with all your care, you could not have prevented it from becoming a wilful transgressor of my law, nor have proved half faithful and watchful enough for its training for the skies. I have therefore taken this work out of your hands, and given your child to my dear Son, that it may pass at once into the seminary of Heaven, and escape the consequences of your unfaithfulness, and mismanagement, as well as the ills of this dying and rebellious world, in which you dwell.” Read then in the death of your sweet smiling babe the mercy of Heaven: and learn to humble yourself at the feet of God, adoring the grace of his covenant, and receiving the kind and paternal admonition, his providence administers.

But has it pleased Him to spare the little prattlers round your table? And already do they begin to strike their roots, and grow like willows by the water courses, then see what a work His providence has laid to your hands. Those sweet lips have already perhaps been soiled. Those bright eyes have fallen on rebellious scenes, and they have left their traces on the little mind and memory. The little bosoms have begun to heave with passion, and swell with desire. And shall the young immortal fall under the damning sentence of God’s holy law? Parent, teacher, nurse, friend, what have you to say? Say ye mothers, will you neglect the moral culture of your darling babes, and suffer the passions and propensities of their nature to rise and gather strength, and bear them off to objects which God has forbidden? Will you allow all this to go on before your eyes, and neglect to tell your little charge of God, and of

his holy child Jesus, and the great salvation,—of the spirit and his blessed influence, and strive to curb unruly desire, to bring it under the early influence of the truth, and form its heart to the love and service of God?

You have been the means of bringing it into a guilty and a dying world. Shall it be saved or lost? The one or the other shall be the fact; and whether the one or the other, will depend, in a great measure on you, and on its early impressions. Resign it to the dominion of its passions—Cheat and deceive it by your falsehood and hypocrisy—Vex and torture it by your fretfulness and rage—Irritate and disappoint it by your treachery and unfaithfulness—Throw around it the contagion of your own depravity—Withhold from it the knowledge of God, and of his law, of Christ, and of his death—Put it under the care of teachers, that neither fear nor love God—And lead it through the paths of science, without an observation of His agency and will, and the child shall grow up, a prey for the vengeance of heaven.

We cannot neglect to urge, in the most importunate manner, on you, the importance and necessity of early and solemn attention to this matter. Will you mothers, fathers, friends, christians, and philanthropists, allow the young immortal to grow up in sin, without an effort to bring its little powers under the genial and sanctifying influence of the truth? Why not familiarize the infant mind with divine things? Why not tell it of the love of Jesus, and strive, before the propensities of the heart shall have become deep rooted, and wedded it indissolubly to sinful objects, to bring it under the influence of some awakening truth, and mould the little understanding to useful, intellectual, and moral pursuits? The system of infant-school instruction, which proposes, as its object, “to awaken a desire in the infant heart, to seek moral and intellectual improvement, by early and lasting activities, to excite virtuous attachments,

and inspire an utter detestation for all immorality,"¹ deserves the interested attention, and zealous co-operation of every one, who would arrest the progress of moral death. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, God has—ordained strength, because of His enemies, that (He might) still the enemy and the avenger."¹ Here, then, let us begin, and make our most studied, and systematic, and mighty attack on Satan's kingdom. Here is where the strength lies. And as the whole plan of God's governmentment, in this world, is that of development, let us learn wisdom from His own constitution, and bring the truth early to bear upon the infant heart, by developing the spiritual powers and mental capacities of the young immortal, we may get the start of corruption and the world, and fit it for usefulness, happiness, and glory. Seize first the affections of the infant heart, in all the tenderness and pliancy of their earliest buddings, and let the bright mirror of God's blessed word, reflect, in mild and mellow rays, the rich and glowing image of the Sun of Righteousness, to ripen it into holiness. His gracious Spirit invites to this work. And blessed be His name, for the growing army of youthful teachers, and yet more tender scholars, whom the blessed Spirit is marshaling in our Sunday and infant schools! "Whom shall he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, and there a little."²

1. Psalm viii, 2.

2. Isai. xxviii, 9, 10.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MORAL CERTAINTY OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

We are exposed, from the earliest period of our moral history to the influence of causes which secure a deranged exercise of our moral powers—Difficult to trace the influence of these things—An harmony in his moral exercises, originally characteristic of Adam—This harmony was deranged through the subtlety of Satan's temptations—One wilful act changed the whole moral aspect of the world—Noticed particularly in respect of the moral feelings of our first parents—Traced in respect of their progeny—Inquiry as to what brings men under the actual government of law—Difference between God's providential and moral government—Out of place to ask whether, and how infants *sin*—The theory of moral unity or representation in Adam noticed—Some remarks to prevent mistake—A brief view of man as furnished with various capacities for thought, feeling and action—The law of reproduction applicable here—Psalm ii, 5.—Conscience affected not by theories, but by personal crime—General laws affecting the development of human capacities—These laws perverted—Instinct—Animal sensation—Passions and affections—Inquiry whether infants possess moral character—Moral character the result of moral acts—Neither sin nor holiness predicable of infants personally—More abundant causes for men's universally sinning, than for the first sin of our progenitors.

In the chapter before the last, we digressed into a consideration of the question of human ability, as it presented itself in the course of our investigations on the subject of derived corruption. In the chapter preceding that, the fact had been noticed, that men inherit from Adam, a constitutional nature, which is subjected to a forfeiture of privileges and immunities that would have been secured by his obe-

dience; and also, that they come into being, under circumstances, which render it *morally certain*, that they will sin, as soon as they are capable of moral agency. It is our object, in this chapter, to advert to the developements of human character, as from the very earliest period of their history, men are exposed to the influence of causes or circumstances, which render it *morally certain* that they will *universally* sin as soon as they are capable of moral action.

It were an endless task, to unfold the ever-varying modifications of corrupt character. They are as numerous, as the individuals of our race, and, as diversified, as the combinations of human passion, which may be excited by ever-varying circumstances. To analyse these, we shall not attempt. To do so, would render it necessary, among other things, to investigate the exceedingly perplexed and intricate subject of *insanity*.—For, it is very manifest that, many of *its* manifestations are owing to the inordinate growth, and ascendant influence of some one *particular passion*. All that we can adventure is, some general reflections to guide the further inquiries of the reader.

We have already seen, that when Adam was created, there was an harmony in the exercise of all his moral powers. His intellectual perceptions, his sensitive emotions, and his voluntary actions, were in unison. As his mind perceived, his heart felt, and his will determined. The operations of his self-love, or the instinctive desires of his soul after happiness, were in perfect accordance with his duty. On yielding to their impulses, and in seeking his enjoyment in the things which God had prescribed, he incurred not the *accusations* of conscience. On the contrary, he secured its *approbation*, without which he could not have been blessed.

The tempter contrived to destroy this harmony. He awakened emotions, which obscured his perceptions of

truth, and induced him to act directly contrary to the divine will. A desire for knowledge, a general respect for the character of God, the natural appetite for food, the influence of animal senses, entire *practical* ignorance of sin, were all appealed to, and roused into action, and through the specious reasonings of the tempter, our first mother made the desperate experiment, determining to do, and doing what God had prohibited. From that very moment, a moral derangement took place. That one resolute act of will, drew with it most fearful consequences in her own moral history, and that of her race. She instantly became the tempter of her husband in her turn, and having persuaded him to sin, their offspring after them, evince through all their generations, the same alienations of mind and heart.

It is a subject of very deep interest, and to the christian minister of awful moment, to inquire how far a deliberate and determined effort of will, in *one* special case, tends to shape the whole subsequent history, and character, and even to effect the generations to come. To the grief and anguish of the soul of a godly minister, he not unfrequently finds, that *one decided and desperate effort of will*, on the part of an awakened sinner, by which he acts with energy, either in *refusing* to believe on Jesus Christ, or in *shaking off his convictions*, is followed by insensibility, rapidly increasing depravity, utter desertion by the Spirit of God, and eternal death; nor does it stop here, but his children after him, oftentimes imitate his example, imbibe his spirit, follow in his steps, and pursue him down to Hell. No man can tell, but that any and every, effort of will in rejecting Christ and his salvation, and in refusing to repent, shall be followed with eternal consequences, both in himself, and in those to whom he may give birth. The whole iniquity that has been teeming in the world, and ruining our guilty race, and spreading havoc

and desolation over it, has followed from that one act of will on the part of our first mother, when she ate the forbidden fruit.

By it she armed conscience, and enlisted all the constitutional and characteristic principles of her nature, in a warfare against herself, as well as in rebellion against God. Conscience, which before had been a minister of bliss, became a demon of torment. The constitutional principles, or the susceptibilities of her nature, remained the same; but their *action* was *totally* deranged, and she became *totally depraved*. The proper balance, if we may so speak, which was to regulate all the motions of the moral man, was lost, and every thing was thrown into wild and frightful disorder. An hurried action instantly took place, and the rebellion, commenced in one deliberate act of will, has been driven forward with resistless celerity, into frantic excitement and resentments even against God Himself.

Such was the process of depraved developments in the first man. “The woman which *Thou* gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”¹ said guilty and impenitent Adam, charging God Himself with being the author of his misery and his crime, and hundreds and thousands of his rebellious offspring malignantly renew and reiterate the charge. The very principles of Adam’s nature, the susceptibilities and instincts of the moral being whose excitement and actings had before been blissful as they were directed to legitimate objects, immediately, on his sin, lent their powerful influence to perpetuate those acts of will, which would detain, and sink him, still deeper, and deeper, in wretchedness and rebellion. By the *one act of disobedience*,² he had changed all his moral re-

1. Gen. iii, 12.

2. The Apostle, in the 5th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, is very careful to designate *the first sin* of our progenitors. He calls it *το πρωτον*

lations, and all his hopes of bliss in communion and intercourse with God, and contributed to corrupt the character of his whole progeny.

The very objects that had contributed to his high and ennobling enjoyment, proved productive of the keenest anguish. The gentle step of God, once so beloved, now breaks upon his ears as rattling peals of thundering vengeance. The bright smiles of universal nature, that had once beamed bliss into his soul, are now like the piercing frowns of some wrathful executioners of the Almighty menace. The very light of Heaven was too intensely glorious for our guilty parents to bear, and as they parted with their hopes and desire of bliss in fellowship with God, and obedience to Him, the very same instincts and constitutional susceptibilities which had inclined to these things, now urged them to attempt an absolute separation of themselves from Him, as the only conceivable method of escape from deserved damnation. The instinct of our nature, which makes us shrink from pain, and every passion of the heart that ordinarily incites to action, were all brought into full and effectual play to beleaguer the will of man, and prevent forever his return to God. And had it not been that God, in mercy, intended to recover the rebel to Himself, and reveal what he never possibly

πτασμα—the offence—the stumbling block over which we fall—*proprie: lapsus offensio*, cum ad rem, in via jacentem, pedem, impingentes prolabimur. Schleusneri. Lex. ad. ver. ἡ γὰρ τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι οἱ πολλοὶ ἀπέθανον—for if by the offence of the one man the multitude died, Romans v, 15. See also verses 17, 18, and 20, διὰ τῆς παρακῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἁμαρτάναι κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, &c. κατεστάθησαν—from a verb which signifies to stand or put in a place—to appoint or establish in an office as an overseer of servants, Luke xii, 42—to lead into, or conduct, Acts xvii, 15, to render or effect, 2 Pet. 1, 8. The Apostle describes the process by which men become sinners. It is διὰ by means of τῆς παρακῆς The offence of Adam, is the instrumental cause of their sin, not the very thing which constituted their sin. It leads to or operates to secure sin in the multitude and render them sinners.

could of himself have discovered, that there is forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, poor wretched fallen man, had bound himself, eternally, with the chains of his own forging, and rendered it forever impossible for him to repent. Hell had quickly opened its flood-gates of wrath, and pouring in its deluge of woe, claimed and secured our whole guilty race, as another family of devils, fraught with envenomed malice, to oppose the government of God.

All this perhaps is seen, and acknowledged to be true, in reference to the first parents of our race; but, it is asked, how is that disordered exercise of man's moral powers, which ensued in them immediately upon rebellion, and by which the passions and appetites, the constitutional susceptibilities and principles of his nature, triumphed over his interest and happiness, rendered certain in his posterity? In reply, we remark, that the idea of *physical defect*, does not at all comport with that of *moral depravity*. The want of an hand or an arm, an eye or a limb, is not ordinarily taken into the account, when we estimate a man's moral character. But, suppose that a person was born into this world, with such a deformed and ill-shapen body, as to be illy adapted to the purposes of ordinary life—destitute of the power of locomotion, and not capable of being guided and governed by the will, we should never think of attributing to *him* that depravity, which we would to one who had the requisite corporeal powers, for manifesting his intentions, and acting out all the rebellious purposes of his heart. Should he, however, possess the faculty of speech, and give vent to blasphemous thoughts and execrations, and thus manifest alienation of mind from God, and malignity of heart towards Him, we should attribute to him an increased degree of depravity, in proportion to the corporeal disadvantages and disabilities, under which he labored. But should he be devoid of mental endowments—in-

capable of reason, and incapable of speech; or, should he be possessed of the power of speech, yet altogether idiotical, incapable of judgment and memory, even acts, which, in another, would be accounted proofs of depravity, and which, in themselves, are immoral, would not be supposed to indicate the same in him. And the reason is, because, practically, we do not predicate depravity of the corporeal, or even mental constitution of man; but of the *actual exercise* of those powers, which are implied or requisite in the willing to do, and doing, what the law of God prohibits, or refusing what it requires. It is, therefore, of essential importance, in our investigations on this subject, that we form correct notions of what it is, which constitutes man the proper subject of moral government—we mean, which brings him *actually* under the government of law.

Mankind universally make a distinction, between mere *natural* discipline or government, and that which is *by law* or the declared will of a sovereign, who has a right to command. The maniac is governed as the brutes. The infant and child, by the mere exercise of power. And, in human governments, where the enactments are designed for the good of society, and which, it must therefore be presumed, are so complicated, as not to be early or easily understood, there is an age, which the individual must have attained, before he is considered as personally responsible in all his acts, or capable of acting for himself. There is evidently this general assumption, on the part of mankind, that there must be such a development of the corporeal and mental capacities, which qualify for acting, as to presuppose a *knowledge* of law, *before* the individual can strictly and properly be said, to be *under the actual government of law*, so far as *his personal acts* are concerned.

The natural, providential government of God, is, undoubtedly, different, from that which, as a moral governor, He maintains over intelligent and voluntary beings. The

latter is *the government of law*, or declared will. The former, of mere power and care. The latter, in this world, is peculiar to man. The former, man enjoys in common with the whole brute and animal creation. It would seem, therefore, that the question is rather out of place, to ask, *whether*, and *how* INFANTS sin, in whom there has not yet been a sufficient development of the intellectual and physical powers, to qualify them for the knowledge of law, and the actions contemplated by the law. Are we under the necessity of supposing, that there is any thing wrought into their intellectual or corporeal constitution, which is, *in itself*, *sinful*? Does the word of God really teach us, that *the mere organization of the infant body and mind*, or that its *substance* and constitutional properties, are sinful? We apprehend not; for then, unquestionably, it must mean *something else* to be *sinful*, than *actually to violate the will* of a moral governor; and if so, we cannot see, but that we might predicate *sin* of the *brute creation*, with as *much propriety* as of *infants*. If the sin of Adam deranged the whole constitution of God, that was *his* sin; but certainly, in no sense, can it be said to be the personal sin of those, who are unfurnished with the capacities requisite for moral action.

The idea of MORAL UNITY, or of representation, or of acting by another, which has been resorted to as a *philosophical theory*, to solve difficulties on this subject, is based on the assumption, that *every individual* descendant of Adam, is *personally* under the *actual* government of law, from the very first moment of its existence; yea, and before it had existence—at least, in the eye of God! The question, which to us seems most, and indeed only appropriate here, is, whether Adam's sin has not so perverted the constitution of God, and produced such a change, in the whole process of the development of the powers and capacities of his offspring, as to render it *morally* certain, that they shall

both sin, as soon as they have knowledge of law, and eventually die too.

This is strictly a question as to matter of fact, and the answer must therefore be drawn, not from philosophical theories, but from careful examination of the *actual* condition of human nature. If it is practicable, there should indeed be,—in all cases, the utter absence of philosophical disquisition and theory, and the plain and faithful reporting of *FACTS*, as far as the sacred Scriptures, and accurate observation, may enable us to ascertain them. It is exactly here, where mischief is done to religion; and it is owing to the different philosophical views, or theories, in which the facts of revelation are involved, that christian teachers and sects are found so much to differ. To separate between *facts*, and the *doctrines*, which are thought legitimately deducible from them—or the *theories* which are employed to *illustrate* or *account* for them would be no mean service rendered to the cause of truth. To detect the difference between the *theory* and the *fact*, or the *doctrine founded on the fact*, as suggested by *some* theoretical or philosophical views, is no easy task.

Indeed, an attempt to do so is exceedingly perilous; for it may awaken a host of prejudices, and excite alarm, from the sudden and almost unavoidable impression made on the minds of many, that a relinquishment of technicalities,—especially if objected against as not *happily adapted* to convey the scriptural idea as to matters of fact—is, at least, presumptive proof of heresy. We therefore venture on a reply to the question just suggested, with considerable solicitude; and would bespeak the reader's candid and patient attention, as we pursue, somewhat further, the difficult and much controverted topic, of the derivation of depravity. It is our desire, and has been, all along, to avoid every thing like technical phraseology, and exhibit nothing but the plain matter of fact, without respect to any

theory or system; and we again express the hope, that our readers will not be so uncharitable as to suspect error, and condemn us, without being heard and understood. Our object is neither to gratify curiosity, nor to divert the mind, by empty speculations, from that which should engage its interested attention. How could I sin in Adam? How could Adam's sin become mine? How could Adam sin for me? How could God impute Adam's sin to me? How could Adam's sin reach me? Through what channel has it been conveyed to me? These are questions of no manner of *practical* utility, as we apprehend, and we shall not pretend to agitate them. The Bible has not started them, nor is it at the pains to meet them. It is a question of vastly deeper moment, and one which involves the eternal interest and destiny of us all, How have I become a sinner? Is God or man to blame?

It will readily be admitted, that man is naturally possessed of certain capacities for action, and susceptibilities of impression inciting to action, which constitute the very elements or basis of his moral constitution. He has a *thinking mind*, which is both capable of perceiving external things, and of attending to its own operations, and which is competent to reflect and weigh well the considerations presented, so as to come to a fixed choice, or purpose of action.

Moreover he is capable of various movements, or agitations of soul, which are appropriate, or adapted to the nature of the different objects which present themselves, or to the character of the different thoughts which arise in his mind. His sensitive nature is capacitated for impressions of pleasure or of pain, from objects without him, or thoughts within him—which impressions, will be correspondent with the real or supposed character of that which produces them; or, in other words, according as the mind apprehends an object to be fit to do it good or the contra-

ry, will it be affected pleasurable or painfully towards it. These affections, produced by the impression of objects around, if not counteracted in some way, quickly grow into habits, and assume the permanent character of what, in common language, we call inclinations, dispositions, propensities, &c.

In addition to all this, there is thrown around the human soul a material body furnished with bones, muscles, nerves, &c., which qualify it for accomplishing the purposes of the man, and acting, so far as he comes in contact with material objects around him.

These different capacities of his nature, which may be generically denominated his constitutional susceptibilities or properties, are dependent, originally, on the sovereign will of God, the great Creator. It has pleased Him to give being to such a creature as man, and to constitute him, a *thinking, feeling, acting* being.

Such was the first man, and according to the law which it pleased the great Creator to ordain for the propagation of his race, these susceptibilities or constitutional properties, are derived through the process of that development, which, commencing in conception, is perfected, in due season, by birth being given to a separate existence. Adam begat a son in his own likeness, and from that day to the present, the law of reproduction has obtained in the continuous evolution of innumerable human beings. In these susceptibilities themselves, considered merely *as existent*, there can undoubtedly be *nothing sinful*, as has already been seen. *It is not a sin to the embryo being, that it has been conceived*, though there may have been great guilt connected with its origin, and it may be subjected to consequences appropriate to such guilt. *It is not a sin to be born*. Nor is it *in itself* a sin, *to think, to feel, or to act*. The *sinfulness* of any, or of all such things, is determined, by a reference to the will or law of

God, which defines what things are, or are not sinful. For human consciousness, which is the register of crime, notes only that which consists in *personal* disconformity to the law of God. No one is *conscious* of having himself sinned in the personal act of Adam's transgression: nor does the Spirit of God lead to repentance for any participation which it may be supposed we had in it.

The Psalmist does indeed make a very humbling allusion to the guilt and sin of his original. I was, says he, *shapen in iniquity*, and in *sin* did my mother *conceive* me."¹ But surely he could not have meant, that *the growth* of his *body* in his mother's womb, or his *conception*, were *THEMSELVES* SINFUL, or, that these natural processes were his personal transgressions. What then it may be asked, could have been his meaning? Whoever will attentively consider his penitential confessions, will find that he is contrasting his own sinfulness, with the perfect holiness of the Divine Character, and after having acknowledged his own personal acts of defilement, his mind is yet further humbled by the thought, that his very existence was derived from a being that had sinned, and that, while the original process of his formation was going on, he was dependent on, and as it were involved in, the being of one who was herself a sinner. This is, and cannot fail to be, when rightly apprehended, a source of humiliation.

Although we are not *conscious* of any particular guilt, attaching to us personally, for any *specific* act of our parents, yet do we feel that we can never make proud and lofty pretensions to excellence, when we consider their character in the sight of God. The child is humbled in the recollection of his parent's crime, and that too, oft-times, where there is *no* distinct recognition of personal guilt. The drunkenness, lechery and dissipation of a parent, which, in

1. Psalm, li. 5.

the eyes of the world, have blasted his reputation, do seriously affect the sensibilities of a child, in any measure awakened to a sense of the impropriety of these things.

In like manner, where the heart is affected, by the Spirit of God, so far as to discern the evil of sin as ruining the reputation in the sight of God, the *sinfulness* of those through whom we have derived our being, cannot fail to humble us in our own estimation. It is not necessary to suppose there was any special guilt, on the part of his parents, which rendered his birth illegitimate, of which the Psalmist made acknowledgement, as some have done. The apprehension of the parent's impurity in the sight of God, will affect the heart of a child: for he insensibly feels, and is persuaded that he can make no pretensions to *native* moral excellence or worth derived from them. Thus was it that Job felt, and this was, doubtless, the import and extent of his interrogation. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"¹

Thus far human consciousness of guilt goes, but no further. To talk of representation, and participation in the acts of parents, are mere theoretic attempts to explain the fact, which men's intellect may, or may not receive. These are not the things which affect the conscience. It is the *fact* of our *descent*, from those whose character we cannot but condemn, that humbles us. No man repents, because of the mere susceptibilities which enter into his moral constitution, or, in other words, because he has been made capable of thinking, loving, acting, &c., but many do repent, that these susceptibilities have been derived and developed under such circumstances as to have led to sin, and involved them in the guilt of personal transgression. And so far does this sort of repentance proceed sometimes, that the sinner wishes he had never been born, or mad-

1. Job, xiv. 4.

ly puts an end to his present existence, as though that would put an end to his misery and his crime.

While, therefore, the susceptibilities of our nature are derived to us, by the very law of reproduction, which God has ordained to regulate His own agency in the creation of the successive generations of men; while there is nothing sinful in these susceptibilities, considered merely as *existent*, or as elaborated in our moral constitution, they are nevertheless subjected to certain great established laws, which affect their development, and which, in consequence of the sin of Adam, render the wilful transgression of his offspring morally certain. These laws do not impose *upon man* a *necessity* to sin against God. They are but a part of that great scheme of providential agency, which God originally projected, and made subordinate to his system of moral government intended for man. The very same laws regulating His own agency, would, upon the supposition of Adam's continuous *holiness*, have rendered *the holiness* of his descendants morally certain. The development of our constitutional susceptibilities, would have been conducted, on the same general principles, and would, doubtless, have been effectuated in the same order; but it would have been just as morally certain, that men would *not* have sinned, as it now is, they *will*, as soon as capable of moral agency.

We need not look into the internal structure of the human soul, to discover an adaptation to the purpose of rebellion there, as though God had, by His own creative agency, taken care to adjust its complicated machinery, so as to secure, by the very necessities of its being, such a result. God cannot act with any such design. It is just as morally impossible, as it is to "deny Himself," which, an Apostle has declared to be absolutely impracticable.¹ We can see sufficient to account for man's wilful rebellion, in that derangement which ensued in the whole circum-

1. 2 Tim. ii, 13.

stances and condition of the human race, as consequent upon Adam's sin. The laws affecting the development of our moral powers, as we may perceive in the history of every individual, are perverted and operate to secure such a result.

INSTINCT, whatever that may be, first operates, and its tendency is simply for the preservation, and future growth of the animal body. Who can fail to see, that it is, in fact, God's agency, for the care of a being, devoid of that intelligence, which is necessary to qualify and enable it to take care of itself? In the *instincts* of an infant, however, there can be nothing *sinful*, nor in their exercise—no more than in its respiration, or any other of its involuntary motions.

Next to instinct, or simultaneously with its very first actings, commences the process, which lies at the basis of all its future knowledge, viz: its ANIMAL SENSATIONS. These are but the impressions which those external objects, with which it is brought in contact, make upon it, and in a way, appropriate to the different senses, which are fitted for receiving and transmitting them. In the receiving of these impressions, or, in other words, in being the mere subject of sensations, produced by external objects, there is nothing sinful. This is a part of God's natural government. He has constituted us to be so affected, and we can no more prevent it, than we can alter the laws of Heaven.

Connected with these impressions or sensations, there is presently found, a DEVELOPMENT OF FEELING OR PASSION beginning to take place; that is, the child gives indication of something affecting and moving it, other than the mere impression which is made upon its senses, by an external object. It evinces love and dislike, desire and aversion. It craves the mother's breast, and manifests delight as it is unfolded to it. It turns from the spoon, and loathes the nauseating drug, which it had once imbibed from it. These for the sin of Adam—unless as the expression be under-

and their kindred feelings, most unequivocally manifested, and at a very early period, may, indeed, be all traced to original animal sensations, of which the conscious being has retained the recollection; but, it is very obvious, that they are something different from mere sensation. Sensation has contributed to their development; but they have, evidently, an impulsive influence themselves. They certainly incite to act, and secure demonstrations of will and purpose. And these, invariably, take a wrong direction.

We are not concerned, to inquire into the philosophical theories of men, as to what it is, which determines the character of influential feeling, rendering it different in different individuals;—whether originally dependent on some peculiarity in the corporeal organization—or what physiological writers term temperament;—or whether adventitious, the result of circumstances, accidentally associated, affecting, permanently, by first and deep impressions, the sensibilities of the being. Our object is simply an observation of facts, so far as they tend to shape, or affect, the future moral character of the child. We say *future*, for it is a question alike pertinent and important, whether, in the incipient period of infancy and childhood, there *can* be any *moral character* whatever possessed.

Moral character, is character acquired by acts of a moral nature. Moral acts, are those acts which are contemplated by the law, prescribing the rule of human conduct. It is not every act which we perform, that is of a moral character. The *instinctive actions*, which are done without thought, and, as it were, involuntarily, and which are designed, by our great Creator, for the preservation of our animal life, —the *different functions* of the various organs of our animal frame, designed for the promotion of our animal life, and which are, in some degree, dependent on the

will,—and the *cravings of appetite*, which are dependent on the very organization of our bodies, are not, in themselves, *sinful* or *holy*.

They do not possess a moral character, because the law of God does not require or forbid them. But, in so far as these things may influence us to do, or to refuse to do, what God has required, they fall under the cognizance of law. The law is so framed, as to regulate all our deliberate and voluntary actions. It prohibits some, and requires others, and defines the objects and extent to which we may allow ourselves to be carried, by the impulses of appetite, and by a respect for our well being. Every action that is deliberate, and the result of motive, i. e. which originates in some voluntary determination of the mind, as having an end in view, has an end prescribed to it. This end is the only legitimate one, and from which, if we deviate, or for which, if we substitute another, the action so performed, not coming up to the standard of God, becomes sinful. “Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all for the glory of God.”¹ Such being the case, that many actions possess altogether an indifferent character, and some do not fall even under the cognizance of the law of God—and that too in adults, where the capacities for moral action are fully developed,—it is obvious, that in infancy and incipient childhood, where none of the actions are deliberate, or the result of motive, operating in connection with the knowledge of law, and of the great end of all human actions, no moral *character* can appropriately be predicated. There are, *in fact*, no moral acts. The being is not yet *actually* under the government of law. It is, indeed, under the *providential care* of God, and shares, in common with the whole animate and inanimate creation, the benefit of his natural or providential government; but it has not

1. 1 Cor. x. 31.

yet come under the actual operation of law, as addressed to the reason and conscience of individual personal agents. Its moral powers, or capacities for moral action, have not yet been sufficiently developed for this. To predicate personal sin, therefore of the infant, is as manifestly contrary to fact, as it is to the common sense and feelings of mankind.

In so saying, the reader will perceive our meaning to be, simply, that the infant, whose moral powers are yet undeveloped, has *not* committed *acts*, which *can* be considered *violations of the law* of God. It has no *personal sin*; for it has not *morally* acted. Its *physical nature* cannot be accounted sinful: for that would be to change the very meaning of terms. Properly speaking, therefore, we can predicate of it neither sin nor holiness, personally considered. Yet, it is placed in a rebellious world, subject to the influence of ignorance, with very limited and imperfect experience, and liable to the strong impulses of appetite and passion, so that the moral certainty is as strong as any thing can be, that the very susceptibilities of its nature, being, at the earliest moment, excited by sinful or forbidden objects,—and God being under no obligations, nor choosing, in this world, to vouchsafe the influence of his holy Spirit, which is necessary to prevent from choosing and doing what is wrong,—there shall take place those acts, of which alone we can legitimately and intelligibly predicate moral depravity. Instinct, animal sensation, constitutional susceptibilities, create an impulse, which not being counteracted by moral considerations, or gracious influence, lead the will in a wrong direction, and to wrong objects.

It was thus, that sin was induced in our holy progenitors. No one can plead in Eve, an efficient cause of sin, resident in her nature, (any *prava vis*,) or operative power, sinful in itself, anterior to, and apart from her own vol-

untary acts. And if *she* was led into sin, though characteristically holy, and destitute of any *innate propensity* to sin, where is the necessity for supposing, that the sins of her progeny are to be referred to such a cause? She influenced Adam to sin, and there was no such cause in his nature. Their progeny are placed under circumstances, by no means as propitious to holiness, and it would be strange indeed, if they would not, most naturally, through the very impulses of their constitutional susceptibilities, be induced to choose what God forbids, when their progenitors, with expanded powers and comprehensive knowledge, and placed in circumstances propitious to holiness, abused their liberty in this way. But an objection may be raised, from the death of infants, before capable of moral action, which requires careful attention, and into which we must digress.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MORAL CERTAINTY OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

CONTINUED.

THE death of infants made a source of objection against the views of human depravity, as advocated in this and the preceding chapter—False inferences deduced from the fact—Disputes about what old Calvinists believed—By no means for christian edification—Other inquiries of more importance—The Apostle's use of the term "wages," not decisive—Supreme deference due only to the words of Christ—The use of the term *punishment*—The facts ascertainable in the case—The consequences of the first sin traced in respect of the irrational creation—Thence an inquiry suggested in relation to those affecting the human race—Nothing gained by theories here—Agreement as it respects essential facts—A false assumption—Remarks on the use of technics—The supposition of an inherent taint of depravity—Rom. v, 14 examined—A further observation of the circumstances under which we are called as moral agents, first to act—The mind's susceptibility as to pleasure and pain—Its power of suspending an action till a correct judgment is formed—Danger arising from the want of knowledge acquired by experience—Instanced in Eve—Thence inferred in reference to her offspring—Various laws in operation under which human beings are brought into existence, and first called to act—The law of development noticed in its progressive results.

"The wages of sin is death."¹ Of this fact there can be no dispute. How then, it is asked does it come to pass, that infants die, if *sin cannot* be predicated of them *personally*? That they have ever sinned by *personal acts*, cannot be proved; and will not be asserted. Therefore it is inferred that either there must be some *innate sinful propensity* inherited from Adam, which renders them de-

1. Rom. vii, 23.

serving of death and eternal damnation prior to all moral acts; or, having been personally represented in Adam, they have really participated in his act, and the criminality of that act, and *thus* are rendered deserving of death and damnation.

This latter idea has of late been the occasion and theme of much dispute, and what is not a little remarkable, much of the zeal, in this dispute, is displayed on the incidental question, whether old Calvinistic writers understood the doctrine of imputation in this or another sense. One party maintains that old Calvinists such as Owen, Turretine, and others did explain the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, in such way, as to convey the idea, that both *the act and ill desert of Adam's sin*, are as *really and truly* his descendants.' as if *they had committed it themselves*. The other deny, "First, that this doctrine involves any mysterious union with Adam, any confusion of our identity with him, so that his act *was personally and properly* our act; and secondly, that the *moral turpitude* of that sin was transferred from him to us; we deny the possibility of any such transfer. These," continues the writer in the Biblical Repertory, "are the two ideas which the Spectator, and others, consider as necessarily involved in the doctrine of imputation, and for rejecting which, they represent us as having abandoned the *old doctrine* on the subject."¹ Both, however, admit, that death in infants ensues, *by virtue of their connection* with Adam. They agree as it regards *the matter of fact*; but they differ as to their explanations of that fact; one party affirming, that death is the *natural consequence* of Adam's sin; the other, that it is its *legal punishment*.

It is a remark, which must be obvious to every reader, that it is by no means for christian edification to dispute about what any uninspired men said or thought. Why shall the

1. See Biblical Repertory, v. ii, p. 436.

churches be distracted, because divines of different schools are disagreed as to what Calvin, and Stapfer, and Turretine, and Owen, and Edwards, meant, when they spoke of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity? Is it not the dictate of common sense, to go, at once, to the Scriptures, and having diligently compared them, by fair and equitable reasoning, or criticism, ascertain what is the mind of the Spirit? We shall not perplex our readers by noticing the philosophical theories of former or modern writers on this subject. But there are several points on which it may be important to have definite ideas.

We shall not inquire whether "the imputation of Adam's sin," means this or that. The very fact of existing disputes about it, shews that it is high time to employ terms less liable to be misunderstood. It is of more consequence to determine, whether the death of infants is the *punishment* of their *own* sins, or the *punishment* of *Adam's* sin, or *a consequence* to which they are naturally liable by virtue of their fore-fathers' rebellion?

The expression "wages," which the Apostle employs, is undoubtedly figurative. It must be metaphorically interpreted, before it can be quoted by any one as meaning *the penalty of the law*. There is no other place in the New Testament, where it is so used. If another quotes it as meaning *the certain result*—the *consequence* which follows just as naturally as the soldiers pay might be looked for his services—he adheres more strictly to the import of the expression, so that in the general question, nothing can be decided by the Apostle's use of this term.

It behooves us carefully to examine the scriptural account of this matter, and to cease from the tenacious use of any technical expression whatever, however consecrated by antiquity, which men may have employed to exhibit their ideas as to what the Spirit teaches. To the *words of*

Christ, we must defer, and not to the technics of men.¹ “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even the words* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil-surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth.”²

That infants are *punished* for their *own inherent physical depravity*, we shall not here take time to disprove. We have already seen that in fact there is no such thing as physical depravity. That *they* personally are *punished*

1. We are happy to have it in our power as this form goes to press, to extract the following, for the benefit of some of our readers as expressive of the views and feelings of the brethren of New Haven, whom it has become fashionable in certain quarters to censure and condemn, as having denied a fundamental article of the christian faith, in the views which they express relative to the imputation of Adam's sin.

“To conclude,” say the conductors of the *Christian Spectator*, “we attach no kind of importance to the question, what was the old doctrine on this subject, except in its bearing on existing movements in the Presbyterian Church. It is a fact of much more importance, and one much more gratifying to us, that our brethren so explicitly deny the imputation of the guilt or moral demerit of Adam's sin, to his posterity. This we consider as so much real gain to the cause of truth. And if, as our brethren intimate, the old Calvinists of the Presbyterian Church, go with them in this denial, we shall anticipate still more benign results. That unauthorized use of words and phrases, to which we have objected, and which is so far from expressing our brethren's own views *as they explain them*, must soon be abandoned. Instead of that unguarded mode of stating the doctrine of imputation as including two things, when according to their explanation, it contains but one; instead of adopting the figurative phraseology of common life in their *doctrinal statements*, and denying its literal import;—instead of using the word *punishment*, to denote evil inflicted without respect to the moral desert of its subject and the words *guilt*, and *ill-desert*, to denote mere *exposure* to penal evils, we confidently expect greater precision and accuracy in their phraseology. Nor is this change desirable for its

2. 1 Tim. vi. 3, 5.

stood in a general and figurative sense, as are many which occur in common parlance—none can affirm, who deny that *Adam's sin*, was personally *our sin*, or that the ill desert or moral turpitude of his sin was transferred to us. If, in a large sense, we say that all the suffering, and misery, and death in this world, is the *punishment* which God, as the righteous moral governor of the world, inflicts, for the violation of His divine constitution by our first parents, the idea is a very different one, and does by no means sanction that mode of speech, which virtually implies, that the death of an infant, is the specific punishment due to it personally in consequence of having *really and criminally participated* in Adam's sin.

own sake. It would involve such other changes and result in such further explanations as would terminate many of those theological discussions, and ecclesiastical conflicts, which so often agitate the Presbyterian church. In these cheering anticipations we may indeed be disappointed. But we are greatly mistaken, if on this subject the consecrated phraseology of the older writers, can be long retained, and used with this modern commentary. Other causes of its disuse are in powerful operation. The attachment to forms of words, as the essential means of defending the truth is giving way to independent investigation. The ministry are becoming afraid to take doctrinal opinions upon trust and are yielding to the solemn responsibility of thinking for themselves. Not that in our view, this implies any want of reverence for antiquity; but rather indicates, that due respect to the great and good, which consents to learn from their instructions, but not to submit implicitly to their authority. The present age is somewhat distinguished for careful and accurate discrimination, both in respect to thought, and the vehicle of thought; and more than all, for a high degree of solicitude to exhibit religious truth in forms adapted to the minds of the people, and fitted to secure its right apprehension, and practical results. Evil may ensue in the progress of these changes, but good, that shall far outweigh the evil, is also to be expected. This tendency of things, in the theological community is a stream whose course cannot be resisted; and while it will conduct safely to the haven of truth, those who shall wisely follow it, will no less surely overwhelm those who in the shattered bark of human authority, shall attempt to stem the current." *Christian Spectator*, vol. iii, p. 511, 512.

Without adventuring further, at present, on ground, where it is almost impossible¹ to use unambiguous terms, we shall present to the reader a general sketch of what appears to be the important facts in the case, as revealed in the sacred Scriptures. None will deny that death, as introduced and perpetuated in this world, is a *consequence* of our first parents' violation of that positive constitution, which God ordained, when He interdicted them from the use of the fruit of a particular tree. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."² And this is not obscurely intimated in the language used in the chronicled record of the original threat. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."³ —*dying thou shalt die*, as though the process was to be indefinite.

The whole account too, which is given of the proceedings of God, in relation to the fall of our first parents, shews plainly, that the act of which they were guilty in eating the forbidden fruit, changed the entire aspect of His moral, and even, in some measure deranged His natural government in this world. That one sin of our first parents, was the violation of the very fundamental feature of the whole moral constitution ordained for this world. It introduced, in every direction, confusion, and disorder. We see that the brute creation dies, having as it were sympathy with man: and that the present uneasiness and misery of the creatures result, by virtue of some connection which they have with man, seems to be, not obscurely taught by the Apostle when he says, that "the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly but by reason of him that subjected the same."⁴ It is very cer-

1. See a singular example of this noticed in *Christian Spectator*, v. iii, p. 509.

2. Rom. v. 12.

3. Gen. ii, 17.

4. Rom. viii, 20.

tain, that the earth was cursed for Adam's sake, and rendered sterile, or prolific of thistles and thorns.¹ The serpent was also cursed,² as having been the instrument of Satan's subtlety; and the peculiar misery of gestation, and pains of parturition, denounced against Eve,³ have been perpetuated among her daughters. But will any one say, that the *beasts partook* of the ill desert of Adam's sin?—That the *serpent sinned* along with the devil, because it was unconsciously employed to seduce our first parents?—That the *earth sinned* also, and that the female sex *shared more largely* in the sin of our first parents, than the other? We presume not. Yet unquestionably have all these things, in the history of this world followed, in *consequence* of the sin of our first parents.

The sin of Adam, deranged the whole constitution of God's government in this world. A connection had been established with him as lord of this lower creation, and all things in it.⁴ By virtue therefore of the state of dependence on man, which God had ordained for them, when he became rebellious, confusion and derangement were secured among them. This we can very readily apprehend, without resorting to the philosophical theory of "the union of representation," to account for the present condition of the beasts and soil. God undoubtedly was at liberty, when man rebelled, to show how greatly He was offended with his sin, and to allow the beasts to rise up and to dispute man's dominion, and to exhibit among them, the same scenes of misrule and ferocious passion, which should prevail among his immediate progeny, as the natural consequence of his rebellion; and further, to cause the earth reluctantly—not without much toil and suffering on the part of man, to yield her fruit for his support. Here we may read, on these monuments which God has erected in

1 Gen. ii. 17, 18. 2 Gen. iii. 14. 3 Gen. iii. 16. 4 Gen. i. 28.

this revolted world, the memorials of His displeasure with the sin of the first rebel.

With these facts we might be satisfied, and learn from them, to read the same humbling and appalling lesson, in the history of our suffering, dying race. What conceivable obligation could there have been, that God, now bound after their rebellion, by all the glories of His moral character, to inflict death on our first parents according to the threatening denounced, should exempt their children and progeny from the same? Especially, since He had ordained that all the life to be imparted to the latter should be conveyed through, and possess the character of that of the former? Must He derange His entire government? Shall the law of development be suspended in reference to man? Or rather shall it prevail every where else, but be instantly *suppressed* in reference to man, *because he had sinned*. Had the infinitely wise and Omniscient Supreme, adopted a principle to mark His natural government, which would so quickly be demonstrated improper and mischievous? Was God chargeable with an act of thoughtlessness and over-sight, in incorporating in His government a principle, which put in jeopardy both the character and well-being of the whole race? Who will dare to assert these things? No. He was not taken by surprise. The laws of His providence, remain unchanged, though man has changed his relations; and, instead of being the conduit of life, conveys death to his progeny; instead of being the occasion and centre of bliss, beauty, and glory among the creatures, becomes the instrument of curse to a ruined world. The death of infants therefore, like any other derangement, in the natural government of this world, is the appropriate and legitimate result of Adam's sin, as committed under the operation of laws, both physical and moral; which God had unchangeably ordained, and which He had most indubitably a right so to do.

There is no manner of necessity, in order to account for the death of infants to suppose that the sin of Adam becomes their personal sin, either in respect of its actor its ill desert. Their death eventuates, according to that law of dependence, which marks the whole government of God in this world, by virtue of which the consequences of the act of one man terminate oft-times on the person of another, where there is not the union of representation. All this is simple matter of fact, confirmed alike by human observation, and the Scriptures. It is THEORY which enters here, and talks about being identified with Adam, and of the whole human race being summed up in him, and being accounted but one moral person, partaking in all its numerical parts of the *act* and *ill desert* of his sin. How few form any definite idea of the fact from such theories! Little if any thing but confusion and perplexity is gained by them. They fail even in that for which they are designed. For, suppose it be admitted, that death is, in every instance, specifically the *punishment* of the sin of the individual in whom it eventuates, and that, since dying infants have no *personal* sin, so there is no sin but that of Adam on account of which they can be punished—what then? Is there any thing gained by this theory, which makes them partakers of *his act* and its *ill desert*, as far as it regards the justice of God? We apprehend not. For, is it not just as intelligible, and consistent with the justice of God, to say that the *consequences* of Adam's sin, appear in the death of infants, by *virtue of the great laws of development and mutual dependences which mark the divine government in this world*, as to say that death being the penalty of the law, the sin of Adam must become really and truly, that of infants, that, before they can be guilty of personal sin themselves, they may be justly punished with death.

In the one instance God is simply viewed—without any prying into His secret thoughts and purposes, as having established a constitution through which, if perverted *by their great progenitor, from whom they were to spring, men would be naturally rendered sinners, and subjected to the consequences of such perversion.* In this there can be no impeachment of divine justice. Injury is done to no one, and there is an awful exhibition, made of the madness, and folly, and ruinous tendency, of rebellion. The descendants of the first rebel, as they are evolved from him, alike partake of his constitutional nature, and are subjected to the consequences of his doings. They are introduced into being, under the operation of causes which render sin, suffering, and death, morally certain, and this, as to fact, is as far as any one can venture to go upon this subject, whatever his theory may be.

In the other instance, God is viewed as *punishing* those who have no personal sins, for no *faults of their own*, and, to give such a procedure the semblance of justice as to them, as having adopted an expedient in what is called “the *union of representation.*” But on what is this alledged “*union of representation,*” founded? It cannot certainly be arbitrary. There must be some ostensible ground for it. That is to be found in the relationship existing between Adam and his offspring, i. e. in the *fact* of their descent or development from him.

Eventually, therefore, when the idea of the imputation of sin, comes to be sifted and examined, it amounts to nothing more nor less, than what we have said about the consequences of the act of one man, terminating on another, by virtue of that law of mutual dependence, which marks the government of God. But, since the phrase is by no means unambiguous—has been misapprehended—is objected to by many—and has led to disputes among those, who agree as to the substantial facts of revelation. is it not safer to decline

the use of a technicality, which renders so much explanation necessary, and does not, after all, meet the difficulty contemplated?

“The union of representation” is indeed insisted on by some, as of *vital* consequence. But we think, that here too is an unnecessary dispute about terms, and their meaning. If, by this, is meant nothing more, than that Adam did not act exclusively for himself; but that his conduct was to determine the character and conduct of those that should come after him, we will not object. But if it is meant to designate any positive procedure of God, in which He made Adam to stand, and required him to act, as the substitute of the persons of his offspring, numerically considered and by name—head for head, so that they might be held, as in commercial transactions, personally liable for this very sin, as being guilty co-partners with him in it, we certainly may require other and better proof, than what is commonly submitted. The prophet complains, in reference to the generations that had preceded him; “Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and *we* have borne THEIR iniquities.”¹ Will it be contended, that in the eye of God, the fathers had been constituted the representatives, in this strict sense, of that generation; so that they were punished for the fathers’ sins, committed before they were born? We presume not. Our Saviour says, that in consequence of the forefathers of the Jewish people, in his day, having put the prophets, &c. to death, it should be required at the hands of them, their children or descendants. “That the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, *it shall be required of this generation.*”² Will any one affirm, that there was “the union of representation” there? Or. when it is

1. Lam. v. 7

2. Luke. xi 50, 51

said, in the second commandment, that ‘God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generations,’ will it be contended, that this is because the former stood as the representatives of the latter, acting, legally, in their name, and for them? We presume not. And yet stronger language cannot be employed, to denote the results which follow from Adam’s sin, by virtue of our connection with him. Why, then, must we suppose, that there is a principle in the one case, different from that in the other? And that what seems to flow out of the *natural* relation between parent and children, and to be the *natural* consequence of such relation, must be attributed to a *legal union* or *moral identity*, between Adam and his offspring?

There is, we apprehend, involved in this theory of the ‘union of representation,’ a principle—or, rather, it grows out of an assumption, which certainly is not revealed truth, and whether it be truth at all, perhaps can never be determined, that no creature possessed of susceptibilities, which may capacitate it for moral action, can be regarded, at *any moment of its being*, but as under the government of law; so that, if not *yet* able, voluntarily to act for itself, in the prosecution of its interests, or the manifestation of its submission, it must be done for it by another, admitted and recognized in law, as its proper and legal representative.

This assumption relates to the conduct of God Himself, as though, by the very act of creating a rational being, He must, as the great moral governor, provide for its being dealt with, at every moment of its existence, and having its destinies determined, according to law, if not in its *own person*, and for its *own acts*, in the person and for the acts of its *legal* representative. Will any one say, that such an obligation on God, does, in fact, exist?

It is very manifest, that these things are not believed by many. whom, nevertheless, we cannot but recognize as the

children of God. Why then contend about speculative principles, or theories, according to which one man and another prefers weaving together the facts of scripture—when, if technicalities and theories were laid aside, it would be found, that all are agreed, as to the matter of fact? If a man will confess, that the transaction of God with our first parents, was such as to affect the whole human race;—that it is in consequence of their sin that we all die;—that it is most certain too, that as soon as we are capable of moral agency, we become guilty of actual sin;—and that such is the condition, or state of things, under which men are born into this world, that they will universally and voluntarily perpetuate the rebellion of the first pair, without some other agency than was originally employed to prevent it,—what more can be desired by the most strenuous advocate of such technicalities, as the representative character of Adam, the imputation of sin, sinning in Adam, falling with him, original sin, the corruption of our whole nature, and the like? Must a man be denounced as having denied the faith—be branded with the charge of heresy, and be subjected to all the fears, and suspicions, and evil speaking, which must thence arise, affecting alike his reputation and usefulness, merely because he does not express himself in terms, consecrated by long usage, but terms of man's inventing, while he nevertheless admits every *fact* that can be established, either by scripture or observation? Is it right, does it at all savour of the spirit of christianity, to declaim against him, as having broken his ordination vows, merely because he does not think it expedient to adopt the *language* of the Confession of Faith; which, like all other living languages, has suffered from the changes continually taking place in the signification of words, while he admits and believes, that the “system of doctrine,” as set forth in that confession, when its terms are fairly and properly un-

derstood, is agreeable to the sacred Scriptures? Does his ordination vow, bind him always to express his views of the great facts of Scripture, in the language of the confession? Assuredly it does not. And if a man admits the grand essential *facts* of revelation, though he may even object against human technicalities, yet ought we to receive him as a brother. The Bible has not thrown those facts together into systematic order, and required us to adopt it. Why, then, shall we be so tenacious of technical terms, and systematic arrangement of truth, when, perhaps, there may be much, if not of false philosophy, at least of human imperfection in both.

These remarks are not made, because of any dislike or hostility towards Confessions of Faith, much less towards our own, as a convenient instrument of ecclesiastical fellowship, but to guard against the substitution & exaltation of *such* fellowship, to the exclusion and injury of that which is *christian*. The experience of the church has shewn, that submission to formularies, though most rigidly enforced, cannot secure the spirit of christianity, or even perfect unity of sentiment among a people. It is the unity of the Spirit alone, which constitutes the effectual and eternal bond; but that, instead of being promoted, is impaired by zealous contentions for technicalities, and set forms of speech, without fraternal fellowship to ascertain, as heart beats in unison with heart, whether, and how far, there is accordance in the belief of the grand essentials of our religion. It is for the *faith* of the gospel, that we are earnestly to contend; but that has reference to *facts* of revelation, and not to the theories or technicalities, which men have thrown around them.

If it be said that infants die, in consequence of some *inherent taint*, or *physical* disorder in their moral susceptibilities, derived by natural generation from Adam, rendering them personally guilty, and *deserving* of damnation, before their own actual sin, the idea is certainly different. But this, as-

surely, will not be affirmed.¹ For the apostle does manifestly speak of death, as eventuating in every instance, *as the consequence of the one offence*, not of the offence of the individual dying, but of the first man. "Through the offence of one," says he, "many be dead." "By one man's offence, death reigned by one." "The judgment was by one (offence) to condemnation"—"by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."² Nothing, therefore, can be inferred from the death of infants, as to any personal participation in the act and criminality of Adam's sin, requiring or justifying it; nor as to any inherent or physical depravity. Death is the natural and legitimate consequence of the first sin of Adam. It eventuates by virtue of the constitution ordained with him.

But does not this conclusion militate against the revelations of God? Paul has said, that "death reigned over Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned, after the similitude of Adam's transgression."³ It is taken for

1. Perhaps we are too sanguine in thus thinking. For Dr. Green, whose *opinions* are quoted as authority by some, has indorsed a theory on the subject of the derivation of depravity, at variance with such an idea, and as deserving of chief consideration. He holds the following extraordinary language, at the weakness and absurdity of which, we know not whether to smile or frown:—"If we must speculate, and form a *theory* on this subject," says he, (he had just before affirmed, "that the soul is *not* created *impure*") "*the safest and most rational* is, to suppose that *all souls* were created at the beginning of the world; that they remain in a *quiescent* state, *till* the bodies which they are to inhabit are formed; that, *on union* with these bodies, they receive all their original impressions, by means of the external senses; that the whole system of bodily appetites and propensities, with the fancy or imagination which is closely connected with them, having become irregular, excessive, and perverted by the fall, do *UNAVOIDABLY* corrupt the soul, and *enslave* it to sin."—CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE, VOL. 3, p. 530. Whether this "theory" has been borrowed from the Brachminical Mythology, or the Stoical philosophy, which represent the soul of man to be of pure celestial origin, an emanation from the Deity, but corrupted by its union with grosser matter, our readers may conjecture. The facts of Scripture need no theories for illustration, suggested by heathen mythology.

2. Rom. v. 15, 16, 17, 18.

3. Rom. v. 14.

granted by many, that infants are here referred to, and that, as they are said to have sinned, while incapable of actual or voluntary sin, it must be, that the apostle contemplates either physical depravity, or personal moral ill desert, or both, since, only by some essential derangement of the moral susceptibilities, or a participation in Adam's sin, could *they* be said to have "sinned." But does the apostle speak of infants at all? As he evidently speaks of having "*sinned*," which is an *action*, we might thence presume, that he is referring to the acts of *voluntary agents*, and the more especially, because he seems to deny only a *formal* resemblance between *Adam's* transgression, and the sin of *those* to whom he refers.

If, however, we look into the context, we shall find, that the fact of death's reigning "over those that had not sinned, after the similitude of Adam's transgression," is cited in proof of another fact, viz:—that there was a *law* existent from Adam to Moses, though it did not at all *resemble* that which *Adam* had violated. The law, which Adam had violated, was a *positive precept*, superadded to the law which was engraven on his heart. Such was not the law from Adam to Moses. But still he teaches that there was a *law*, and confirms it by the fact, that sin was in the world. Men actually did sin during that period. But it is not the procedure of God, or the dictate of common sense, to account, that there either is or can be sin, where there is no *law*. "Sin is not imputed, where there is no law."¹ His object seems to be, to support his assertion, viz:—that, by virtue of the sin of our first parents, men had become sinners, and were righteously subjected to death—there having been a law which they had violated, notwithstanding it was not of the same formal character, with that which Adam had transgressed, and for the viola-

1. Rom. v. 15

tion of which, death might be most righteously, as it was actually, inflicted on them that had not sinned, after the similitude of Adam's transgression. We can, therefore, see no reason to suppose, that the apostle uses the word sin here, in a sense, contrary to his own definition of it, as being "the transgression of the law"—the act of a voluntary being, under the government of law;—and, if so, there is no room for the supposition, that he is here speaking of infants.

What he says of "sin dwelling in" him, &c. has been already explained.

Having, therefore, as we think, shewn, that there is nothing decisively to be objected from the death of infants, against the views presented in the preceding chapters,—that they are, in fact, not under the actual government of law, but merely under the providential rule of the great Creator—and that there is nothing, in the facts and language of scripture, to confirm the idea of there being something *created* in us, and born with us, which, prior to all voluntary acts, constitutes us really sinners in the sight of God, we return from this digression, and proceed to trace the law of development yet further, as it operates to secure the guilt of personal sin, as soon as the individuals become moral agents.

With instincts operating, sensations experienced, and nothing more than passions or feeling developed, the infant has not yet actually become a moral agent, and, consequently, possesses no moral character. It has not risen above the level of the mere animal. Intellection must be superadded, at least to such a degree, as that the individual shall have knowledge of law, before that it can become a subject of law. Man differs from the entire animal creation beside, in that he is possessed of capacities, which are designedly fitted for the lofty enjoyments and purposes of the knowledge

and communion of God. The development of these capacities, however, is effectuated by means of external and material objects, and it is not until the child has been so far accustomed to associations of thought, clear perceptions, accurate observation, careful comparison and abstraction, as to be able to form an idea of something, not perceptible by his senses, and to employ some sensible object as its representative or image, that it can have the idea of God. This occurs, at a much earlier period than some apprehend. A child, whose sensations have been vivid, and perceptions clear, can soon form the idea of an efficient cause, and with this, by familiar comparisons, associate the ideas of various moral qualities, which, together, will give the complex notion of God.

We are not concerned to trace, in the regular process of intellectual education, the development of the different capacities, which fit man for such knowledge, to which every child with or without the aid of designed teaching by instructors, is subjected. They are only some general facts, which are pertinent. No one can have failed to observe, that those objects, which produce *pleasurable* sensations, are apt to engage *the attention* most, and secure the most accurate perceptions, and that in proportion to the vivid character of the sensation, will be the discriminating character of the perception. In like manner such sensations, with their associated thoughts, will be most frequently recalled, and most indelibly recollected. The vivid character of the sensation, may, indeed, in some measure, depend upon the susceptibilities of the organs of sense. It is the susceptibility of the mind as to pleasure or pain however, which secures the interested attention requisite to an accurate knowledge, and retentive recollection of the object. In other words, just in proportion as feeling is awakened, or excited, will be the degree of interested at-

tion, and the probability of the objects not being forgotten. And what is true of objects as productive of thought, is also true of subjects, or of those ideas, which the mind forms or arrives at for itself, by its comparisons and deductions. Such is the law of our nature, and we cannot alter it.

Impressions and passions, or feelings, rouse to action. But there is given to the mind of man, a power of balancing, deliberating, and suspending action, till a full and correct judgment is formed. That judgment must always be, according to the character, or degree of correct knowledge acquired. If it is thought that an object, or action will be promotive of our interest, or happiness, there will be a strong determining influence to seek, or resolve upon it. And as it is a law of our nature, that we act according to the influence of prevalent motive, so it is manifest, that if the judgment in the case, should not be the result of sufficiently accurate, and extensive, knowledge of the character of the object, or action, or of their tendency to benefit us, so as to counteract the influence of impressions or feelings inclining to it, the choice or purpose and conduct of the individual will err, and be found eventually at war with his real interest.

And here we may remark, that in most cases of practical bearing, the judgment which we form as to the fitness or unfitness of an object or action to benefit us, is the result, not of mere speculative knowledge or intellectual perceptions, but actual experience. The child may be told, and it may even be demonstrated to him, that an object or action will prove injurious; but nothing that he can hear, and learn in this way, will be so efficient in preventing the choice of it, as the actual experience of its injurious tendency. The object may be very attractive, its impressions very pleasant, and its whole appearance so imposing, as to produce the conviction of its being calculated to benefit, and

that in so strong a degree, as actually to prevent that close observation, and those discriminating perceptions, which are necessary to a fuller knowledge of it, and which, if had, would counteract its illusions. The child will not be effectually prevented from catching at the flame of the candle, till it has burned its little hand. The knowledge thus gained by experience, will exert a more efficient influence, than all it had acquired from the frowns and prohibitions and other demonstrations of its nurse.

Now, every human being is brought into existence under the operation of these and similar laws of his very nature, and that too, under circumstances altogether unfavourable to the acquisition of the knowledge necessary to determine always to conduct promotive of his real benefit. Sensible objects first appear, and caress his attention, and attract and win his heart. There is a strong bias towards them produced by the pleasure afforded, and the indulgence allowed, before that intellect has been sufficiently developed to discover their real character, and their bearing on his true happiness. There is, moreover, a particular readiness or inclination to experiment for himself, and to learn *practically*, rather than to take the word of one more competent to judge.

Thus was it in some respect with our first parents while innocent, and it was on this very principle of their nature, that Satan operated successfully to secure their sin and ruin. The influence of passion, excited by the view of the fruit, and conversation with the tempter, becoming prevalent, and not being counteracted by any knowledge of evil which our first mother derived from the law or prohibition of God, the readiness to experiment and practically to know for herself, overpowered her faith in the testimony of God, and she plucked and ate the forbidden fruit. It was manifestly, in her, the triumph of her sensitive over her intellectual nature. Her passions and appetites pre-

vailed, notwithstanding she was in possession of an understanding fully developed, and furnished with demonstrative knowledge.

Need we then think it strange—Is it not most natural, that her offspring should successively make the same fatal error, especially when they are placed in circumstances vastly more unpropitious than she was, having in fact been brought under the strong influence of sensitive indulgence, before that their intellectual powers have been sufficiently developed, to discern and know the will, or law of God—which declares what is holy, good, and true, and to be sought, and what is evil, and ruinous, and to be avoided? The mere knowledge of God, and of His law, intellectually acquired, has to combat with the strong influence of passion, impelling, oftentimes, to what is prohibited, so that, from the very first moment in which the child begins to act, there takes place a manifest derangement in the exercise of its moral powers, or of those capacities and susceptibilities, which fit it for moral action. It becomes a sinner, therefore, most naturally:—nothing, indeed, can be more natural than such a result, considering all the circumstances under which it is placed. And yet there is no absolute necessity, arising out of the constitution of its being, or from the presence of some latent, intangible cause, or foundation, wrought into the very structure of the human soul. But, when it becomes a sinner; or, in other words, when it first commits sin, it does it most voluntarily. For what is it to act voluntarily, but to act according to the prevalent motive? The man naturally, and without resistance, yields to the motive, which, at the time, seems to him to be most important, and to have the most direct bearing on his pleasure or happiness. In so far as he has power to weigh and balance the several motives for or against an action, is he actually and perfectly free. This power, however, it must be obvious, will never be brought into full energy, where

the passions and affections, through ignorance and inattention, possess such a flattering and engrossing influence, as to make a trifling and sensual gratification, outweigh an eternal inheritance. Yet such is the situation in which man is placed, when he is first called, as a moral and accountable creature to act. The motives drawn from sensible objects, have already been operative, and gratification has been found in the indulgence of sense. The affections and passions have been developed, and already excited, and put into that tendency to action, which we may commonly call the will. The knowledge of God, and of His law, acquired in the development of further and intellectual powers of the man, present other, higher, and opposing objects of pursuit. At first, they are but partially known, and under these disadvantages, the moral being is called to decide, whether the rational mind shall rise, and push its conquests over flesh and sense, aspiring after the joy of communion with God; or, whether animal indulgence and passion, shall detain it in bondage. Alas, for our wretched, dying race, the decision never fails to be a fatal one! One generation passeth away, and another cometh, while each repeats the same ruinous experiment of rebellion against God!

And all this, is the consequence of the first sin of our guilty progenitors. There it commenced, and the defection has been propagated through all generations. If it be inquired, why are human beings placed in circumstances so unpropitious?—Why are they left thus to perish, in thick and rapid succession?—Our only reply is, that God saw fit to adopt, as the rule of His providence, the law of development and mutual dependence, for the production of the vast family of man. This he had, unquestionably, a right to do; and the captious inquirer might, with the very same propriety, ask, why the same law extends throughout the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms. The Most High giveth no account of His proceedings. It hath seemed good to Him,

thus to ordain his government in this world; and, but for the rebellion of our first parents, the very same law of the divine agency, would have been as efficient in the production of holiness; for the development of human beings, and their powers, would have been conducted under circumstances as adverse, as they are now favorable to sin.

That rebellion has deranged the whole issues of this developing process, and converted our first parents, who were ordained to be a channel of life and purity, into that of death and corruption to their progeny. Earth had been, forever, a vast Aceldamer, the charnel house of our rebellious race, where nought but misery, corruption, and death had been developed, had it not pleased the infinite and adorable Creator, to provide a new fountain head of influences, and ordain the Lord Jesus Christ to be a second Adam, that as all united to the first by ordinary generation, become partakers of death, so all united to Him by regeneration, should be partakers of eternal life.

From him, the process of development commences in a new series, and as the powers of the renovated man are unfolded, his corrupt exercises cease, and the individual is recovered from the influence of depravity, there is no estimating the lofty attainments in holiness, to which he shall rise. He came, not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly. The life that was to flow originally to men, was to pass through the narrow channel of our great progenitor's capacities, but now, "as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath he given to the Son, to have life in Himself,¹ that He may give it to whomsoever he will, and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."²

If God shall see fit to bring the infant mind, before its powers have been developed, into connection with the bles-

1. John v, 26.

2. John i, 14.

sed Redeemer, as He probably does, in the case of those that die in infancy, and let the developing process, be in the high and holy exercises of those redeemed by His blood, and elicited by circumstances, inconceivably propitious to happiness and holiness;—or, if he brings the rebel mind, already arrayed in opposition to His government, to submit to His sway, and believe upon His Son, and then commence its renovated life, and high career of glory, to Jesus must be all the honor and all the praise ascribed. Great and ineffable will His glory appear, as it shall be seen, that man has risen from a state of mere emptiness and wants, from the lowest and despicable of beginnings, to such a degree of perfection, that there shall not be found a creature so lofty, as to excite his envy, or so low as to be treated with disdain;—and that thus, upon the very same principle, which the first rebel perverted to misery, corruption and death, God has raised, and purified, and enlarged the capacities of poor, degraded, fallen man, to the highest conceivable and possible degree of holiness and bliss. Oh, the depths of the wisdom and goodness of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE NECESSITY AND CAUSE OF REGENERATION.

THE necessity of a change of heart inferrible from the fact of total depravity—The present disqualification of the impenitent sinner for the happiness of Heaven—A comparison of Christ's and the world's philosophy on this subject—His conversation with Nicodemus, John iii. 2—8—The evidence which substantiates the fact—The special and direct influence of the Spirit its only satisfactory cause—Some attempts to refer it to *natural* causes—Two remarks preliminary to an examination of some of them—1. Conversion not the *natural* effect of EARLY EDUCATION—2. NOR of THE DISCIPLINE OF CIRCUMSTANCES—3. NOR of the power of strong BELIEF to REALIZE the thing believed—Two remarks as to all the hypotheses, which admit not the special and direct agency of the Spirit—The attempt to identify Baptism and Regeneration.

We have seen that the moral exercises of man are deranged; and that instead of the capacities of his nature, his powers of mind and the affections and passions of his heart, being carried forth in harmonious exercise towards God, as the supreme good,—in which consists his spiritual life, there is an awful disorder prevailing, in which the world has usurped the place of God; and while it attracts and binds the thoughts and purposes and desires of the soul, to what is altogether inappropriate, excites an aversion and hatred to the former, evincive of a radical derangement—a total depravity. With the restoration of their disordered powers and affections to appropriate and harmonious action, or in other words, their being actually brought into blissful play around God as the great centre, and spring of all our delights, commences spiritual life.

Whatever objections, therefore may have been urged against the necessity of a change of heart, from the alleg-

ed virtue of man, it is obvious, that, being based entirely on false grounds, they cannot lie. Assuredly no one will pretend, that, take man as we find him—the subject of various sinful passions and emotions, which bind him down to earth, and render him forgetful, neglectful, and hateful, with respect to God,—he is, or can be qualified for a happy entrance into Heaven. Remove the impenitent sinner to the bright scenes of bliss and glory, that fill with transports of delight, the “spirits of just men made perfect,” and he could not be happy. His heart is altogether unattuned to such scenes. No chord in his soul vibrates in unison with the soft melody of the skies. The nearer his approach to the infinitely Holy and righteous One, the more intense must become his misery, while his heart retains its enmity against Him. We need not conjure out of the strong metaphorical language of scripture, an Hell of material flame for the torturing of the damned.

Every impenitent sinner carries the elements of Hell in his own bosom, and all that is wanting to the perfection of his misery, is to place him in circumstances, where the various passions and affections now elicited by prohibited objects, and modified by his aversion from God, shall be fully developed. If the dim and very imperfect view, which the sinner, in this world, has of the character of God, oftentimes lashes into fearful and hellish excitement, the pride, and rage, and malice of his soul, and throws him into paroxysms of despair and anguish; how much more intense will be these things, when the scenes of earth shall recede, and the veil which now covers the eternal world, shall be removed, and he shall see, as in full blaze, the grandeur and glory—the brilliant lustre of Jehovah? Oh how will the poor soul recoil, and prey upon itself, with the most agonizing reflections, when it shall be brought to see and know, who and what He is, against whom it rebelled, how holy, and just, and righteous, and true, and immutable are his judgments!

The truth is, eternal punishment arises out of the very constitution of the mind itself. While under the influence and controlling power of its selfishness and its enmity against God, it is not, it cannot be at ease and happy. And if man, when the veil of sense is thrown around him,—as it is here, in the first stage of his existence,—to blunt his perceptions of the vivid and appalling glory of the Divine Being,—with his very partial and imperfect knowledge of the divine character, begins, as soon as he is capable of acting, to shew his aversion; if, when he is placed under circumstances so favourable for repressing and subjugating his enmity against God, it promptly, and characteristically, and efficiently, displays itself, can we anticipate any thing else in relation to him, than that unless a change of heart takes place,—unless he here actually and entirely lays aside his enmity, he will continue through all eternity to hate God, and thus torture himself as he shall not fail to make clearer and fuller discoveries of the absolute and entire opposition of the divine nature to him? It is as contrary to common sense, and sound philosophy, as it is to the sacred Scriptures to anticipate future happiness for man without a change of heart. The dead soul must spiritually live, before there can be either security or bliss.

This is seen and felt by some, who look, with closer observation and more discerning eye, on the character and condition of man by nature, than the sighing sentimentalists, who, in their poetic visions, descry in him, but perfect purity, or at least perfectibility, without divine influences. The necessity of some moral transformation, or renovation is admitted, but instead of hearkening to the unerring word of God, which reveals the great Almighty Agent—the Holy Spirit whose life-giving influence alone effectuates it, they resort to the theories of a false and impertinent philosophy, or to a miserable and degrading superstition. It may be well, before we trace the influence of the spirit, in pro-

ducing this change of heart in man, to notice some of the theories, which philosophy and superstition have embraced, in order to account for, or evade the force of scripture testimony, as to the reality and necessity of a change of heart.

The blessed Redeemer states, in the most unequivocal terms, the fact of a moral transformation of character being both real and necessary, in order to enter into the kingdom of Heaven, or bring us under the gracious government of God; and that this transformation, is produced through the immediate and special agency of the Holy Spirit. Under whatever aspect it is contemplated, whether in the voluntary exercises of the living soul, in the spiritual graces of faith, repentance, love, and the like severally, or whether in the relative series of these vital exercises, the Spirit of God is proclaimed to be its author. Call it regeneration, new birth, new creature, change of heart, renovation, or by whatever expression it may be designated, still the agency of the Spirit of God, is assigned as its great and appropriate, its direct and immediate cause. The fact is as perfectly ascertainable, as capable of being subjected to the attention and apprehension of man, as the wind, though as inscrutable as it regards the *modus operandi*.

Such is the philosophy of the Saviour. With the evidence of the fact, He requires us to rest satisfied, provided it is *sufficient*, even though we may not be able, in any metaphysical analysis, to unfold the specific nature of that agency, by which the Spirit produces those remarkable transformations of character which commence in Regeneration. In this respect He shews the superiority of his, to the systems of human philosophy. They induce a thousand fruitless speculations, and excite such ardour, in quest of what is not to be discovered, as oftentimes to produce disastrous effects. They lead into such numerous

doubts, and bewildering perplexity, so torture with uncertainty and conjecture, and superinduce such a frightful gloom on the mind itself, that for its own relief, it oft-times gladly seizes some fantastic theory, and yields to its guidance in hope of escape,—as the lone traveller, led by successive shrubs and flowrets into the forest's depths, till lost in the darkness of night he hopes to retrace his steps by the light of deceitful fires, that dance around his path. How much of human philosophy consists in wild *conjectures* about things which cannot be discovered! How are the mind's energies and the precious moments of a fleeting life, wasted in mere bewildering speculations!

The Saviour, if we will submit to his philosophy, subjects us to no such loss of time or efforts, but tells us at once, *thus far shalt thou go, but no further—here let thy proud reasonings be stayed.* “Who art thou, O vain man, that repliest against God?” The conversation of Christ with Nicodemus, may be said to have been altogether of a philosophical character. The topic was the very theme which now engages our attention, the great fact of the REGENERATION OF A SINNER, one of those striking phenomena, which the gospel reports, and which we observe occurring in the moral history of some that hear it. Nicodemus seems to have been of an inquisitive, and reflecting mind. He had not yielded to the prejudices of his sect and day, against Christ; but, having collected a number of facts which had occurred in His history, and having subjected them, and the evidence which substantiated them, to the strictest investigation, had arrived at the conclusion, that He was “a teacher come from God.” The works performed by Him he saw to be of such an extraordinary character, as to be inexplicable on any of the known laws of nature, or on any other supposition than that of the divine presence and co-operation with Him. “Rabbi! we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no

one can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with Him.”¹

Impressed with this very rational idea, he desired some instruction from Him. The blessed Saviour at once announced the fact and necessity of *regeneration*. “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” The thing was altogether incomprehensible by Nicodemus. *How* a man could be *born again* was a question, which neither his Pharisaism, nor his philosophy could answer. The Saviour, to relieve his mind from fruitless speculations, assured him that the change was indeed a real one, of which he spake, and so explained the phraseology he had employed, as to shew that he was making use of a metaphorical expression, and should be understood as designating some change in the spiritual character of man analogous with that: (*which takes place in his animal functions*) at birth. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, 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 that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye *must be born again*.”

The *mode* of the Spirit's efficiency in regeneration He states, is beyond the reach of inquiry. It is like every other mode of divine agency altogether inexplicable; and therefore not a legitimate subject of investigation. The evidence of the fact was sufficient. That was the word of Christ, which upon Nicodemus' own principles, and by virtue of his professed conviction that He was a teacher *come from God*, he was bound to believe. At the same time the more effectually, and speedily, to check his useless curiosity, and induce his faith, the Saviour remarked, that in requiring him to believe the *fact*, while he re-

1. John, iii. 2-8.

mained ignorant of *the mode* in which the Spirit, to whose agency he attributed it, accomplished it, he required nothing more than what he willingly conceded, every day, in relation to objects in the material world. He never doubted the reality of the wind which howled around his dwelling, and yet with all his philosophy he could not invent a satisfactory theory with regard to its origin. "The wind," said the Saviour, "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell, whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He believed in its existence, because of the report which his senses made to him, and was satisfied with *this* evidence, though ignorant of almost every thing else in relation to it. Why could he not do the same with regard to the *fact* of regeneration? He had the testimony of a "*teacher come from God*," whose testimony in the case was, undoubtedly, as sufficient as the truth of God itself, to secure his belief, though he could not understand the *precise mode* by which the Spirit produced the change.

The gospel is thus found to be in exact accordance with sound philosophy; so that, whoever refuses to believe the Saviour's doctrine of regeneration, only shows how unphilosophical is his infidelity. The only point on which it can be lawful, on philosophical principles, to hesitate, is, the *evidence* of the fact. We are not to be too credulous, and believe every thing reported to us for fact. We owe it to our rational nature, to see that the facts, or phenomena reported, are supported with *sufficient proof*. But, being once satisfied with that proof, any *difficulty, in solving these facts, or phenomena*, can never authorize us to disbelieve their *reality*. Now, the evidence adduced in support of the fact of regeneration, is *that of testimony*; and in the case of the individuals renewed, there is superadded that of *consciousness, or experience*. The sum of the evidence

on the subject, amounts to this.—The God of truth declares, that such an entire and radical change of men's dispositions and habits,—such a thorough transformation of their thoughts, feelings, purposes and conduct, as to make them exhibit a new life, (which is therefore, very appropriately termed *regeneration*, or being *born again*,) is effected by *the DIRECT AND SPECIAL agency of the Spirit of God*. Individual sinners add their testimony to that of God, and declare, that *such* a change has been wrought on *them*, and furnish, in their *sudden conversion* and *subsequent life*, *sufficient proof that it is even so*.

It will not do for an objector to say, "I have never experienced such a change, and, *therefore*, there is no such thing." The conclusion is gratuitous. Ten thousand well attested cases of *sudden* and *extraordinary conversion* may be cited. They crowd upon us in every direction. From Saul of Tarsus, down to Newton and Scott, of modern days; and in every of those numerous revivals of religion, which bless the churches in this land, we may meet authentic instances of *sudden*, *entire*, and *most extraordinary transformations* in the moral character of individuals, to account for which, no cause so satisfactory can be assigned, as that which the blessed Saviour states, viz:—the efficacious grace and influence of the Holy Spirit. The *fact*, that *some such changes* do take place, cannot be denied. The sceptic, and he who sneers at *spiritual* religion, *devotional frames*, and *christian experience*, cannot resist the evidence of history, and the force of accumulating testimony, as to the fact of some change, whatever may be their theories to account for it. Among the most ingenious devices, by which to resist the evidence of fact, in favour of the Spirit's special and direct influence, is that, which, having clothed itself with the semblance of religion, the garb of sanctity, and possessing a belief in the *general* influence of the Spirit, and truths of

christianity, undertakes to trace the frames and feelings of the converted sinner, *exclusively* to some *natural* cause.

The whole strain and spirit of the Saviour's conversation, appear sufficient to show the fallacy of such a procedure. It is a virtual impeachment of his truth and wisdom, to resort to any other supposition, than that which He has stated to be fact. And whoever professes to have extricated the *fact* of regeneration from *all* mystery, and to make the thing perfectly plain, does, in that very circumstance, furnish presumptive, if not positive proof, that the regeneration which he inculcates, is essentially different from that which Christ taught. But, lest it should be said, that we demand too unqualified a submission to the authority of the Scriptures, and reject the light which mental science furnishes, it may not be improper to notice, distinctly, some of the more imposing suppositions, which men of ingenious minds, but enemies of evangelical religion, have framed, to account for sudden and extraordinary conversions, and for the whole of spiritual experience, without admitting the direct and special agency of the divine Spirit. They will all be found inadequate. Laid in the balance of the Sanctuary, they shall be found wanting. But to prevent mistake, it is necessary to make one or two preliminary observations.

The *first* is, that, however we may be able to trace the workings of our own minds, and ascertain the operation of certain general laws of thought and feeling, in cases of sudden and extraordinary conversion, we must be careful how we attribute effects of a *singular* character, to causes, continually operating without such effects. That the Spirit of God will not violate any established law, by which God governs mind, in the regeneration of the sinner, but will actually make it subservient to his own design and agency, is freely admitted. And yet it will, by no means follow,

that there is not a special and peculiar agency, over and above that which is implied in such general laws. For, if the agency of the Spirit is only and entirely through, or in the operation of some universal and established law of human thought, then, assuredly, we ought to expect, that the *result* will be *uniform*. Transformations of character, such as the Bible describes, and such as take place in conversion, must, in this case, occur, as *certainly* as these laws exist and are appealed to, or brought into operation.

In the *providential government* of God, we invariably expect an uniform result from a general law. Let the sceptic show why it is, that the transformations of character, of which we speak, are so rare, if they are to be referred to the regular operation of universal and established laws, or natural causes. He is bound to account for their comparatively *unfrequent occurrence*. For, either these conversions must result from *general* laws, or particular accidental combinations of circumstances, if the special and direct agency of the Spirit is denied. If the former, we demand that the sceptic, the scoffing infidel, the hypocritical formalist, the rational divine, (*et id omne genus*,) shew what it is, that so prevents the operation of *general* laws, as that their appropriate effects become as rare as exceptions. If the latter, then the providence of God must be denied, or still a special, divine interference in arranging and combining those circumstances, must be admitted, so that nothing is gained by the supposition; for there is still some special agency of God, in the conversion of a sinner.

The *next* observation, relates to the character of the facts, which are to be referred to the special and efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, as their appropriate cause. They are such as the following, viz:—children and youth, apparently free from crime, and filled with all the giddy and glittering fancies of puerile imaginations, are suddenly op-

pressed with a sense of their own total depravity, and presently are brought to repent of their sins, and to exercise a strong and affectionate confidence in God, through the merits of Christ, which fills them with peace and joy, and secures a walk and conversation, according to godliness;—persons, of adult years, who had lived in utter ignorance and thoughtlessness about divine things, are suddenly affected with the same characteristic exercises, producing the same results;—violent opposers and persecutors of religion, through the same inward process of conviction and faith, are suddenly transformed into its most zealous friends and advocates:—proud, audacious, and blaspheming infidels, cold and speculative sceptics, become humble and devoted believers:—moralists and religionists, and even acknowledged ministers of Christ, externally free from blame, are awakened, and confessing that they had been deceiving themselves, with outward forms, and utterly ignorant of a change of heart, evince a deep and heart-felt experience of the truth:—and all professing the same oppressive sense of personal guilt, a pacifying confidence in God, through the merits of the blessed Saviour, and the deep feeling of repentance for their sins, and that too, neither in one country, nor among a particular people, nor in a peculiar combination of circumstances, but throughout the world, under a different ministry, and missionaries of different sects, savages of our forests, Hottentots, Caffres, Hindoos, natives of the Sandwich and Society Isles, Greenlanders, Kamtschadales, “all speaking the wonderful works of God,” and telling “what He has done for (their) souls.” Other classifications of facts might be made, but these are sufficient for our purpose, as they may serve to assist us, in tracing the particular hypotheses, by which the infidel formalist in religion, attempts to waive the force of the proof they furnish, in favour of the Spirit’s work.

1. It is objected, that in citing the conversion of children and others, as proof of the Spirit's special and direct agency, we attribute to a *supernatural influence*, both feelings and conduct, which should, more appropriately, be regarded, as THE EFFECTS OF VERY EARLY EDUCATION. A very ingenious and plausible writer, whose object was, to disprove that there was any regeneration, "distinct from Baptism," and to show, that the high church principles and ultraism of the established Episcopacy in England, were the only safe interpreters and promoters of religion, has endeavoured to expose, what he has gratuitously called, "the evils of making religion consist in abstraction, imaginations and feelings," and thinks that he has found, in the melancholy and occasional hallucinations of Cowper's mind, an ample warrant for his hostility to vital religion, and his most invidious classifications. "The Essene and the Evangelical," he says, "appeal to their natural feelings as to a divine sanction," and "concur in diverting religion from influencing men's conduct, in the business of life, by supplying their consciences with false, or exaggerated principles of self-approbation and acceptance with God." Now this is false, as regards the matter of fact, and betrays, altogether, unpardonable ignorance on a subject, on which the writer, and those that retail his ingenious trifling, ought to be better informed.

The Evangelical does not appeal to his natural feelings, *as to a divine sanction*, though he does regard *feeling*, appropriately characterized and estimated, by the infallible standard of Bible truth, to be an *essential and indispensable part and evidence of true religion*. To trace the influence of natural feelings and susceptibilities, which the Spirit employs and excites, in the conversion of a sinner, or, to discern some remote analogies between them and other transformations of character which take place, and

are, confessedly, not religious, are not sufficient to *disprove the fact* of the Spirit's special agency in producing them, in opposition to the plain and solemn declarations of the word of God.

That *religious education*, in eliciting and directing the natural susceptibilities of a child, may have an influence in shaping its character and feelings, we freely admit. And so important is that influence, as we believe, that no christian parent can neglect the religious instruction of his children, without subjecting himself to the charge of worse than murderous barbarity, towards the souls of his offspring. But, in making this admission, we affirm, that whatever influence it has in the *permanent* formation of truly christian character, is owing to the *special agency* of the divine Spirit, and not to any *general law* of nature, by which that agency is universally and equally diffused. For, if it be a general influence, according to a fixed and undeviating law of nature, on the result of an appeal to it, we may calculate with the utmost certainty. We may, undoubtedly, and most legitimately expect, that, in *all* cases, the *same appeals* will secure the *same results*. This, however, is not the fact.

But, even on the supposition of the efficiency of a religious education, should we admit that on its result in the conversion of children, we may calculate with the utmost certainty, it behooves the objector to shew, whence that efficiency is derived, and whether it is not wholly from the agency of the gracious Spirit of God. The truths of the Bible, constitute the *materiel* of a religious education. But these truths constitute the instrument of the Spirit's agency. It is "by the word," we are begotten to a lively hope, and it is "through the truth," the Spirit sanctifies. It is, therefore, begging the question, to refer the conversion of children to religious education, as the appropriate

efficient cause, when the sacred Scriptures so explicitly declare, that the truths of the Bible which constitute the *materiel* of a religious education, are rendered efficient, *wholly* by the agency of the Spirit; the very thing for which we plead.

That, in itself considered, what is ordinarily called a religious education is inefficacious, there are abundant facts to prove. It fails under the very same circumstances precisely in which it takes place. It takes effect in others, where less advantages are had than where it fails. Of the former we may refer to an Ishmael in the family of Abraham, and an Absalom in that of David;—and of the latter, to a Samuel among the sons of Eli, and a Josiah in the wicked house of Amon. And similar instances occur in almost every direction. How many pious parents have to bemoan the froward, ruinous conduct of some one or more of their children, notwithstanding all their care, and all the impressions of an early religious education! And how many lovely youth, like plants of paradise, may be seen flourishing and yielding the fruits of holiness, in direct opposition to parental influence or domestic example! It is a miserable begging of the question—an involuntary surrender of the point in dispute, to talk of *delicacy of organization, sensitiveness of mind, puriency of imagination, precocity of understanding, irritability of nerves, constitutional malady*, and such like things, as being *peculiar* in the case of this, and the other child renewed by the blessed Spirit, and urge *them* as satisfactory solutions of the change. Will any one, can any one, making the least credible or decent pretensions to a belief in the sacred Scriptures, undertake, by such means, to account for the powerful and revolutionizing impressions which religious truth often makes on the heart of children and youth? The blessed Saviour's own solution of it is plain and satisfactory, though it does offend the pride of

such as disbelieve the special agency of the Divine Spirit, in the work of conversion. "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, because it seemed good in thy sight."¹

And if the vivid imaginations, and warm feelings, and what some are pleased to call the false associations, of childhood, cannot satisfactorily account for the conversion of children, much less will a sound logician be satisfied with an attempt to account for those which take place in more advanced life, by saying that they are *but the revival of early associations*, which had long faded from the mind, and "which disappear from the memory at one period, to re-appear at another."

2. To resist the evidence which this second class of facts affords, in favour of the special influence of the Spirit in the conversion of the sinner, the philosophic formalist summons to his aid, "THE DISCIPLINE OF CIRCUMSTANCES." It is sometimes asserted, that there is a wise and salutary provision, in the established system of Providence, for correcting any preponderance of evil, which may arise out of imperfections, in the work of nature, or process of education;—and that this provision, is nothing but such a general disposition of the course of human events, as "to produce an experimental conviction of the ill effects on the individual himself, of conduct which is mischievous to others." To this is attributed, by some, the sudden conversions which take place in men of dissipated habits. It is somewhat singular however, to hear a strenuous opponent of human depravity, impeaching the perfection of nature's works. Nature and education are not sufficient.—It would be folly to expect so much from *these* "architects of the

¹ Mat. xi, 25, 26.

mind," as a character in which good preponderates over evil, and therefore *the discipline of circumstances* must supply the defect!

Now, admitting, for the sake of argument, the general position above noticed,—which we are by no means prepared to do, in its full and unqualified extent—it is a question of some moment, and one which our antagonist is bound to answer, *whence* does the discipline of circumstances derive its *efficiency*? That the Spirit of God operates on the human mind, in accordance with the natural exercise of its faculties, and the established laws of human thought;—that He adopts His influence to the outward circumstances which, in the providence of God, are combined, and calculated to make impressions on the heart;—that the whole process of thought and feeling which goes on in the mind of a sinner brought from darkness into light, may be shewn to be consistent with all the laws of association, which regulate the production of thought;—and that the common means of moral improvement, are rendered efficient without that kind of agency which may be strictly termed miraculous, may be freely admitted. But what then? Does the admission of these things necessarily imply, that *the efficiency of the whole, or any part* of them, in bringing about the result, the conversion of the sinner, is not to be referred to a special agency of the Spirit? It is assuming the very point in dispute, to talk confidently of the discipline of circumstances as possessing an efficient power in changing the sinner's heart from a preference of sin, to a preference of holiness; from the love of the world, to the love of God. Especially so, when the instances, in which the salutary and saving issue of this discipline, are comparatively so rare. If it be a general law, or provision of providence for correcting the defects of nature and education, why are the effects so *special and singular*? We are in no wise concerned to answer

this. Let him that objects to the agency of the blessed Spirit do it, and do it satisfactorily, if he can.

So far from this sort of moral discipline, being in itself effectual to secure the sinner's conversion, it derives its whole virtue, from the co-operating and saving grace of the Divine Spirit. The objector is constrained to admit, that there are different results flowing from the very same cause, for the *diversity* of which, by the way, he is bound to account. To say, that this discipline corrects, in *some*, only the offensive display of vice, leaving the principles unchanged,—that *in others it gradually* improves the heart, as well as the conduct,—that in a *few*, it produces an entire and sudden moral change, is saying just nothing at all to the purpose. *Whence* this diversity? *General laws have uniform results.* And to refer us to differences in degree, or peculiarity in the combination of circumstances in special cases, is a mere begging of the question.

We deny the objector's assertion, however, in the broadest and most unqualified manner, and appeal to endless facts, in support of the negation. Hundreds and thousands perish, and are *goaded to destruction*, by this very discipline of circumstances. In itself considered, there is nothing saving or salutary in it. It only serves to enrage and exasperate, in a multitude of cases. "Why should ye be stricken any more?" said the prophet, to rebellious but afflicted Israel, "ye will revolt more and more:"¹ Nay, if there is efficiency in such discipline, we must look to Hell for the most remarkable conversions—for there the sinner will know vastly more of the ill effects, on himself, of his conduct, which is mischievous to others, than is or can be known in this world. But if *afflictive* circumstances have no saving virtue, it is altogether absurd to allege, as is

1. Isai. 1, 5.

sometimes done, that where the heart is debarred from worldly objects, the mind *necessarily* aspires after the bliss of communion with God, and exhausts its wasted energies in the deep love and ardent aspirations of a mystic Theopathy.

3. But the philosophic formalist is at no loss for causes to account for conversions. If either of the former will not suffice, we shall be referred to "THE POWER OF STRONG BELIEF, TO REALIZE THE THING BELIEVED;" as though the mere influence of natural faith, was adequate to solve all their phenomena. The reference, however, is most unfortunate. For, whatever invigorating influence there may be in that faith, which saves the soul, the Scriptures teach us, that it is itself the result of the Spirit's special agency. That there is an energy, inspired by strong desire and confident expectation, which, in its appropriate displays and efforts, has a natural tendency to secure the good contemplated, we shall not deny; as likewise the converse, that despondence and fear induce that degree of mental imbecility, which either disqualifies for, or prevents the requisite energy.

The wisdom of God, who adapts His agency to the principles of our nature, is very apparent, in His having selected *faith*, as the grand means of bringing us to a participation of all the blessings of salvation. We may trace its influence, throughout, from the incipient step for the conversion of the sinner, to the last breathings of ardent love and desire, at the moment of triumph in death, which is to be succeeded by the bright visions of eternity. It is *faith*, or a belief of the testimony of God, as He proclaims his law, which overwhelms the conscience with convictions. It is faith in His testimony, as He proclaims the gospel of His grace, that fills the soul with peace and joy. It is faith in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, as "a

present help in every time of trouble," that gives us the victory over the world and our corruptions. It is faith, which brings the bright visions of futurity, the glowing realities of the eternal world, in rich and vivid display, before the dying saint, and enables him, in the hour of his sorest conflict, to come off more than conqueror, through Him that hath loved him, and hath given Himself for him.

But, in so saying, who will undertake to say, that we attribute to *natural faith*, such a potency? By natural faith, we mean that which goes current among men for faith, but which is nothing more, in most cases, than a strong and vivid and absorbing *impression*, not the intelligent and interested evidence, which is given to the *testimony* of another. The faith of which we speak, is not natural, for it is found, comparatively, in very few. The sacred Scriptures declare it to be "the gift of God."¹ Its whole energy and influence, so far as it has any effect in pacifying the mind, quelling the passions, satisfying the desires, and transforming the conduct is referred to the influence of "the Author and Finisher of our faith,"² and "who fulfils all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power."³ Paul prayed for the Ephesian converts, that God would "grant (them) according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit, in the inner man."⁴ He lifted up his heart in praise and thanksgiving to God, for "the power that worketh in us."⁵ And he urged believers to "be strong in the Lord; and in the power of his might."⁶ How do such expressions comport with the idea of the energy of a mere impression? Does not the apostle actually deceive us, or speak nonsense, if this be all the energy of a believer, when he tells us that we "are kept by

1. Eph. ii, 8.

3. 2 Thess. i. 11.

5. Eph. iii, 20.

2. Heb. xii, 2.

4. Eph. iii, 16, and Col. i, 11.

6. Eph. vi, 10.

the power of God, through faith unto salvation?"¹ Is there not an evident distinction, between faith in the mind of the believer, and a divine energy through that faith? The truth is, this objection, like the last, falls at the first touch. It is again begging the question; for all the transforming power of faith, which, it is alledged, is sufficient, *in itself*, to account for conversion, is, according to the sacred Scriptures, derived from the special and direct agency of the Spirit—the thing which he denies. "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."²

It is unnecessary to examine, in detail, the many other methods, by which men, professing to believe the Scriptures, have endeavoured to account for a change of heart, and deny the interesting and solemn truth, of the Spirit's special agency in the work of conversion, such as the *vehemence of oratory*, the *contagion of sympathy*, the *stupendous effects of an imagination*, roused into action for the first time, and such like. We are willing to admit, that these things have their influence, in many cases, and that a variety of *spurious* conversions are effected by these means. But, as is the cause, such is the effect. They are all fleeting, momentary, evanescent.

These are not the facts on which our reasoning is based. Our reference has been, and is, to those conversions which are *permanent*, and which declare the adoption of new principles of action, and demonstrate themselves in an *uniform* life of holy obedience. However such conversions may be diversified, in respect of extraneous circumstances, the Scriptures assign them all to one cause. "Which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of

1. 1 Pet. i, 3.

2. Tit iii, 5, 6.

man, but of God.”¹ The infidel formalist, for such we must call him who denies the Spirit’s agency, refers them to an endless variety of causes, operating conjointly or separately, as the case may be. Nor does he distinguish between the true and the false; assuming, in his reasonings, those spurious transformations, which we reject as decidedly and as utterly as he does, and misrepresenting the argument on this subject, as though we plead, indiscriminately, for *all* that *bears the name* of conversion. The fallacy of some hypotheses has been exposed. The residue possess the same character.

There is but one other, deserving of attention, and that is, the attempt of certain divines, to identify baptism and regeneration. But before adverting, particularly, to this bold attack upon the very vitals of our holy religion, we have one or two general remarks to make, in reference to the whole tribe of infidel hypotheses, to account for human conversions, where the special and immediate agency of the divine Spirit, is not admitted.

1. They are all based on false assumptions,—such as the following, that the Spirit’s influence is equably diffused—that it is universal and adequate without any increase or variation in special cases, to the production of faith and love, and other graces—and that it is impossible to distinguish between that love of God, of virtue, and of man, which proceeds from mere human principles and motives, and that which flows from the influence of the Divine Spirit. These will not be conceded, and the man who opposes the special and efficacious grace of the Spirit, in conversion, must establish them before we can at all agree to listen to the suppositions that grow out of them.

2. Another remark is, that they violate two of the fundamental principles of all sound philosophy, viz:—that no

1. John, i, 13.

more causes are to be admitted, than are real and sufficient to account for the phenomena, and that effects of the same kind are to be referred to the same cause. The special and efficacious grace of the Spirit is assigned by the testimony of God, as the cause of conversion, and it is sufficient. Admitting the authority of the Scriptures, as they do with whom our argument is concerned, it is unphilosophical to seek for another. And, what is worthy of the strictest attention, every truly converted person, whoever and wherever he may be, whether born and brought up in the church of God, or sprung from Hottentots or Hindoos, or savages, evinces the same effects. He is humbled and mourns deeply and bitterly, on account of his sins—submits to the sovereign authority of God, his creator, and feels that it would be just in Him to punish him eternally for his sins,—he sues to Him for mercy,—he trusts in Him through the merits of a crucified Redeemer for pardon and acceptance,—he experiences an inward peace and joy, and he cherishes a firm unconquerable hatred of sin and love to God and holiness; and he perseveres in a life of holy obedience. These effects you find wherever true converts are found, whether among the learned, or unlearned, the noble, or ignoble, the civilized, or the savage. They are effects of the same kind, and which the word of God, as philosophically, as unequivocally, attributes to the Spirit's special influence. It is unphilosophical therefore, to attribute them to any other.

Nothing can be more utterly ridiculous and absurd, than the endless self-contradictory, and unintelligible suppositions, which captious formalists have framed to account for what are called extraordinary conversions. We object not to any careful and minute investigation of the mental acts, and whole process of thought and feeling, leading to, and issuing in conversion. These things are legitimate subjects of investigation, and no one can judge,

intelligently and correctly of his own change of heart, who does not inspect and examine them. But we do object, to that rash, and infidel pride, which prompts many, because of the perfect adaptation of the means which the Spirit employs to the end which is designed, to deny His immediate agency altogether, or to assimilate it to some general law by which God governs the human mind. If the sacred Scriptures, have described certain acts and exercises of the mind and heart of man, as *effects of the Spirit's agency*, and we give credit to their authority, the voluntariness of those acts, of which we may be conscious, or the ease with which we may trace the operation of the general laws of thought throughout the whole, are, by no means a sufficient warrant to set aside the declarations of the word of God, in this matter as nugatory, and refuse to admit the direct agency of the blessed Spirit. For after all, let men trace the laws of thought as distinctly as they may throughout the whole process of conversion, the effect in the entire change of a man's thoughts and feelings, desires, purposes, conduct and habit, is *singular*, proving some *special cause* in the individual cases, giving direction and efficiency to all the rest.

As to the supposition, that Baptism and Regeneration are identical, we have but little to remark. The error as sanctioned by the phraseology in the book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church in these United States, and adopted by some of its members, who claim for its ordinances exclusive apostolical validity, is the chief thing that gives it any importance. It may indeed suit those who attach so much importance to Baptism, and help to invest the rite with a deeper and superstitious sacredness as performed by those who have been Episcopally ordained; but the common sense of mankind is not so easily to be imposed upon. But few who read their Bibles, and take the liberty of thinking for themselves, without deferring to that

mystical being, "the church," who thinks, and says, and ordains thus and thus, will ever be in danger of mistaking Baptism for Regeneration, or of identifying them.

To tell us of what the church thought, and how the baptized persons were called renewed, and how in the primitive ages of christianity, Baptism and Regeneration were supposed to be identical, is nothing to the purpose. We hold, as of very little value, any and every decision or authority on this subject, but the sacred Scriptures. It evinces a servility that we do utterly disdain, to cite the opinion of this and the other bishop, and father, or council, or doctor, or divine. To the law and to the testimony. What say the Scriptures of truth? So far from their identifying these things, they are careful to let us know that they are perfectly distinct. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision availeth any thing but a *new creature*. "If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*." "We are his workmanship created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." Believers are said to be "*renewed* in the *spirit* of their minds." How any man with such, and many other passages of like import; staring him in the face, can undertake to say that Regeneration in the Scriptures, denotes merely a change of *state* and not a change of affections, is to us truly astonishing.

What if the baptized were called *renewed*, does it follow that Baptism and Regeneration are the same? Where a church is so careful and pure in the administration of the ordinances of Christ's house, as to admit none to Baptism, but such as give satisfactory evidences of a change of heart or of being born again, then we see plainly how the terms might become correlate. But for any one, gravely to argue on *such* grounds as to the *identity* of Baptism and Regeneration, is really evincive of something by no means creditable, either to his head or heart. If any choose to apply the term Regeneration to Baptism, and renewed

to baptised persons, let them produce their authority for it from the sacred Scriptures, and shew that such an application of them is sanctioned by Christ, and the Apostles. But do not let them attempt to justify such perversion of scriptural language, by citing the opinions, and writings of any uninspired men, or intrenching themselves behind the customs and usages of uninspired speech in any age of the world.

There is nothing more deluding and dangerous, than to use the language of Scripture, as expressive of ideas, different from those of the inspired writers, who first employed it. Nothing can justify such a thing. It is, in this case, a wresting of words, and perverting of the truth, to the ruin of souls; and they that will be guilty of such an attempt, to get rid of a vital and essential doctrine of christianity, as to apply the terms of Scripture, which denote a change of heart, so indispensably necessary to salvation, to a mere formal rite or ordinance, can no longer be regarded in any other light, than as false and dangerous guides. We know what some have done, and how they have actually eviscerated the lively oracles of God, of all their distinctive and living truth, of every thing that can give consolation to a troubled conscience, while, nevertheless, the language is retained. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life;" and whether it be the essential fact, of an atoning sacrifice offered by the eternal Son of God, or of the vital influence of the Holy Spirit, in changing the sinner's heart, we can discern but little difference. It is but a frigid, killing system of religion, where either does not hold a conspicuous place. The wretched mind of man, is in most disordered action; drawn away, by earth, from God, the source and centre of its bliss, and held, in sad, corrupting subjection, by its selfishness. There is need for an influence from God, a beam from the fountain of light, to restore the miserable and degraded being, that has resigned himself to the dominion

of his lusts. Blessed be God, that the instances are not rare, in which He “who hath shined out of darkness into light, shines into the heart, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.” There is no hypothesis of infidelity, no resort of formality, no refuge of lies whatever, that can resist the evidence of facts occurring, so plainly and so satisfactorily solved in the sacred Scriptures, by referring us, for their cause, to the *special agency of the Spirit of God*.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE REALITY OF THE SPIRIT'S SPECIAL AGENCY.

THE doctrine of the special agency of the Spirit in the conversion of the sinner not a mere hypothesis—The history of the church, furnishes proof of a *special* care indicating a special agency on the part of God—The same thing inferred from the numerous promises relating to its growth and prosperity—Objected that these things are true only of the church, as a collective body—Proofs to the contrary—The effects of the special agency of the Spirit, capable of being traced through human consciousness, and consciousness conjointly with the testimony of the Scriptures, furnishing evidence of the reality of the Spirit's special agency.

We have assumed as true, in the remarks already made, the special agency of the Spirit, in the work of conversion, and shewn, that it alone is a cause adequate to account for the effects contemplated. Before we attempt to trace that agency, in its immediate influence on the mind and heart of man, it may perhaps be proper to adduce some proof of its reality in addition to what has incidentally been exhibited. It is not a mere hypothesis.

Were there no other evidence of the *special* agency of the Spirit of God, in the regeneration of the sinner, than the plausible manner in which it accounts for the remarkable moral transformations among men, commonly called conversion, regeneration, change of heart, &c. it would after all, be nothing more than a mere *philosophical theory*, invented and adduced, to explain the language of the Scriptures, and as such it could not, however plausible; claim the assent of our faith. But that such is not its character, a few considerations will suffice to convince the reader.

No man can have looked with any degree of thoughtfulness upon this vast world of living beings, without having been led to some ideas of dependence on God, and at least of providential agency on His part in their preservation and support. The circumstance of there being an apparent blending of divine and human agency, may indeed produce some perplexity; but it will not destroy the conviction, that there is, and must be some over-ruling care and power on the part of God. But while the *general providential agency* of God, in the support of our animal being, and in the government of our moral actions, will perhaps be admitted, the direct and *special influence* of the Spirit in the conversion of the sinner is denied by some. But there is sufficient evidence,—not only of a general providence on the part of God extending to all nations and people; but also of a *special care* employed in relation to the church, which CARE indicates a divine agency, in her affairs, different from, or superadded to, that from which all alike, receive benefit.

The whole history of the church, for near six thousand years, may be appealed to in proof of the assertion. One mighty colossal nation after another, has raised its proud and lofty head, and seemed, as it loomed large before the world, to be upheld and guided by the hand of God:—but in a few centuries where was it? Fallen, broken, and in ruins! But the church of God has lived and flourished, on the ruins of the mighty nations which sought its overthrow. Is there no proof of special care and agency on the part of God, towards his church and people in the Egyptian bondage, and subsequent miraculous emancipation?—in their forty years sojourn in the wilderness?—during the Babylonish captivity?—in their return to Judea? in the spread of the gospel?—in its preservation in the world, when the floods of northern barbarians had swept

away nearly every vestige of civilization, and for centuries inundated the world with ignorance?—in the preservation of the truth among the Waldenses?—in the triumph and spread of the reformation?—and in the rapid progress, which has marked the course of those who, within the last thirty years, have sought to diffuse the blessings of religion, in despite of all the proud menaces, and predictions, and combination of haughty infidels? He must be blind indeed, who cannot see a *special agency* of God, for the preservation of his church, in accordance with His own pledge, that “the gates of Hell,” should not prevail against His Zion!

And what mean all the promises of God, which look to the growth, enlargement, prosperity and universality of the church of God? Is there no intimation of His *special* and peculiar agency when God says, “Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west: I will say to the north, give up; and to the south keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.”¹ “I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee, shall come bending unto thee: and all they that despised thee, shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord; The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee. I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.”² “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee,

1. Isai. xliii. 5—7.

2. Isai. lx. 15—157

and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord from henceforth and forever."¹ It is unnecessary to add to such declarations. They might be multiplied indefinitely. Assuredly such promises pledge something more to the church, than that general agency, by which God upholdeth all things. Whether they are understood of the literal Israel, and look forward to those wondrous scenes of Evangelical triumph, when God shall make the repentance and conversion of the Jews, prove the riches of the world; or whether they have reference to the spiritual Israel, and describe the prevalent influence of the truth among them, it effects not our argument. In either case, there is distinctly recognized a special and gracious agency on the part of God as the appropriate cause of these results.

Here, perhaps, it will be objected:—there is, indeed, a special divine agency towards the church; but it is only in her character as a *collective body*, that it is to be regarded; and not as extending to her individual members. The language of some of the passages above quoted, evidently intimates something very different. Beside, the objection is contradicted alike by facts, and the plainest declarations of the word of God. Was there no special agency in the divine care of Abraham, of Joseph, of Moses, of David, of Daniel, of Jesus, of the Apostles, and others.

If it should be urged, that *they* were *extraordinary* persons, then let the objector say, why it is still, that in different families such different results are seen, in the character of different members:—why one is taken, and the other is left. Why is it, that one is drawn to the house of God, and to the place where prayer is wont to be made; and inclined to seek the face and favour of God, while hun-

dreds and thousands go on in blasphemy and crime, to their eternal ruin? Why is it, that through all the changes, which eventuate in the history of one and another, there is ever and anon something stirring within him, reproving him for his sins and short-comings, and leading him to look to and depend on God and Christ alone, while others, with more outward opportunities, and more likely means to rouse their consciences, remain entirely indifferent? Why does the word come with power into the heart of this man, and not into that of him, that sits beside him? Why is a burden of distress laid on the heart of God's people, for this one and another, and great fervency in prayer for their salvation is induced, while others excite no interest in the heart, and no freedom in prayer for them is felt? And why, in despite of all his resistance, is this, and the other rebel spirit made to bow in submission at the feet of Jesus, while others set their mouth against the Heavens, and through the pride of their countenance, will not seek after God?

The answer is plain, and may be given in the language of God Himself, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee;"¹ or, in that of the blessed Redeemer; "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."² The words of God, as reported by the prophet, in the 43d chapter of Isaiah, are very explicit, and they only assert individually of the members of the church, true christians, what is elsewhere said of them collectively, as true alike of each and every one. "This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise."³ The truth is, there is not a promise of the well ordered covenant, which does not imply such an agency. What mean such

1. Jer. 31, 3.

2. Mat. xi. 25.

3. Isai. 43, 21.

expressions as these—"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."¹ "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse, you: 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 keep my judgments and do them."² It is impossible for language to be more pointed, and plainly indicative of a special agency on the part of God, towards the conversion of sinners.

Although it may be truly said, that the primary reference of these passages, is to the great and wondrous effusion of the blessed Spirit of God, when the remnant of the Jewish nation, which is now scattered over the face of the earth, shall be converted unto God, yet does not the agency by which this shall be effectuated, differ, in character, from that which is exerted, and has been, from the first, for the conversion of a sinner? For the apostle has shewn, that the grand principle involved in these promises, is applicable throughout the whole period of the Evangelical church. What God says, in reference to the ultimate conversion of the Jews, was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, and is still in every revival of religion, and conversion of a sinner. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, (it) as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, (it) as one that is in bitterness for a first born."³ Assuredly, these things mean something direct and special, in which *all* do

1. Jer. xxxi, 33.

2. Ezek. xxxvi. 25—28.

3. Zach. xii, 10.

not *alike* share. The Saviour has explicitly asserted the fact, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw* him."¹ Unto all that truly believe, there is actually a pledge of special strength and grace given. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."² "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will *help* thee; yea I will *stngthen* thee; yea, I will *uphold* thee, with the right hand of my righteousness."³ What does such language mean! Is it not pre-eminently calculated to deceive, if it is not designed to teach us, that God does and will vouchsafe His special agency, to them that believe and bestow on them another sort of care, from that which he imparts to sinners in general.

The fact must be beyond all dispute, among those that accredit the word in its plain common sense meaning, and receive it as of paramount authority. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."⁴ "The Lord knoweth (that is takes a special and approving cognizance of) the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."⁵ God has determined, as the Apostle intimates, "to make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory."⁶ Here is a special gracious agency on the part of God, distinctly and positively asserted, embracing alike His providence and His spiritual communications, and exerted *with the express design* of bringing guilty sinners to Himself; and, in exact accordance with this view, the same Apostle, in addressing himself to a body of reputed and professing christians, expressed his entire confidence, that "He which had begun in them a good work, (would) perform

1. John vi, 44—65.

2. 2 Cor. xii, 9.

3. Isai. xli, 10.

4. Psalm, xxxvii, 23—24.

5. Psalm, i, 6.

6. Rom. ix, 23.

it until the day of Jesus Christ.”¹ Nothing can be more explicit than the following, which, in fact, asserts a special agency on the part of God for the salvation of his people from the beginning to the end, well sustaining the title given to our Redeemer, when He is said to be “the author and finisher of our faith.”² “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born 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.”³ This is not theory. It is the Spirit’s own declaration of facts, and if it is lawful to take the plain and obvious import of expressions, and language can have any definite meaning at all, a special divine agency in the sinner’s salvation, is most clearly and conclusively taught.

To trace the effects of that agency, on the different constitutional or characteristic properties of our nature, is as legitimate as it is interesting and profitable. For there is abundant evidence, appropriate to the subject, and as satisfactory as any other species of evidence, which subserves our acquisition of knowledge;—it is that of consciousness. Consciousness takes cognizance not of abstract essences; but of the acts or doings, and feelings, or emotions of our own minds and hearts. These acts and exercises are as strictly matters of fact, as any thing can be: for they do as actually take place in the mind and heart of the individual, as the events which transpire in the world around us.

The heart is itself a world in miniature, and there needs but very little attention to discover, what scenes are transacted there, and how incessantly and actively, the thinking and feeling soul of man, is occupied according to its various capacities. Disease may, through the sympathy be-

1. Phil. i. 6.

2. Heb. xii. 2.

3. Rom. viii. 29—30.

tween mind and body, derange or powerfully excite; but even of our most bewildered and extravagant and delirious thoughts and feelings, consciousness makes faithful report, though indeed, for very sufficient and obvious reasons, memory is oft-times unable to recall them. However wild may be the vagaries of human thought, they are nevertheless real events or acts, in the life and history of the individual moral being, and, as far as they are faithfully reported by consciousness, and recorded by memory, become legitimate matters of investigation. Now, the reality of the special agency of the Spirit of God, in the production of gracious affections, or in giving character to the moral being, by eliciting appropriate acts and exercises of his constitutional capacities, is perfectly ascertainable. For, God Himself, in His own word, has described to us, most accurately, those gracious affections, which, while they are our own voluntary exercises, and as such, are strictly cognoscible by consciousness, are nevertheless denominated, "the fruits of the Spirit," and referred to the Spirit and His special influence, as their appropriate cause.

Of the precise manner in which the blessed Spirit comes in contact with our minds, if we may so speak, or *how* it is that He throws back the current of our disordered affections, and restores the mind and heart to their appropriate exercise, we cannot tell. We know not *how* he preserves in appropriate action, any living creature whatever. But, we may know and trace the immediate effects of his agency, inasmuch as they all lie in our own voluntary acts and exercises, of which we are distinctly conscious, and are produced, through the instrumentality of the truth, or word of God, which is adapted to our apprehension as intelligent creatures, and is calculated to arrest our thoughts, attract and rivet our hearts. An apostle has enumerated some of those things which are to be referred

to the immediate special agency of the Spirit, and which, every reader, at first sight, will perceive, are to be classed among our voluntary exercises. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."¹

In the *existence and play* of these, and their kindred voluntary exercises, by which the soul turns away from earth and sin to God and holiness, consists the very essence of spiritual life, and accordingly, the Apostle has noticed this circumstance in immediate connection with his enumeration of the fruits of the Spirit. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we *live* in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit, not being desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."² With the exact method by which the Holy Spirit, awakens and elicits those affections or dispositions which influence and determine our choice and actions, we are unacquainted. We know not how one spirit acts upon another, yet do we every day attempt to affect the hearts of those with whom we have much intercourse. And no one thinks it to be altogether a vain attempt. It is by mind and spirit acting on mind and spirit, that all the mighty movements among mankind are effected. Appropriate instrumentalities however, are employed. It is by the feeling uttering of our own thoughts, or the manifestation of emotions, which agitate our own soul, that we affect others. This is all we know in the matter. And the utmost that we know of the Spirit's influence on our hearts, is that it is "*by the word*"—"through the truth." But if through consciousness we can discover in ourselves the various voluntary exercises of faith, love, repentance, hope, fear, and the like, which are

1. Gal. v. 22—23.

2. Gal. v. 24, 25, 26.

described in the sacred Scriptures, as *the fruits of the Spirit*, we have evidence full and satisfactory of the *reality* of that special agency by which the sinner is first translated from darkness into light, and being prepared for glory. We have the witness of the Spirit with our spirits, that we are the children of God. Neither sophistry nor ridicule can destroy the evidence of the fact, while such exercises continue. And hence it is, that the simple honest-hearted christian, who has had a vivid experience, whose affections have been excited, and, through the various channels in which they flow, been directed to God in Christ, as His Father and Redeemer,—possesses in himself the witness, which is of more value and efficiency, than all the arguments and philosophy of the wise and learned. “He that believeth, hath the witness in himself.” His experience corresponding with the delineation of gracious principles and affections given in the sacred Scriptures, the result of the Spirit’s special agency, furnishes him invincible proof of its reality in his own case. Human consciousness, and the unerring testimony of the Spirit, unite to prove “his calling and election sure.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE METAPHYSICAL NATURE OF REGENERATION.

THE impossibility of speaking long on such a subject, without indicating our peculiar philosophical views, as to the operations of the human mind—Necessity, therefore, of dispassionate inquiry—The philosophy of divines of former centuries—The Shorter Catechism's metaphysical description of Regeneration—Its *philosophy* not binding on the conscience of any one, who adopts it as a confession of faith—Notice of different philosophical systems, and their influence on the current phraseology of their votaries—A brief view of our constitutional susceptibilities and capacities—Obvious results from it—The laws which regulate the exercise of our constitutional capacities—Analogical illustration—Spiritual objects not cognoscible by our senses—The Bible disclosing spiritual objects to our view, and faith the medium of our knowledge of them—The different effects produced by these objects—Their saving and salutary impressions, referrible to the influence of the Holy Spirit—The christian's evidence of the Spirit's influence on him, not delusive.

It is impossible to speak on the subject of the metaphysical nature of Regeneration, without betraying the peculiar philosophical views, which are taken of the operations of the human mind. How important, therefore, is it, that mutual forbearance, calm and dispassionate inquiry, and brotherly love should prevail, in order to the clear and accurate apprehension of each other's views, as to matters of fact, instead of zealous and animated contention, about points in philosophy, where, perchance, both may be equally far from the truth.

It is easy to perceive, that while the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms of the Presbyterian Church, have not defined Regeneration, or spoken explicitly on the subject, its metaphysi-

cal nature is described, in the account which is given of "EFFECTUAL CALLING." This description was evidently influenced by the particular views, in mental science, entertained by the framers of that "form of sound words." The moral being, or rather the rational soul of man, is contemplated, as being endowed with various *faculties* or *powers*, which are, at least, virtually considered as *distinct* from the mind itself. The general classification of these powers, was into Understanding, Will, Affections, Memory and Conscience, and in some treatises on Regeneration, composed by Theologians of former centuries, we may trace the influence which their *philosophy* had, upon their Theological views of this subject. The "*Understanding*" being accounted *the supreme and governing faculty*, men's aberrations from rectitude, and their disrelish of a life of holiness, were mainly referred to some *obliquity* in it, or to some injury it had sustained by the fall, which actually *incapacitated* it for *clear and correct apprehensions* of the truth. And, in support of this view, it was common to adduce those passages of the word of God, which intimate a darkness and blindness of the understanding.

The above distribution of the faculties of the mind, being assumed as correct, and the understanding being considered as supreme,—as invested with authority, by the great Creator, to control the passions, and determine the volitions, according to its peculiar views of truth or excellence,—it was concluded, that what was chiefly wanting towards the conversion of the sinner, was, to introduce into his understanding, correct views of divine truth. Hence, the chief attention was paid by ministers and parents, to the *doctrinal* instruction of their hearers and children. An undue importance was attached to the *illumination of the mind*, because it was thought, that, by means of enlightening the understanding, the Spirit renewed the heart.

The reader will at once perceive, from the answer to the question, “what is effectual calling,” how the views of the Westminster divines, as to the metaphysical nature of Regeneration, corresponded with, or were suggested by, the system of mental philosophy, adopted by them. “Effectual calling,” say they, “is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby *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.” Now, so far as these words describe facts and acts of the mind, no one, who has experienced a saving change of heart, can question their correctness. The three most important facts stated, are *illumination of mind*, *renovation of will*, and the *cleaving* of the *affections* to the blessed Redeemer, as the object of supreme delight, love, and choice, &c.—and these are attributed to the Spirit’s agency. That all these things, which imply acts and exercises of man, as a rational and feeling creature, are to be attributed to the agency of the Spirit, no one who admits the fact of Regeneration will deny. Nor does the answer in the Catechism, intimate any thing like an agency of that Spirit on the soul of man, changing its essence, or altering its constitutional properties, or laying any *foundation* in *nature*. by an act of *creative* power. These things did not seem to be a part of the philosophy involved in it. But from the order in which the different acts and exercises of the mind, which characterize the regenerate sinner, are enumerated, it would seem that the framers of the Catechism thought, that a mere intellectual perception of the truth, followed by a change in the *faculty* of the will, unitedly secured the giving of the heart to Christ, or bestowing of the affections on Him.

This is altogether philosophical theory. Will any man say, that it is a point of *faith*, and that, in adopting the

language of these divines as a confession of faith, our consciences are bound to adopt the philosophy involved in it? We presume not. A man may entertain very different, and more correct views of the nature of the human mind, and mental operations generally, and yet hold the same facts with the Catechists. Shall he be condemned for this, and denounced as heretical? Shall ignorance, fostering itself in unwarranted prejudices against mental science, and, with a show of zeal and devotion for the truth, assail the reputation of a Christian brother, and mar his usefulness, by branding him a heresy, merely because he takes a different method of exhibiting the same facts, and, instead of speaking in the technicalities of old Theologians, employs language more adapted to common sense, and to the advanced state of mental philosophy! Rather, let brethren concede to each other the utmost liberty of illustration, while they adopt the essential facts which Revelation teaches, than attempt to bind themselves to set *forms of speech*. The manifestation of fraternal confidence and regard, and the friendly intercourse and communion which will take place, wherever there is the unity of the Spirit, are a much more efficient means of preserving the truth, and a much more desirable and valuable bond of union, than ecclesiastical canons and theological technics, and demonstrations of heated zeal, though the latter may, with some, be had in estimation, as *contending earnestly for the faith, once delivered to the saints*.

Instead of contemplating the human mind, as possessing various *faculties*, analagous with the members of the human body, and practically conceiving of these things, as distinct and separate individualities in the mind itself, one thinks he can much more satisfactorily think and speak of *states* of the mind, and another of *modes of action*. All, certainly, have a liberty so to do; and even if they err, provided that they faithfully declare, and plainly teach the

scriptural facts, which constitute what we may term the phenomena of Regeneration, let each one use his liberty, without impugning his brother.

We are in the habit of contemplating the human mind as one and indivisible,—a simple, uncompounded spirit or substance, endowed, by its Creator, with certain susceptibilities of emotion or feeling, and capacities for thought and action. Its susceptibilities are adapted to the various objects which God has created around us, and on which we instrumentally depend for their exercise. Its capacities for action, are suited to the various exigencies of our nature and condition, all wisely arranged in the mind of our great Creator, and ordained, originally, in the very constitution of our being. Thus, for example, we are susceptible of impressions, from objects without us, which thus assume a sort of moving power over us,—a lovely object, exciting desire,—a disagreeable object, aversion,—a dangerous object, fear and such like. As to their exciting power over us, we can say no more, than that such is the constitution of things, which God has ordained—such the nature of our susceptibilities, that we are capable of being made to feel, or of being moved and excited, according to the varying character of the circumstances and objects, with which we are brought into contact.

In the mere impression or excitement, produced by things seen, heard, or related, we are involuntarily affected. It does not depend upon our will, whether to feel or not, no more than it does, whether the impression made on the retina of the eye, be thence transmitted to the sensorium, and originate the sensation which we call seeing, or, on the tympanum of the ear, or any other of the organs of sense, producing the sensations appropriate. It depends entirely on constitution.

Superadded to these constitutional susceptibilities, we possess a power of *voluntary* action. The *modes* of that action, which are various, depend also on the constitution

of God. But the exercise of the mind itself in each mode, is subject to the will, i. e. it is not by necessity but voluntarily; yet varying, according to the circumstances which call the mind into action. Thus, for example, when an object is presented to our attention, there is a degree of voluntariness implied in the action of our minds, when we are said to perceive it. In like manner, in *reasoning* another mode of mental action, we voluntarily compare our perceptions or thoughts and knowledge recalled;—in *remembering*, we revive our perceptions;—and in *imagining* combine them in new forms. Now these susceptibilities of emotion, and modes of action, are not two separate and independent systems in the mind itself, but are found to be so blended, as to be alike operative, or discoverable in almost every voluntary action.

Our voluntary actions are of a complex nature. Thus, for example, we say that we love or hate, desire or fear, hope or despair, and the like, and so doing, give, by particular acts, the appropriate indications of these things. Now what do we mean by such language so very common in human parlance? We could not *love*, if we were not possessed of that constitutional susceptibility, which qualifies us for feeling the attractive influence of some object of beauty or excellence,—nor *hate*, but for another susceptibility, which qualifies us for feeling the repelling influence of some disagreeable object, &c. Nor should we love, or hate, notwithstanding these susceptibilities, unless some appropriate object, i. e. some object of excellence, or the contrary, calculated to excite the affection, be presented. When such object is presented, whether directly exhibited to the inspection of our senses, or represented by statement, or recalled by memory, or created by imagination, there is first, the perception of it, which, if of a vivid character, awakens the appropriate feelings; and, securing a degree of attentiveness to it, next brings those feelings, more

fully into play, till a moving power is felt in the soul, and it is, as it were, carried towards it, or from it, with full consent, and voluntarily, by looks, words, or deeds, gives indication of the prevalent emotion. When, therefore, we say we love or hate, we mean, that we voluntarily consent or yield, to the particular impression which has been made by some appropriate object on our susceptible soul.

These voluntary exercises are oft-times very transient, passing away forever with the thought or object which has excited them, being quickly obliterated by the impressions of succeeding and more interesting objects. Where however, the impression has been deep, i. e. more than the *evanescent* feelings awakened by the play of surrounding objects, especially where it has been made by something which has a near or special bearing on our interests, our happiness, or our security,—the feelings will be prolonged, repeated, invigorated, and the voluntary exercises, at first isolated and solitary, will become continuous, and ripen into purpose, leading to action, and subordinating feebler and counteracting influences. According to the *influential purpose*, will be the acquisition and manifestation of *character*. Men take their denomination, or descriptive epithet, from the moving, or ruling passion;—the *slave of avarice*, being called a *miser*, a wretch, because his love of gold makes him deny to himself the common comforts, and almost the necessaries of life; the *votary of sensual pleasure*, a *voluptuary*, a *sensualist*, and one and another, *deceitful*, *wrathful*, *vindictive*, *jealous*, *envious*, according to the prevalent feeling which fails not appropriately to express itself.

Now from this view of the susceptibilities, and capacities for action, which characterize us as moral beings, several things seem obvious; as, that in the mere *existence* of these things, there is nothing *sinful*; that the sinful or holy character of them is to be estimated by a reference to

the *objects* which elicit them, whether unlawful, or the contrary;—that the mere *involuntary excitement* produced by the action of an improper object on our susceptibilities, is not sinful, but only becomes so, if allowed to prevail until it gains the consent of the will;—and that this excitement ripening into will and purpose, possesses no compulsory power, but follows the general laws which God has ordained for the government of mind.

What those laws are, have already been incidentally brought into view. They may be summarily stated to be the following, viz.; that on the presentation of an object adapted to any susceptibility of our nature, an impression or involuntary excitement in some degree, when it is perceived, shall follow—that the strength of the impression, or the degree of involuntary excitement depends upon the vivid character of the first perception of the object,—that if the excitement is not resisted, it will, by virtue of the laws of associated thought, increase and gain a controlling power over the will, first securing its consent, and then maturing into some purpose according to, and in prosecution of, which the appropriate capacities of action are exerted, and in such way as to give indication of the fact.

In all these, we observe a strict analogy with the manner in which material objects act upon the mind, through the organs of sense. The floweret of beauteous colour, or delicious odour when approached, makes its impression on the appropriate organ of sense. The impression if lively, awakes the attention of the mind. The attention of the mind increases the strength of the impression, as it brings the organ of sense, more fully under its exciting power. That impression deepening, we approach and pluck it, or inhale its perfume, giving demonstration in acts, and often in laudatory expressions, not only of the exciting influence of the flower, but also, of that excitement being voluntarily sustained and promoted by us.

But the objects appropriate to our spiritual life, the things of the Spirit, are not directly cognoscible by our senses. "The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."¹ The great realities of eternity, and the peculiar exciting facts or truths of our holy religion, are none of them open to the inspection of our senses. They are reported to us by the testimony of God, who cannot lie, and it is only *by faith*, that we can have *any knowledge* of them. This indeed, is the only way in which we can obtain information with regard to matters of fact, which we have not seen, or which have been without the sphere of our personal observation. It is, from the very necessity of the case, and not by reason of any arbitrary constitution, that in these high concerns, "we walk by faith, and not by sight."² In due season, we shall be permitted to apprehend them, by other means, and to our inconceivable delight, when the emancipated spirit, shall have thrown off the casement of the mortal body, or that body shall be resuscitated, with its senses so sublimed, and purified, and delicately attenuated, as to secure, in blissful impressions on the soul, the full and joyous excitement from real objects, which now can only be known by faith. But though we do see as through a glass darkly—though the life we live, is by the faith of the Son of God, yet have we sufficient information communicated to us by God, in His holy word, for all the purposes of a present blissful life, and of eternal safety and glory. The Bible is made the sphere of spiritual vision. Here are spread before us the wondrous objects which excite, and bring into blissful and holy exercise, the susceptibilities, and capacities, of our immortal nature. With faith, as with a telescopic glass,

1. 1 Cor. ii. 14.

2. 2 Cor. v. 7.

we peer into eternity, and survey with rapture and delight, the realities of the unseen world. For "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things, which are unseen: for the things which are seen, are temporal, but the things which are not seen, are eternal."¹ Nay further, we penetrate by its means, into the very heart of Heaven and of God: for the Bible is the revelation of His mind and will, disclosing to our view, Himself and His perfections, Christ and His salvation, the Spirit and His work, Heaven and its happiness, Earth and its misery, Hell and its horrors, man and his guilt, the church and her interests, the world and its rebellion, and whatever other spiritual truths or facts we need to know. And hence it is called, "a light to our feet and a lamp to our path."

But the wondrous facts revealed in the Bible, make no salutary impressions on the minds of multitudes. Instead of rousing into blissful action their susceptible nature, its precious truths, with many, have an irritating effect. While the christian pores over its sacred pages, and, in the spirit of prayer, drinks in the refreshing influence of the truth, exclaiming with the Psalmist, "Oh, how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day."² The unrewed sinner dislikes it, and neglects to consult it, as "the man of his counsel," though it is "able to make him wise unto salvation." He sees nothing lovely or attractive in it; except, indeed, it may be, in the sublimity of its poetry, and simplicity of its history. The blessed Saviour, who is there unveiled in the rich glories of his character, possesses no charms. He is, to the unbeliever, "a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness, and when He is seen, there is no beauty (perceived) in Him, (to excite the sinner) to desire Him."³ Whence arises this difference?

We reply, from the special agency of the Holy Spi-

1. 2 Cor. iv. 18.

2. Psalm cxix. 97.

3. Isai. liii. 2.

rit. He, by His gracious interposition and influence, brings before the mind the grand central object of our faith and hope—the blessed Redeemer—and influences it to attend to and contemplate Him, and his claims. Various objects or truths, as is the case when the sinner is convicted, may have been previously presented by Him, producing a state of excitement, or bringing the mind into a mood, favorable to an impression from the appeal which He makes. When the pains of Hell get hold of the conscience, and the sinner becomes uneasy, the instinctive desires of the soul for bliss are excited. The promise of bliss in Christ, attracts attention. His natural susceptibilities of emotion, are variously excited. Hope, fear, desire, sorrow, begin to operate. Reformation is attempted. An exciting influence from spiritual objects, although they are but partially and imperfectly understood, is now experienced. The interested attention given to them, increases that excitement. Clearer views of their solemnity and importance, or their excellence and desirableness are had. Some degree of illumination ensues. Spiritual things are apprehended as realities, and the full and hearty approbation and choice of Christ, as all our salvation and all our desire, are secured, affecting the heart with sorrow for past neglect, or contempt of Him, and for the ingratitude manifested by former iniquity, and rejection of his proffered mercy, and engaging the whole soul, in all its various capacities to act, no longer for its own selfish interests, but for His glory. The heart loves Him, confides in Him, yields, in adoring submission, to His claims, lies humbled at His feet, and consecrates itself and all to Him. And thus the sinner, in a way perfectly consistent with, and through the established laws of human thought and feeling, is brought by the Spirit of God, to turn from his sins and live. Every one, who is acquainted with the experience of the christian, knows the truth and general ac-

curacy of the above account, of the process of conversion. The different steps taken by the sinner, and the different accessions of divine influence, prior to the entire surrender of the heart to the Saviour, in some cases occur at distant intervals, and it is not till after long and much striving, that the rebel yields. But, in others, the transitions of feeling are rapid: and, into the short space of one half hour, is crowded an experience as full and vivid, as that which is spread over months. These sudden changes occur in seasons of revival, when the Spirit's influence is powerfully exerted. The former most frequently take place, when there is no special excitement on the subject of religion.

In estimating the reality of conversion, we must not look to the time, during which our minds may have been affected with convictions, prior to believing; but to the *reality* of certain characteristic exercises. Have we been brought to see and feel our wretched, guilty, cursed state, by reason of our own sins? Have we been affected with a sense of the evil of our sins, as committed against God? Have we felt, that it would be most righteous for Him to condemn us eternally, for our sins? Have we been convinced, that our carnal minds are enmity against God? Have we seen that there is, and can be no hope for us, from our own obedience? Have we heard of the salvation which there is in Christ? Have we seen, that in Him there is a fullness and sufficiency for all our need—blood, to atone for our sins—righteousness, to justify—and a purifying Spirit, to cleanse our hearts? Have we given full and hearty credit to God's word, when he calls upon us to embrace this Saviour, as a certification of his great benevolence, and of his willingness to receive and save us? Have we actually ventured upon Christ, and given ourselves, soul, spirit, and body, away to Him? Have we sincerely and deeply repented of our sins,

as committed against a righteous God, and a merciful Redeemer? And have we cordially, unreservedly, unchangeably, and forever devoted ourselves to His service? If so, the blessed Spirit has subdued us to Himself. The characteristic exercises of a saving change of heart, have been experienced by us. We are born again. And no one, thus born again, who has seen and felt the evil of his own heart, the blindness of his stupid mind, and his natural aversion from the service of God, but what is ready to exclaim, in admiration of the power and freedom of the grace of God, which has made him willing to submit,—“Not unto us, Oh Lord, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.”¹ Whether rude or learned, noble or ignoble, Hindoo, Hottentot, Caffre, Indian, or the civilized son of science, he will relate, essentially, the same experience, and evince the same impressions of truth upon the mind. To what other general and extensive cause, can we assign these mental exercises and transformations of character, than to the Spirit’s gracious agency. He is their author, and His be all the glory and all the praise.

From the above general account, of the change of characteristic exercises in Regeneration, produced by the Spirit of God, it is obvious, that there are objects existing, and that facts have transpired, which are, in their nature, adapted to produce impressions and excitement, necessary, according to the constitution of the human mind, to rouse the will into appropriate action;—that these objects and truths are presented to, and may be apprehended through the exercise of our constitutional capacities, as rational and sensitive creatures;—that the word of God is the great theatre where they are displayed;—that men are naturally averse from the contemplation of them, and treat them, as though they were false and illusory, being unwilling to pursue them, as the means of their enjoyment; and that this aver-

1. Psalm cxv, 1.

sion is overcome, by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, who, in some way entirely unknown to us, but in perfect consistency with the established laws, which regulate the exercise of our capacities, gives an impressiveness to these truths and objects, excites the feelings, secures the attention, engages the affections, and so making the man *willing* and determined to embrace and cleave to them for ever as to realities substantial and eternal, revolutionizes his whole character and conduct, and develops in him a new life.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION.

MORAL exercises possess a complex character—Inquiry as to the nature of SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION—It does not consist, 1. In any change wrought on the *essence* of the human mind—2. Nor in some *newly* created disposition of mind—3. Nor in the communication of any new *faculty*, or *sense* or *instinct*—4. Nor in removing any *imbecility* of the natural faculties—5. Nor in any *peculiar* mode of *intellectual* knowledge—The Bible does not contain truth beyond the natural capacities of the mind—*Its* mysteries not peculiarly inexplicable—The fact not to be denied however, that human corruption impedes the perceptions of the understanding—The Saviour's explanation of this thing—John viii. 43: Jer. vii. 5: Eph. iv. 18—A General view of the structure of the Bible, which is the sphere of spiritual vision, tending to show, particularly the reason of its obscurity to many—An illustration drawn from real life—An objection answered—Illustrative facts culled from christian experience—In what consists the Spirit's agency—That agency unfolded—Some observations as to incurable blindness of mind, and hardness of heart.—Psalm, lxxxi. 11, 12—Mat. xiii. 14, 15. &c.

FROM the brief sketch of the metaphysical nature of Regeneration given in the preceding chapter, the reader will have discovered, that, while it is the commencement of a change in the character of the moral exercises, and subsequent acts, those exercises are of a *complex* description, and not predicable exclusively, either of the intellectual perceptions, or of the *sensitive* emotions, but uniting both.

Two things are observable in this process. The mind's perception of spiritual things, and the heart's acquiescence in them. The former has been technically called SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION, and the latter corresponds with MO-

RAL SUASION. The agency of the Spirit in both, requires our special attention.

In what does spiritual illumination consist? The reader will excuse us if in replying to this inquiry, we may seem to repeat some ideas already brought into view. We do not aim to be concise, but are anxious to be understood.

1. Spiritual illumination does not consist in any *change* wrought on the *essence* of the human mind. Such a change would make us no longer *human* beings. Let the essential mind be converted into that of an angel, or seraph, or new order of intelligent creatures, and it will no longer be a human soul, for by the very terms of the supposition, it is *essentially* changed.

2. Neither does spiritual illumination consist in some newly created *disposition* anterior to, but the appropriate cause, or immediate original of the mind's perceptions of the truth. In so saying we do not mean, that feelings elicited have not an influence on the mind's perceptions; but simply, that there is no peculiar foundation, or *fons actionis*, laid in, or superadded to, the constitutional capacities, and susceptibilities of the moral creature man, by any exercise of *creative* power on the part of God. This too would be to change the constitutional nature of the being, were such a thing in reality to take place. When the real nature of what are called *dispositions* is examined, they will be found to be *habits* of feeling; and every one who has attended to the exercises of his own mind, knows that a powerfully and permanently influential feeling, may be awakened by a simple combination of circumstances adapted to the mood of the individual's mind at the time. One strong and vivid emotion or feeling, ripening into purpose, secures, by virtue of the very laws of mind, the easy and frequent indulgence of the same; and unlike our mechanical habits, *the very first* impulse of such feeling assumes for years afterwards a de-

termining character. But in all this, there is no new foundation laid in nature, by any creative act—no production of a new principle or cause of action *sui generis*, but simply the eliciting of constitutional susceptibilities in new exercise, and of such sort—so vivid, so strong, so influential, as to secure their easy and frequent repetition. It is *philosophy* that talks of some peculiar adaptation of created nature, that is the specific *cause* of those acts and exercises, which as they are strung together in series, or become habitual, we denominate *dispositions*. And it is, as we apprehend, an improper use of the term—one which common sense will not sustain, to designate, as a *disposition*, a mere modification of created nature; for such according to the philosophical use of the term just noticed, it must mean. We use it commonly, to denote any particular class of acts, and exercises towards given objects as they operate on our constitutional capacities and susceptibilities, and not as efficient causes *per se*, lodged in the structure of the soul, or super added to its properties.

3. Neither does spiritual illumination consist in the communication of any *new faculty*, or *sense*, or *instinct*, to the soul. For if so, then it follows, as in the former case, that the subject of it ceases to be a human being. We may be unable to know what they might do with it, yet we can conceive it possible that there should be creatures, whom the power of God may create, having all *our* senses, and one or more superadded. The addition of these new senses, would constitute them creatures of a different constitutional nature from ourselves; and should *we*, by any exercise of divine power, become similarly endowed, we should cease to be human beings. The same things hold true, with respect to our intellectual, as well as to our sensitive nature. Say that our minds have been rendered capable of new, or angelic *modes* of thought, and we have ceased to be men. Beside, if illumination consists in per-

ceptions, through a new sense, or by means of a new faculty, or instinct, created in the soul, the unregenerate man is no more under obligation to understand and approve of spiritual things, and act accordingly, than the blind man can be, to perceive and understand colors, or the deaf man sounds. Without the capacity or faculty, requisite to perceive and understand the truth, all moral obligation would cease; and, accordingly, the Saviour has authorized us to believe, that the ignorance and blindness of men, on spiritual subjects, is not owing to the destitution of any of the natural faculties or capacities for mental action, employed in the perception of truth. Whatever derangement sin may have produced in our moral nature, one thing is certain—it has not robbed us of any distinctive power, or capacity, with which we were originally endowed by our great Creator. It is not a necessary consequence of the fall, that any of the natural operations of the human mind should be destroyed. Instances, it is true, do occasionally occur in the case of idiots and lunatics, where the rational powers are withheld, suspended, or not developed,—sad proofs, indeed, of the havoc which sin has made, but not the necessary and infallible consequences of the fall. For, he that would conclude from such facts, that the fall of man has deprived us of any mental faculty, must, by the very same mode of reasoning, infer from the fact of some being born blind, and others being naturally deformed, or deaf mutes, that it has also deprived us of corporeal powers. The absurdity of this last idea is obvious; and, therefore, by a parity of reasoning, we are forbidden to conclude, that the fall has divested the human mind of any of its natural capacities or powers, and, consequently, that illumination no more consists in restoring the lost capacity, than in imparting new. Man is still possessed of all those powers, which are necessary to constitute him a moral agent. To deny this, is to deny human accountability.

4. Nor does spiritual illumination consist, in removing any natural *imbecility* of mind, or “depravation of the faculty” of understanding, which may be supposed to prevent the exercise of the intellectual powers, in the perception of spiritual truth. Dr. Owen speaks of “a two-fold impotency on the minds of men, with respect to spiritual things. 1. That which immediately affects the mind, a natural impotency, *whence it cannot receive them, for want of light in itself.* 2. That which affects the mind by the will and affections, a moral impotency, whereby it cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, because, unalterably, *it will not.*”¹ This is a legitimate inference, from the doctrine of physical depravity. To present truth to the mind of man, *thus* disabled, would be just as absurd, as to reason with an idiot. If, however, the mind is not physically disabled,—created defective,—spiritual illumination cannot consist in restoring, by a new creative process, what had not been lost.

5. Neither does illumination consist in any new and peculiar mode of mere intellectual perception of truth. For both the renewed and the unrenewed, possess the same *essential* capacities, and are governed by the same general laws of thought. And the former, sustaining no change in the essence of their being, nor receiving any superadded faculty or sense, *their* intellectual operations cannot differ, essentially, from those of the latter. How far the exercise of the intellectual powers, on the part of the unrenewed, may be impeded by the corruption of their hearts, is a question we shall not undertake to solve. That in regard of spiritual and moral truth, the perceptions of men of quick understanding have been greatly blunted by the disordered state of their hearts—by the prevalence of corrupt inclinations, is a fact, of which there is abundant proof. And,

1. Owen on the Spirit, vol. 1, p. 417.

inasmuch as almost all our intellectual knowledge has, or may be made to have, some bearing on moral and spiritual things, the man of depraved taste, who is not only destitute of a relish for holiness, but actually *disrelishes* it, labours under the influence of prejudices, which may, and often do prevent him from perceiving truth perfectly obvious. He is actually, in this state of mind, disqualified for impartial investigations, so that the very energies of his mind may be employed, in the miserable attempt to confirm and illustrate, what is absolutely false. The apostle has told us, that "the world, by wisdom, knew not God—They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they become fools,"¹ and he gives us the most palpable proof of it in the fact, that they "changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things."¹ The christian man, whose mind is free from the prejudices against God and holiness, engendered in a depraved heart, is unquestionably, all other things being equal, more likely to make the most rapid and extensive acquisitions in valuable science. And facts will confirm the assertion. Any advantage, however, which a renewed man may possess, in this respect, is not to be attributed to the removal of any constitutional or peculiar obliquity, or imbecility of intellect, but to the healthful exercise of all the moral powers, secured by the Spirit of Life. The advantage, in respect of moral and divine truth, is undeniable.

But this is not owing to any thing in the truths of the Bible, beyond the natural capacities of the human mind, or requiring peculiar modes of intellectual perception. We are distinctly told, that, as it regards the great truths of the Bible, "the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err

1. Rom. 1, 21—23.

therein.”¹ The law of the Lord is declared to be perfect and right, “making wise the simple,” and “enlightening the eyes.”² It is true, that it discloses to our view a variety of facts, which are altogether mysterious and inexplicable, and which never could have been conceived of by the human mind, if they had not been made known to us. But the doctrines, i. e. the propositions founded on these facts, are just as intelligible, as are any advanced in elementary treatises in the sciences. Nay, in this respect, the Bible claims superiority to all the writings of men.

Its mysteries are not more inexplicable, than are some of the facts, on which mathematical reasoning is based, or, than the innumerable phenomena on which the doctrines of chemistry and natural philosophy rest. He that can comprehend the axioms of the former, is capable of apprehending the *doctrines* of Revelation. We do not say the *fact*; and hence we find many, who, with but little mental cultivation, have been able to understand and discuss all the doctrines generally comprised in a system of theology, and who could never perhaps be made to comprehend a single proposition of Euclid. We now speak of mere scientific, or intellectual acquaintance with the truths of Scripture, by those that are confessedly unrenewed. The fact is not to be disputed, that multitudes, who give no evidence whatever of a saving illumination, understand the doctrines of revelation—which fact furnishes strong and incontestible proof, that there is nothing in *them* which *transcends the natural capacities* of the human mind; and consequently, that, in whatever spiritual illumination may consist, it is not, in any peculiar modes of intellectual perception of truth,

Yet there is no denying the fact, that human corruption impedes the perceptions of the understanding. We have

1. Isai. xxxv. 8.

2. Psalm, xix. 7, 8.

a striking example of this sort proposed in the case of Christ's hearers. They seemed to labour under some great and pressing difficulty,—something, which, as it were, blinded their minds, and rendered it *impossible* for them to understand Him. “Why do ye not understand my speech, even because ye CANNOT hear my words.”¹ But alas! they are not the only example! How many sit under the preaching of the Gospel for years, and remain utterly ignorant of its grand and peculiar truths! They have eyes, but see not—minds, but they perceive not,—and seem to be illustrations of the dreadful sentence of Heaven,—“It is a people of no understanding, therefore, He that made them, will not have mercy upon them, and He that formed them, will shew them no favour.”² But these facts no more prove that men are destitute of intellectual capacities to perceive the truth, than does the stupidity of one and another with regard to the process of mathematical analysis, prove the human mind to be destitute of a capacity for the apprehension of such truth. It is not only in respect of scriptural truth, that the perceptions of the mind, are impaired by the corruption of the heart. Passion, and prejudice, and various sinful affections, have an injurious influence on it, even in respect of those subjects which are properly intellectual and scientific.

The Saviour has Himself anticipated and answered the inquiry, whence arises the difficulty in apprehending the truth by the unrenewed mind. When He said of those whom He addressed, that they *could not* hear His words, and assigned that as the *reason* of their not understanding his speech, he certainly did not mean to say, that they could not perceive the sound of His voice through the external *sense* of hearing. They were not deaf. By hear-

1. John, viii. 43.

2. Isai xxviii. 11.

ing, He undoubtedly meant, giving that attention to what He said, which was necessary, in order to understand it. No man ever yet understood a proposition or discourse to which he did not attend. *Attending* is the very mode through which, the mind's energies, requisite to the perception of truth, are roused into action. Now why cannot the carnally minded sinner give his attention to divine things? Why can he not think as intensely, and with as deep interest, about *them* as about the things of this world? Is any new faculty wanting? If so, then is he freed from all obligation to do so; for God will not require human beings to perform actions, for which they have not the requisite natural capacity. Will He, does He, require the deaf mute to hear, or the blind to see? By no means. Why then did not Christ's hearers give their interested attention to what He said? Because their passions and prejudices were such, and so powerful, as to render them unwilling to do so. They actually hated Him, and were actuated with murderous designs in relation to Him. The grand difficulty in understanding the words of Christ, arises from the natural aversion of the heart to what He speaks. There is no relish for it, but on the contrary, a disrelish.

When we look into the context, from which we have just quoted, where Christ describes the character of His hearers, we find that he declares them to be assimilated to Satan, in two of their leading and essential features. They had a desire to kill Him, and a disrelish for the truth He spoke, thus proving themselves to be the offspring of the god of this world, who "was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him."¹ Their love of *falsehood*, and *dislike* of the truth, He assigns, as the reason *why* they

1. John viii. 44.

could not hear, and did not *believe* Him, who spake the truth. The same thing, as we have seen, is done by the Apostle, who assigns the difficulty or impossibility in the way of the unrenewed sinner's obedience, to the enmity of his mind.

The Saviour has, as we think, most conclusively decided this matter. "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men *loved* darkness rather than light, *because* their *deeds* were *evil*. For every one that doeth evil, *hateth* the light."¹ Now it is as impossible for a man, to *hate* what he does not perceive, as it is, to *love* what he does not in some measure know. There is therefore, according to the plain and obvious import of the Saviour's terms, no differing mode of intellectual perception of the truth. The cause of spiritual blindness, is the prevalent influence of a hatred of the truth.

God also assigns the same, as the reason of the continuous and confirmed rebellion, of the ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem. "Why is this people of Jerusalem, slidden back with a perpetual backsliding? They *hold fast* *deceit*, they refuse to return."² The Apostle represents that the Gentile world, the unrenewed, whose case was hopeless, had so far abandoned themselves to their corrupt inclinations and desires, as to be actually destitute of any sensitiveness, with respect to holy things. It was because of the blindness of their *heart*," and their "*being past feeling*" that they were "*alienated from the life of God*," held in ignorance "*having the understanding darkened*."³ Whereas the Ephesian converts had "*put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts*, and had been renewed in the *spirit* of their minds."⁴ These passages may suffice. The difficulty, which the unrenewed sinner finds, in un-

1. John iii. 19, 20.

2. Jer. viii. 5.

3. Eph iv. 17—19.

4. Eph. iv. 22, 23.

derstanding the truth; arises, not from any defective organization of the mind; nor from the want of any constitutional capacity; nor from any particular *imbecility* of natural intellect; nor from any peculiarity in the truth itself, which renders it unadapted to the natural faculties of the human soul; but from the powerful and prevalent influence of those feelings, which oppose themselves to the truth, and prevent them from giving that simple, sincere, undivided and interested attention to it, which it deserves.

And this conclusion may be illustrated and confirmed by an exhibition of facts. The Bible, being the sphere of observation and of spiritual vision, may properly claim a brief notice from us of its structure, and the correspondent actings of the human mind in the apprehension of its truths. There are various kinds of composition, or rather, divine truth is presented, in the sacred Scriptures, in various forms, which render it perfectly intelligible to the unrenewed mind. There are some parts, which are purely *intellectual*, i. e. divine truth in them is presented to us in a form perfectly abstract and logical. Every mind capable of such an intellectual process as must be had in conducting a mathematical demonstration, or in pursuing a philosophical investigation, or in framing an argument, can comprehend them. There are others which are presented in the simple dress of historical narrative, and these, even children understand without difficulty. Others yet, are exhibited in a *poetical* garb; and these delight the imaginations of many, who disregard the Bible as a Revelation from God. An illustrious modern poet awarded the palm to the poetical writings of Moses in the book of Job, and says that he once had thoughts himself of writing a Job, but despaired of success. Now in such parts of the word of God, the unrenewed mind, finds no peculiar difficulty in apprehending its truths. In proof of this,

we have abundant facts. What parts of the Bible does the close mathematical reasoner so often select for his reading, as the very logical writings of Paul? Where does the man of taste and fancy go more frequently, than to the poetical writings of the Old Testament? And what is more frequently conned, or read with more pleasure by children, and the great mass of those who read the Bible when urged to it, merely from a general sense of duty, than the interesting and striking *histories* and *anecdotes* related in the Old and New Testaments? They all find in the Bible, something adapted to their taste, and which must be perceived, or it never could be relished.

But we remark, in the next place, that there are numerous passages in the Bible, which belong not properly to either of the above, and sometimes expressions and sentiments occur in them, which are the offspring of feeling. Intellect is employed to portray the emotions, the sensibilities, the passions of the convinced, converted and sanctified soul. Now, it is a truth, which will not, we presume, be seriously disputed, that the *language of passion* or feeling cannot be well or fully *understood* by one, who is destitute of the passions and feelings, expressed or implied,—who has *never* experienced them. Language cannot excite, in a blind man, the idea of vision. Nor can signs convey to the deaf mute, that of sound. So, neither can the language of strong emotion—of excited feeling, be fully comprehended by him, who is a stranger to the feelings which dictate it. The language of the amorous swain, for example, is disgusting to one, that never felt the tender emotion. There is a sympathy of feeling, necessary to render language lucid and intelligible, where it is *that of the heart*. The slave, whose dark mind has never been illumined with freedom's genial rays, who knows not the aspirations and emotions which liberty inspires, cannot understand the glowing language of the freeman, who is in-

spired with the love of country. There is no sympathy between them. Just as it is necessary for us to have seen an object in nature, in order to have a simple idea of it, so is it necessary, that our hearts should be affected in some measure, as are those of the convinced and converted sinner, in order to understand him when he speaks.

This being the case, it follows that those parts of the word of God, which imply or describe the various emotions of a sanctified heart, cannot be understood by him, who has never experienced such emotions. Now, strong devotional feelings, and holy exercises of heart, prevail throughout, and under the guidance of the Spirit of God, suggested the language of holy writ. The hearts of the inspired writers of the Scriptures, glowed with zeal for God, and gratitude to Christ, and love for the souls of men. And they were, oftentimes filled with heart-rending sorrow for sin, with holy joy and delight in God, with agonizing grief for the dishonor done to Him by wretched men, and with a concern like the very travail of birth, for the salvation of souls. Wherefore, it is obvious, that, if the above remarks are true, then, where such things have never been experienced—where the heart has never been waked up, under the influence of holy emotions, the Bible, in all the splendor and fervor of its spirituality, must, to the unrenewed man, be a sealed book. Now, that such feelings are not natural to men, has been already fully shewn. We are, by nature, destitute of holy feelings. The love of God, and genuine repentance for sin, are wanting in the uprenewed heart. “I know you,” said the Saviour to his hearers, “that ye have not the love of God in you.”¹ God is hated, and sin is loved. Here, then, are we to look, for the source of all the difficulty of which some complain so loudly, in hearing and understanding the words of Christ. The words are plain, and perfectly intelligible to those, whose minds and

1. John, vi. 43.

hearts are overpowered with prejudice and dislike of God. They are not straitened in God, but in their own bowels. Your own wilful, obstinate, malicious, and inveterate hatred of holiness, and your besotting, stupifying, and enslaving love of sin;—your enmity against God and Christ, and your raging thirst after the riches, honors, and pleasures of the world, prevent you, oh impenitent reader, from giving that sincere and docile attention to the words of Christ, which is alike your duty and your interest, as a rational and immortal being. Lay not the blame of your ignorance and blindness on God.

From the above view of the subject, it is obvious,—that as the spiritual blindness of men is owing, not to essential disorganization of mind, nor to the destitution or imbecility of constitutional susceptibilities, nor to any difference in the modes of intellectual perception of truth,—but, simply, to the entire absence of all those feelings, or excited sensibilities, appropriate to the objects and subjects submitted to attention in the sacred Scriptures;—so, spiritual illumination consists in the experimental and feeling sense of the truth, which is connected with its vivid and interested perception. The sensibilities of the heart are roused, and brought into blissful action by divine things. They appropriately and pleasurably affect the man, and that gives a vigor, and intensity, and vividness to his perceptions of them, which the dull, systematic, scientific or philosophical views of the doctrinal christian, or rationalist in religion, ever want.

And this view of the subject will admit of very easy and familiar illustration. You may have seen a man become inimical to another, for some reason, which neither he, nor any one else perhaps, could divine, and whose enmity was altogether as unjust as it was unreasonable. Although the character of the man he hates may be excellent, and he may even befriend him and his family, yet his heart has a bias

against him, and he disrelishes every thing which belongs to him. Whatever he does, or says, or thinks, or enjoys; his deportment and conversation, his opinions and company, his children and friends, his business and possessions, the very sight of him, every thing that is his,—he hates. Endeavour to persuade him he is wrong;—recount to him the numerous excellencies of the one he hates;—tell him of the many kindnesses he himself has received from him;—adduce proof till he can no longer reply, and although you may have given him much knowledge which he never had before, yet, if his heart still cherishes its hatred, you will not convince him. His hatred, instead of being diminished, will rather be increased. But let him cease from his enmity, and become a friend, how great will be the change! Every thing will be seen, as it were in a new light. The very things his heart hated, will now be loved;—not because he has any greater knowledge of the man's character and conduct, but because the state of his own mind has undergone a change. It is thus, in reference to the sinner's hatred of God. Although he may know much of Him, his knowledge only irritates. His mind is enmity against Him. Such are the feelings of his heart, that the knowledge of Him proves painful. But when spiritual illumination takes place—the feelings of the heart have undergone a change. Instead of hatred and irritation, there are love and delight. The sensibilities of the soul are differently excited, and the very objects which once irritated, disgusted, tormented, now please, refresh, and satisfy. Divine things possess a charm, which he never felt before;—not because they were not perceptible before, but because a jaundiced mind, a prejudiced heart, a bitter enmity to God, divided and distracted the attention, and thus prevented them from making their appropriate impressions.

Will it be objected to this view of the subject, that it degrades the rational or intellectual nature of man, by making

the perceptions of the mind dependent, for their character, upon the sensitive properties or feelings? The objection has no force. It is the fact, degrading as men may think it. And it follows the entire analogy of our being. Sensation forms the basis of all our knowledge.

Our corporeal senses regulate, and influence, and shape the character of our intellectual operations. And if so, why should we be loath to believe, that our perceptions of spiritual things, may be dependent on the susceptibilities of our sensitive nature? Whether these susceptibilities have their origin in the corporeal organization of our complex nature, or whether they are merely sympathetic affections of the immortal spirit, in unison with animal sensations, certain it is, that not a few of those things, which are characteristic of the renovated man, and of the feelings excited, when the spiritual perceptions are most vivid, do involve, or are blended with animal sensations. We must take man as he is—complicated in his structure as His Creator has made him, if we would rightly estimate his characteristic exercises. And to say, that making the intellectual operations dependent on the emotions, or to connect them with the sensibilities of the heart as consecutive, or as taking their character from them, is degrading the rational being, is merely begging the question. Analogy decides against the objection. And so will the united testimony of many facts, which may be culled from christian experience.

Conviction of sin, consists not in the mere intellectual perception of the nature of sin; but in the feeling sense of the fact, that we ourselves, personally are sinners. The mind of the convinced sinner, apprehends it is as a *reality*, that he is a rebel against God. and the deep feeling of interest thence excited in his heart, makes the apprehension abiding and influential, and renders him particularly sensitive, in view of the evil nature, as well as of the consequences of his own sins. No one ever yet thought of calling the mere in-

operative intellectual judgment, as to the nature of sin, conviction. It is the sinner's waking up, under a *realizing* view of the *fact* of *his own guilt*, and its just and horrid consequences in his own case.

The *graces of the Spirit*, will be seen to be something more than mere intellectual perceptions of truth. They involve, essentially, those feelings or emotions, which are appropriate to the character of the objects the Spirit presents, and the relations the individual sustains to them.

The *peculiar significancy* of particular passages of scripture, which every christian has, at times, noticed in his experience, and which is oftentimes esteemed proof of some special illumination of the Spirit, can be easily explained by a reference to this simple fact, that, on such occasions, the individual has experienced the very feelings expressed in the language contemplated.

In *seasons of affliction*, and persecution, and peril, from different sources, when *feeling* is *strongly excited*, how pregnant with import are many of the Psalms, which, under other circumstances, make but little impression! The perfect applicability of the sentiment expressed, to the circumstances of the christian, when feeling of any kind is excited, renders it quite intelligible.

In seasons *when strong devotional feelings* prevail, how refreshing are those parts of the word of God, which breathe forth the ardent expressions of love to the Redeemer, and hope and trust in Him! How does the heart feel its interest excited, by those incidents or peculiarities in the circumstances, or experience of christians, recorded in the Bible, which correspond with its own! The language of the soul, in close and deep communion with God, is intelligible and only intelligible to those, who have been admitted to the same.

In *seasons of revival*, when the current of feeling, awakened by the truth and Spirit of God, seem full and strong,

how lucid do the Scriptures generally appear! The untutored and unlettered christian, seems, at once, to understand the import of scriptural metaphors, and of transactions had by primitive christians, which no commentaries can enable the mere intellectual formalist, or pharisaic professor to apprehend. He enters directly into the feelings of the convicted, or the rejoicing around, and what, to the cold and speculative rationalist, and self-righteous pharisee, appears disgusting and fanatical, unmeaning and absurd, is, to him, altogether authorized and appropriate, interesting and delightful.

It is unnecessary to cite any further facts. The above are sufficient to confirm and illustrate the position, that spiritual illumination consists in those vivid and interested perceptions of divine truth, which are secured through the influence of the feelings, appropriate to the character of the object presented, whenever such feelings are excited. It is, in scriptural terms, *understanding with the heart*—the knowledge obtained, not by observation, but by actual sensible experience.

Such being its nature, it is easy to perceive, in what consists the special agency of the Spirit in its production. It is, in eliciting and exciting the feelings of the heart appropriate to the character of the objects and truths, presented to the mind, and thus securing those vivid perceptions and that interested attention, without which there can be no influential and abiding knowledge. This is exactly the account which is given of it by the apostle John. “The anointing,” says he to christians, “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, (a reality) and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”¹

1. 1 John, i, 27.

If it should be asked, how the Spirit elicits and excites the feelings, appropriate to the character of any spiritual object or truth, we must reply, as we have already done, that the *precise mode* of His agency is, to us, inscrutable; but, in so far as its effects can be traced through human consciousness, it eludes not our research. We have already seen, that we are so constituted as to be differently affected and excited by different objects. Why it is so, we cannot say, other than that, so God has ordained, and such is the nature of His own providential rule. When the object is apprehended, it makes its impression, unless the sensibilities have become extinct. He that understands somewhat of the human heart, can operate upon another's sensibilities, whose character he knows, by such a presentation of objects, and by such appeals and exhibitions of motive, as to produce an high degree of excitement, and both influence his conduct and shape his character. His success depends upon his knowledge of character,—the exciting power of the considerations adduced,—the excitability of the individual, on whom he seeks to operate,—the exciting power of the considerations adduced,—the wisdom and art, requisite to combine circumstances, calculated to excite the very passion desired, and to sustain or prolong that excitement,—and the skill with which he can adapt his exhibitions of motive, to the particular mood of mind induced, and to the interests of the individual to be affected. In all this, there is no physical creation. Should we then deny to the Spirit of God, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men, what we concede to a worm of the dust? And maintain, that when He undertaketh to change the heart, to disentangle the affections from sinful and direct them to holy objects, it *must* and can only be done by physical power—an act of physical efficiency? But this subject will more appropriately present itself in the next chapter.

We conclude this by remarking, that from the view of spiritual illumination as already given, it clearly follows, that the blindness of mind, and hardness of heart, which characterize the reprobate, are not attributable to any positive efficiency, or "sovereign" agency on the part of the Spirit of God. They are the natural results of a refusal, on His part, to toil and strive with impenitent men, who have already resisted the impressions of truth. The sovereignty of God, is His supremacy, as a moral governor. And He displays it, in the laws and constitutions He ordains,—in the method which He has devised, and instrumental agencies which He employs for administering, or executing the interests and provisions of His government,—and in the exercises of His prerogative to pardon. A mere capricious and arbitrary volition is not sovereignty, but tyranny. In the punishment of offenders, He simply executes His justice. In the pardon of rebels, He exercises His sovereignty, or the right of His supremacy to forgive. No rebel has, or can have, a claim on Him for forgiveness.

If, in any case, He sees fit to abandon a man, and leave him to himself, there is no wrong done to him, no positive influence from God, or divine efficiency exerted on him. All restraints being withdrawn, the man yields to the passions and affections excited by sinful objects. They obscure his perceptions of truth, and thus, by process of resistance in the first instance, and of unrestrained indulgence subsequently, the man becomes incurably blind and callous. It is a result that *naturally* follows: and we are under no necessity to talk about a *judicial* procedure on the part of God, in giving the sinner over to hardness of heart, as though that were the basis of certain positive influences and agency exerted for his destruction. Judicial processes are reserved for the great judgment day, when it shall be found that none of the natural results

previously eventuating in God's providential rule, will militate against the principles and decisions of eternal justice.

And this is exactly the account which God Himself, has given of this matter. "My people *would* not hearken to my voice; and Israel *would* none of me. So I *gave them up* unto their *own heart's lusts*; and they walked in their *own* counsels."¹ Correspondent with this, is the Saviour's account of the same, when explicitly speaking of those who were the subjects of incurable blindness. "*By hearing*, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's *heart* is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; *lest* at any time, they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."2 This dreadful result according to the Saviour's account, is brought about through the sinner's exercise of his natural capacities, and susceptibilities. He hears and sees things that are calculated to excite and induce him to forsake the ways of sin. They make some impressions; but he resists them. He refuses to attend to them. He labours to obliterate them. Eventually they lose their impressiveness. In the absence of all impression from the truth, or divine things, he acts as though such things did not exist, and God lets him alone. His sensibilities become indurated. His lusts become dominant, and through the influence of base and corrupting passions, the most obvious truths are imperceptible by him. The man is not to be moved by any appeals made to him in judgment, or in mercy. Afflictions irritate, mercies are despised, and the wretched slave of hateful passions, is "led captive by the Devil at his will." Pha-

1. Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12.

2. Mat. xiii. 14, 15.

raoh was a splendid example of this sort: and so were the Gentiles of whom Paul speaks. And when, in the one instance, God is said to have *hardened Pharaoh's heart*, and in the other to have given them over to "vile affections," and "a reprobate mind,"¹ no other agency on His part is implied than His abandonment of them. Withdrawing from them the restraints of His truth and grace, and letting circumstances occur in His providence, which irritate and exasperate their corruptions, they become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Falsehood is believed in preference of the truth. Conscience often resisted, is easily blinded by corrupt reasonings, and loses all power to control or check. Like raging waves of the sea, they foam out their shame, "speaking evil of those things which they know not, and what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those they corrupt themselves."²

The same account is also given by the Apostle, when speaking of those who are devoted to destruction for their adherence to that wicked one, "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders." He says that the corrupting and hardening influence which is exerted on such, so far from being from God, is from the Devil, and is "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." It is the deception which they practice on their own minds, through their ingenious acts of disobedience, that holds them in guilt, and hardens their hearts. God does not *choose* to counteract *their* WILFUL resisting of the truth. Yea for this very thing he abandons them. "Because they *received not the love of the truth that they might be saved*—and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, (it results in His providence, and according to the great principles of His government,) that they should believe a lie; that they

1. Rom. i. 21—32.

2. Jude 10 v.

all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”¹ So God Himself predicted that it should be, and so He denounced His vengeance against the rebellion of those who *would* not be influenced by the truth, to make choice of Him, and submit to His sway. “They have *chosen* their *own* ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.—I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them, because when I called none did answer, when I spake they did not hear, but they did evil before mine eyes, and *chose* that in which I delighted not.”²

The result is manifest. God is not to blame. He is not the efficient agent in blinding the minds, and hardening the hearts of impenitent men. They *destroy themselves*. They arm the very capacities and susceptibilities of their nature against themselves, and by opposing the will of God, secure through the very operation of the laws ordained for the government of the human mind, their own defilement and damnation. Yea, and they expose themselves by the indulgence of deceitful lusts, to the caprice and tyranny of the enemy of all good,—that fell “spirit of the storm,” that rides in the tempests of human passion, and guides them at his will. For, “if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom, *the god of this world*, (not Jehovah,) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, *lest* the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, should shine unto them.”³

Reader, art thou resisting thy conscience, shutting out the light, rejecting the Saviour, receiving not the love of the truth, and sporting thyself with thine own vain imaginings? Thou art in the pathway to Hell. The strong blasts from the deserts of earth, are sweeping thee away. The prince of the power of the air, is assuming a control

1. 2 Thes. ii. 9—12.

2. Isai. lxvi. 3, 4.

3. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

in thy heart. The dimness of thy perceptions, the numbness of thy sensibilities, indicate the thickening gloom of that tempest of wrath, which will presently burst around thee. Repent, believe, and receive the love of the truth, or thou shalt be swept, as with the besom of destruction, into the bottomless abyss!!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MORAL SUASION OF THE SPIRIT.

THE word of God the instrument of Regeneration—That word not a *creative fiat*, but the facts and truths of scripture—These well adapted to the result designed by them—The Spirit gives them efficacy—Inquiry whether this efficiency is in the suasive influence of truth, or by acts of physical power—The persuasive influence of truth felt in some degree by all hearers of the gospel—The Spirit's influence something more than the mere exhibition of truth to the mind—The influence of mind on mind—Its potency—Its availableness—The Spirit's peculiar to Himself—Exerted through the truth—Not a physical energy—Quotations from Dr. Owen—Examination of the argument in favor of a physical efficiency which is adduced from that class of scriptural testimonies which speak of faith and repentance as gifts of God—An illustration—The common-sense view of the subject.

THAT the Spirit of God is the author of regeneration, is not denied by those who speak of it as the commencement of a change in the character of our *voluntary* exercises. Whether that change is the result of a *creative act* of God's *physical power*—terminating on our constitutional capacities and susceptibilities; or consists in the substitution or succession of new exercises of these capacities and susceptibilities, the exercises taking their character from the *objects* and motives inducing them, are questions which have been already answered. Even they who contend for a *literal* interpretation of the phrases, *create anew, new creature*, as denoting an act of *physical* power on the part of God, will nevertheless admit, that the power of God exerted in regenerating a sinner, is through the instrumentality of the truth or word of God—a fact essentially at war with the idea of a *literal* creation. *Such* a creation

is without means—there being *nothing* on which to operate, and *creation being the production of something out of nothing*. But in the moral creation, means are employed by God. “Of his own will begat He us *with the word of truth*.”¹

It is assumed that this “word of truth” is not the *creative fiat* of the Almighty, but the facts and truths revealed in the sacred scriptures. Every one who will attentively consider the subject, cannot fail to perceive, that these facts and truths are admirably adapted to engage the rational mind and sensitive soul of man, in exercises evincive of a change of heart. In order, however, to induce these exercises for which the word of God is actually employed, common sense at once teaches, that the truths and objects revealed in the scriptures, must be brought to bear upon our minds, i. e. must be so presented to us as to engage our attention, and rouse our mental and other capacities into action. This the Spirit does in various ways, and does effectively, in all that believe. In what His efficacy consists, is a question of deep interest, and in attempting to meet it, it becomes necessary to inquire whether the Spirit’s agency is in the *suasive* influence of truth, or by some act of *physical* power irrespectively of the appropriate influence of the truth.

That the great facts revealed in the word of God, with its doctrinal instruction, its promises, its precepts, its threatenings, its examples, its precedents, its motives, are adapted to produce distinct impressions on the minds of men, and designed to teach them how to live to God and enjoy His communion, no one who is acquainted with the sacred volume can deny. It is through this that we are commanded and exhorted to turn ourselves to God and live. By whatever instrumental agencies that truth is exhibited, whether by the *living teacher*—the ministry of

¹ James, i. 16.

reconciliation, or the *living epistle*—the conduct and example of the church, or the *lively oracles* themselves, as quoted, explained, or taught by men, it is still the great means which the Spirit of God employs to convince us of our sins, and turn us from the error of our ways.

Every one whose mind has ever, in any degree, apprehended the truth of the scriptures, has felt somewhat of its persuasive influence, leading him to a compliance with it. “Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian,”¹ said Agrippa. And when Paul “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.”² The powerful exhibition of motive by the minister of Christ, as he appeals to the consciences of his hearers, and sympathetically moves by the manifestation of his own feelings, seems to have a natural tendency or operation to induce the conversion of the sinner. All that have turned to God have felt it.

But is this all the influence of the Spirit? Does His influence extend no further than the mere *exhibition* in the word, of motives, arguments, objects and considerations *calculated* to move the heart and change the will? The sacred scriptures intimate something more than this. He does, in this way, strive with men universally, who hear the gospel, and sometimes, with remarkable evidences of its influence; as in seasons of revival of religion, when almost every heart is made to quake, and every mind is impressed with the solemn conviction that God is in the midst of His people. But if there is no other agency of the Spirit than the mere *exhibition* of moral truth *calculated* to excite, then is there no *special* and *immediate* or *supernatural* influence, to secure the conversion of one more than another; whereas the Saviour’s thanksgiving to God plainly teaches that there is. “I thank thee Oh Father, Lord of Heaven and of earth, because Thou hast hid

¹ Acts, xxvi, 28.

² Acts, xxiv, 25.

these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father for so it seemed good in thy sight.”¹ And the numerous conversions in the primitive churches are all attributed to some *special* agency, which justified the apostles in using, as the designation of their members, the phrase “elect of God.” Beside, the Saviour says expressly, “no man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”² There is something more than the mere *objective* strivings of the Spirit, as they are sometimes called.

In so saying, however, we are not to be understood as denying that the efficient agency of the Spirit, is in perfect unison with the moral influence of the truth: nor as maintaining that it consists in an effort of *physical* power. It is very obvious, that the same truth pronounced by one man will make a much deeper impression than as it comes from another, though both may be placed precisely in the same external circumstances. One man may better understand the character of him whom he addresses, than another, and from his knowledge of that character, and interests, relations, prejudices, dominant passions, and the like, be able to make his appeals, in such way, and to sustain them by such motives, as to produce the very excitement, and rouse into action the very feelings, requisite to sway the will into a compliance with his demands. Perhaps no other man could have done this. We see examples of this nature, in the success with which one man of practical knowledge and tact, and particular acquaintance with dispositions, &c., makes his appeal to the heart of some wretched slave of avarice, and secures his liberal donation, although others had often tried and failed.

¹ Mat. xi. 25.

² John, vi. 44, 45.

Were we then to say, that the Spirit of God, who knoweth perfectly what is in the breast of man, can so arrange providential circumstances, and, at the same time, so cause truth, specially adapted to the mood of mind which they have produced, to be presented, as to rouse into action the constitutional capacities and susceptibilities, and thus secure the compliance of the will with his solicitations, we should maintain a special and direct agency of His, superadded to that of His mere objective strivings or the mere presentation of truth to the mind. The grace of such a procedure would be passing strange indeed!

But there is an influence which mind exerts on mind, the extent and power of which we cannot estimate. We see it, in the impressions which a father has made upon his son, and trace its wondrous developments, as that son may roam in distant lands;—in the distracting effects of those terrible denunciations of vengeance, with which an angry foe has put to flight some timid offender;—in the checks and barriers, which some benevolent friend has, by his feeling counsels, thrown in the way of the young votary of sinful pleasure;—in the winning influence of certain indications of affection, made by the very twinklings of the eye, which rivet the heart;—in the solemn, premeditated appeal, which passes unheeded at the moment, and seems to die from the recollection, but revives, with almost tempestuous power, when the individual to whom it has been made, suddenly finds himself involved in the circumstances contemplated;—and in the surprise, delight, anxiety, or terror, which may be awakened in the mind of another, by one, who, studious of the heart, has learned from certain outward indications, to read the thoughts, and founds an appeal on what the individual addressed had supposed, would never be known or suspected by man.

We stand amazed, at times, at the potency of that influence, which those conversant with the human heart, and

with knowledge of the ways of wicked men, can exert, in detecting culprits, in swaying the angry passions of the multitude, and in subduing, almost by a word, and altogether unarmed, the subjects of violent and infuriate excitement. There is a sort of sympathy between human spirits, which may be touched to produce designed emotion, with as much certainty as we can strike the chords of music, to secure the very sounds desired. What, in these things, we concede to man, must be attributed, in infinitely greater degree, to that Spirit, who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men.

Nor are we disposed to rest even here. We freely admit, that the Almighty Spirit, which formed us at first, is able to rouse our different capacities into action, in some way peculiar to Himself, so as to produce exactly the result He designs; yet so as neither to do violence to any principle of our nature, nor be the efficient Author of our volitions, or of any positive creation within us, having *causal* power over such volitions. But what that agency precisely is, we will not presume to say, any further, than that it is not irrespective of the appropriate influence of truth, upon the rational mind and feeling heart of man, nor in any independent exercise of physical power, nor inconsistent with the voluntary agency of man.

When the influence of the Spirit, in Regeneration and sanctification, is promised, or spoken of, it is as in connection with and through the truth. When Paul prayed, that the eyes of the understanding of the Ephesian converts might be enlightened, he asked God specially to give them the Spirit of wisdom and *revelation*, in the *knowledge* of Christ.¹ When the Saviour promised the Comforter to his disciples, he said, "He shall *teach* you all things, and *bring* all things *to your remembrance*, whatsoever I have *said*

1. Eph. i, 17, 18.

unto you.”¹ When He prayed for their sanctification, it was “*through the truth—the word.*”² Paul says of the Corinthian converts, “In Christ Jesus, I have *begotten* you *through the gospel.*”³ Peter says of christians, that they are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by *the word* of God;”⁴ and Paul prays, that God might sanctify and cleanse (them) *with the washing of water, by the word.*”⁵

These, and such like testimonies, are sufficient to teach us, that whatever influence of the Spirit in regeneration or sanctification is promised, prayed for, or to be expected, it is in and through the truths of the sacred Scriptures. In them, are revealed the great objects which the Spirit presents, and causes to make their appropriate impressions on us, so that our minds and hearts are led forth in holy exercises. This fact will not be denied; but an agency of the Spirit, quite different from any that we have noticed, is asserted and contended for by some, as constituting the positive work of the Spirit in regeneration. It is something altogether independent of the moral influence of truth, and which may as readily be exerted without, and irrespective of the truth, as with or through it. We refer to the *physical* energy of God, which we have denied is exerted in the regeneration of the sinner.

The reader will remember, what has been already brought into view on this subject, in a preceding chapter, where it is shown, that such an energy is actually contended for by some old Calvinistic divines, and is altogether unsupported by reason or Scripture. We are aware, that some are disposed to accuse us of a misrepresentation of the views of old Calvinists, and seek a subterfuge in the equivocal import of the word *physical*, as it is sometimes used synony-

1. John xiv. 26.

2. John xvii, 17,

3. 1. Cor. iv, 15.

4. 1 Pet. i, 23.

5. Eph. v. 26.

mously with *material*. But this will not do. Dr. OWEN shall once more speak on this subject. He is very explicit, when treating on the subject, which claims our attention in this chapter, and takes care, in the most pointed and formal manner, to assert an agency of the Spirit, of a totally different character, from that which is exerted through the truth. Of the latter he says, "His operation is *herein* moral, and so metaphorical, not *real, proper and PHYSICAL*." And while he admits, "1. That the Holy Spirit doth make use of it in the regeneration or conversion of all that are adult," he adds, "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."¹ This he undertakes, at considerable length, to prove, as an important point, and necessary to be maintained, in opposition both to the Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian heresies. We can discern, however, an influence of the Holy Spirit, which is effectual, and operates, certainly, to secure the choice of the will, through the influence of truth, over and above that mere providential *presentation* of the truth, which leaves to the will the liberty of indifference, without finding it necessary to combat the Pelagian heresy, by maintaining such a monstrous absurdity, as that of *physical* Regeneration.

The ideas of physical depravity, and power, or ability, in the faculties themselves, were so interwoven with this writer's system, that he seems to assume it throughout that there is, and can be, no other way of *effectually influencing* and bringing the sinner to *holy exercises*, but by *an actual effort of creative power on the part of God terminating on the abstract physical constitution of the*

1. Owen on the Spirit, vol. 1, p. 476.

moral being—renovating or reinvigorating the *very faculties*, so that He may be said to have literally created the *very willing* of the sinner to come to Christ. “God worketh in us to will and to do. The *act* therefore itself of willing in our conversion,” he says, “is of God’s operation: and although we will ourselves, yet it is he who *causeth* us to will *by working in us* both to will and to do.” “Yet is not the will able to apply itself unto one 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 *effect the act of willing in it*.”¹

We refer the reader to the quotation in the note below,² and pass to the consideration of some passages of Scripture, which seem to favor the idea of a physical efficiency of the Spirit in the work of conversion, and which are commonly cited in proof of it. And the FIRST we notice, is that numerous class, which speak of faith, repentance, and other christian graces, as the GIFTS of God. “To you it is GIVEN on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”³ On this verse Dr. Owen remarks: “To believe on Christ, expresseth saying *faith itself*. This is given to us. And how is it given to us? even *by the power of God working in us* “to will

1. Owen on the Spirit, vol. 1. p. 478, 488.

2. 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 actuated. 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 actuated, 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 actuated thereby. And, in respect of its own *illicit* act, as it is so actuated and moved, it is *movens*, the next efficient cause thereof.—Owen on the Spirit, vol. 1, p. 498.

3. Phil. i 29.

and to do of his own good pleasure.”¹ It is certain that every *giving* of a benefit does not imply a physical efficiency producing it. God is said to have “so loved the world as to *give* his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish but have everlasting life.”² Here it does not mean an efficiency producing any exercise, but the authoritative *grant* of God, which He has been pleased to make of His Son as a Saviour for a lost and guilty world. The word indeed sometimes means to convey or invest with some right or benefit, but even here it does not always denote the idea of efficient power.

But it will be said;—the very character of the Being contemplated, is such as necessarily implies, in the present case, an efficient exercise of power on the part of God; for faith is something which had no previous existence, and must, therefore, be *produced* before it can be said to be *given*. It is true that faith and repentance have no existence in the unrenewed sinner. But what are they? They are not *substances*. The Aristotelian philosophy, and the dreams of the *realists* are of no authority in the church of God. Faith and repentance are *acts* of the thinking, feeling, conscious being, and they must be *voluntary* too, or they want an essential feature. To say, then, that God, by an act of physical efficiency, *gives* faith and repentance to a man, is, in other words, to say, that He produces or *creates* the very *acts themselves*. And accordingly Dr. Owen does not hesitate to assert as much, “The act of God working faith in us, he says, is a *creating* act.”³

We confess ourselves at a loss to know what is meant by the word *create* in this application, as literally understood. The *acts* of an existing being are not properly and literally *creations*: nor can they, in any literal sense, be called such, else God may be said *to create his own*. The

1 Phil. i. 13.

2 John, iii. 16.

3 Owen on the Spirit, v. i. p. 496.

views of the author just quoted, which in our youthful days we thought were too profound for our comprehension, are too mystical for us still. "The will, therefore," says he, "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."¹ "This internal efficiency of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, as to the event is infallible, victorious, irresistible, or *always* efficacious."²

The meaning of these, and such like declarations, which we meet with in the writings of this and of other divines of the same school, must be, if we can at all apprehend their design, that God, by an effort of *physical power*, creates a *faculty to will* spiritually in regenerate man, and by simple physical power puts that faculty in motion.³ Thus God's effective government of mind, is made that of physical force, and in no wise different from that of the material creation. The accountability of the creature is destroyed and by a parity of reasoning, the acts of the mind

¹ Owen on the Spirit, v. i. p. 494.

² Idem, v. i. p. 491.

³ 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 actuated 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 in us the will of conversion unto God, so actuating our wills, as that they also act themselves, and that freely. Owen on the Spirit, v. i. p. 494.

being literal creations, God Himself becomes the Great Creator of unholy as well as holy volitions, and consequently, according to this doctrine of efficiency, is the greatest and the only real sinner in the universe!!!

We can and do, in the ordinary language of common sense, understand very well such expressions, as that of giving faith, and giving repentance, without any *physical efficiency* in *creating the acts* or exercises of faith and repentance. Were we to maintain that God grants to this and the other man, that the mind and heart shall be disentangled from prejudice, and brought to perceive and believe what He says, and that to this very end, He is pleased to exert a very special agency by His Spirit, adapted to the ordinary laws of human thought and feeling, throwing around them such objects, exciting such feelings, presenting such truth, and making such appeals, and that with so much point, pathos, and power of influence, as to induce them to believe and repent, who does not see, that we might, just as legitimately, yea, and with far greater semblance of *grace*, say;—to such it is *given* to believe—to them hath God *granted* repentance? In all this there is no *physical efficiency*: and yet the specialty and moral power of God's gracious interposition and influence are very apparent.

We see a benevolent individual, whose property has been injured by a company of thoughtless and wicked youth, and some of it fraudulently carried away. They are all known to him. His safety and reputation require, that such conduct should not pass unnoticed. He has it in his power to adduce proof against every one, and may put the law in force, and let it take its course. But He is not disposed at once to do so. The natural benevolence of his heart, is sustained by the interference of another, so that, in so far as his honour and reputation are concerned, they may all be forgiven. Accordingly he apprises them

of his willingness to pardon, and calls upon them to believe his professions and repent of their conduct. But none are inclined to do so. They disbelieve his professions. They reject his proffered kindness. They trifle with his forbearance. They defy him to do his utmost. For the benefit of society he lets the law take its course with some: but here is one and another whom he is determined to rescue. He is under no obligation to do so; but so he is inclined. Accordingly he accosts them with kindness, exposes to their view the evil of their conduct, and its dreadful and ruinous consequences—tells them of his concern for them—demonstrates it in many ways before them—promises and presses on them his forgiveness—makes his strong appeals to the feelings of the heart, and assumes such a powerful influence over their conscience, and their instinctive feeling of self-love, as to gain their attention, and eventually, by means of the cogent exhibition of truth to their minds and hearts, persuades them to believe, and melts them in repentance. Who does not see that He is the author of this change in the feelings, and resolutions of their hearts! It is all grace! amazing grace! and but for such grace they had neither believed nor repented.

Had he not *given* them to believe—granted them the opportunity, and exerted the influence requisite to bring them to do so, they had not ceased from the feelings cherished and conduct pursued in reference to him. But in all this, there is no *physical efficiency*. Shall we suppose that God cannot do with sinners, in reference to Himself, what one man has done with an other? That a physical efficiency is necessary to make the sinner willing to confide in Him, and repent of his rebellion! To suppose so, is, in fact, to attribute a moral influence to man more potent than that, which, in such a case, it would be requisite God should exert! It would in effect be to say that *man* can subdue

his foe, and by an appropriate moral influence, convert him into a friend; but that God *cannot* convert *His* enemy, and bring him to believe, *except* He puts forth *His* physical power, and literally create him over again. Were the depravity of man a *physical* thing—a *created substance*—“something” having being in the soul anterior to all moral acts and exercises; or were holiness a physical attribute, then, indeed, there could be no other method of conversion than by an act of *creative* energy, to remove the tainted, vitiated “nature,” and implant another, having power to produce acts adapted to it. But the falsity of such an idea has been exposed: and, therefore, it is altogether improper to speak of the power of God exerted in the production of faith as possessing the same character with that which is employed in *creating*.

We use the term every day, in reference to a moral influence, and talk of the power which one man has over another; and none misunderstand us. Why must we suppose the term is literally to be understood, when used to denote the moral influence of the Spirit of God? We know not why. And if we may and must reject the idea of *physical efficiency*, i.e. of the act of faith in the believer’s mind being the simple product of God’s creative power, then there is nothing of which we can predicate power, but the moral influence which the Almighty mind exerts on ours. This influence is exerted in various ways and degrees, to induce the voluntary rational agent, man, to believe and repent. And it is successfully exerted in many cases. The illustration, a short time since adduced, will, with a very slight variation, apply here. We have rebelled against the High and Mighty Ruler of the Universe. His justice and the equity of His government,—the truth, honour, and stability of his character and law, require that we should be punished. God is under no obligations to refuse to punish, or to think of doing any thing else in relation to us. His

benevolence prompts him to pardon. His eternal and co-equal son, by suffering as though he had sinned, and obeying the divine commands, has satisfied the justice of God, and wrought out an everlasting Righteousness, through which He can be just, and yet justify the ungodly. His law being magnified and made honorable, so that He can consistently pardon—being proved, unanswerably, to be wise and righteous, and not tyrannical, He proclaims his mercy to a lost and guilty world. They, one and all, begin to make excuse, reject the offered mercy, and refuse forgiveness. His professions are not believed. No sorrow for rebellion is evinced. To one and another He is pleased to make, by His Spirit, His solemm appeal. Object after object, truth after truth, motive after motive, are presented. Reiterated appeals are made to conscience and the heart, and, eventually—where He is pleased in sovereign mercy—to subdue one and another believe, and are made willing to forsake their sins. They never would have done so, but for such a procedure of grace on the part of God. How appropriate, therefore, is it, to say of such, that to them it has been *given* to believe?—to them hath God granted repentance. We see, at once, how faith is the gift of God, without any act of physical efficiency on his part, and the same too of repentance, which both are voluntary exercises, on the part of man. Let us then beware, how, in the spirit of philosophy, we push the import of terms beyond that, which common sense shows to be their appropriate meaning.

And that such is the correct interpretation of the passage quoted, and of others of similar character, will be obvious to every unprejudiced reader, who will allow himself to consult the text, in its connection. “Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, *but also to suffer for his sake.*” No one will pretend, that God’s giving the Phillippian christians to *suffer* for Christ’s sake,

was His actually, by His own power, inflicting suffering on them; yet this *suffering* for Christ was as much the *gift* of God, as their *believing* on him. Every one sees, that it will not do to adopt the same rule of interpretation, in reference to the *suffering*, that Dr. Owen and others do in reference to *believing*. But what right has one to attach a meaning to the word *give*, differing in one case from the other? We know not; and, therefore, as we cannot, by any rule of interpretation whatever, say, that God, by any “physical work,” of his own, directly inflicts sufferings on believers, for Christ’s sake; neither can we say, the apostle here teaches, that, *in this way*, he produces faith. The truth is, the passage does not contemplate so much the influence, or agency exerted to *produce* faith, as it does the great grace, or favor, which God displays, in allowing christians to believe on Christ, and suffer for his sake. Both are signal expressions of grace. That we should be permitted to confide in Him, and be reputed worthy to suffer for His sake, are favors truly wonderful! And when these things are secured, through the special influence of the Spirit, on our minds, and the special ordering of His providence, the grace is exceedingly enhanced. “By grace are (we) saved, through faith, and that not of (ourselves); it is the *gift* of God.”¹

1. Eph. ii, 8.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MORAL SUASION OF THE SPIRIT.

CONTINUED.

The term power appropriately employed to denote a moral influence—Not necessary to suppose it denotes *physical efficiency* when applied to the Spirit's converting influence—Not so to be understood when it is used in scripture in this connection—Psalm, cx. 8; Rom. xv. 13; 2 Thess. i. 11; 2 Cor. xii. 9; John, i. 12; Rom. i. 16; 1 Cor. i. 18; 1 Thess. i. 5; 1 Cor. ii. 5, 6; Mat. vii. 22; Acts, vi. 8, 10; Heb. iv. 12; Eph. iii. 7; Eph. vi. 10; Phil. iv. 13; Eph. vi. 11; Eph. i. 19, 20, explained—Inferences from the view of the Spirit's influence given in this and the preceding chapter—1. The impertinence and arrogance, &c. of the spirit of philosophy—2. The character and danger of the sin of grieving the Spirit.

HAVING dwelt so long in the former chapter, on the *first* class of texts, and shewn the fallacy of their interpretation, by the advocates of physical efficiency, we hope the reader will not impatiently accompany us in noticing the *second*, which speak specifically of the power of God as the proper *cause* of faith and other gracious exercises, or at least as having some connection with them. We have already shewn, that the term *power* is, very naturally and intelligibly, employed to denote the vigor, energy and successful issues of moral influence, where there is no physical efficiency. We are, therefore, under no necessity to suppose, that the success of the Spirit's agency is and must be attributable to a "physical work," or literal creation, and to be determined, in the ideas which we attach to it, by such an assumption. It is by no means difficult to shew, that in none of the passages where it is used in connection

with the Spirit's agency in our conversion, is it necessary for us to understand it, as intimating a *physical work* on the part of God or His *efficient creative energy*. We notice a few of those most commonly quoted in proof of such a *creative power* being put forth by God in the regeneration of the sinner.

"Thy people," says the Psalmist, "shall be *willing* in the day of thy *power*."¹ This is commonly quoted to prove, that it is the power of God which makes us willing, and that power not a moral influence which is through truth and motives presented; but a physical efficiency. We design not *criticism*, but even the unlearned reader

1. Ps. cx. 3. *Populus tuus spontaneitatem tempore potentie tue in magnificis ornamentis sanctitatis: ex ulcro auroræ fluat ros juventutis tue.* Quibus verbis. *a.* Morales civium Messie qualitates describuntur, et *b.* immensa eorum copia. Hujus populi internas externasque qualitates delineant voces *spontaneitatum*, et *ornamentorum sanctitatis*; quarum illæ ad animi, hæ ad totius hominis actiones pertinent. Internam animi qualitatem et dispositionem laudabilem ob oculos ponit epitheton *spontaneitatum*, nomini *populi* additum: sive vertatur, *populus tuus spontaneitatum* per ellipsin vocis *populus* ut plene sit, *populus tuus est populus spontaneitatum*, sive reddatur, *populus tuus spontaneitates* sc. sunt, pro *spontaneus* est summo gradu; utrumque his admitti potest, et eodem redibit. Sensus enim est populum Messie esse lubentem, ingenuum, generosæ ac liberalis indolis, qui sese Christo sponte sua, et toto animo submitit, et ad quævis officia promptum paratumque præstat. Venema in Psalmos ad loc.

The Hebrew scholar needs not to be told that the translation of this verse in our English Bibles and the use that is commonly made of it, are alike incorrect. The power spoken of, is something different from physical efficiency. Populum enim Messie talem futurum, seseque præstiturum, dicit poeta, die potentie, sive in genere, tempore potentie tue, sc. regis Messie quem adloquitur. Interpretis hic varie quidem instituunt, et vel tempus *copiarum colligendarum*, vel *victoriæ*, vel simile quid intelligunt. Sed eorum potiores sunt rationes, qui tempus *potentie*, vel *strenuitatis* regis interpretantur; qui satis usitatus est vocis significatus: modo illud hic intendi statuatur, quo Messias omni vilitate et imbecillitate, quam inter homines, carne vestitus circumtulit, deposita, ad dextram *potentie* Dei exaltatus eam singulari modo exseruit, in Spiritus s. donis effundendis, euangelio potente et exalta manu potentissima propaganda. Hoc est tempus *potentie* Messie oppositæ ad tempus *carnis* et imbecillitatis inter homines. Idem.

may perceive by the letters in italics in his Bible, that the words, "*shall be*," are supplied by the translators. The proper rendering of the verse does not at all convey the idea of an exercise of power on the part of God to make his people willing. They are spoken of as *already willing*, and the power adverted to, is that of an army or a triumph, which furnishes the occasion for demonstrations of loyalty. Thy loyal people shall come to thee *attired in holiness in the day of thy triumph*. Let not the text be made to mean what it cannot, by any fair interpretation, be understood to express.

When Paul prayed for christians at Rome, that "the God of hope (would) fill (them) with all joy and peace in believing, that (they) might abound in hope *through the power* of the Holy Ghost,"¹ he did not ask that God would, by any *physical efficiency* produce these *acts* of faith and hope, and *feelings* of joy and peace; but that the Spirit might exert His influence, and so order it, that they should abound in these exercises and emotions. We have already seen that God can, and does exert an influence, which is successful, and is very properly denominated *powerful*, without any act of *creative* power. To say that the power of the Holy Ghost, in producing hope and faith, is his *creative efficiency*, lodging in the soul, "a principle or disposition" that *causes* such exercises, is saying no more of it than what may be said of his power in creating the instincts, &c. of animals, and thus making His work in regeneration altogether *natural*, i. e. like that in nature, not *supernatural* which it is in fact—an influence exerted in pursuance of special design, and not uniformly and infallibly, according to fixed laws of nature. The apostle speaks of the continuous exercises of faith, hope, &c. induced by the *special influence* of the Spirit, and not of any *cause* of them, philosophically speaking, in the soul itself.

1 Rom. xv. 13.

In the same way we can understand his prayer for christians at Thessalonica, that God would “fulfil (in them) all the good pleasure of his goodness, and *the work of faith with power.*”¹ The *work* of faith is not the simple *act* we call faith, but all those things which they who believe incline to, and do in obedience to God, and with a view to His glory—the *actions and labor consequent upon or induced by their faith.* The prayer, therefore, is for the powerful influence of the Spirit, to stimulate them to increased and prolonged labor, and by His co-operating agency to sustain and give them success in it. What he has here brought to view in his prayer, he has elsewhere introduced in the form of precept. “Be ye steadfast unmoveable, *always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that your labor is not vain in the Lord.*”² In this sense he used the phrase in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, when he said, that he remembered “without ceasing their *work* of faith and labor of love.”³

When Paul speaks of “glorying in (his) infirmities, that the *power* of Christ may rest upon him,”⁴ he speaks of the supporting, sustaining, or co-operating and strengthening care and agency of God,⁵ by which he was enabled, in the midst of his poverty and afflictions and weakness, still to work for Him. The idea is not that of *physical efficiency.*

When believers are said to receive “power to become the sons of God,”⁶ the reference is to *dignity, excellence; right or authority*, as any one, acquainted with the original, can perceive.

When the apostle speaks of “the gospel of Christ, and

¹ 2 Thess. i. 11.

² 1 Cor. xv. 58.

³ 1 Thess. i. 3.

⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

⁵ Of similar import are the following, Col. i. 11; Pet. i. 5; 2 Tim. i. 8, &c.

⁶ John, i. 12. ἐξουσίαν—*license*, or liberty of action. See Mat. xxi. 23, 2 Thess. iii. 9; *authority or right*, Acts, xxvi. 10; Mat. ix. 5; viii. 9. x. 1. xxviii. 18; *privilege, prerogative, or dignity*, John, v. 27.

the preaching of the cross," being "the *power of God* unto salvation to every one that believeth,"¹ he is not speaking of the act of faith, or any other grace, but of *the gospel*, i. e. the wondrous facts and gracious truths which it was given him in charge to preach, the very annunciation of which to guilty rebels such as we are, is news of the most gladdening nature. There are other reasons to be assigned for its receiving this denomination, than any *physical efficiency*, which, some philosophical expositors of scripture, have supposed, the Spirit of God exerts, on the minds and hearts of men in connection with the preaching of the gospel. As the grand medium or vehicle of those powerful influences, which the Uncreated Mind exerts on our minds and hearts, it may well receive such an appellation, especially as the sudden transformations of character, which result through that influence, are so decisive and surprising, and so far beyond the power of mere human suasion, as to prove the moral influence to be superhuman.

To the same purport are the declarations of the same apostle, specifically with regard to the success of his preaching. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also *in power*, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."² Whether the *power* of which he speaks, as distinct from the Holy Spirit, be the *miracles* wrought in proof of the religion he taught, or the cogent influence of the truth revealed, we are not concerned to inquire; but one thing is certain;—it cannot mean *physical efficiency*. For, he notices that it was "in much *assurance*," i. e. in full proof of the truth, whether that assurance was the hearer's conviction or his own confidence of speech. "My speech and my preaching," says he, "was not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but

¹ Rom. i. 16, 1 Cor. i. 18.

² 1 Thess. i. 5.

in *demonstration* of the Spirit and of power,"¹ in the cogent, powerful demonstrations of the Spirit. He sought not to allure by human eloquence, nor to convince by human reasoning; but claimed the credence of his hearers, for what he communicated to them as the word of God,—the proof of which fact, viz: that it was the word of God, they had in the miracles and gifts of the Spirit which attended his ministrations. "That your faith," he adds, "should not stand in the wisdom of men but *in the power* of God."¹

We have the authority of the scriptures themselves for this explanation of these expressions. The Saviour is said to have "taught the people *as having authority*,"² and yet he did not then exert any thing like a physical efficiency. And so Stephen is said to have been "full of faith and *power*."³ He spake with undoubting assurance himself, and so convincing were his arguments, that "they were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spake,"³ for "he did great wonders and miracles among the people."³ All this is perfectly intelligible without the supposition of a physical efficiency. Why then must it be admitted, when it is said of "the word of God," that it "is quick and *powerful*, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow?" Especially when this glowing metaphorical language is explained by the apostle himself to mean, that it "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart?"⁴

The success of Paul's preaching was very remarkable. Thousands were converted by means of it. Much of its potency depended on the miracles he wrought, and gifts of the Spirit, which God had conferred on him. These things gave him energy. They were all expressions of

1 1 Cor. ii. 5, 6.

2 Mat. vii. 29.

3 Acts, vi. 8, 10.

4 Heb. iv. 12.

God's favor to him, and not mere natural qualifications. And this is the account he gives of the matter when he says, that he was "made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto (him) *by the effectual working of his power*"¹—i. e. according to the energy of His might. He is not speaking of any *physical efficiency* producing faith in his own mind, or in the minds of others; but of the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, which accompanied his preaching. That influence we have skewn was not *physical*, but the potent energy which the Infinite Mind exerts on our thoughts and purposes and affections, and by which we are kept the subjects of His sway.

We notice another passage. "We are required to be strong in the Lord, and *in the power of His might*."² To exert the efficiency of God we cannot, and it would be as absurd to require us to do so, as it would, that we should use Sampson's strength. But God exerts his own energy, in co-operation with our efforts, as we trust and hope in Him, and gives the effective force, requisite for the accomplishment of every hearty, believing, obediential purpose. The apostle means, that we should cordially trust in God, which will secure His Almighty agency, in all cases; or, perhaps, more according to the import of his own metaphors, that we should be courageous, and have confidence in the Lord, our great commander, whose resources are exhaustless, whose forces are invincible, and who will not desert or betray us. As soldiers are courageous, and display great energy, when they have confidence in their general, so will we, if we are confident in the Lord. We refer the reader to the passages, cited in the margin below.³ With such an intrenching ourselves, within the

1. Eph. iii. 7. *κατα την ενεργειαν της δυναμεις αυτου*. Compare Eph. iii. 20. and Col. i. 29.

2. Eph. vi, 10.

3. 2 Chron. xxxii, 7; Isai. xxxv, 4; Josh. i, 7, 9; Numbers xiv, 9; Isai. xvi, 4; xli, 10, 14; Zeph. iii, 16, 17; 2 Chron. xiv. 11.

breast-work of Omnipotence, every christian is familiar.¹ But, in all this, there is no intimation of a *physical efficiency* on the part of God, put forth in the production of our acts. “The Strength of Israel” co-operates with us, as we trust in Him, carries us through frightful dangers, and causes us to triumph over all our enemies. “I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me,”² said the apostle. What he further says, in explication of this thing, shows plainly, that he is not speaking of a *cause* of energy, lodged by God in the soul, nor of any physical efficiency, on the part of God, in producing acts; for he calls the graces of faith, hope, &c. THE PANOPLY—“the whole armour of God.”³ *These graces* are the divine weapons, through which we conquer—the exercises of mind, which secure the defence and support of Omnipotence. We notice but one more of the numerous class of texts, which speak of the power of God, in connection with the gracious exercises of the christian.

Paul prayed for the Ephesian converts, that they “might know—what is the exceeding greatness of his (God’s) 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 the heavenly places, far above all *principality* and *power*, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,”⁴ &c. This is commonly quoted as decisive. Dr.

1. *Be strong in the Lord, &c.*—It implies a further act of faith, not only to believe that God is Almighty, but also, that this Almighty power of God is engaged for its defence; so as to bear up in the midst of all trials and temptations undauntedly, leaning on the arme of God Almighty, as if it were his own strength, so to encourage the christian to make use of God’s Almighty power, as fully as if it were his own; when ever assaulted by Satan in any kinde.—Gurnall’s Christian Armour, p. 23.

2. Phil. iv, 13.

3. Eph. vii, 11.

4. Eph. i, 19—21.

Owen says, in commenting on this very passage, "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 to 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 to our present purpose, consists in the acting of his divine power, *by a real internal efficiency.*"¹

This, we think, is a fair specimen of the influence, which a man's philosophy naturally exerts on his mind, in the interpretation of Scripture terms.² Philosophy is always dangerous. Common sense is a much safer guide,—and when epithets are multiplied, it is always done to give importance to the subject, and the apostle's design, in doing

1. Owen on the Spirit, vol i, p. 490.

2. κατὰ τὴν ἐνεργειαν τοῦ κρᾶτος τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ. are the apostle's terms. Calvin explains them ἰσχυς robur est quasi radix. κρᾶτος potentia autem arbor, (or as Poole quotes Zanchy out of Calvin, arbor cum ramis.) ἐνεργεια efficacia fructus—est enim extensio divini brachii quæ in actum emergit. Calv. Com. in epist. fol. ἰσχυς est facultas ipsa, κρᾶτος ipsius sese exerentis virtus, ἐνεργεια vero ipsius effectum: ἐνεργεια est ipsa efficax operatio, quæ proficiscitur immediate ἀπὸ τοῦ κρᾶτος, i. e. ex actuali robore, quasi a manu et brachio exserto. κρᾶτος igitur erit potentia et vis exerta, qua quis aliquid agit, et hæc proficiscitur ἀπὸ τῆς ἰσχύος, vel δυνάμεως. Etiam Philosophi tria distinguunt, δυνάμιν φυσικὴν, ἐξιν, habitum, et ἐνεργειαν, unde opus oritur. Pol. Syn. ad loc.—Sed non opus est tanta subtilitate.

so here, seems, evidently, to extol the *immensity* of the divine power, rather than philosophically to unfold its nature, or teach, precisely, its physical character. Let us see what are the facts he teaches.

He asserts, that there is a mighty energy exerted on the part of God, in relation to believers—“*the exceeding greatness of His power* to us ward who believe.” If it be said, that this power is *physical*, and it be argued alike from the redundancy of epithets, and the special example of Christ’s resurrection adduced, we shall not dissent. But the reader will perceive, that the apostle does not say that it is exerted *in*¹ BELIEVERS, much less *in the production* of those acts of their minds, and feelings of their hearts, which we call *faith*. He is not speaking of the *act* or *exercise* of faith at all, but of christians personally or characteristically considered, whom *he describes* as those “who believe,” or, more literally, “the believing.” It is the greatness of God’s power *for them*, that the apostle prays they may see. Now, that power is variously exerted, and will be to

1. *εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας*—*εἰς* when it governs the accusative, has many different significations, but mostly refers to *place* when it is used to denote *in* or *into*, and is substituted for *ἐν* with the ablative. See Mark i. 9. *εἰς τὸν ἱερὸν ἱερῶν ἐκπαιστῆναι* for *ἐν τῷ ἱερῶν*. If the apostle had intended to speak of the efficacy of the divine power specifically exerted in our minds, in the production of faith, he would not have said *εἰς ἡμᾶς*, but *ἐν ἡμῖν* as he has done in Phil. ii. 13. *ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν*. Our translators have rendered it by *erga* towards, which does not convey the idea of any internal real physical efficiency. Examples of this sort Schleusner cites from 1 Pct. iv. 9: Mat. xxvi. 10: Acts xxiv. 17: Rom. v. 8: xii. 10: 2 Cor. ii. 4. We object not to its correctness. But if any one should prefer to render it *for*, “*ut causam finalem indicet*” as in Mark i. 4: Mat. viii. 4: or *in relation to*, “*quod attinet id*” as in Gal. iv. 11 and Eph. iii. 16, the idea of physical efficiency will no more be taught by the apostle. In the last text cited *εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ἀνθρώπου* is used for *κατὰ τὸν*, &c., in reference to the inner man, and the subject spoken of is the powerful, not physical, influence of the Spirit in the development of gracious affections, especially, as by this means believers are encouraged and emboldened to meet and endure their tribulations.

all eternity, for their benefit and glory. Their deliverance from afflictions, perils, temptations, persecutions, Satanic arts and mischief, the counsels of the wicked, the wrath of man, death and the grave, and their being raised to life, and glory eternal in the Heavens, are all effects and exhibitions of the mighty power of God.

Of this energy on the part of God, towards believers, the apostle cites an illustrious example, in the resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and universal supremacy and dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ. "According to¹ the working of

1. *κατα την ενεργειαν*, &c. When *κατα* governs the accusative, it has a great variety of meanings. It is necessary however to prove that it here denotes the *efficient cause*, before the text can be quoted as proof of God's physical power being exerted in the production of faith. Stephanus cites Mark i. 27, as an example of its *causal* import; but *κατα εξουσιαν* is properly *according to authority*—authoritatively, as having authority; Schleusner quotes Gal. i. 11, as an example of the same sort; but *κατα ανθρωπον*, if translated *according to man*, is equivalent with *human* as opposed to divine or inspired, which is the apostle's idea, being a periphrasis for an adjective, and is in fact so used by him in Rom. iii. 5, where he quotes the cavilling objections of unbelievers against the doctrine of justification, which he taught. Thus also it is used 2 Cor. xi. 21, where *κατα ατιμιαν* has an adverbial import—foolishly—according to folly. See also Acts xxviii. 16. Schleusner also cites 1 Pet. iv. 14, as an example of the causal import of *κατα*, as well as the titles of the gospels. With respect to the latter, its import obviously is not so much to the work *produced*, by Matthew, &c., as to the gospel, i. e. the account of Christ's life and ministry—the Evangelical narrative, *according to* Matthew's relation of it, in contradistinction from the same as given by Luke, John and Mark. And in Peter, the obvious meaning and force of the preposition is given in our translation, in reference to them "on their part *κατα μεν αυτοις* &c. he is blasphemed," but in reference to you "on your part *κατα δε υμεις* he is glorified." We doubt whether *κατα* can be understood in 1 Cor. xii. 8, as denoting an efficient cause. In every other specification of gifts, where the efficient agency of the Spirit is noticed, it is either *δια του Πνευματος*, or *εν τω αυτω Πνευματι*. Where *κατα* in this verse occurs, may it not be to denote the knowledge which was had experimentally *in relation* to the Spirit, and His influence, making *κατα το αυτο Πνευμα* qualify *γνωσεως*, viz: knowledge in relation to this same Spirit? rather than *λογος*, as though the *word* or discourse of knowledge was the immediate production of the Spirit? Whatever we

his mighty power, which he wrought *in Christ*, when he raised *him* from the dead," &c. The immensely efficacious power, of which the apostle speaks, was wrought *IN CHRIST*, not in believers; and it was wrought in His resurrection, which was, indeed, a display both of physical and moral power—the latter being far more amazing than the former. It is true, that Dr. Owen and others, who maintain a real physical efficiency of the Spirit, in the production of faith, admit this, but allege, that the power which produces faith, is of the *same kind* with that which raised the blessed Redeemer; and in this they think they are justified, by the import of the preposition, translated "*according to.*" But the preposition here directs specially to the *objects*, towards which believers' faith is directed, for whose fuller and more satisfactory knowledge of which the apostle prayed. The whole verse may be rendered, "that ye might know the exceeding greatness of his power, for our sake who believe, in relation to the working of his mighty power—that which He wrought, when He raised Christ from the dead," &c. Thus, when the import of the apostle's language is fairly examined, it contains no sanction of the idea of *physical efficiency* or *creative power*, on the part of God, being exerted in the *production of faith*.

may think or decide, however, on this import of the preposition, it is certain that it has various other significations as applicable as this. Whether we understand it to denote *in* as directing to the objects on which attention falls as in Acts xxiv. 14, *κατα τιν νουν* in the Pentateuch; or, in relation to, still designating the objects of attention, as in Eph. vi. 21, *τα κατ εμε*, my affairs, it equally answers our purpose, and furnishes legitimate authority for considering that the words translated "to usward who believe, according to the working," &c., mean *to us believing as to*, or, *in respect of*, or, *in reference to, the working*, &c.; thus setting forth the specific *objects* towards which the christian's faith is directed, viz: that glorious display of divine power made in the resurrection, exaltation and supremacy of Christ, and not describing the efficacious influence exerted to *produce* the *act* of faith.

But, even if the criticisms subjoined should not be found satisfactory or valid, and we must admit, that the power of God, which the apostle prayed the Ephesian christians might know, was that exerted in the production of faith—which faith was the result of that wondrous exercise of it displayed in the resurrection of Christ, and in his universal supremacy,—there is nothing that requires us to believe it was a *physical efficiency*. It was through material creation that God revealed Himself to our first parents. The works and beauties of nature were the means of inspiring them with confidence in God. But they rebelled; and gloom and despair gathered round and settled on their minds. It was a wondrous exercise of power *displayed in creation*, which, originally, was the means of exciting and sustaining *their* confidence. But that having lost its efficacy—man having sundered his relations, and changed his character—it was a far more *wonderful display* of divine and moral power, *made in the mediatorial work of our blessed Redeemer*, which re-inspires the heart of man—the revolting, guilty, rebel heart,—with confidence in God. We need not be astonished at the strong terms which the apostle uses, when noticing this power, if we advert to the immense *materiel* of motive, to induce and secure the confidence of our hearts in God, which is crowded, in the teeming wonders and triumphs of truth, justice, holiness, grace, mercy and benevolence, in the resurrection, ascension, and universal dominion of the blessed Redeemer, who has all power in heaven and earth given into His hands, and is worthy of the boundless trust and unqualified submission of an intelligent universe. These bright scenes of glory—these wondrous developments of divine power, form the wide range of truth—the new creation, over which the blessed Spirit of God is hovering, and by means of which he awakes in the chaotic mind and heart of rebellious man, that hearty confidence in God, which

furnishes the proof and induces the actions of spiritual life.

Whatever view, therefore, we take of this and similar passages of the sacred scriptures, there appears to be no countenance of the idea of *physical efficiency* on the part of God in the regeneration of the sinner. His object immediately in regenerating, is to induce and secure holiness. This is by no means a physical attribute. Nor is it necessary to suppose that, it must or can only be produced by some created disposition, or "next power" in the soul, which is its immediate and appropriate cause, as the appetites and instincts of animals are of their peculiar and characteristic acts and functions. The capacities and susceptibilities of man, as a rational and moral agent, are not *in themselves sinful*. The blessed Spirit of God, in the exercise of *His own* suasive power and efficacious influence, through the truths and facts of scripture, excites those feelings, and induces those exercises, which are strictly and properly called *holy*. The same truth in the hands of none else, could produce such an effect. In *His* hand it is "the *sword* of the Spirit," and its impressiveness, and efficacious influence in subduing the heart, as imparted to one and another mind, most gratuitously by that Spirit, is "the gift of the grace of God given—by the effectual working of his power,"—"the power that worketh in us."²

We have dwelt longer on this point than some of our readers may think necessary; but, as much of the controversy, on the subject of the Spirit's regenerating influence, turns on this very point; as the views which are entertained in relation to it, shape the whole system of our *spiritual tactics*, if we may so speak,—and indeed influence ministerial efforts, and in some measure regulate its success,—we have thought a full and impartial investigation peculiarly appropriate and requisite. Its practical bearing in a few

1 Eph. iii. 7.

2 Eph. iii. 20.

important respects we submit to the readers consideration in the form of inferences, legitimately deducible from the views above exhibited.

1. The impertinence and arrogance of the spirit of philosophy, cannot fail to arrest the reader's attention; as well as, its unkind and pernicious influence in securing strife and jealousy, unbrotherly suspicions and allegations. "*Unless,*" says Dr. Owen speaking explicitly of the physical efficiency of divine power in regeneration, "*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.*"¹ Here is philosophy deciding as to what the work of the Spirit *must* be!!! With his peculiar views of the constitution of the human mind, and of the nature of its operations, and *assuming them as true*, he could not conceive of an *efficacious influence* of the Spirit, in the conversion of the sinner, other than some *physical efficiency*, exerted "immediately and effectually upon the will, producing and *creating in it* a principle of faith and obedience *infallibly determining* it in its free acts."² And, therefore, all who did not subscribe to his philosophy, must necessarily be rejected and condemned, as denying, at least, in his estimation, a fundamental article of the christian faith! There is too much sad and sickening evidence of the same baleful, and arrogant spirit abroad in the church of God at this day. Some vague and mystic notions are had about disposition and habit as the proper *philosophical cause* of holy exercises. This *philosophical cause* of holy acts and exercises, is itself pronounced holy,—as every cause, it is thought, must possess the same quality or character with its effects; and in the production, or communication, or lodgment, or creation of this *causal* "something," this *disposition*, or *habit* in the human soul, by the Spirit of God, it is alleged consists re-

1 Owen on the Spirit, vol. i. p. 491.

2 Idem, vol. i. p. 515.

generation. Power is *thus* given to the regenerate man, to perform holy acts, and thus the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit is resolved into a mere *physical efficiency*! And all the passages of scripture, which speak of His power in this connection are explained by means of this philosophical invention! All this is *assumed* by many as absolutely and indisputably *true*; yea, and is taught as the revelation of God Himself! so that, when a brother questions the truth of this philosophy, denies the premises, and thus deranges the whole habits of thought, and modes of speech, and long consecrated technics in which others have been educated, and accustomed to explain the Spirit's operations, he is viewed with suspicion—denounced as unsound—proclaimed to be heretical, and presently defamed, as actually denying the influences and efficacy of the Spirit altogether.

Although a man believes and preaches, that the impenitent sinner never will turn to God unless the Holy Spirit makes him willing to repent;—although he presses this fact on the consciences of sinners to convict them of their obstinacy and horrid enmity against God, and sets it forth to extol and magnify the marvellous grace of God in converting any;—although he may pray most fervently, and strive to get all his people to pray specifically for the influences of the Spirit to revive His work, and to convert the impenitent;—although, in all his ministrations, he may protest that he is dependent for success on the Spirit of God;—although day after day, and night after night, he may wrestle with God for the conversion of dying souls, and his very health decay through the ardour of his importunity;—although the powerful effusions of the Spirit of God, in answer to his prayers, do actually attend his ministrations, and the profane and sensual and ungodly—the proud, the self-righteous, and the self-deceived—the drunken and lecherous and blasphemous—the scoffer and infidel and sceptic—the hoary-headed, middle-

aged and youth,—the rich and poor, bond and free, black and white may ALL be seen to take the alarm, lay down the weapons of their rebellion at the feet of Jesus, confess their sin, and with penitent and believing hearts adore the grace of God and the power of his Spirit in their conversion, and through their subsequent lives evince the fruits of holiness;—and although results like these may frequently take place, studding with the richest gems his crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus, shedding all around the vivid lustre of Immanuel's glory, and striking awe and panic among the ungodly and making them to gnash their teeth in rage; yet, are there to be found, frigid formalists, self-righteous Pharisees, indolent and inefficient ministers of the gospel, eager and ready to disbelieve the whole work—to denounce the man as heretically denying the Spirit's work, and to bemoan, most piteously, the blighting influence of such false theology—because he does not believe, and will not teach, that the Spirit converts the sinner by creative power and by some "*immediate*" act of *physical efficiency* produces faith and repentance, but urges the instant repentance of the sinner, and appeals to his mind and conscience, by all the power of motive which he can employ, believing that it is the Spirit's power of moral suasion, adapted to the rational and sensitive nature of man, which effects the change!!! Truly it were becoming, in those private christians who are settled on their lees, and do practically consent—as for any manifestation of concern to prevent it or of sorrow in the view of it—to let guilty and perishing souls around them go down to Hell in rapid succession; and in ministers of Christ whose ministry has been barren and unblessed, and whose churches are gradually decaying with themselves, to be more cautious how *they* raise the cry of error and delusion and wild-fire theology, under *such* circumstances. Is it not well worth inquiring, whether *they* and their ministra-

tions may not be found to have been "spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit?"

This suggestion is not made in the spirit of censure, but as an affectionate appeal to those, whose more efficient ministrations, and extended usefulness, are, undoubtedly, matters in which all who wish well to the cause of truth, and can shed one tear of sorrow over a guilty world, must certainly feel a deep and lively interest. At all events, may we not sue for a truce in this strife, which now agitates the churches, and claim and exercise, at least, mutual forbearance in reference to theoretic and philosophical explanations of the essential and acknowledged fact of the Spirit's powerful and efficacious influence? The moral suasion of the Spirit—the energy of the truth, as urged *by the Spirit* in contradistinction from that of man, is infinitely superior to human eloquence and argument, and very different from the mere objective presentation of the truth, or human suasion. And if this be strenuously maintained, we see no reason, why a man should be censured and condemned, who refuses to take one step, in the light of philosophy, beyond the voluntary exercises of the human mind, in which alone he can trace the proofs and workings of the Spirit's power.

2. The character and danger of the sin of grieving the Spirit of God, are rendered very obvious, also, from the view which has been taken of the Spirit's efficacious influence. That there is such a sin, and that to it, and to the quenching of the Spirit—which is the same, but in a greater degree of turpitude and malignity—the sacred scriptures attribute much importance, cannot be denied. Exceedingly vague and mystical notions, however, obtain in many minds, in relation to it, as though there were some secretly *infusive* power, which the Spirit exerts and is necessary for the transmutation of the sinner, and which, although its presence can never be detected by any conscious

exercise, the sinner is in danger of having forever withheld from him, if he resists, to any great degree, the *Spirit's* strivings. We are said to grieve a friend, when we resist his counsel, and admonitions, and entreaties, and all the winning arts by which he seeks to induce us to do what will be promotive of our good. We grieve the Spirit in the same way. He is striving with us, as the truth makes its impressions on our minds and hearts. And by all the commands and promises, threatenings and cautions, examples and motives in the scriptures, through the preaching of the gospel and other means, He is pleading with us to repent and be reconciled to God. It is an object which God has much at heart. "Oh do not this abominable thing which I hate!" "How can I give thee up?" "My repentings are kindled within me." "Why will ye die?"—are his pathetic appeals. To resist their impression, is to grieve this benevolent friend, because it is to counteract the object, which is so near his heart.

But resistance, under such circumstances, cannot long be made, without incurring terrible guilt, and indurating the sensibilities. No man can tell, when he acts against his strong impulsive convictions, and by wilful efforts, banishes his serious impressions, or deliberately makes choice of what God forbids, or refuses to accept what God proffers, but that, at any and every moment, he is contracting *such* guilt, and *so* hardening his heart, as to provoke God *forever* to withdraw, and say, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." Here lies the guilt of your sin, Oh forsaken impenitent! You have *chosen* to act in opposition to the truth, as urged by the Spirit of God, and as commending itself, alike to your reason and conscience. And the danger of it, is, not only, that eventually you will thus bring upon yourself swift destruction; but that you are rendering your susceptibilities of impression so callous, as perhaps, at this very hour, to be closing the last avenue

of access to your heart. If you hope for a mighty creative power to be exerted on you, irrespectively of your voluntary exercises, your hopes are baseless and visionary. The Spirit's efficacious agency is through the suasive influence of the truth, and if you resist *it*, you resist the *only* means, that you, or any one else, can hope to be exerted for you, to bring you to repentance. To what *degree* or extent this Spirit will strive with you, who can imagine? Even now the pinions of his wings may be already stretched to take up his last, eternal, flight from an heart that has been long hardening itself and rejecting his counsels of love!

O sinner mark thy fate!
Soon will the judge appear,
And then thy cries will come too late,
Too late for God to hear.

Thy day of mercy gone,
The Spirit grieved away,
Thy cup, long filling, now o'erflown,
Demands the vengeful day.

Thy God insulted, seems
To draw his glittering sword;
And o'er thy guilty head it gleams,
To vindicate his word.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GRACES OF THE SPIRIT.

THE subject of the chapter stated, viz: 3. That the *graces of the Spirit* are not *created causes, per se*; but *habitual voluntary exercises* induced by His efficacious influence through the truths and facts of Revelation—Christian graces originally *affections*—Why called *principles* of christian action—The meaning of the term defined—Preference of common sense to philosophy in the apprehension of truth—The Spirit's influence the appropriate *cause* of holy exercises—No valid objection against this view of the subject to be drawn from its making us absolutely dependent on the Spirit's agency for such exercises—Some specific laws of human emotion noticed—Habits of feeling different from all others—The nature of particular graces examined, viz: LOVE—REPENTANCE—FAITH—HOPE and FEAR.

FROM the view of the Spirit's efficacious influence, taken in the preceding chapters, we may be led to some satisfactory ideas of what are commonly termed the *christian graces*. They are certain characteristic emotions, or principles of action, which regulate christian conduct, and determine christian character. It is not our design to notice them in any minute detail or metaphysical analysis; but simply to present some considerations, suggested alike by common sense and christian experience. And this we shall do, by introducing to the reader's attention, the third inference from the fact of the Spirit's moral suasion, viz:

3. That the graces of the Spirit are not *created causes per se*, but *habitual voluntary exercises* induced by His efficacious influence through the truths and facts of revelation. The graces, or "fruit of the Spirit," are enumerated by the apostle. They are "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness. goodness, faith, meekness, temper-

ance.”¹ These are all manifestly different affections, which depend originally on our natural or constitutional susceptibilities, and, as excited and elicited by the Spirit’s exhibition of the objects and truths appropriate to this end, assume an impulsive influence, and secure those acts and exercises which we call *holy*. In the enumeration, as given by the apostle, primary reference seems to be had, to their influence in regulating the social intercourse of christians. But this is only one of the spheres, in which they shed their radiant lustre. We select a few, and shall trace their character as determining our actions in reference to God. As to the order of their enumeration, we attach but little importance. They are all of them complicated, intimately uniting the perceptions of the mind, the conviction of the judgment, and the emotions of the heart; and whether one or the other assumes, for the time being, the prevalent influence, is owing to the character of the objects presented, and of the truths apprehended. LOVE, REPENTANCE, FAITH, HOPE and FEAR are, in their first rise, affections, excited and elicited by appropriate objects, and becoming habitual, they assume such permanent influence on conduct and character, as to be denominated *the principles of christian action*.

The intelligent reader will perceive at once, in what sense we understand the word *principle*:—not as designating “something” *laid* in the very structure of the being:—nor a superadded *quality* of the soul;—nor a specific *cause* of holy exercises, lodged in the heart by the creative power of God, anterior to any such exercises; but the determining or regulating influence of any particular species of feeling, as continuously or frequently and readily excited and elicited, by the presentation of some object or truth, appropriately operating on our constitutional susceptibilities. We are aware, that here we tread the ground

¹ Gal. v. 22, 23.

acquired by frequently having done the thing before. The former become easy after the very first decided impulse of feeling. And this circumstance explains satisfactorily the great apparent ease with which the new convert *keeps himself in the love of God*.

From the above remarks, the reader will be prepared to understand the concise account which we subjoin of the leading graces of the christian. LOVE has been defined, by metaphysical writers, the gravitation or tendency of the soul towards good. But this is too obscure for common use. We all know what is meant by the term. It denotes that feeling of approbation, or complacency, or delight, in any object, either good in itself, or supposed to be fitted to do us good, which leads us to desire and make choice of, and seek to enjoy it. The feeling could not exist if we had not been created with a capacity for it. Neither can it ever be excited unless there is some object adapted to secure it, presented to our consideration. As an object addresses our senses, or our rational nature, and is apprehended to be good and desirable, the feeling is awakened. As to the character of the objects which present themselves, multitudes make fearful and fatal mistakes. Fortune, family, friends, health, children, and sensual indulgences, receive the affections of the heart. The love of these things pollutes the soul, distracts its joys, and drowns it in perdition. But such is the hold, which the world and the things of the world have upon the heart, that if the blessed Spirit of God did not see fit to detach them, we should sink deeper and deeper in the mire of pollution. This He does by bringing before our view, objects in every respect deserving of our regard. In our natural state, we bestow our affections on unworthy objects, and withhold them from such as possess the highest traits of excellence. The blessed Redeemer is accounted "a root out of dry ground, and when we see Him there is no beauty in Him to desire Him." But the

Spirit so presents to view the character of Christ, unfolds this and the other interesting and wondrous trait, shows us his exalted excellence, and urges them upon our minds and hearts, that eventually, we cordially embrace Him as all our salvation, and all our desire, and can say "What things were gain to (us) these (we) count loss for Christ, yea doubtless, and we count every thing but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."¹ We shall not pretend to notice the various thoughts and feelings, the fears, anxieties, and desires, that racked and agitated the soul before it cordially surrendered itself, in sweet and delighted approbation of the Chief among ten thousands—the one altogether lovely; nor through how long, or how short a space, the Spirit has been telling of His glory, and His grace,—now pointing to Calvary, and now to Heaven. Suffice it to say, that the heart once barred against the tenderest and best of friends is unclosed. Every thing which once stood in the way of the soul's communion with Him, is renounced. Rank, parentage and relations, wealth, honors and worldly applause, religious duties, outward morality and former experiences are all sacrificed. Without Christ he is unhappy and feels he ever must be so. He is the life of his delights—the centre, and sum, and soul of all his joys. 'Tis Heaven to see His smiling face, and the child of God presses close to the throne of His grace from day to day, that he may gaze upon His glory. In loving adoration he bows before Him, and as he feels the beamings of that light which pours its splendor all around, earth sinks, and fades, and disappears. Its glory is darkness in his eye as illuminated by the brighter glories of the Son of God, and every thing, which men call good and great, is absolute loss in his view, as it keeps him from the presence and communion of Him who is the song, and boast, and triumph of Heaven.

¹ Phil. iii. 7. 8.

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¹ Phil. iii. 7. 8.

Thus, the love which animates the christian, is perfectly intelligible, without supposing it is the effect of some *specific* disposition, created in the soul or laid, like our animal appetites and constitutional susceptibilities, in the very nature. It is the natural capacity to love, as awakened and directed by the noblest object in the universe—the blessed Redeemer; to the apprehension of whose grace and excellence the mind has been excited by the Spirit's efficacious influence. Nor does it terminate exclusively on His person and character. We take a deep interest in all that concerns the reputation, and engages the attention of the one we love. Accordingly, the christian loves the law of God, and would not expunge from it one solitary precept, or wish its restraints on his heart and conduct, to be in the least diminished. So does he love the word of God, and frequently meditates upon its precious promises, precepts and salutary instructions and counsels. He also loves the worship of God, and cannot consent long to be absent from the public assembly, and social meeting, where, according to His promise, Jesus meets with his people. Much less can he consent, if he be a parent, that his family should become a nursery of rebellion, and the morning and the evening sacrifice be neglected. He loves his duty, and delights to do the will of God. He loves the followers of Christ, and his faithful ministers, and esteems them very highly for His sake. Nor does he restrict this regard, to those of his own sect. He loves the cause of God, and labors and contributes in his place, and according to his means, to see it advanced. In short every thing that belongs to Christ, and interests His heart, commends itself to the christian's. These are the objects that gain the affections, which were once squandered on things earthly, sensual, devilish.

Intimately associated with this feeling of love, is that of **REPENTANCE**. We are said to repent, when we are heartily sorry for what we have done, and wish that it had not been

done, and seek, by confession, restoration, reformation, or in other appropriate ways to make some amends for it. It is a feeling that is ever connected with a sense of personal guilt. We never do, nor can, we repent for what is not, either wrong in itself, or apprehended to be such by us. The child sees the character of its conduct towards its parents, and feeling it has done wrong, repents of its evil deeds, and, acknowledging its feelings, gives a moral pledge that it will reform. So, the sinner,—when he brings his own conduct and the feelings of his own heart in contrast with the righteous commands, and holy character of God, and sees, in the light of this high and holy standard of right, how wrong they have been—becomes uneasy, agitated, and oftentimes overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt. He does indeed, after some sort, repent,—regrets that he had done this and the other wickedness, and protests and vows that he will do so no more. But such feelings are painful; and it is a law of our nature to shrink from pain, and to avoid what is productive of uneasiness. The terrors of hell, and of death induced by the contrast, which the sinner makes of his own conduct, with the truth and righteousness and holiness of the divine law and character, never yet lasted long, or proved permanently influential. They are only the pleasurable emotions, or those which, at the time afford some gratification to the individual, that are of easy repetition and are cherished. But against the anguish of convictions the impenitent sinner struggles.

There is, however, another view to be taken of the Divine Character, and when the impenitent sinner contrasts his conduct with the goodness and grace, the boundless love, and mercy, and compassion of God, especially as manifested in His giving His own well beloved Son to die for us—the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to Himself, he feels the baseness, the vileness, the ingratitude, the malignity of his conduct, and heartily loathes it, and himself.

on account of it. The feelings of sorrow, induced by a view of the tender mercies of God, in contrast with his own character, break his heart; and he weeps and mourns, for his transgressions. He looks on Him whom he hath pierced, and mourns for *it*, as “one that mourneth for an only son, and is in bitterness for it, as one that is in bitterness for a first born.”¹ Nor does he find these feelings painful. He seeks to have them increased continually, and often in retirement, in meditation on the word, under the preaching, and at the holy table of the Lord, stands gazing with mingled emotions of sorrow and love, on Him “who was delivered for our offences.” It is his full, deliberate, and decided purpose, eternally to renounce his sins. The sins and corruption of others as they dishonor God, deeply affect his heart. God is his choice, and seeing His glory to be of far greater consequence than his own enjoyments or interests, he is ready to exclaim

Oh could I lose myself in thee;
Thy depth of mercy prove;
Thou vast unfathomable sea
Of unexhausted love!
I loathe myself when God I see,
And into nothing fall;
Content, if thou exalted be,
And Christ be ALL IN ALL.

With these feelings of love for God, and sorrow for sin, will be found associated that of confidence or FAITH. Faith is the trust or reliance of the heart upon the word of God. It is not a mere intellectual belief; for the objects disclosed by His testimony, cannot be apprehended as *realities*, without producing some excitement, and therefore it is, that, “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” *Scientific speculations* and *inquiries*, regard the great truths and facts of revelation as mere *matters of abstraction*. Such things seldom, if ever, interest the heart. Indeed when they do so, in any strong degree, it is thought to in-

¹ Zech. xii. 10.

dedicate mental alienation. And perhaps, this is one reason why an unbelieving world accounts the christian mad. They cannot understand why mere abstract matters, as they apprehend the truths of christianity to be, should take such deep hold on the sensibilities. But the christian knows, that they are solemn realities. His religion is all based on matters of fact. He knows it is true, that God hates sin, and must punish the sinner, if he will not repent;—that sin is most odious, impudent, malignant and abominable, as it is opposition to His law and government, and seeks to exalt a miserable worm of the dust, a wretched rebel—the idol self, to supremacy;—that Jesus the eternal Son of God, has died to magnify the law of God, and make it honorable;—that having finished transgression, and made an end of sin, He hath brought in an *everlasting* righteousness, so that, now God can forgive, in perfect consistency with His truth, and honor, and without any ground of impeachment of His goodness and equity as a moral governor; and that He actually is willing, and ready to forgive, and proffers His pardoning mercy to any and every sinner, who hears the gospel. Apprehending these things as absolutely true, the heart is inspired with confidence, alike in the character of God, as a moral governor, and in the faithfulness of his declarations, and yields itself in sweet reliance unto Him in both respects.

The evidence of the truth of these things, which is furnished to the mind, is abundantly satisfactory. It is the word of Him *who cannot lie*. This sways his mind, and his faith becomes “the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for.”¹ “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”² But “he that believeth not God, hath made Him a liar.”³ And this is the grand offence which ruins and damns to all eternity, those who reject the testimony of Jesus, “the Amen—the faithful

¹ Heb. xi. 1.² John iii. 33.³ 1 John v. 10.

and true witness.”¹ And it is RIGHT it should be so. For faith, or the cordial believing of what God says, is most *reasonable*. We have capacities of mind, to perceive the truth of what He testifies, and of heart, to feel its impressiveness. His testimony is emblazoned with the most convincing evidence of truth, and nothing but the most unjustifiable, and bitter prejudice, and dislike of God, prevent the mind from perceiving it. If, therefore, a veracious friend or neighbor feels, that he has a right to expect and demand our confidence, when he speaks, how much more reasonably must God do so? Could He speak to us, and leave it optional whether to believe or not, so that with impunity we might refuse, it would be an impeachment of Himself, and a virtual declaration, that He is not worthy of our confidence. It is true, that in the exercise of our minds in the perception and belief of truth, we act voluntarily; but when the evidence is sufficient—when the person speaking is a true and competent witness, and his communications clear and intelligible—we are morally bound to believe Him. From such obligations, in reference to God, we can never be released in heaven, earth or hell. They will follow us to the utmost verge of creation. Nor can we ever escape from them, as long as we have intellectual capacities sufficient to attend to, and believe another.

“If I say the truth,” said the blessed Saviour, “why do ye not believe me?”² Impenitent reader, say why? You know full well, that when your neighbor, whom you believe to be a man of truth, speaks to you, you readily give your assent to and repose in his statements. Indeed, if your mind does not labor under the influence of prejudice against him, you find it morally impossible not to believe what he testifies he has seen and does know, though you have neither seen nor known it. But on the other hand, if you know him to be false, and hypocritical, and not worthy of confidence, and your hearts are prejudiced

¹ Rev. iii. 14.

² John viii. 46.

against Him, scarcely will his asseveration and oaths induce your belief. You cannot, it is morally impossible for you to believe the man, whom you think does not speak the truth. Here lies the grand difficulty in the way of your believing God. You believe Him to be a liar. You think that what He says, in His word, is not true, and in this practical influential conviction, with respect to the character of God, which saps the very foundation of all confidence in Him, you are sustained, and confirmed, by your wishes that it may be so, your love of sin, and your dislike of God. You would rather believe, that God falsifies His word, and violates His pledges, and perjures his soul;—yea, and that Jesus, notwithstanding He has died to save us, is destitute of mercy, and the devil worthy of greater confidence than either! In short, any thing and every thing sooner, than that it is true, that *you* must go down to Hell unless *you* repent. Your difficulties are all of your own creating. You put from you the word of eternal life, and judge yourself unworthy of it. Oh poor suicide, “Who shall have pity upon thee? or who shall be-moan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest?”¹ “You have beheld the Lord, and said it is not He, neither shall evil come upon me.”² But “you shall know that He is Jehovah when He shall lay His vengeance upon you”³—and that it is true, all true, most true, unalterably and eternally true, what God hath said, that “the wicked shall be turned into Hell,” and “he that believeth not shall be damned.”⁴

We have taken a very brief and general view of faith; but every reader must perceive, that while its essential character as the cordial belief of the word of some faithful witness, remains the same, its specific influence, and the manner in which it will affect the sensibilities, and the acts of the man, depend upon the character of the truth,

1 Jer. xv. 5.

2 Jer. v. 12.

3 Zek. xxv. 17.

4 Mark xvi. 16.

or objects, brought into view in the testimony, and apprehended by the mind. In all this, we do not perceive any thing like a cause *per se*, or what is called a *principle* of faith, which is the original of faith, but are directed to the immediate and special agency of the Holy Spirit, as He operates through the truth upon our constitutional susceptibilities, and elicits them in the cordial belief of that truth, and embracing of the objects presented.

HOPE, too, possesses the same general character. It is the expectation of some future good desired, the attainment of which is deemed possible. We do not hope for what we see. Nor for what we deem to be impossible. As long as the sinner thinks it is impossible for him to be pardoned, he can have no hope. But if he believes, the professions which God makes as to His willingness to forgive, and the promises in which He holds forth an abundant supply of grace for every time of need, he confidently expects, that, in due season, these things will be forthcoming, according to the very tenor of the promise. This is hope. It springs from faith, and looks far into the vista of eternity. The christian's hope is not the illusion of a distempered fancy. It is the lofty elevation of the rational soul, borne upward by a faith which gives to the mind all the evidence and certainty of demonstration. It substantiates the realities of the spiritual and eternal state, and rises superior to all the sophistry and deceits of a changing and perishing world.

'Tis Heaven, all Heaven, descending on the wings

Of the glad legions of the King of kings;

'Tis more:—'tis God diffused through every part—

'Tis God Himself triumphant in the heart.

The grand and prominent object of the christian's hope is the blessed Redeemer; and thence He is Himself called "our hope." The enjoyment of His society, the vision of His glory, a perfect assimilation to His character, a

crown of glory from His hand, a seat upon His throne—and an eternity of honour and bliss and ineffable delight in His communion, are the objects towards which the christian's hope is directed, which here elicit his most enlarged and gladdening anticipations, and to which he shall, as certainly attain, as there is a God who cannot lie.

Hope with uplifted foot set free from earth,
Pants for the place of her etherial birth,
On steady wings sails thro' the immense abyss.
Plucks amaranthine joys from bowers of bliss,
And crowns the soul while yet a mourner here,
With wreaths like those triumphant spirits wear.

An hope so lofty, and so aspiring, and whose anticipations are so pure, cannot fail to exert a purifying influence on the heart and conduct, and to stay the soul, in the midst of those rude tempests of distress, which are wont to lash and agitate the ocean of life. "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself as God is pure."¹ It cannot be that he should degrade himself by hopes that rest on earth. His hope is near akin to the very fruition of God. It here affords a taste of joys celestial, and is itself the antepast of heaven. "For God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered."²

This hope every christian is under obligations to cherish and maintain. His destitution of it is his sin, and must be assigned to his neglect or refusal to exercise that faith which overcometh the world. On which account the

1. 1 John iii. 3.

2 Heb. xi. 17—22.

apostle has very appropriately and solemnly exhorted us to "give all diligence to the full assurance of hope, even unto the end."¹

We subjoin a remark or two with regard to the FEAR of God, which forms an essential feature in the character of the christian. It is not that slavish dread of punishment which characterizes the condemned and guilty culprit, nor the startling impressions which we instinctively feel, when suddenly apprehending some impending danger, or in view of some mighty and irresistible power, which may be brought to bear upon us to our injury; but that reverence and respect for God, which a right apprehension of His character, as the great Moral Governor, and of our relations to Him as such, cannot fail to inspire. The external means employed for awakening these feelings are numerous. The whole creation, in all its vastness and extent—the entire providence of God, in all its intricate and wondrous developments—the law of God, in all its purity and rectitude—the scheme of redemption, in all the wonders of divine condescension, as effectuated through the high and holy One, who though He were a Son, yet learned obedience,—all contribute to awaken, in the believer's mind, that profound deference and respect for the great Moral Governor of the world, which tend to secure the avoidance of temptation, the exercise of circumspection, and the constant appeal of the heart to His mercy and grace through a mediator, for protection and support. These things are manifestly the duty of every rational man. They are, indeed, feelings, but they are feelings under the control of, and to be regulated by the will. And, accordingly, we are exhorted to "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."²

Whatever christian grace, therefore, we contemplate, we discern in each alike, the voluntary agency and ac-

1 Heb. vi. 2.

2 Eccles. xii. 13.

countability of man; and that any individual should be destitute of any one is his guilt, and will most justly contribute to his damnation. Say not then, impenitent and graceless reader! that you are under no obligations to exhibit "the fruit of the Spirit" in your walk and conversation. You are commanded to repent of your sins and to believe, to love, to fear and hope in God. You have the capacities and susceptibilities which are adapted to such exercises. As directed in their exercise towards God, and divine things, they become the graces of the Spirit. To induce such exercises of them He operates continually through the truth—presenting the objects and considerations which are calculated to secure them, and giving efficacy to that truth, and impressiveness to those objects. Nor would any one ever love, trust, or hope in God, save for His blessed agency. But that is not because there must be previously some created cause lodged in the soul, of which they are destitute, nor because the capacities requisite to be acted on are wanting, but because the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, do hold the thoughts and hearts of men aside from the consideration and choice of God and divine things. That these things are so, is their damning guilt. And that God by His Spirit should take care, in any, to awaken these characteristic emotions is grace indeed. This He actually does in those whom He makes willing to renounce the world and turn to Him. And having once awakened these emotions, He does, by the same means, continually operate to secure their growth, and increasingly effective influence, in the production of the various subordinate graces of the christian character, and in the blessed expansion and exercise of every capacity of the rational and sensitive soul of man

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.

A *fourth* inference from the fact of the Spirit's moral suasion, viz: the means of grace become efficacious as the Spirit operates by them and secures the fixed and interested attention and the voluntary consecration of the soul to God—The means of grace all properly resolvable into the truths and facts of scripture, as they awaken and fix the attention of the mind—A natural tendency in these truths to induce Regeneration—Whence the obligation instantaneously on the exhibition of the truth, to exercise and express the affections appropriate—Several propositions stated, viz: 1. There are means of grace—2. They are adapted to the end designed in them—3. Yet do they not possess efficiency in themselves—4. Nor does their efficacy depend entirely on the agency of man—5. But simply as the use of them secures the divine agency—Inquiry as to the character of that agency—The result of special design and not a fixed law—Appeals to it therefore are of a different character from those made to laws of nature—Much superstition has been the result of practical error here—Much antinomianism also—And a deluding, soul-destroying system of spiritual tactics—Instances of their practical bearing—The proper course to be pursued with anxious souls—A contrary course productive of self-righteousness—Inconsistent with itself—What the means of grace which may correctly be denominated such—The same employed by God alike in securing the conversion of the sinner and the sanctification of the believer—The divine example and exhortations a sufficient testimony in favor of the principles, and warrant for the mode of procedure, advocated in this chapter.

MUCH of what might appropriately be brought into view in this chapter has been anticipated. Yet are there some things which demand particular attention. These, we shall notice, in the observations suggested by a fourth inference from the fact of the Spirit's moral suasion, as already stated, viz:

4. THE MEANS OF GRACE become efficacious as the

Spirit by them, and in a manner perfectly adapted, alike to their own nature and to that of the human mind and heart, secures the fixed and interested attention and the voluntary consecration of the soul to God. These means, may all be ultimately resolved, into the truths and facts of scripture, as brought to bear upon the mind of *rational* and *feeling* man. For "what," says an eloquent writer, "are bibles, sermons, and sacraments, but instruments to carry truth to the understanding and heart? What are all the expostulations of others, but efforts to press the motives contained in truth, upon the sensibilities of the soul? What are the passions which preachers address, but channels, through which truth is carried to the quick, or instruments to rouse the soul to view it with sharpened attention? What does Providence more than illustrate, and enforce revealed truth? Sabbaths are not means of grace, so much as *opportunities* to attend on ordinances and exercises that are."¹ The believing prayers of christians, in relation to the unconverted, which are made, in the closet or apart from them, are but means of securing, in the good providence of God, that impressive exhibition of the truth, through which the Spirit subdues the heart. The gracious exercises, and other efforts of christians, are but a preparation for its more decisive and effective appeals. And the efforts of the unconverted, to which, by some, a superstitious, and by others, a self-righteous, importance has been attached, are all reducible, when properly examined, to the *attention* which the mind gives to the truth, or to the ordinances or means through which it is exhibited.

Now it is obvious, that there is a natural tendency of the truths and facts revealed in the scriptures, to induce those exercises, appropriate to the capacities, condition, and relations of men, *in the commencement* of which consists regeneration. We are required to love and confide in

¹ Park street Lectures, p. 135.

God, to repent of our sins, and to hope in and fear Him. All of which things are affections of the renovated man, and without which, no one can lay claim to the christian character. But in the bible, the truth, faithfulness, benevolence, justice, holiness, grace and compassion of the divine nature, are unfolded, and specific declarations are to be met with, in the form of promises, giving clear and decided intimations of these things, and they certainly have, in the nature of things, as obvious a tendency to produce the affections of love for, and confidence in God, as have the exhibitions of similar traits of excellence, and proofs of regard, when coming from man to man, to induce such exercises between them. The dreadful nature of sin, its damning consequences in us, its frightful impeachments of the divine character, and its horrid malignity as depicted in the scriptures, are calculated to move to repentance. And the views which are given, of the bliss and glories of Heaven, and of the character of God as a Moral Governor, have as manifest a tendency to excite hope and fear.

The opposition, which the heart may and does make against these things, and their failure, in any case to produce such results, do not disprove the tendency of the truth to secure them. Nor, do the *special* influences of the Spirit, which are NECESSARY *in consequence* of the rebellion and resistance of men *against the truth*, furnish any argument, against the adaption of that truth, to the circumstances, character, condition, and constitutional capacities of man, and consequently, its *natural tendency* to produce the affections contemplated. So far are the scriptures from sanctioning such an idea, that they do actually urge the OBLIGATION, *arising out of the very exhibition of the truth*, made to the mind and heart of man, *instantaneously* to exercise, and express the affections appropriate.

With the following examples, the scriptural reader is

familiar. "Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse *first* that which is *within* the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."¹ "*Put off* all these; anger, wrath, malice,"² &c. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners and *purify* your *hearts*, ye double-minded."³ "*Stablish your hearts.*"⁴ "*Set your affections* on things above."⁵ "*Make to yourselves a NEW HEART and a new spirit.*"⁶ "Oh Jerusalem *wash thy heart* from wickedness, *that* thou mayest be *saved.*"⁷ "*Save yourselves* from this untoward generation."⁸ "My son give me thy heart."⁹

Whatever influence the Holy Spirit exerts, to awaken and induce such feelings and exercises in men, is and must be, in entire accordance with their moral agency. For, unless men exalt their philosophy above the bible, it is undeniably *through the truth*, that it is imparted. This very circumstance, implies that the solemn consideration of the facts or objects, which that truth makes known, is intimately connected with the sinner's conversion. Indeed we do not perceive how else a rational and accountable creature such as man is, is to be made *willing* to renounce his sinful, selfish, sordid attachments, and bestow his affections on spiritual things. The idea of *immediate power on the soul*, or a physical efficiency *determining* the will, is a contradiction. If he is *voluntarily* to turn from sin to God, and 'he will is always determined by motives, appropriate motives must be presented and the attention interested. This in the very nature of things, is necessary; and may serve to throw some light upon a subject, exceedingly perplexed, and obscured by the false philosophy and false theology of some, viz: *the use of the means of grace.*

1 Mat. xxiii. 26.

2 Col. iii. 8.

3 James iv. 8.

4 James v. 8.

5 Col. iii. 2.

6 Ezek. xviii. 21.

7 Jer. iv. 14.

8 Acts ii. 40.

9 Prov. xxiii. 26.

Other instances of the same sort, may be seen in James i. 21; 1 Pet. i. 22, ii. 1; Col. iii. 12—15; Heb. xii. 1; Deut. x. 12—16; Jer. iv. 3, 4.

On the first view of this subject, it would seem natural and right, that we should attempt to discriminate correctly, and inquire, in whose hands the means become effectual;—whether in the Spirit's or the sinner's—and what are the particular agencies of the Spirit, and of the sinner, necessary to their being used successfully? We shall attempt a reply to these questions, in the confirmation and elucidation of a few simple propositions.

1. There are, strictly and properly speaking, such things as are called means of grace. If the phrase is not found in the bible, that is no reason why it should be rejected, provided that the thing it teaches or implies, is found there. In the hand of God, *the truth* is unquestionably a means through which He displays and imparts His grace. In the experience of the christian, the *consideration of the truth*, to which his mind is led in the right performance of the duty of prayer, and in the reading of the scriptures, contributes greatly to the growth and perfection of the gracious affections, and principles of his character. As employed by the Lord's people, the various methods which they adopt for the exhibition of the truth, are conducive alike to their own spiritual improvement, and to the conversion of sinners. And as awakening and fixing his attention, even the unconverted sinner may make use of means, that have a salutary tendency. Whoever may be the immediate agent contemplated, there are appropriate means through which he may operate. God and man both work by means.

2. The means of grace are *admirably adapted* to the *end designed* by them. God's wisdom is infinite, and it were an impeachment of it, and of His character altogether to suppose that it were otherwise, as it respects the instrumentalities of His agency. Nature and Providence alike display proofs of this. We have already seen the adaptation of the truths of scripture to the result sought, which

is the sinners conversion. They address His intellect and heart, and make their powerful appeals to conscience which unites both.

3. The means of grace, however, notwithstanding this natural tendency or adaption, *do not possess any efficiency in themselves*, to secure the end designed. For, if that were the fact, then must they differ from all other instrumentalities whatever. Instead of being called means, they should be styled *causes*.

4. The efficacy of the means of grace, does not depend upon the agency of *man* entirely, in the use of them, *for* the exhibition of the truth. That man has a very important part to act, in co-operating with God, according to His plan, in the use of those means He is ordinarily pleased to employ and bless, we do not deny. Would that the whole church were more awake under a sense of the importance and obligation of this thing! But our co-operation with God, however important and indispensable, according to the constitution He has ordained, is not that which gives efficiency to the means. He is the Mighty One who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, and makes use of our agency as the channel through which He imparts His own energy. "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."¹

5. It is only as the use of the means of grace secures the divine agency, that they become effective means of salvation. "I have planted," says Paul, "Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."² This, we presume will be denied by none. But what is that agency, and how is it secured? It is not a *physical efficiency*, as we have seen, but a moral power—a power given to the truth, which sways effectually the mind and heart of the rebel, and turns him from the error of his ways. If that power be exerted on the mind and heart of

1 1 Cor. iii. 17.

2 1 Cor. iii. 6.

man, irrespectively of the truth, and to prepare by some *creative* process for the influence of the truth to be felt, then is regeneration altogether a physical work. We care not how it may be described, whether as *creating* a *disposition*, habit, taste, instinct, principle, or any thing else. If it be the product of simple *immediate* power on the soul, irrespectively of the truth, the work is not of a moral character, but precisely in keeping with the great effects which transpire in the created universe, from the exercise of physical Omnipotence. Such energies are exerted uniformly, undeviatingly and infallibly, *according to the fixed and established constitution of things*.

In the conversion of a sinner, the agency of God is the result of special DESIGN, and not according to any fixed law, to which, as in the operations of nature, successful appeals may be infallibly made. Appeals are daily made to the divine agency in nature, as for example to the law of gravitation, with infallible success, by those who lose sight of God's design and providence altogether. It is not thus, however, with respect to the converting agency of His Spirit. It is true, that FAITH has a wonderful *potency*, and may *anticipate*, with confidence, the final result in an appeal made to God, for the conversion of a sinner. But that is a very different thing, from the immediate success of an appeal made through the truth, at any given period to the mind and heart of the sinner. It is the agency of God, which gives that truth its efficacy, and although the ultimate result may be confidently expected, and there may be circumstances to authorize the expectation of immediate success; yet we do not, and cannot, partly from the very nature of moral agency, and partly from our ignorance of the mode and laws of the divine agency, anticipate, with as infallible certainty the *issues* of an appeal of *this sort*, as we do to what are termed the laws of nature.

We admit, that there may be, and are certain natural

laws, according to which, God governs mind, and from which He no more deviates, than from the laws of nature. Yet is there, by virtue of that liberty of action, conceded to the will, a wide range for the combination and employment of the *motives* that may sway it. *We* cannot tell what peculiar class of motives will affect this or the other man, most powerfully. Nor can *we* always calculate, with absolute certainty, as to the decisions of the will. Different minds are differently affected by the very same considerations. One fears and trembles, another becomes uneasy and wrathful, and a third is filled with delight, at the mention of God, and Christ, and religion, and a change of heart. Every variety of motive, has, through the agency of God, led ultimately to gracious results; and every variety of motive, has had at times quite the contrary effect. The thought which has disarmed one sinner, and dissolved him in love, has driven another to rage and desperation. A reason of this difference, is to be found in the particular state of heart at the time, which is a province beyond our research. But as God *searcheth the heart*, HE can, and does, combine and press motive, so adapted to the peculiar character, and mental state of the individual, or exhibit truth through *such* external instrumentalities, and at such junctures, as that in His hands, when He specially designs, it becomes effectual to the sinner's conversion. But what is the appropriate result of *special design*, we cannot legitimately account for, as eventuating through a *fixed law*: and therefore, the means of grace become not efficacious, as they are an appeal to a fixed and established mode, through which the Creator exercises His energies.

We fear, that much superstition prevails in the church on this subject, and, that the illustrations, and analogies, employed by many writers and preachers on this subject, have contributed no little, to induce and confirm it. Witness the miserable votaries, and slaves of the papal hierar-

chy, who rhyme their AVE MARIAS and PATER NOSTERS, and multiply their "vain repetitions," with confident expectation of some beneficial result! See too the poor formalist—but a few degrees above the worshipper of the crucifix, and of the Virgin,—who somnolently reads his Bible on the Sabbath,—floats to church with the crowd,—sits in the same seat from week to week and year to year, in the house of God—partakes of the sacrament and goes through other religious duties, without an interested mind and heart, yet thinks, that he is using the means of grace, and that these dumb-shows—this *pantomimical* sort of religion, will *eventually* secure the grace of God! And hear the learned and philosophical illustrations, of the operations of grace, given by mystic divines, in their account of the husbandman's breaking up the fallow ground, preparing the soil, sowing his seed, and *waiting* patiently for a crop! They are all the ruinous, soul-destroying, practical mistakes begotten by a false philosophy in alliance with a mystic theology. For our parts, we discover very little, if any essential difference in these monstrous births. In point of safety, or of real intelligence, among the votaries of either of the above superstitious methods of appeal to the agency of God, there is unquestionably none.

Nor is their system any nearer the truth, who either theoretically or practically talk of making efforts and using the means of grace, so as to bring God under some sort of obligation to help them. It is truly deplorable to witness the soul-destroying influence of antinomian principles in the church of God. Here and there is to be met one, who, passes through certain forms and duties of religion—is a stickler for "Orthodoxy"—proclaims that he gives all the glory of his salvation to God,—and denounces every thing like *zeal* and feeling in religion, and pressing of the obligations *immediately* to repent and lead a holy life, as self-righteousness and as denying the grace and work of the

Spirit; but who, when interrogated with respect to his own personal hope, hesitates not to say that he trusts in God, and expects *eventually* to be saved. The *sins of the heart* are *not* sacrificed. The *distinctive duties* of religion are *not discharged*. The man is like the world, drowned in its lusts and cares. Not a word escapes from him in commendation of the Saviour. Not a warning is given by him, to his impenitent and ungodly associates. He must not be pressed as to his *own* personal experience in religion, for it is the prerogative of God, he says, to search the heart. His family perceive no other indications of religion about him, than that he goes to church, and "takes the sacrament." No altar is raised near the domestic hearth, on which ascends the morning and the evening sacrifice. He is more frequently to be seen in the tavern, than at a prayer-meeting. His voice may be heard in political clubs, but never in a religious conference. He knows from experience, what it is to be "filled with wine wherein is excess." He can counsel his friends and neighbors, about their worldly concerns, or declaim against revivals of religion, and "revival ministers," but knows not how, nor undertakes, to confer with an anxious sinner about the concerns of his soul. And yet he accounts himself a christian! He is trusting in Christ *eventually* to be saved, but is not willing to be saved just *now*, and part with *all* his sins and begin to practice *every* duty. Nor can he endure that preaching, or that man, which makes him doubt his safety, while he can give no evidence whatever, that his *faith*, or what he calls his "faith, purifies his heart," "works by love," and "overcomes the world" *in himself*. Miserable delusion! He is floating, on what he calls the means of grace, most quietly down to hell! And that preaching, and those ministers, whose exhibition of doctrinal truth, tends to induce and confirm this soul-destroying delusion, will be found among *the guilty causes of his damnation*.

Not much less deluding are the system and tactics of those, who, fearing to invade the province of the Spirit, are careful to remind the sinner, at every turn, that he is utterly unable by his own unassisted powers, either to believe, or to repent to the saving of his soul. It might as truly be said, that he cannot rise and walk, by his own unassisted powers, and it would be, by no means, a difficult thing, for one, not hypocondriacally predisposed—who would allow himself to doubt, whether God would assist him, and perplex his mind about divine agency and human dependence,—to persuade himself to sit still, believing that he had lost the use of his limbs. More ridiculous hallucinations have *actually* taken place. The sinner, that truly repents, will learn, more effectually from his *own* EXPERIENCE, than from all human teaching, to whom the efficacious grace, which made him willing to turn to God, is to be ascribed. To brandish in his face, at every moment, the solemn charge that he CANNOT, as though by some *physical necessity* of “SINFUL NATURE,” it was *impossible* for him to repent, is, according to the very constitution of the human mind, and to the laws which regulate human thought and action, to take the most effectual method to prevent him from ever doing so.

For it is a wise and benevolent provision of the great Creator, that we never think of *attempting* to do, what we *know* is *impossible*. Every man feels that he will be acting, as absurdly, as fruitlessly, in *trying* to do, what he *knows* he CANNOT, and therefore, *instinctively* refuses thus to mispend his time and strength. Let the rational man, therefore, be addressed by one in whom he has confidence, and the truths and facts of religion, be exhibited to his mind, so as to make the impression, and lead to the conclusion, that he *cannot* succeed if he tries; yea, *dare* not attempt in the strength he has,—the only strength of which he is conscious,—to repent and turn to God, and the

inevitable result will be, to lie down and *wait* for some more convenient season, than the present. Such is actually the result, in many instances, as the protracted impenitence, and deep damnation of delaying sinners fully prove. And such are the excuses too, which are drawn from the very mouths of the ambassadors of Christ sent forth to beseech rebels to be reconciled to God,—excuses which they are ever prompt, and delighted to render, and oftentimes actually do, to the shame and confusion of the legate of the skies! Look to the barren ministrations of those whose style of preaching, is unvaryingly of the character referred to. Decent outward attendance upon the rites and ordinances of religion, may be secured; but while men may become reputable citizens, discreet in their behaviour, studious of the doctrines of christianity, and be accounted in the main religious, few, if any, marked and decided cases of conversion, take place, and still more rare, are, that spiritual intercourse, that active and untiring zeal for God, and that anxiety for souls which are indispensable evidences of true piety.

We do not mean, unnecessarily to censure. Nor are we *supposing cases*, to support our *theory*. At the moment we pen these lines, our thoughts revert with painful emotions, to a venerable father, who lifts, in the councils of the church, his solemn and thrilling voice of alarm, and denunciation against *heresies, errors, new measures, &c.*, and who prophesies of the blighting influence of his brethren, that differ from him in their opinions, but under other circumstances deploras that, although he has for near half a century, been preaching the gospel, he does not know one instance, in which he has been instrumental in the conversion of a sinner. “By their fruits ye shall know them,” says the blessed Redeemer, and if such be the rule of judgment in this case, would it not be well to suspect, that the error may be nearer home? Surely *such* exhortations as the following, cannot fail to have a most deleterious influence.

“Now my dear young friends, here is your duty, you are called to believe in Christ, and to exercise repentance unto life. But you are *not* called, but *forbidden* to *attempt* this duty in your own strength.”¹ It is well, that the feelings of many counteract the influence of their theory, and that the exhortations, suggested alike by the sacred scriptures, and by common sense, notwithstanding a mystic theology, are addressed to the consciences of sinners, to urge them to instant repentance. The exhortations “to seek,” and “pray,” and “strive,” and “use the means,” which are sometimes substituted for those, which it is explicitly given in charge to the minister of Christ, to urge, cannot fail to perplex, bewilder, distract.

Take the confession of a young man, which has been recently spread before the churches, and whose clear discriminating mind required better counsellors, than it seems to have been his lot to meet: “I was almost ready to despair; but I remembered, that ‘God’s arm was not shortened, that it could not save,’ and I determined never to cease from *striving*: but even this, I knew was what I would not be able to do of myself. This continued to be my state, with little variation, for more than a week.” After listening, with great interest, to preaching, and talking with christians, he adds, “nothing they said, however, gave me much encouragement. It was only ‘strive,’ ‘seek,’ ‘ask,’ ‘knock.’ That I was ready to do; and for the few days past, this darkness has been breaking away, and in its place a calm assurance has been succeeding.”² The character of that assurance is not described, nor any thing said, as to what it relates, but the connection would seem to intimate, that it refers to the conclusion, drawn in his own mind, that he had become a christian. The writer of these confessions, may have become such;

1 Christian Advocate, vol. ix. p. 516.

2 Missionary Reporter, for Oct. 1831.

but other evidence of the fact, than what he intimates, influenced his judgment in the case, is indispensibly necessary. The calm assurance of which he speaks, was naturally to have been expected from such counsels, and such efforts, and such excitement. And the conclusion—as we fear it is too often done, where such preaching and management of anxious souls obtain—may have been drawn, that the mystic change had been experienced, the heart had been secretly renewed, though there had been no distinct *consciousness* of the *voluntary* and *heartly renunciation* of all sin, and confiding in the blessed Redeemer, as an *all-sufficient* Saviour, accompanied with a loving and resolute, and delighted consecration of himself and all, to His service. The above is merely selected as a specimen of the practical bearing of the counsels given by those, who,—instead of directing at once to the Saviour, and spreading the truth which is to be believed, before the mind, and exposing the guilt and danger of every moment's delay to repent, and requiring it, as by the authority of God, to be instantly done—exhort to pray, and read the bible, and use the means of grace—*seeking*, knocking, striving after faith and repentance, and what not.

Now, against all such theory and practice, we enter our solemn protest. It is contrary to the principles of common sense. That teaches us to direct the attention specifically and directly, towards *the result* to be secured. The means, or process, by which that result is to be obtained, are, in many cases, instinctively discovered, and while requiring, and urging the *final issue*, every one feels, that the *preliminary processes*, which, in the nature of things are necessary to secure it, are also required. But to direct the attention *first* to *these*, is, in fact, to cause the mind *virtually to lose sight* of the great end to be secured. For example, we are required to believe. Now every man of common sense knows, that before there can

be an act of faith, there must be somewhat to be believed—that that must be perceived—and that the attention of the mind must be so far awakened, and interested in the matter, as to fix itself, in a full reliance, on the testimony given. We are also required to repent; but before this can be done, there must be something seen to be wrong, and sufficient considerations be present to the mind, to induce sorrow. Now, when the injunctions to believe and repent, in reference to God, are given, they impose, as in all other cases, an obligation, as to all the necessary preliminary exercises of mind. This, in all ordinary matters, every man feels to be true and right. Why shall we then deviate from the common rule of estimating duty, and proceeding in such cases? Instead of *first* directing to the *means*, or *preliminaries*, and telling the sinner about praying and reading the bible, and going to church, &c., let us direct him to the *end* which *must* be attained, or *perdition* SHALL overtake him. In doing so, we take the most effectual method to secure, just that sort of attention to preliminaries, that is indispensibly necessary, while we afford him no place to rest, and no solace whatever in his present conscious impenitence and rebellion.

To pursue another course, is to foster the spirit of self-righteous effort. Every one, conversant with the human heart, knows how prone men are to rest, in this and the other effort, as conducing to their salvation. How often do you meet with those, who, have been, most “religiously,” using the means for years; but have not *cordially* embraced the Saviour. Now it is of no moment what the sinner does in this way—if *he does not* ACTUALLY believe *from his heart*, and repent, *he must*, and WILL BE DAMNED. Is there not danger, therefore, from such counsels, when we know, how prone men are, in the spirit of self-righteous effort, to rest short of Christ? It is of little avail to say, that you will guard against that, by charging:

him not to do it. If you direct him to *use the means*, as conducing to his salvation, or to make any other effort than the one all essential, you do actually soothe him, for the present, and for the present keep him from Christ? Let any one who doubts the truth of this declaration, enter the inquiry meeting, and there study the developments of the human heart. A note of commiseration, a tacit acknowledgment of any other inability, than a *wilful* refusal to come to Christ, and a directing to means which can be used as though faith and repentance, were not, and might not, instantly be exercised, will blunt the edge of the keenest convictions. The sinner, and his counsellor may both weep together, and sing a song of lamentation, over the imbecility of his nature, and his wretched condition, but his *sense of guilt*, will necessarily be impaired by such a process. Well will it be, if he be not thus beguiled away from Christ, and instead of cordially submitting to him in belief of the truth, and yielding up his all at his feet, be inducted practically into that life of self-righteous effort, which will blind his perceptions of truth, and enrol him among the many self-deceived formalists, and inactive, inefficient professors of religion in the church of God.

Beside, this method of procedure is inconsistent with itself. The sinner is to be told "that effectual help may be obtained by earnest entreaty"—that if he asks *aright* he will be heard. He cannot this very instant believe; he must not *dare* to do so in his own strength; he must be "forbidden to attempt" it; but, if he prays *sincerely* and fervently, help will soon be found. And this, with some is "preaching the whole counsel of God," and to neglect to do so, is "keeping back the truth"!!! The first may produce, as it does among those who adopt the "seeking" plan, a great deal of noisy excitement, and in many cases the most fatal delusion, and abominable hypocrisy. We speak that which we have seen, and testify that which we

do know. The other suggestion about praying aright, only tends to distract the sinner's attention, and turn it away from Christ to himself. He is put upon inquiry what it is to pray aright, and examining his own feelings, and it is morally impossible, in such a case, for the mind to wake up, under the influence of the great objects of our faith. In order to this they must be placed before the mind, and the thoughts be directed towards them. Let this be done, and let the minister of Christ, by the authority of the word, and appeals to the conscience, and appropriate illustration, keep the solemn facts to be believed sparkling and glowing before the sinner's mind, and press him to *instant* belief of them, and submission to Christ. But, as he would not throw the soul on the very threshold of the kingdom, immeasurably, and perhaps eternally, back, let him beware how he directs him to pray or to *use the means*,¹ lest he comfort him in his rebellion. If he speaks the truth, he must tell him, that if he does not believe he cannot be heard, and if he tells him he *must* use the means *believingly*, and all the time tells him he *cannot*, he is only distracting the attention and sporting with his misery.

Why then shall the sinner be told to pray, or to do any thing else, as though *it* could directly or indirectly conduce to his salvation, when at the moment he *refuses* to believe? Is it true, that *asking* and *seeking* are acceptable to God, unless there is faith? Does He not say, "He that cometh to God must believe"—"that without faith it is impossible to please him."² "That whatsoever

1. Every intelligent reader will at once perceive, that to urge and press the conscience of the impenitent sinner with his obligation to pray, and to direct the convinced sinner to pray, when uneasy in his mind, as conducing to his eventual faith and repentance, are perfectly distinct, and can never be confounded, but by those who are wilfully ignorant, or of incurably obtuse intellect.

2. Heb. xi. 6.

3. Rom. xiv. 23.

is not of faith is sin?"¹ "And that they that are *in the flesh* cannot please God?"¹ To counsel the sinner in any other way, and to put him upon efforts, as it were to turn God to him, is taking part with the sinner against God, fostering the spirit of rebellion—and practically slandering the God of love. It is the sinner that must be turned. God is willing to receive him. He needs not to be turned. To inquire as to His secret purpose is to suspect the sincerity, and truth of His promise.

Oh, men of God, beware how ye do practically betray the cause of a bleeding Saviour, and while His heart is rent and torn, and His bowels yearn over a lost and guilty world, how you counsel the sinner, so as to make another impression, than that every moment's delay to repent and believe, is only loading him with heavier guilt, and sinking him down to hell. Though your hearts ache for him, let not your sympathies ruin his soul. If you virtually lead him to think that you have more tenderness for him than Christ has, he will cling to you. Press to *immediate* submission. It is a horrible quarrel the sinner has against God; and if he is not disarmed of the weapons of his rebellion, he is lost for ever. You have no authority to tell him any thing else, as to what is to be done by him, than what the apostles and John the baptist before them, and the Saviour Himself, did. They charged it on their hearers and especially the awakened to repent and believe.² This is the scriptural plan. Who dare substitute another? If the Saviour has said "ask and ye shall receive," he speaks of no other than successful asking, "For every one that asketh," he says, "receiveth."³ And there is no successful asking, but in faith. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven by

¹ Rom. viii. 8.

² Mat. iii. 2. iv, 17: Mark i. 15. vi, 12: Luke xiii. 3: Acts ii. 38, 40: iii. 19: xvi. 31: xvii. 30: xxvi. 20.

³ Mat. vii. 7.

the wind and tossed. For *let not* that man think that he shall receive any thing at the hand of God."¹

From the above remarks, the reader will perceive, what is that use of the means, which is appropriate to the sinner's condition, and conducive to his salvation, and how it becomes efficacious, as well as the danger of directing one with conscious unbelief and impenitence, to make any effort that may contribute to his conversion, instead of requiring the thing itself—*the giving of the heart to God*. As long as the sinner is actuated by his selfish desire after security, and, without renouncing his sins, seeks to cherish the hope of acceptance with God, his whole conduct is rebellious and idolatrous. To tell him to pray for forgiveness, when he is consciously unwilling to forsake his sins, is to tell him to insult the Majesty of Heaven. To tell him to pray for repentance, while he loves and cherishes his sins, and will not sacrifice them, is to send him before God to play the hypocrite. To tell him to do certain things which he can, but which are sinful, and which it is necessary he should do, in order eventually to be able to do what now he cannot, is to set him superstitiously and sinfully to work, as by some spell or self-righteous effort, falsely to bring God under obligations to him. To tell him to make use of means, and cry for help, and forbid him to attempt complying with the claims of God in his own strength, i. e. till God does *something more* to excite him to believe and repent than He is *now doing*, is to tell him to cast the blame of his present impenitence on God. To tell him to do any act as conducive to his salvation, prior to his *full* and *actual* compliance with the claims of God for his heart, is to tell him to do what God abhors, and cannot accept, and in which he may rest to his everlasting perdition. What then is to be done? Is there

¹ James i. 6, 7.

no help for him? Must he sink in perfect apathy, or become frantic with horror? Must he go down to hell in the full blaze of gospel light? By no means. Let him at once be put upon compliance with the demand of God. Let the glorious object of our faith be held up to his view,—let the solemn and awful facts which God has revealed, be made known to him,—let the guilt of his present impenitence be exposed,—let the truth in full beamings be poured around him,—and let his conscience be pressed to *instant* belief and submission.

These are the means through which the Spirit of God operates upon the mind and heart. The gospel is the mighty “power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth.”¹ Through its truths, the Spirit strives to bring men off from their rebellion. They make their solemn appeal to the instinctive principles of our nature—our constitutional desire after happiness, and dread of misery. And the Spirit, operating on our susceptibilities through them, is exciting the mind and heart to action, and drawing to the belief and love of the truth. The attention of mind requisite to perceive truth, the fixing and dwelling on it necessary to feel it, the apprehension of the evidence that indeed it is truth, and the actual consenting unto it as proposed,—these are all involved in those preliminary mental processes, which the injunctions to *believe* and *repent* imply, and which have a natural tendency to issue exactly in the exercises of faith and repentance. If then such things be called using the means of grace, we shall not object. But certainly this is not the ordinary, and theological use of the phrase. To open the eye-lids, and direct the eye-ball towards an object, that the rays which emanate from it may fall upon them, and we behold it, are indeed the indispensable means of *seeing*; but who does not see that they are all comprehended.

1. Rom. i. 16.

in that one complex act or operation which we call vision? So, to give the mind's attention to the truths which God speaks, and *fix the thoughts upon them so as to feel their appropriate influence*, and actually to consent to, approve of, and embrace them, may be called the means of faith and repentance; but who does not see that they are all comprehended in the ordinary meaning of the terms employed to express these complex exercises. *These* are the means God employs. These are the means requisite in the very nature of things.

And these are essentially the means of christian advancement in the divine life. The outward ordinances of "the word sacraments and prayer," are the means through which the truth is brought in close contact with the heart and conscience, and, as the Spirit operates through the truth, become the means of His efficacious agency. These ordinances, as used by christians, can be no more effectual to their spiritual improvement than as used by sinners, if the mind and heart are not interested in the contemplation of the objects disclosed by the testimony of God, and there are not the voluntary exercises of faith, repentance, love, hope, fear, &c., regulating the inward experience, and the outward actions. Holiness is not *a substratum*, but consists in those exercises which a supreme love for God and desire for His glory induce. The immediate evidence of holiness, therefore, is to be had through our *consciousness of such exercises*, and it is only as new conscious holy exercises are developed or former holy exercises vividly revived in the recollection, are that the "Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we the children of God."¹ "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."² The witness of the Spirit that of goes no further than our own spirits, and they can only testify our christian character as we do actually ex-

¹ Rom. viii. 16.

² 1 John v. 10.

ercise the christian graces and discharge the christian duties. The recollections of former experience, and the conclusions as to our state thence drawn, afford no sensible enjoyment, save as they contribute to induce the repetition or renewal of gracious exercises. To look, therefore, for growth in grace, by a dull monotonous use of outward means, is just as unauthorised, and will prove as fruitless, as in the unconverted sinner's case. Truth is the means of the Spirit's influence, as well for sanctifying as for regenerating, and the ordinances are but outward, formal, stated, modes of exhibiting that truth. Unless the words of Christ abide in us, and we give our attention and interested thoughts to the great concerns of our souls—often fix them in contemplation of Christ and his cross, and through the sacraments, and prayer in all its various modes—especially in secret, let our minds and hearts be engaged in close communion with God, *actually* loving Him, *actually* believing what He says, *actually* repenting of our sins, *actually* fearing and hoping in Him,—there will, there can be no spiritual improvement, and no satisfactory evidence of our affiliation. Hence the apostle exhorts professing christians to “desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby, if so be they have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”¹ “Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, *consider* the apostle and high-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”² “They that are Christ's have crucified the affections and lusts. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”³ Such are the means of conversion and of growth in grace *approved and rendered efficacious of God*. Let us beware how we substitute others. In so doing we shall violate alike our com-

1. 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3.

2. Heb. iii. 1.

3. Gal. v. 24—26.

mission as ministers of the gospel,—the principles of our nature as rational voluntary agents,—and the whole constitution through which God has ordained that the efficacious influence of His Holy Spirit, shall be exerted for the conversion and sanctification of sinners.

His own example, and his own exhortation, evidently designed and calculated to induce our interested attention, and the entire consecration of ourselves to Him, are a sufficient testimony in favor of the principles, and warrant for the mode of procedure, which we advocate. “Those things hast thou done, and I *kept silence*. Thou *thoughtest* that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes. Now *consider* this, ye that *forget* God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.”¹ “Come now, and let us *reason* together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool.”² “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which *satisfieth* not? *Hearken* diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. *Incline your ear* and come unto me, *hear* and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”³ “If ye then be risen with Christ *seek* those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. *Set your affections* on things above, not on things on the earth.”⁴

1. Psalm l. 21, 22. 2. Isai. i. 18. 3. Isai. lv. 2—4. 4. Col. iii. 1, 2.

CHAPTER XXX.

MINISTERIAL EFFICIENCY.

THE subject stated in a further inference from the fact of the Spirit's moral suasion, viz: 5. It is only as the ministry of Christ exhibits the truth, so as to prove the vehicle of the Spirit's influence, that their ministrations become efficient—The ministry, the more immediate means, employed by the Spirit, for the exhibition of His truth—Mat. xxviii. 18—20. Rom. x. 14, 15: 2 Cor. vi. 1: 1 Cor. iii. 9: iv. 15—Inquiry whether there is such a mode of exhibiting the truth, as to prove the efficacious instrument of the Spirit's influence—The answer turns upon the particular philosophical views, which may be held, as to the *character* of the Spirit's agency—Not in the nature of man to take a lively interest in *mystic operations*—1. It is essential there should be the exhibition of *SCRIPTURAL truth*—This mode of preaching, opposed to various, which have at different times obtained—Danger of preaching and studying systems of theology, and the importance of every candidate for the ministry, learning for himself from the mouth of God, what is to be believed and taught—Danger also of preaching the dogmas of sect—2. Those evangelical truths should be selected, and most frequently urged, which are *appropriate to the general condition of men*—Various truths to be variously exhibited—But “CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED,” the grand cardinal theme—3. The exhibitions of truth, should be adapted to the complex nature of man—Not deferring to the taste of unbelieving minds, but being adapted to the intellect, the heart, and the conscience of men—The inefficiency and mischief of a declamatory style of preaching—Also where it is purely intellectual—The importance of actual feeling in the preacher, appropriate to his theme—The best method, to preserve the intellect and heart in union, is to address conscience—4. It is important, that in his exhibition of truth, the minister of Christ should be found co-operating with the Spirit—God's design in the preaching of the gospel, is the reconciliation of sinners to Himself—For ministers to lose sight of this end, is to cease from co-operation with God—Different pernicious ends sometimes aimed at in preaching the gospel—Animadversions on the spirit of sectarianism.

Co-operation with God, in the display of the temper and spirit, which characterised the Saviour, in His ministry--Care also necessary, lest in our exhibition of truth, we violate any of the known laws, by which God governs mind.

It is the truth, in the hands of the Spirit, that is efficacious for the conversion and sanctification of the sinner, it is easy to perceive the secret of ministerial success, and the duty of every one, who bears the high commission of an ambassador of peace. To His co-operation must he look for all his efficiency. Without it, he will never win a soul to Christ. It becomes, therefore, a very interesting and solemn question, to every one who would convert sinners, from the error of their ways, how they may best exhibit the truth, so as to secure the co-operation of the Spirit, and render their ministrations successful. We shall adventure a reply to this question, in the present chapter, as the great practical issue of all our previous discussion, and as tending to show the manner in which this subject stands connected with the permanent interests of the Divine Government. This we shall do by introducing to the readers attention, the fifth and last inference, out of many we might submit, from the fact of the Spirit's moral suasion, being the efficient agency, exerted for the conversion of the sinner, viz:

5. That since ministerial success depends on the agency of the Spirit, and since the truth is the instrument of that agency, it is only as the ministry of Christ, exhibit the truth so as to prove the vehicle of the Spirit's influence, that their ministrations become efficient. The truth of the general position, will not be disputed by one who believes; that the great apostle of the Gentiles spake the truth, when he said, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, *even as the Lord gave to every man!*" It is the *illustration*, therefore, rather than the

confirmation of the truth, which requires our attention. Its importance we deem to be of infinite moment, not only as it may affect the interests of particular individuals, destined to an endless existence; but also as it effects those of the divine Government in general.

It is the ministry of reconciliation, by means of which, in a more especial manner, God is pleased to operate for the subjugation of the rebellious minds and hearts of men. When our Lord Jesus Christ put into the hands of the apostles, their high and extensive commission. He prefixed it by a declaration, which shews, that they stand closely allied, in the exercise of their functions, with the loftiest authority in the universe,—that they do indeed come forth from the very throne of the Grand Universal Sovereign,—and that their instructions are stamped and emblazoned with JEHOVAH's great seal of state. "All power," said He, just before He ascended to His throne,—“all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever I have commanded you*, and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen!”¹ With the mission and execution of their trust, the apostle identifies the spread of the gospel, and the extension of the Redeemers sway. “How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”² And, in the execution of their trust, the same apostle does not hesitate to denominate them, “WORKING TOGETHER (with

¹ Mat. xxviii. 18—20.

² Rom. x. 14, 15.

God).”¹ “We are laborers,” says he, “TOGETHER WITH GOD.”² Nor, did he fear to be suspected of boastful vanity, when, speaking of his own agency in the conversion of sinners, as though it were a thing not to be disputed, but legitimately, and confidently expected and asserted by the minister of Christ, in the prosecution of his trust. “For though,” says he, “ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I HAVE BEGOTTEN you *through the gospel*.”³

In treating, therefore, on the subject of ministerial efficiency, and in confidently asserting, that success is a thing to be expected, yea, and not without horrible guilt in any case, to be entirely wanting, we are not to be understood as invidiously exalting one class, and censuring another, of our ministerial brethren. We do but “magnify our office, if by any means we may provoke (ourselves and brethren) to emulation, and might save some of them”⁴ — who now are at ease in their guilt and rebellion. As to other men’s labour, we “judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God. And these things,” we desire to transfer to ourselves and others, “that (we) might learn not to think of men, above that which is written, that no one be puffed up for one against another.”⁵

There is a question very naturally rising out of the proposition advanced in this chapter, which leads directly to the merits of our subject, and to which we invite the readers candid attention, viz: *is there such a mode of exhibiting the truth, by the ministry of reconciliation, as that*

1 2 Cor. vi. 1.

3 1 Cor. iv. 15.

5 1 Cor. x. 3.

2 1 Cor. iii. 9.

4 Rom. xi. 13, 14.

it shall prove the vehicle of the Spirit's efficacious influence? If there is, how infinitely important is it for us to know it? And how awfully guilty must we be, if we labor not, *in that very way*, to exhibit it?

The observant reader will at once perceive, that the answer to this question, in a very great degree, turns upon the particular *philosophical views*, which may be held, as to the *nature* or *character* of the Spirit's agency. If we must believe, that regeneration, or conversion, or repentance, or faith,—for we care not here, to distinguish between them,—is produced by an “*immediate*” act of POWER *on the soul*, irrespectively, and without the intervention, of *the truth as the means* of its exercise and direction; then, it is manifest, that HIS heart, who *thus* believes and preaches the truth, *cannot* catch that fervent, lively, all-inflaming inspiration,—which he is likely to do, who speaks it as the very word of the Most High, *by which* the Spirit is to subdue his hearers, and save the perishing in view—and which will cause the truth to flash from his eyes, kindle in his looks, burn in his soul, and pour forth his impassioned torrents of warnings, arguments, appeals, entreaties and expostulations like the very fires of Heaven. He may indeed present the truth as the materials, and frame-work for the building, and as he does this from day to day, think that no other obligation rests upon him, than to have it ready at the call of the Great Builder, and prepared—laid to His hand, when He shall appear on the scaffold, and undertake to do the work; but not as a *builder along with Him*.

It is not in the nature of man, to feel a deep and lively interest in the *mystic* operations, which depend *exclusively* on the *creative energy* of God. The conjuror, and devotee of a degrading superstition, who appeal, as they and others suppose, to some such mystic agency, may do

it in all due form, and with great solemnity, and punctilious accuracy as to times, seasons, and modes of operation; but there cannot, in the nature of things, be that intelligent and animated feeling of the heart, which could not fail to be awakened in view of something *rational, feasible, and adapted to the capacities of man*, to be effectuated *through* his own *voluntary agency*. Is there not reason to fear, that to this philosophy or superstition, call it which you please,—for they are nearly allied,—may be referred the cold didactic discussions often introduced into the pulpit, where divine truth, shorn of all its beamy glory, is exhibited as a *mere abstraction*, altogether devoid of reality, save as it exists in the intellects of speaker and hearers? And that to the same, must be assigned, as to its appropriate cause, much of that unmeaning, punctilious, pharisaically solemn observance, of outward rites and forms of worship, traditions of the elders, and usages of the fathers, to venture beyond which, is quickly repelled, as though it were an impious, or sacrilegious tresspass, on the province of the Holy Spirit? One thing is certain, that the man who interprets *literally*, in application to his hearers, Ezekiel's vision¹ of the valley filled with dry bones, i. e. who has no hope of their revivification, but by some *physical*, mystic efficiency of God, will have very different feelings from him, who regards it as an *allegorical* description of that *moral* death and desolation, which are to be counteracted, by the agency of the Divine Spirit, *through* the preaching and the prayers of the prophet. Both may feel, and feel intensely; but the feelings of the latter, will, from the very laws of human thought and emotion, be of a much more active, energetic, exciting character, leading to prolonged and multiplied exertions to bring, in every varied form, the truth,

1. Ezek. xxxvii.

through which the Spirit works, to bear upon the rational mind, and feeling heart of the hearers, while those of the former, will vary from the most intense and painful anxieties, to calm and patient waiting, or despondence, or indifference, as to the result of the regular, solemn, and stated presentation of the truth.

Rejecting therefore as we do, the *mystic philosophy*, which talks about the “*immediate*” and *physical efficiency* of God, in the conversion of sinners, as degrading this marvellous work to the level of mere operations in nature by creative energy; and believing, that the Spirit’s agency is *in*, and *through* the suasive or motive influence, of His own truth, as addressed to rational, and feeling creatures, we desire a light, which relieves the darkness of our path, and reveals somewhat of high concernment to us, as we essay, “in Christ’s stead,” to beseech men, “to be reconciled to God.”

1. It is essential that there should be the exhibition of *SCRIPTURAL truth*. It is not *all* truth the Spirit deigns to bless. Much valuable information may be obtained from the light of nature, and the wonders of providence. The treasures of science may enrich the mind; and, through the wide fields of matter, mind, and morals, we may range, with profit and delight. But whatever truth may be discovered, by the mere general observation, or the exercise of reason, it is totally insufficient for the conversion of the soul. Philosophy, in different ages and nations, has framed her systems, and diffused her light, but not one solitary beam, falls upon the pathway of the sinner from death. She may attend his steps, and cheer him in life; but at the grave’s mouth, she bids the weary traveller adieu, nor throws one flickering ray upon the dark bosom of that eternity, into which he enters. She has never yet converted a sinner from the error of his ways, and saved a soul from death. In this work the gospel of the grace of God

stands pre-eminent and alone. It hath brought life and immortality to light. The *word of God*, reveals the *only* truth, which is, or can be efficacious for the rescue of the sinner from the dominion of his sins, and for his recovery to the forfeited bliss of fellowship with the Most High. It is “sure,” “converting the soul,”¹ and therefore, if this be the end we design, it behooves us to see to it, that what we preach, can be confirmed by a “*THUS SAITH THE LORD.*” We are to come, as clothed with full *authority*, to make known *what He has revealed*; and, although we cannot say it as miraculously taught in the manner of Paul, yet still, drawing from the fountain of all saving truth—the sacred Scriptures, “which are able to make (us) wise unto salvation;”²—we must, in all our solemn appeals to our hearers, be able to declare with Him, “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which (is) preached of me, is not after men. For I neither *received* it of *man*, neither was I *taught* it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”³

Now this mode of preaching stands opposed to many, which at different periods, have been approved. To exhibit *scriptural truth*, is not to *discuss* questions in philosophy, or philology—nor to *indulge* in *metaphysical disquisitions*—nor to *elaborate* learned *arguments*—nor to *cull the flowers* of rhetoric—nor to *soar in the regions of fancy*; but to *REPORT* the awfully solemn and tremendous facts revealed in the Bible, and *press them*, in the simplicity of its own diction, and by the *commanding* authority of God Himself, on the consideration and the consciences of the hearers. “For God hath not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power,” and therefore, we must not be “ashamed of the testimony of the Lord.”⁴ In order to this, it is of moment, that we learn to discrim-

1. Psalm xix, 7.

3. Gal. ii, 12.

2. 2 Tim. iii, 15.

4. 2 Tim. i. 7, 8.

inate between the *facts* of *scripture*, and the *doctrines* of a *system of theology*. There is often so much of philosophy, and of refined speculation, wrapped up in the *systematic arrangement* of scriptural truth, that, if men will undertake to preach the doctrines of a system, they will of necessity, be found mingling much of human wisdom with the word of God, and contending zealously for vain imaginations, as though *they* were “the *faith* which was once delivered to the saints.”¹ It is easy to perceive what different hues the facts of scripture will assume, according as they are viewed by the light of the Sublapsarian’s or Supralapsarian’s scheme. The Arminian and the Calvinist, *agree* in many essential *facts* of christianity; but how widely do they *differ* in their *systems*, and that difference originates in their philosophy. If ministers will preach their *systems*, they must of necessity, preach much that is their *own*, and *not* the word of God. Preach their systems they will, if, in preparation for the pulpit, they consult the writings of men, and the tomes of their admired and favorite authors. Consult them they will, if, in their theological education, they have been taught and trained so to do. Initiate the youth, into the use of a system, by often referring with approbation to this, and the other systematic writer—by requiring him to recite their opinions and reasonings, and by putting them as text-books into his hand—and you will rarely find him wander in quest of truth, out of the paths wherein he has trodden in the schools. We deem it of essential consequence, that one who has the ministry of Christ in view, should be led early to the simple unadulterated word of God, and not only be urged, but actually discipline himself to learn, in the very language of inspiration itself, what is the mind of the Spirit. Let him hear as from the mouth of God,

1. Jude 3.

and, *for himself*, in the first instance, know what He says and is to be believed and taught, and he will never afterwards think of consulting any other instructor. Let him make his Bible his TEXT-BOOK, and explore it diligently, accurately, prayerfully and believingly, while in training, and he will never think of stepping from the lofty vantage-ground on which he stands. Paul's instructions to Timothy, which claim the studious attention of every candidate for the ministry, are replete with precepts and maxims on this subject. "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been *assured of*, KNOWING OF WHOM thou hast learned them."¹

The above remarks are just as applicable to the dogmas of a sect, as to the doctrines of a system, for they differ very little. That moment the minister of Christ becomes the minister of a sect or party, and begins to ring the changes of his shibboleths, he loses many advantages, he might otherwise have had, in his attack on Satan's kingdom. In so far as he arrays himself in the *distinctive peculiarities* of sect, he throws off the armor of God. It is not the doctrines, or the system, or the tactics, or the ecclesiastical organs of a sect, that constitute his magazine. If he trusts, in them he has reckoned without his host. It is the gospel of Christ, that is "the power of God." Let him exhibit its truths, in all their native simplicity, and as they lie properly scattered, sparkling and glowing on every page of holy writ.

2. In the exhibition of the truths of the gospel, it is obvious *they* should be *selected*, and *most frequently urged*, which are *appropriate to the general condition* of men. "All scripture given by inspiration, is (indeed) profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

1. 2 Tim. iii. 14. How pertinent and imperative are the following: Tim. vi. 3—5; Tit. i. 9; 1 John iv. 1; 2 John 9, 10; 2 Tim. ii. 23.

righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."¹ A faithful and intelligent minister, will endeavour, as he may obtain the co-operation of his people, to bring before their view, and to indoctrinate them in the great truths of scripture, which pertain to the trials, the difficulties, and the conflicts of the christian life,—to the temptations and perils to which they are exposed,—to the duties, personal, social, and public, which are incumbent on them,—to the incitements and encouragements to perfect holiness,—to the interests and prospects of Zion,—and to whatever else, may, from the providence of God, the aspect of the times, and the interests of truth, require consideration. How this, in all cases shall be done, we shall not presume to say. Here is a wide range for the exercise of discretion. The Bible class, the religious conference, the public examinations, the weekly lecture, the parochial visitations, the private interview, and the catechetical instruction may furnish some opportunities for this thing. But it seems to us highly important, that the members of the church should in some way, be regularly and frequently convened, particularly for religious improvement in calm, brotherly, and conversational discussion of points of christian duty, experience, and faith, when and where every one may be at liberty to express his opinion, or propound his inquiries. This is unquestionably a much more effective mode of *instruction*, than the formal lecture, or the public preaching. That seems to be much better adapted, and designed for the exhibition, enforcement, and illustration of important truth, where masses of men are promiscuously assembled. It is, more especially, the ordinance for *the conviction* of sinners, and *the production of faith, and repentance*, and therefore, its

1. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

stances and character. A discourse suited to confirmed believers, and designed for their edification and consolation, would be by no means appropriate to skeptical and infidel hearers. In like manner, where excitement on the subject of religion obtains, it would be highly unbecoming to introduce a topic neither calculated to sustain it, nor to give it a proper and salutary direction and issue. The unconvinced and anxious sinner, the proud self-righteous and Antinomian rebel, the humble, prayerful, and believing child of God, all require a different presentation of truth, and indeed the discussion of different topics; and yet to all, the faithful and intelligent ambassador of Jesus Christ, may more truly, and effectually preach Christ, and him crucified, varying his subjects and illustrations, than if he had been ringing his changes upon "the suretyship of Christ," and "His covenant character," and "His vicarious sacrifice," and "His justifying righteousness," "the sinners inability," and the like themes which hold a prominent place in his scholastic, or *theological system*. And this remark may be further amplified.

3. It is important that our exhibitions of truth, should, as to the manner of them, be adapted to the complex nature of man. By this we do not mean to insinuate, that any deference should be paid to the vitiated and fastidious taste of men, of unbelieving minds, though it is obvious we should not causelessly excite prejudices, where they may be avoided. Paul said explicitly to the Corinthian church, referring to the style of his preaching among a people, when, if ever he might have felt the temptation to study the ornaments of diction, "my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom."¹ "I came not to you with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, DECLARING TO YOU THE TESTIMONY OF

1. 1 Cor. ii. 4.

god.”¹ “Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.”² There was a simplicity of diction, a plain unadorned style of discourse, employed by Paul in declaring the truth, which rendered him unpopular among the Corinthians, who preferred a sort of preaching, which the Spirit of God, has pronounced to be unprofitable. He did not endeavour to establish divine truth upon the foundation of human reason. He was no advocate of *rationalism*, but declared *the testimony of God*. Nor did he think to set forth the beauty of the gospel, by the rules of rhetoric, or the art of man. The word of God was in his hands the sword of the Spirit. But in exhibiting that word, as any one may see by an inspection of his writings, he addressed the intellect, the heart, and the conscience of men,—employing apt illustrations, taken from familiar scenes or objects, in order to convey, to the minds of his hearers, a lively idea of the truth he was inculcating.

There is a declamatory style of preaching,—full of brawling exclamations, and of loud and noisy reiterating of truths generally believed, by a christian auditory,—which is by no means calculated to make any deep or permanent impression. The *passions* may indeed thus be lashed into excitement, through the mere *contagion* of human feeling, but no interest of heart, can long be sustained without an intelligent apprehension of truth. There must be an object before the mind, to move the sensibilities. Sympathy, through the mere animal senses, may do so for a season: but it can operate very little longer, or further, than the exciting scenes and emotions which exist around. But when *truth* of an exciting character is introduced to view, and apprehended by the mind, it lodges an exciting power in the very soul itself. It follows the man wherever he

1. 1 Cor. ii. 1.

2. 1 Cor. i. 17.

goes, and develops itself in his thoughts, feelings, words and actions. It is essential, therefore, that there should be *truth intelligently exhibited* in the public preaching of the word. The *rational* nature must be addressed, as well as the passions. Something must be given to the mind, on which it may bestow its thoughts, and it must be clearly, plainly and intelligently exhibited, if we would either powerfully excite, or permanently influence the man.

When this is not done, and the passions are roused by *other* means, there is danger, not only of spurious conversions taking place, but also of securing wild and fanatical displays of feeling. For the rational principles of man's being, demand a *reason* for all powerful and long continued emotion. We must justify it to ourselves in some way; and if there is not solemn truth to authorize and sustain it, there is great danger, on the supposition of its continuance, that selfish and malignant considerations—of which, the corrupt heart is so prolific,—will soon give it the shape and colouring of fanaticism. The ministers of Jesus Christ therefore, do here, incur tremendous responsibilities. Let them beware of ignorance, of unmeaning declamation, and of rousing passion without the directing, and sustaining influence of truth. If inattentive to the rational principles of our nature, and negligent to prepare themselves, by prayerful study of the scriptures, for the faithful exhibition of truth, they may, ere ever they are aware, be found, through high and prolonged excitement, to have generated some noxious monster of fanaticism. This is deserving of particular consideration in times of revival, when the Spirit of God is extensively poured out. Not that we mean at all to justify the absurd, and ridiculous cry of fanaticism, as it bursts forth from the lips of infidels, formalists, and pharisaical professors, where religion, in any place, begins to be made a matter of deep personal feeling and concern;—but simply to caution

the herald of the cross, how he endeavours to produce, and prolong excitement on the subject, in any other way than by the appropriate exhibition of truth. Let him remember, that he has MEN, and not *mere animals* to deal with.

There is however, an excess on the other hand as dangerous, and as ruinous to the souls of men, as this. The public preaching may be *too intellectual*. The facts of scripture may be exhibited, in *abstract doctrinal discussions*, which shall necessarily and insensibly beguile the minds of the hearers,—if they be not too far above the level of ordinary persons,—into the study, or at least, apprehension of religion, *as a matter of science*. Even *experimental* religion, as it is sometimes called, may be thus taught, and men may become profound theologians, and expert casuists, and yet themselves be strangers to the purifying, and transforming influence of divine truth. Intellect may illumine, and throw its pensile rays upon many intricate questions in didactic divinity, but after all, the heart be not melted, or reached. And unless the heart is affected by the truth, its motive power will not be experienced. In order to this, something *more* is necessary than the *mere intellectual* exhibition of truth, as *a matter of science*. It must be made known, as though the speaker himself *realized* it, and *understood*, and *felt* its actual bearing on the condition and interests of his hearers. Common sense, at once, describes the truth of the heathen poet's¹ remarks;—and no where are they more important, than where men come, in the name of the Lord God of Hosts, to plead with wretched rebels that despise His grace; or, to counsel and console His friends.

The varying face should every passion show,
And words of sorrow wear the look of woe;
Let it in joy, assume a vivid air;
Pierce when in rage; in seriousness severe.

1.

Tristia mœstum

Vultum verba decent; iratum, plena minarum,
Ludentum lasciva; severum seria dictu.—*Hor.*

The man who tells the sinner of his guilt and danger, and evinces no concern,—who reproves vice and hypocrisy, and betrays no displeasure and indignation,—who describes the Saviour's love and tenderness, and is not himself melted,—who extols His grace and glory, and does not burn with holy zeal, may indeed be accounted a learned divine, and a profound scholar, and a great preacher, but will never sway the *hearts* of his hearers. In order to this, he must himself display feeling. Nor should it be a mere *display*. We have heard of ministers studying their cadences, and practising their gestures before the glass, and enunciating their studied periods, as with theatrical simulation. Such things may please the lovers of the stage; but they will never win a soul to Christ. They are all mere antic capers, or abominable hypocrisy in the sight of God. Nothing can *make amends* for the *actual want* of feeling. Histrionic emotion is easily detected. Noisy mechanical excitement cannot be successfully disguised. Nothing can *supply the place* of a soul deeply imbued with its subject, and that, realizing its solemn truth, and the immense responsibilities and interests at stake, makes its thrilling appeals, through those avenues of feeling by which alone the heart is accessible.

On this subject we could say much, not only as to the importance and necessity of actual feeling in the preacher, but as to its character—appositeness—the danger of cherishing improper feelings and of improperly displaying them—and the mode of cultivating and exciting those that are appropriate; but the cursory sketch intended in this chapter forbids enlargement, and detail. It is the feeling exhibition of the truth, where the feeling is appropriate to the truth—to the circumstances under which it is made known—and to the state and character of those addressed, which we particularly regard as an highly important and

essential qualification, for success in the preaching of the gospel. Dull monotonous discourses, on themes which have little or no practical bearing, or where their practical bearing is lost sight of, are not the means which the Spirit of God employs, to convert the souls of men. They are not adapted to this end;—and the fact that they are not actually employed, should administer a rebuke to every one, who, in this way, prophesies over the dry bones in the valley of vision. The attention must be engaged, and interested. It is indispensably necessary, as we have seen from the very process of conversion. In order to this, there must be truth vividly exhibited, and that, so far as human instrumentality is concerned, can only be done effectively, where intelligence and feeling are blended in the exhibition.

Intellect and heart in the minister of Christ, should never be disunited. Perhaps one of the best methods a minister of Christ can adopt, to prevent himself from attempting their divorce, is to address the *conscience*. Here both mind and heart unite. Conscience is the judgment which we form, as to the character of an action compared with the standard of right, and which is accompanied with a feeling of approbation, or the contrary, according to the character of the action, or its correspondence to the rule of right. All the great truths and facts of religion, have a direct bearing on conscience. You cannot effect *it*, where there is not the exhibition of truth; but where truth is properly exhibited, so as to secure the interested attention, and the vivid perception of it, our sensibilities will be affected, painfully, or pleasantly, according as the character of the truth, and individual, and the circumstances of the case may determine. You may indeed affect the imagination, and move the passions; but no motive power to induce conversion, shall be felt. It is through truth, as it tells upon the conscience, that the Spirit of

God, converts the soul, so that, when this is defiled, and seared, the sinner's case is hopeless. Now if the minister of Christ would prove successful, he must have a reference to this circumstance of the Spirit's agency, and so present the truth, as to find its way to the conscience. If he addresses the intellect, the fancy, or the heart only, and does not attack the conscience, he need not expect to see the Spirit's influence, accompany his ministrations. It is true, that all may be enlisted, and their influence brought to bear, in giving truth a direction, and a point, so as to rouse the conscience into action: but here is where they are to have their outlet, and to accumulate their power. Arguments, illustrations, appeals, and every available method of exhibiting and enforcing truth, may be appropriately, and seasonably employed; but to the conscience must they all speak, or they will prove inefficient, and the converting influence of the Spirit will be withheld. For we remark further,

4. That in his exhibition of truth, it is important the minister of Christ, should be found *co-operating* with the Spirit of God. "We then," says the apostle, "*as workers together with Him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*"¹ There can be no co-operation, where there is neither a plan of operation previously known, and acted on, by the parties, nor the entertainment of the same design, in the prosecution of it. Now God has a design in the preaching of the gospel. It is a specific means He has ordained for its accomplishment. That design is the conversion of sinners, or the reconciliation of them to Himself. "He hath given to us," says the apostle, "the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their tresspasses unto them; and hath committed

1. 2 Cor. vi. 1.

unto us the word of reconciliation."¹ It is therefore the solemn duty of every minister of Christ, to aim specifically, and directly, at the conversion of sinners in the prosecution of his work. He must labor to effect a reconciliation in the sinner, to God. To this his preaching, prayers, and efforts, should all tend, so that he may enter fully into the Spirit of the apostle's words, and say in his addresses to his hearers: "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."² In the ministration of the word, to lose sight of this end, is to cease from co-operation with God; and how in such a case, can success be expected?

It sometimes happens, that ministers aim at the mere mental illumination of their hearers, or their entertainment, or their gratification. These are all unhallowed ends, when made supreme, and will vitiate the service. Nor is there any better, who seek, in the spirit of sectarianism, to swell their numbers, or, in the spirit of proselytism, to seduce from other denominations. God does not commission, or employ ministers to labor for their sect. The Bible knows nothing of sect, save it is the sect every where spoken against—the *true* followers of Christ. To increase *their* number, should be the aim of the ministry; and they who manifest more zeal for the increase of their sect, than to bring sinners to Christ, have forgotten their commission, and will receive no plaudit from Heaven, for their labor. It is truly pitiable to witness the expenditure of time, labor, funds and feeling, which is made in the spirit of sectarianism! The Presbyterian, and Episcopalian, and Methodist, and Baptist banners, are to be seen floating in almost every direction; and the cry for recruits, is heard in every breeze: but alas!

1. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

2. 2 Cor. v. 20.

how often, instead of enlisting "good soldiers" for Jesus Christ, is it to be seen, that *the sect is first*, and Christ *next*. To hear of conversions, and revivals, gives little pleasure to many, unless they happen to be in their ecclesiastical connexion! This is a most baleful spirit. It is reprobated of God; and they who indulge and act according to it, do indeed *oppose*, but do not *co-operate* with Him. He brings sinners to himself, here and there, wherever the truth is preached, regardless of ecclesiastical organization. They who co-operate with Him, should be willing, and bless Him that he does it. Let the grand aim be *to convert sinners*, to *bring souls to Jesus*, and not to marshal the forces of a sect. It is certainly a matter of comparative unimportance, provided the sinner is *truly* converted, in what ecclesiastical connexion he may eventually be found. For we know that he is dear to the heart of the Redeemer, and that as He has given himself for him, so his Spirit will be given to redeem him from all iniquity and purify (him) to himself (as one of His) peculiar people, zealous of good works."¹

It is true, that the fellowship of one society, may conduce more to holiness, than that of another, and that therefore, some degree of consideration may be given to this subject. But who will pretend to say, what is that society in every particular place? In one place, Presbyterians may be the most warm hearted, zealous, and intelligent sect of christians whose fellowship may be most desirable and salutary;—in another it may be Episcopalians;—in a third Methodists. In other places, the fellowship of each may be exceedingly injurious to the interests of vital piety. Shall we then exalt the mere ecclesiastical organization—which is unquestionably a thing of human device in many of its formal rites and usages—

1. Tit. ii. 14.

above the fellowship of God's dear saints, and show more devotion to the interests of a sect, than to those of the precious "flock" of God "which He hath purchased with His own blood?"¹ If we do, we are not co-operating with Him, and are exalting *our plan* and *aim* above His. Beside we do necessarily restrict the sphere of our influence,—circumscribe the field of our labors,—and actually render our ministerial services less extensively available than they might be. Yea, and we do, by acting in the spirit of sectarianism, virtually and formally contribute—to perpetuate, and justify the infidel reproach of Christianity, that it is a schismatic and litigious thing,—and worse still, to frustrate our Redeemer's prayers,—and to deprive the world of the grand convincing argument of the divine authority of His mission, and of our own too! He prayed for *his people*, not only for the apostles, but "for them also which should believe on Him through their word," "that they may be *one*, even as (He and His Father) are one: I in them," says He, "and thou in me, *that they may be made perfect in one*; and that the world may *know* that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."² Never till the spirit of sectarianism, and schism, and strife, is banished from among the professed friends and followers, and ministers of Jesus Christ, can the world have *this* proof of the divinity of His religion, or the ministry have its full efficiency and success.

If we shall be censured for so saying, and our sentiments be distorted and misrepresented, as proofs of hostility to "*creeds*" and "*confessions of faith*," and of alienation from, or disaffection towards, our own ecclesiastical sect, we shall regret, but cannot help it. We cannot keep back what appears to us, to be the truth, and so high-

1. Acts xx. 28.

2. John xvii. 20—23.

ly important to extensive ministerial success. We shall be traduced and slandered, if men *will* propagate such *inferences*, from our remarks. They are not legitimate, and we disavow them. But the very fact of such allegations, being whispered, and circulated to the injury of their ministerial reputation,—and consequently the success of their ministerial labors,—who look beyond the boundaries of sect, and aim at the conversion of the world to Christ, is sufficient proof to us, that one cause of the comparative inefficiency of ministerial labor, in many cases, is to be found in the narrow and restricted aim which directs the efforts of some, and, their not coming up directly, and fully, “to the help of the Lord,” in His design to subjugate the whole earth. We are not the ministers of a sect. Nor do our commissions carry us within the range exclusively of a particular church, or denomination. We are ambassadors for God to a *guilty world*, and the terms of our commission direct us to “*go into all the world*, and preach (the) gospel *to every creature*.” Till we act in the spirit of that commission, and with the design of Him who gave it, we must expect but partial success.

Where the grand and immediate business of the ministry is lost sight of, and men begin to contend about forms of expression, and phrases, and subordinate matters, carnal contentions, and strife and schisms will prevail,—and though they may attempt to apologize for these things by alleging that they do but contend “*earnestly* for the faith once delivered to the saints,” and that it is of consequence to maintain “*orthodoxy*,” against error, yet is it found to be the fact, that they who are perpetually *testifying against error*, and build their ramparts, and walls of defence, high around them to keep it out, and who

fulminate their excommunicating anathemas, against those who differ from them, are neither the sects, nor the men, whom God, in His providence, at this day, is leading forward in grand and successful plannings and labours for the spread of the gospel and the conversion of the world.¹

But there are other modes of co-operating with God, beside the adoption, and prosecution of *His* catholic design in the preaching of the gospel. There must also be a participation of His Spirit, i. e. the exhibition of those affections, which He represents as characterizing Him, more especially in this work. He is fraught with compassion for the souls of men. He is intently, and incessantly occupied in His endeavours for their conversion “rising up early,” as He says, and sending His prophets, pleading and expostulating with them,—now with tenderness and pity, and now with authority and power—now with love and grace, and now with solemn fore-warnings

1. It would be well for ministers and christians generally at this day, to read the discourses of Dr. John Howe, on the *carnality of religious contention*, and of *union among protestants*. We give the reader one or two extracts.

“All are *for the truth*, and they are all *for peace and union*. By which some indeed, more gently, mean, they hope all will quit their former mistaken *opinions and ways*, (as in great kindness to themselves, they take for granted, all men’s are but their own,) and come wholly over to them. Others that have not breasts capable of even so much *charity* as this, not only are as much *lovers and admirers of themselves*, but so vehement haters of all that presume to differ from them, that they think them not fit to live in the world, that durst not adventure to do so. The meaning therefore, of their being *for peace*, is that they would have destroyed them that are not of their minds: and then, (as the Roman Historian speaks,) *quando solitudinem, fecere appellant pacem*. When they have made a *desolation*, so that they themselves, are left alone in the world, *that they will call peace*.”—Howe’s works, v. ii. p. 217.

“Our famous *Davenant*, speaking of the noted controversy between *Stephen*, bishop of Rome, (who he says, *much as in him lay, did with a schismatical spirit, tear the church*; and *Cyprian* who, *with great lenity and christian charity, professes, that he would not break the Lord’s peace, for diversity*

and threatening denunciations, &c. It would be well for us to study the example and spirit of our blessed master, and address ourselves to the work of preaching His gospel as He did. No toil, no fatigue, no privation, no opposition, no reproach, no fear of ecclesiastical censures or of criminal prosecution, diverted Him from His work. His whole heart was in it. He *delighted* to do His father's will; and so must we. Days spent in preaching, must be followed by nights spent in prayer. We must be careful to "let (the same) mind be in (us,) that was also in Christ Jesus,"¹ and to "put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, and above all these things, charity, which is the bond of perfectness."² To preach Christ in any other spirit,—out of envy or of strife, is not to co-operate with God. He calls us not to draw the sword, save it is the sword of the Spirit, and if we will, like Peter make use of carnal weapons, we shall, like Peter, be presently left to deny our Lord and master. The holy God can have no

of opinion, nor remove any from the right of communion,) concludes that *erring Cyprian*, deserved better of the church of Christ, than *Orthodox Stephen*. He thought him the schismatic, whom he thought in the right, and that his *Orthodoxy*, (as it was accompanied,) was more mischievous to the church, than the other's *error*, nor can a man do that hurt to others without suffering it more principally; the distemper of his own spirit, what can recompense! And how apt is it to grow in him, and while it grows in himself, to propagate itself among others! Whereupon, if the want of love, hinders the nourishment of the body, much more do the things which when it is wanting, are wont to fill up its place. For as naturally as love begets love, so do wrath, envy, malice, calumny, beget one another, and spread a poison and virulency, through the body which necessarily wastes, and tends to destroy. How soon did the christian church cease to be itself, and the early vigor of primitive christianity degenerate into insipid spiritless formality, when once it became contentious! It broke into parties, sects multiplied, animosities grew high, and the grieved *spirit of love*, retired from it."—Howe's works, vol. ii. p. 232, 233.

1. Phil. ii. 5.

2. Col. iii. 12—14.

communion with us in unhallowed affections. We must imbibe His Spirit, and like the holy Jesus, at one time weep over lost sinners, and at another, sternly reprove the carnality of professors. Oh, if the ministry in the discharge of their high and holy functions, were but a mirror to reflect the affections of God, upon a lost and guilty world, convulsed and torn with selfish strifes, and dissensions; how amazing and rapid would be the success, and spread of the gospel!

We only add to the above, that in order to co-operate with God, we must beware how, in our exhibitions of truth, we violate any of the known and established laws, by which He governs mind. God's gracious constitution, is not at war with His natural. The laws by which He regulates human thought and emotion remain unchanged, and when He brings the sinner to Himself, it is not in violation of any one. For He does not work against Himself. It is essential, therefore, to the success of our ministrations, that we should know the ordinary principles which regulate the operations of the human mind and heart, lest through ignorance we may be found opposing our own design. It is one of the laws of human thought and action, that *distinct* or clear and vivid perceptions of truth, must be had, in order to its assuming a powerful, or permanent influence. You need not pretend to influence a man, by addressing him in a language or style, which he cannot understand. We must therefore, see to it, that our preaching is plain, intelligible, and adapted to the apprehension of common sense. Vague and incoherent declamation—obscure and unintelligible expressions, must be carefully avoided, and the most easy, and familiar illustrations employed. Thus did He, “who spake as never man spake.” Inattention to this, oft-times, renders the ministration of the word, perfectly unprofitable; and no more effectual method can be adopted, to beguile the minds of men, into

listless, dreaming, indifference, and stupidity, than the perpetual use of hackneyed phrases, in which, if there is truth at all, it is imperceptibly presented. What ideas will nine-tenths of ordinary hearers of the gospel be likely to obtain from such expressions as “implanting in the heart, the principles of grace,”—“the application of Christ’s righteousness to the heart by the Spirit of God,”—“infusing life into the soul,”—“injecting grace,”—“standing in our law,”—and others which we might mention? The reproof of the apostle, is as deserved in reference to much of what is charitably passed to the account of depth, or profundity in theology, as it was to the abuses in preaching, which first elicited it. “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise you, except ye utter by the tongue, *words easy to be understood*, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air.”¹ We have already noticed the inevitable effect which, a certain mode of exhibiting the sinner’s inability, must have, as being at war with one of the benevolent provisions of the Great Creator. We might also notice how the want of a due respect to the operation of human sympathy, and the established modes, by which one mind influences another, cannot fail to neutralize, and vitiate much of ministerial effort; but it would be dilating, and digressing too far. We pass to still more important considerations.

1. 1 Cor. xiv. 8, 9.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MINISTERIAL EFFICIENCY.

CONTINUED.

5. It is indispensibly necessary to success, that the truth be delivered “in demonstration of the Spirit”—Instanced in Paul’s preaching—To be “filled with the Spirit”—What it means and whence the obligation to it—Necessary as an accompanying testimony to the truth of God’s message by us and for other reasons—Cannot be wanting without guilt, &c.—The necessity of a minister’s being an experimental exercised christian—The very instincts and sympathies of our nature where the facts of our religion are believed, prevent indifference in the minister of Christ—Paul’s spirit commended—The example of Christ and His apostles—No success to be expected if we are not filled with the Spirit—How this is to be attained—Necessity of meditation and prayer—Important that there should be much knowledge of the human heart—6. If we would be successful we must confidently expect success—Ample warrant to expect it—Objection urged from the “divine Sovereignty”—Answered by a reference to missionary effort—A general view of the divine government—Also from the ample warrant given us in the promises of God to anticipate success—And their actual fulfilment when plead in faith—Apostolical success—The relation of the ministry to the government of God—Have an agency in forwarding the millennial glory—And a yet more important relation to the glorious scenes of eternity.

5. It is indispensibly necessary to ministerial success, that the truth be delivered “in demonstration of the Spirit.”¹ To this cause the apostle referred the efficiency of *his* preaching. He preached, so as to give a demonstration to his hearers, *that the Holy Ghost was in him*. A demonstration of this is of vastly greater consequence than of

great talents or erudition. He also preached, so as to give a demonstration that he was *assisted* by the Spirit in his work. To *His* agency he referred continually *as the means* of his success. For His influence *he prayed*. And he took care his hearers should know that from that Spirit he *actually derived* his aid. He preached the truth with such light and power, as to give a demonstration, that it was the Spirit's own weapon for convincing and converting sinners. Although it came through his lips, it was the Spirit, that effectually operated by it. It was the Spirit speaking in him.

Such preaching cannot fail to be successful. We dare appeal to the experience of every zealous and spiritual teacher, whether his ministrations have not always been successful in proportion as he has been imbued with the Spirit of God? There has been an unction, a pathos, a fervour, a power which has made the hearer involuntarily exclaim, "God is in him of a truth," and the effects have been very perceptible. But while this will perhaps be admitted by most, is there not reason to fear, that none of us sufficiently realize our obligations thus to preach the word. Our blessed Master led the apostles to expect that they "should receive *power*, after that the Holy Ghost was come upon them, and that they should be *witnesses* for Him."¹ And they did receive it, and no sooner did they begin to speak, and testify to Christ, than thousands were pricked in their hearts and cried out "men and brethren what shall we do." The *words* of the apostles had a much more powerful effect on them, than the *miracles* performed before them, or the *visible tokens* of the Spirit's presence. They were "baptized with the Holy Ghost,"² and the same promise of the Spirit, which was then fulfilled in them, reaches to this day, and authorizes the expectation of the same power to accompany us, and our minis-

¹ Acts i. 7, 8.

² Acts i. 5.

trations. We may and must "be filled with the Spirit,"¹ and as thus furnished for our work, "how shall one chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight."²

On this subject we feel deeply, and beg leave, with all modesty, to drop one or two hints, conscious that we ourselves have much to learn, nor forgetting that "days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom."³ The *obligation* to "be filled with the Spirit," cannot be denied. It is just as obvious, and peremptory, and as much a thing to be expected of course in christian experience, as it is that we "be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess."⁴ Ministers and private christians, alike are bound, to "live in the Spirit," and "walk in the Spirit."⁵ If we are not "filled with the Spirit," it is not because God, by any capricious or arbitrary dispensation, is pleased to deny us His influence, so that we must *wait* till a more propitious season of revival arrives. At no time does the Spirit withdraw from us, till we "*grieve*" and "*vex*" Him. And he is ready, at any moment, to return to us, when we do not, by our impenitence and unbelief prevent Him. "Draw nigh to God," says the apostle James, "and He *will* draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands ye sinners; and purify your hearts ye double-minded."⁶ He "that dwells in the high and holy place, (dwells) 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."⁷ If we have not the Spirit it is beyond all dispute our own *fault* for "if (men) being evil, know how to give good gifts to (their) children, how much more shall (our) Heavenly Father know how to give the Holy Spirit, to them that ask Him?"⁸

1 Deut. xxxii. 20.

2 Job xxxii. 7.

3 Eph. v. 18.

4 Gal. v. 25.

5 Jam. iv. 8.

6 Isa. lviii. 15.

7 Luke xi. 13.

But what does this mean? We have already seen that ideas of *personal inhabitation*, of *infused grace* and of any *mystic* agency of the Spirit, form no part of the scriptural doctrine of His influence; but that that influence is exercised and displayed in the appropriate impressions of truth, upon our minds and hearts. A man's mind is *full* of his subject, when it occupies his thoughts, engages the interest of his heart, and is the continual theme of his conversation. So we say a man is *full* of his project or *full* of himself—he is *full* of wisdom, *full* of sorrow, *full* of wrath, &c., when there is the governing and absorbing influence of such matters, and such affections. In like manner we are *filled* with the Spirit, when mind, heart and conversation, are under the appropriate, prevailing, absorbing influence of any one or more of the great truths, through which the Spirit operates. And this is the sense in which the phrase is used in the sacred scriptures. Elizabeth on hearing Mary's salutation "was *filled* with the Holy Ghost."¹ There was indeed an extraordinary, though not unnatural, bodily sensation first experienced, which induced the *conviction* that she saw the mother of her Lord, the long promised Messiah, and that thought, or truth, or fact took complete possession of her mind. It was predicted of John the Baptist, that he should be "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb,"² that is, from the earliest period of his history, he should be under the controlling and absorbing influence of the Spirit. And such was the fact. He was absorbed in his work, and his mind was deeply imbued with truths, which did not thus affect others. Zacharias recovering his speech and prophesying—thus giving proof of the powerful impression of the truth upon his mind,—was said to have been "filled with the Holy Ghost."³ So also, when the apostles on the day of Pentecost, began to speak, it is observed by the historian that

1 Luke i. 41.

2 Luke i. 15.

3 Luke i. 67.

“they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”¹ Peter before the Sanhedrim,² the apostles when Peter and John returned,³ and Paul in his address to Elymas the sorcerer,⁴ are all said to have been *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and when we advert to circumstances, we find that the boldness, and absorbing zeal and feeling with which they spoke the truth, are especially worthy of notice. The truths of christianity, when really and fully believed, will make a deep and absorbing impression, and when they do so, we are filled with the Spirit—i. e. our spirits are appropriately and fully excited by the Spirit of God, through the instrumentality of His own truth, as apprehended and cordially believed by us.

Now, *that they should be thus believed* by every one, especially by the ministers of Jesus Christ, who will deny? Is not the *obligation* to this, as strong as the truth of Him who speaks can make it, and as solemn as eternity? We are not at liberty, at any time, to refuse to believe the *man* who speaks the truth. Much less are we, where *God* is the One that testifies. Nor can we, without guilt, remain *unaffected by what He testifies*. For *He* never *trifles* with us, or asks our attention to matters of *little* or *no importance*. God is ever serious, and His communications to us, are on themes of deep and thrilling interest. To treat them with indifference—to remain unmoved by them, is and must be highly *criminal* in us. It is a virtual impeachment of the divine solicitude and sincerity.

A deep, operative, heart-felt conviction of the truth, is also *indispensably necessary*, as *our accompanying testimony to the truth* of what God testifies. Suppose that a minister of Christ should rise up in the sacred desk, or elsewhere, and address his fellow-men on divine things, in a light and flippant style, or in a cold scholastic manner, or with studied theatrical display, or with evident care

1 Acts ii. 4. 2 Acts iv. 8. 3 Acts iv. 31. 4 Acts xiii. 9. &c.

for rhetorical ornament and effect; who would not, at once perceive, that his own heart attached very little consequence to the message of the Lord, which he was professedly delivering? It would be utterly in vain to tell us, that he did indeed feel, and that he was a faithful, and learned, and pious minister of Christ. We could not resist the evidence of our senses, and to deliver the truth, in a dull and heartless, or careless and indifferent manner, could scarcely fail, according to the very laws of human feeling, to prejudice the hearer's mind in some degree either against the speaker, or against it. Nothing, as has already been intimated, can make amends for the *actual* want of feeling on the part of the ministry of Christ. Where however, it does exist, it cannot fail to exhibit itself. Can any private christian, much more any minister of Christ, be free from blame, when destitute of *all* feeling appropriate to the truths of religion? It is the very evidence, requisite in the nature of things, to demonstrate to others the reality of his faith professed, and to bring the truth, under circumstances favorable for its reception, to bear upon the minds of others? This is the demonstration of the Spirit—the convincing evidence of its being truth, which the minister of Christ publishes,—the very truth and message of God, of which he has no doubts,—through which the Spirit moves and excites, and stirs his own spirit within him,—and which thus, by the very laws of human sympathy, and through the energy of the Spirit, present at the time, comes with convincing light and power to the minds of the hearers. Who can fail to see, and to feel, the immense necessity of this thing, in order to the successful administration of the word?

This deep, heart-felt, moving, spirit-stirring, belief of the truth, on our part, as ambassadors of Jesus Christ, is *necessary* to prove to those that hear us, that *we* do indeed believe the messages of God by us. If wanting, it will excite in others the suspicion, and indeed generate the

presumption, that as *we*, who *profess to have the message from God*, give so *little proof*, of its being believed by *us*, the thing after all is not as we represent it. It is, *necessary* also, to conciliate and engage the attention of our hearers; for all men naturally refuse to attend to, and do actually, turn away with disgust from, the man that does not, *at the time*, *believe what he is saying*. And it is *necessary*, still further, to give that sort of sensible exhibition of the reality, of what we preach, which, according to the laws of human emotion and sympathy prevailing among creatures of sense, is requisite, in the very nature of things, for effectively, and successfully, inducing the minds of others to believe it.

In all this, there is nothing but what may be most appropriately demanded of every minister of Christ. It cannot, in any case, be wanting, without guilt on his part,—without endangering the souls of his hearers—and without his being, more likely, the instrument of their unbelief, than of their faith. Oh, have we not reason to fear, that our exhibitions of truth, may sometimes be made, in any other way than in “the demonstration of the Spirit?” If our hearers remain, from year to year, unbelieving, and unconverted, ought we not to institute a strict inquiry, *whether we may not in some way conduce to it?* Surely, if “the demonstration of the Spirit,” were with us, it would not, could not be thus! And can *that* be long, and *totally*, wanting, *without guilt* on our part, when it is most reasonable, and natural, and of rightful obligation, that we should cordially believe, and be fully and powerfully affected, by the great facts of religion, which we teach, and when God, is *ever* willing “to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” Ah, will we not have reason to dread the disclosures of eternity, if our own hearts and souls, are not fully imbued with the truth we preach? How can we look our Master in the face, or how can we

ever think of meeting with our hearers at His bar, if we have not admonished, rebuked, instructed, exhorted, entreated, and expostulated; as those that fully, and cordially believed the truth themselves. Our religion does not consist of mere *abstractions*; nor is that preaching the gospel, and watching for souls, which consists in exhibiting mere *doctrinal propositions*, that may engage and instruct the intellect, instead of asserting facts which we know and feel, have a direct and solemn bearing on the character, experience, and destiny of our hearers. This can never be done, where our own hearts have not believed, and felt, and we have thus been *practically taught* by the Spirit of God. We must speak from *experience*—from our personal experimental sense, and knowledge of the truth, or our preaching will be mere human science—the theology of the schools,—the wisdom of philosophy,—the tradition of the elders,—the opinions of the fathers,—and the like matters, in which we cannot *bear witness*, as those who *know* the truth *as taught of God*. Thus Paul was taught, and thus he preached, whether he addressed the unconverted, or believers. “Knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,”¹ said he, as realizing the awful condition of the impenitent. And when addressing the people of God, still he ventured not beyond his own experience, testifying in *all* cases, as to what he *knew* to be matters of fact. “Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”²

And thus ought the minister of Christ, ever to preach. He professes to believe, that there is a Hell of unutterable and unalterable woe, where the wicked shall be forever made to endure the unmingled and unmitigated wrath of

1. 2 Cor. v. 11.

2. 2 Cor. i. 4.

God—that whosoever does not repent of his sins, and believe on Jesus Christ, is, *at the present moment*, a candidate for that Hell; yea, that *even now*, “the wrath of God *abideth* on him;”¹ that life is extremely uncertain and precarious; that death *at once*, and *forever*, determines the state and destiny of men; and therefore, that any and every one of his hearers, who *does not repent and believe*, is *at every moment trembling*, as it were, *on the very vortex of the bottomless abyss!* How, can a man look into the face of his hearers, whom he knows to be impenitent, and at the same time, *believe these things*, and *not feel?* The very heart of adamant, we should think, must be broken and melted in such a case; and warning, exhortation, and entreaty, clothed as it were in the very “terror of the Lord,” be resorted to, as the most appropriate method of obtaining relief, under the painful agonizing burden of distress. An immortal soul, is of value too immense, and the injury done to the blessed Saviour, by unbelief, and impenitence, too shocking and malignant for any minister of Christ, to remain a calm, indifferent and callous spectator. Paul, could not. Stephen, could not. The apostles, could not. The blessed Jesus Himself, could not. And shall we? Shall the fear of reproach, or shame, or death, or the fancied danger of incurring our hearer’s displeasure, or a tame and courteous compliance with the soul-destroying maxims of men of ungodly minds, and with the usages of society adopted or approved by the enemies of God, be allowed to enter, and chill the generous compassions of the soul? Shall we fear to be accounted mad-men, and fanatics in consequence of our letting such truths take full possession of our minds,—of being “filled with the Spirit?” Paul was pronounced a mad-man, for this very reason. But, as with a “realizing sense of

1. John iii. 30.

the truth he preached, he was "made manifest unto God, and in (the) consciences"¹ of his hearers. He cared not what they thought. He sought not to commend himself to them: but "whether we be beside ourselves," said he, "it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause."² "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me."³ Let no man think me a fool, if otherwise, yet *as a fool*, receive me."⁴ Be it our endeavor to catch the spirit of Paul, and to consent, to be accounted fools, and mad-men, rather than contribute to form the minds of our hearers to unbelief, and countenance their rebellion against the light, by preaching to them with calm indifference, a "dignified" religion, which will pass current with the rich, and gay, and lordly sons of pride, self-righteousness, and soul-destroying pharisaism.

If we are "filled with the Spirit," and preach "in the demonstration of the Spirit," we must expect to be mocked, and ridiculed, and accounted *insane*, and *worse*, by some. The whole company of apostles were reported to be drunk, by the infidel wags, and pharisaic elders⁵ of Jerusalem. The Master Himself, was said *to have a devil*.⁶ His very friends, said that *He was beside Himself*,⁷ because of His devotion to the work of His ministry; and it is saying *very little* for our zeal, or faithfulness, *if we escape such reproach*. Never, ought we to be satisfied, or think we are sufficiently engaged. The wondrous facts of our religion, should possess our minds; and zeal, for the glory of our Master, and love for the souls of men, should ever lead us to exhibit the truth, "*in the demonstration of the Spirit*."

1. 2. Cor. v. 11.

3. 3 Cor. xi. 1.

5. Acts ii. 13.

7. Mark iii. 21.

2. 2 Cor. v. 13.

4. 2 Cor. xi. 16.

6. John viii. 48.

Without this, at least, in some degree, we need not anticipate success. We may indeed bring men to treat the ordinances of religion with respect—we may inoculate them with the Spirit of sectarianism—render them feverishly zealous for their church—and set them to labor diligently in building high the ramparts of defence against error, and heresy, and the like—but if *we* are not “filled with the Spirit,” we shall not be very efficient in the conversion of sinners, and in bringing them when converted to bold, active, untiring, ardent, self-denying, labor, and liberality in the service of a crucified Redeemer.

Does the reader ask how this is to be had, and maintained? The answer we give, is like that which we return to any, and every enquiry, as to the mode in which any, and every religious feeling is to be had and cherished, viz. by voluntarily bringing our minds in contact with the objects which are adapted to excite the feeling. If the sinner asks us *how* he is to love the Saviour; *how* he is to believe upon Him, and we should venture to give an intelligent reply to such an absurd question, as we must call it, we would say—look at the person to be loved, and see His excellence—look at the character of the witness, and see His truth—“attend to His words, and incline your ear to His sayings.”¹ So, if asked *how* are we to “be filled with the Spirit,” that as ministers of Christ, we may preach “in the demonstration of the Spirit,” we reply, let us look at the great facts and objects which we exhibit to our hearers’ attention,—let us ponder on what God says,—and dwell upon these solemn things in our own minds, till our own hearts are affected by them.

To this end it is obvious that, *prayer* becomes *indispensably necessary*. The closet of the minister of Christ should be, as it were the private gate through which he

1. Prov. iv. 20.

looks into Heaven and Hell, and where he surveys the wonderful *realities* to which he is to direct his hearers' attention. All preparation for preaching without prayer, will be of little avail. His studies will become a mere intellectual exercise, if meditation and prayer, are not continually employed. We must live near to God, and be much given to prayer, and never attempt to say or do, any thing for His glory, and the good of souls, without having first gone to our blessed Master, laid it before Him, and consulted, as it were with Him, to see, that it meets His approbation, or is His message. Paul abounded in prayer. The dear Redeemer, "in the days of His flesh, offered up prayer and supplications, with strong crying and tears."¹ The apostles spent much of their time, in this way. They gave themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."² Thus they lived in the Spirit, walked in the Spirit, and were "filled with the Spirit." We need not wonder therefore, that they preached "in demonstration of the Spirit." They that do not devote much of their time to prayer, and, who know not what it is to put up the *prayer of faith*, and to bring their sermons right from the very throne of grace, perfumed and seasoned with the unction from the Holy One, need look no further for the causes of their inefficient ministerial labor. Let us ever go to the blessed Saviour, to learn from Him, and receive "the unction that will teach us all things," and having delivered our message, let us go to Him, as did the apostles, and tell Him all that we have done. It is essential, if we would have the Spirit of Christ, that we be much with Him, and lead lives of close, and endeared communion with Him.

It is also important, that the character of the hearers, should be understood, in order that appropriate truth may

1. Heb. v. 7.

2. Acts vi. 4.

be exhibited. In so saying, we do not mean, that it is necessary there should be the knowledge of private history, or of personal character; nor that in preaching we should *designedly* so particularize one or two individuals, as to turn the eyes of a whole congregation on them. Let this sort of preaching be done in private. But we mean, that there should be much *knowledge of the human heart*—of the manner in which different passions and affections operate, and influence conduct,—of the different springs of human feeling,—of the character of objects adapted to excite particular emotions,—of the ordinary laws of human thought and feeling,—of the appropriate modes in which the various passions display themselves,—of the diversified exercises and reasonings of unrenewed men, by which they apologize for, or justify to themselves their impenitence and rebellion,—of the motives which are suitable to one and another class,—of the temptations of Satan, and the many soul-destroying devices of men of unbelieving minds,—of the reproaches and objections of an ungodly world against the cause and people of God,—and of the perplexities, and perils, and snares, and intricate experiences of the christian, and the like. Thus, will he be able to commend himself to the consciences of the hearers. He will speak matters of fact which will find witnesses in the hearts of his hearers. Truth presented in this way, will not go over the heads of the hearers. Nor will they hear as though they were attending to some scientific lecture or doctrinal discussion.

It is of the utmost consequence, that there be this knowledge, or otherwise, there will be little skill or discernment in the selection of subjects, in the use of the Bible, and in the exhibition of truth at different times, to different people, and under the influence either of different passions, and prejudices, or of different usages and modes of preaching sanctioned and modified by different states of society. In order to this

knowledge, there must be, the careful study of our own hearts,—continual self-inspection,—the sifting of motive and conduct, of feeling and purpose,—the frequent and prayerful perusal, more especially of the devotional and experimental parts, of scripture,—a disposition to trace the influence of truth on different minds,—readiness to enter into spiritual conversation,—a facility at eliciting, and a tact in discerning the experience or feelings of others,—an easy adaptation of ourselves to all classes of society, and to every condition of life,—a diligent improvement of the scenes and exercises which the inquiry meeting unfold,—and other things of like character. This knowledge, is not to be obtained from books, or theological lectures; but only as we may be enabled, by means of the great principles in the word of God, and the facilities afforded for it by the teachings of the Spirit, to dissect our own hearts, and those to which we can have access. It is in the possession of such knowledge,¹—in appeals made to *real* life,—and by the exhibition of facts drawn from *actual experience*, that the minister of Christ, when imbued with his subject, and speaking “in demonstration of the Spirit,” finds the word of God, to be, the sword of the Spirit—“sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”¹ It is thus he acts effectively in his high character, as a *witness* for God and for Christ, and the more we evince the spirit, and display the appearance, and actually perform the part, of one who simply declares the truth as a *witness* for God, the greater will be our success.

The reader will excuse us, if we add but one more remark, which is,

6. That if we would be successful in the work of the

1. Heb. iv. 12.

ministry, we must confidently *expect* success. Every one knows the influence, which the confidence, or even hope, of success has upon the effects requisite to accomplish a contemplated design, or enterprise. So powerful, and so obviously necessary is it, that when we see a man despond, and droop, and expect disappointment, there we soon expect to witness that sort of languor, and listlessness, and desultoriness of effort, which are ominous of failure. On the other hand, the certainty of success gives an energy to effort, which makes it powerfully tell, and oft-times speedily result in success. Now there is an ample warrant for us, if we do rightly engage in the Lord's service, to anticipate success. Such an hope is not a vagary. For why hath our blessed Master, instituted the ministry of reconciliation? Assuredly it was not to demonstrate the inefficiency of His own ordinance! Nor to harden the hearts of men, and prepare them for a dismal Hell! What He said to Paul, is sufficiently evincive of His design in commissioning the heralds of the cross; and that being His declared design, have we not more reason to suspect, that the want of success is attributable, rather to the improper and unfaithful mode of executing our commission, than to any counteracting design on His part, "Rise" said He, "and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things, in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the gentiles, unto *whom now I send thee; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*"¹

1. Acts xxvi. 18—18.

We are aware that here an objection favorable to human indolence is commonly urged. The want of success in the ministry, is by many attributed to *the Sovereign will of God*; and that too where comparatively but little effort has been made. They have been sowing the seed, and preaching the word at some *stated* times—and in some *formal way* striving to *enlighten* their hearers, by didactic and polemic discussions, &c.,—but God has not chosen, to exert *His* power, to give *their* labor effect! How pleasing such an idea is to the inefficient minister, and how capable of being made subservient to indolence and unfaithfulness, in the discharge of duty, are very obvious. It is therefore a judgment, which we ought to be very careful how we form. For we incur responsibilities on the subject, as ministers of Christ, which may make us prejudiced judges. The natural love of self, and of ease, create great danger here; and it certainly would be wise, and safest, for us, never to imagine, that the want of success is attributable to some particular, secret, and inexplicable exercise of “Sovereignty” on the part of God,—at least, until we are very sure, that *we* are not to blame, and that with the utmost zeal, diligence, prayerfulness, self-denial, and laboriousness, *we* have *done our duty*. We have already had occasion to advert to the mistaken views of “Divine Sovereignty,” which sometimes obtain, and prove the bane of sinner’s effort. Let us beware, that the same in us do not neutralize our ministerial labor.

The utter inattention, of a large portion of the christian world, to the subject of missions, until within a late period, we think may be cited, as strong proof of the deleterious influence of such views. The idea of Regeneration being the result of physical power, on the part of God,—or that some *creative* process, superadded to the influence of truth, upon the mind, is necessary for ministerial success,—cannot fail to destroy, in some measure, a sense

of accountability, and secure a censurable inattention to the mode adopted in the exhibition of truth. Such language as the following, we deem highly symptomatic of the tendency of this philosophy to prejudice effort, and to impair a sense of *ministerial responsibility*. "Wherefore, although we are to take care, and pray much about the continuance of the dispensation of the gospel in any place, and its propagation in others; yet need we not be over-solicitous about it? This work and care, the Holy Ghost hath taken on Himself, and will carry it on according to the counsel of God, and His purposes concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ in this world; and thus far, the gospel is only a *causa sine qua non*, of the regeneration of men, and the *granting* of it, depends *solely* on the will of the Spirit of God."¹ A very comfortable doctrine indeed, for covetous churlish, indolent professors, and a wordly-minded ministry! The Saviour hath *granted* the gospel to every creature, and it is the sin and guilt of the ministry and the church, that it is not preached to every creature. Our commission is plain enough on this point, and it is a mere modified fatalism, which leads any of us to be at rest, in missionary and ministerial exertion, as though it were not the will of God, that His word should run, have free course, and be glorified.

The Sovereignty of God is not a capricious or mere arbitrary will. His Sovereignty, when rightly understood and viewed, leads directly to the contrary state of feeling, and to the most quickened and increased exertion, and to the most animating hopes of success. His will on the subject, has been declared. We read it in the very terms of our commission. To *imagine* that He has private purposes conflicting with our written instructions, and to be influenced by such *imaginations*, in our labor, is vir-

1. Owen on the Spirit, v. i. p. 390.

tually to assail the very character of God, and to place us in a very uninviting, and uncomfortable attitude before His enemies, when we undertake to preach His gospel. It is not forgotten, we presume, how the missionary zeal and labors, of many of the ministerial brethren in England, were met with objections drawn from the Sovereignty of God. Nor are we free from them in this country. How little of bold, daring, *catholic* missionary enterprize, is there among the churches, whose ministry and members are ever harping about the Sovereignty of God! They can build up the walls of defence, to keep out alleged heresy, and contract the sphere of evangelical labor, and never in *such* labor, anticipate any difficulty from the Sovereignty of God. But, to break through the trammels of sect, and aim at the conversion of the world, are dreaded and denounced, as departures from the faith, and disastrous intendency, although there are abundantly more explicit declarations of the Divine will, in reference to the latter, than the former, both in the word and providence of God.

The views of Divine Sovereignty, entertained by many, amount to religious fatalism. They see an existing evil. Sin reigns, and is ruining millions. Many of the hearers of the gospel are going down to the pit of perdition, and, in each thirty years, eight hundred millions of the human family, pass to the bar of God,—of whom, by far the greatest portion have lived, and died, in utter ignorance of “the only name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”¹ That God calls us to an active, and important resistance against the ravages of sin, and has provided powerful means for offensive hostility, and promised His co-operation, and our success, in the proper use of them, cannot be denied;—nor, that a disposition heartily, and zealously, to do so, constitutes a feature of every true christian.

1. Acts iv. 12.

Why then, should there be parsimony, indolence, despondency, and tameness in the use of them? Assuredly, it is no honor done to God, or to His cause, to allege His "Sovereignty," in permitting this state of things, and to claim exemption from obligation to personal and practical effort against it.¹ With equal propriety, might he abstain from all resistance against the influence of sin, in his own mind, and practically deny his obligations incessantly, and zealously, to advance in holiness. This is the very spirit of antinomianism, which is one perpetual libel against the God of all grace and holiness. And no man *can* claim exemption from obligation to contend against sin, and refuse to act, and apologize for indolent and inefficient efforts of resistance against it, on the ground, that God in His Sovereignty *forbids it, without taking part with it against God*. It is in plain terms, saying, God permits it, and therefore I will,—thus making his assumed *secret* will in the case, the rule of duty and obligation, in direct opposition to His plain and imperative command! The truth is,—

1. We cannot forego the pleasure of directing the reader's attention to an admirable discourse, delivered before the Baptist Missionary Society, in Bristol, England, by that very eloquent, and distinguished man, Mr. John Forster. On the subject of christian obligation to activity viewed in connexion with the divine permission of sin, he asks, "What indeed is its permission but simply its existence? In virtue of which it can give you no exemption from the duty of attacking it, which would not be equally an exemption from all duty whatever, in the form of opposition and conflict, which would not confer an universal inviolability on evil, and end practically in the maxim, that the more evil there is on earth, the less there is for the servants of God to do. Under which condition of things how impertinent, how worse than useless, how thriftless of happiness, were that pious animation of feeling, which you are admitting to be an internal duty, that holy indignation of the soul against what is working infinite mischief and misery to a large portion of mankind. Vain passion of christian zeal! Illusory, and almost penal fire from Heaven! Animating the heart but to consume it, if there should be no practical mode and machinery of conveying outward its energy, to strike against the hated object. To have the mind filled as by main force, with the revolting images of pagan

this plea of "Divine Sovereignty," is the lying whisper of the great enemy of souls, to beguile us from a sense of duty, and vitiate and destroy those feelings of fervent zeal, which would lead to the energetic use of means, and which cannot exist, where there is not the prospect of success. Indeed, when stripped of its disguise, it is but a slander against God, which, being propagated in the spirit of apparent piety, and reverence for God, renders it the more odious and dangerous. As it operates on the mind of the minister of Christ, frustrates, retards, and gives monotony to effort, it betrays the secret influence of some such thoughts as these, alike injurious to the honor of God, and to his own comfort and success, and is in effect saying to Him,

"I behold two views of thy government: there is thy permission of an awful array and amount of evils, and there is a system of thy dispensations framed to work in most direct and absolute opposition to them. The impossibility of apprehending the unity of principle of these

abominations; (the remark appears equally to the minister and servant of Christ, who groans under a sense of the abominations committed under the gospel,) and to know that this infernal usurpation triumphs in the slavery of millions of our common family, and yet, the while, to submit to be unfurnished with expedients of devout revenge, to have no arrows, no power of throwing reflected convergent sun-beams, no missiles charged with the elements most noxious to a malignant nature, would be felt as a hard *imposition* by a man of zeal, who would dread to have his soul, in reference to the service of God, in the condition of a hero in chains: what shall we think then, of a servant of God desiring as an *exemption* and a *privilege*, to be allowed *thus* to expend away the vital force of his spirit, without action? *We cannot believe that he has any* of that zealous emotion, which he pretends. No, my good friends, you must not profess to feel, and fulfil a duty of enmity in spirit against the permitted evil, and at the same time acknowledge no duty of offensive exertion. The true animosity would be so intent on some means of action, that it is quite certain the state of feeling, which persuades to decline such means, is far too pacific toward what is insulting God, and destroying man."—p. 51, 52.

opposed parts of thy government, throws a dark mystery on the one of them. But with me unlike my fellow mortals, the mystery rests on the latter view, on the economy constituted for resistance to the evil; whereas the reason for its permission is so plain to me, that I can, in dissent from all thy faithful servants, since the world began, adopt it as my rule of conduct. In pursuance of this adoption, I dare to believe, Thou art in truth, *not* so much the enemy of this same evil as is pretended, *even in thy own revelation*; and that I shall upon a *certain secret understanding*, please thee fully as well by declining to join in, (and zealously, and successfully prosecute,) an attack upon it, as by devoting to the utmost my active forces to co-operate against it, in a war, which, I do at the same time, perceive clearly, that Thou thyself for what reason of state I cannot conjecture, hast raised and maintained with a palpable and continual interference."¹

Who does not see the fallacy, and may we not say, the impiety of such sentiments? Do they become less false and criminal, when they are embodied in practical maxims, and exert an influence on conduct? We can see very little essential difference between *thus acting, thus thinking, and thus speaking*. The "Divine Sovereignty," affords no refuge for guilt and indolence. Blessed be God the copious effusions of His Spirit, secured by fervent and believing prayer, accompanied with the faithful and diligent administration of the word, expose the falsity of all such attempts to satisfy conscience. Before we can believe, that the "Divine Sovereignty," stands in the way of ministerial success, we must have some well authenticated instances, in which there have been the laborious and persevering preaching of the word, in all plainness and faithfulness,—also humble, ardent and believing prayer for the effusions

1. Forster's Sermon, p. 54.

of the Spirit of God—and the prompt, decisive, and energetic use of *all* those *means* which are ordinarily blessed for the conversion of sinners. We are not to be referred for instances of ministerial effort, being counteracted by “Divine Sovereignty,” and of success being *thus* withheld from those ministers, whose health, &c. permit greater effort, but who have neither conversed with their hearers, on the subject of their personal religion, nor inquired into the state of their souls,—who are not careful to organize, and maintain meetings for prayer among their people,—who neglect to urge, and educe, professing christians to zealous and active co-operation with them in their labors; who fear to irritate, or offend the pride and prejudices of their hearers, by the faithful exhibition of the truth,—who do not themselves wrestle and agonize in prayer, till Christ be formed in sinners’ hearts the hope of glory,—and are not instant in season, and out of season, continually abounding in the work of the Lord. Until *all* these things have been done, the blame must lie at the door of ministers, and not of the “Divine Sovereignty.” When examples of effort *thus* made, and maintained, proving utterly inefficient, can be adduced, then, but not till then, shall we think there is room for the objection.

That prayerful believing, faithful and diligent effort should in any case prove altogether unsuccessful and inefficient, is what we have no right to expect. Indeed to suspect it is to mistrust God, or to misapply the great promises which He has given for the encouragement of our faith. He has said, that in the seed of Abraham, “shall all kindreds of the earth be blessed,”¹ and promised, in reference to these very days in which we live, “I will pour out my Spirit upon *all flesh*,”² Here is ample warrant for us, to go to our fellow men, wherever they may be found

1. Acts iii. 25.

2. Acts ii. 17.

upon the face of the whole earth, and, as we preach to them the unsearchable riches of Christ, pray for and expect the effusion of His Holy Spirit. If we pray in faith, we shall not be disappointed, for still the rule of God's gracious providence, is "according to your faith, be it unto you."¹

If we do not pray in faith, we may learn the secret of our want of success. Do we fear to believe, and think that the anticipation of success, is presumption? It may be so, and certainly is, if founded on our own efforts, but cannot be, if inspired by the belief of the promises of a faithful God, and a reliance on His Spirit. We, as ministers of Christ, have as large and ample promises, on which to confide in God, for His efficacious energy to attend our ministrations, as the individual sinner has to venture on the grace of the Redeemer. The sinner's ground of hope is in Christ, and he ventures to trust in Him for His salvation, because he is God's ordinance for salvation to a guilty world, and is offered freely and fully to Him as one of that world. So should the minister of Christ derive hope as to his labors. God "hath given Him (Christ,) for a light to the gentiles, that He may be His salvation unto the ends of the earth."² In pursuance of this design on the part of God, and in discharge of His high and gracious trust, He commands, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth."³ And on the basis of His own infinite fulness and sufficiency, and the universal applicability of His salvation, He commissions His ministers, to "go into all the world, and preach His gospel to every creature."⁴ Nor is it a vain and empty commission, for He pledges His own presence, at any and every moment, to the end of time, wherever, and whenever they undertake to publish His grace. "Lo I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world."⁵

1. Mat. ix. 29.

2. Isai. xlix. 6.

3. Isai. xlv. 22.

4. Mark xvi. 15.

5. Mat. xxviii. 20.

He has pledged Himself to His ministering servants, to “*send the Comforter,*” who “*will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.*”²

He *actually* fulfils His promises, and sends His Spirit, where there is faith, to plead them and expect their fulfilment, combined with the diligent and faithful exhibition of His truth. All over the earth, where “Christ and Him crucified,” is thus preached, it becomes “the power of God, to salvation.”³ We therefore, disgrace our commission, slander our Master, injure His cause, and encourage His enemies, if we do not expect success, when, in His name we undertake to attack the strong holds of sin and Satan. And we need not be surprised, if, with pusillanimous spirit, we publish His salvation, we shall be put to shame before his enemies. Let us contemplate the examples of His apostles, and catch their spirit. The Master has said, that “the least in the kingdom of heaven,” shall be *greater than the prophets*,⁴ and that greater things should be done by them, than were done by Himself.”⁵

How fearlessly, zealously, and successfully, the apostles preached, and how speedily, when the little church was brought into proper action, the gospel was proclaimed in all the earth, are not to be disputed. Peter looked in the face of an audience of thousands, suddenly convened in the court of the temple, and charging on them their sin, and unfurling the banner of the Cross, announced “Unto you first, God having raised his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning *every one* of you from his iniquities.”⁶ If such was the Master’s design, it were cowardly in His followers, and an imprecation of His sincerity, to anticipate the want of success. The mission of Christ

1. John xvi. 8.

2. Rom. i. 16.

3. Mat. xi. 11.

4. John xiv. 12.

5. Acts iii. 26.

after His resurrection, was *through His apostles*, not in person, to the Jewish people; and as Peter preached, he doubtless felt, that at that very moment in himself, God was accomplishing His design of mercy, and sending His risen Son, to bless his hearers, and turn every one of them from his iniquities. Thus ought we to preach; and thus preaching, the demonstration of the Spirit, will assume commanding power over the minds and consciences of our hearers.

But ah! how far short do many of us come, and how sadly do we fail, in the spirit, and success, which should attend our labors! How much yet is to be done! How large a portion of the earth remains to be possessed, by the servants of the King of kings! The ministers of Christ have a most intimate and awfully responsible relation to the interests of the Divine government. According as they execute their commissions, the cause of God prospers, or languishes,—the energies of the church lie dormant, or are put in active requisition,—and the enemies of godliness triumph, or submit themselves to His sway. Even if false prophets, said God “had stood in His counsel, and had caused *His people* to hear *His words*, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.”¹ How much more must such a result be expected, by those His true and faithful servants, that bear to Him a loving heart! If they “take heed unto (themselves,) and (their) doctrine, and continue in them,” they shall be successful, for saith the Spirit of God, in doing so, *thou shalt save both thyself, and them that hear thee.*”²

Who does not therefore, see what an important bearing the ministerial trust has upon the Divine government? We incur tremendous responsibilities! If a wicked world

1. Jer. xxiii. 22.

2. Tim. iv. 16.

is up in arms against our God, no time should be lost, and no energies lie dormant, but all should be put in effective requisition—in powerful action. If the church sleeps, and her individual members have not, and act not under, a sense of their personal responsibilities as the subjects of Christ's kingdom, i. e. their direct and pressing obligations to Himself to be in action,—His cause will suffer, and souls will perish.

There is a great day of millennial glory coming on the world, and it is not very distant. The light that is to fall from Heaven, will fall upon the church, and must be reflected, from her ministry and members, upon the darkness of this world. That light is the truth, embodied in living glowing examples of its efficacious influence—of its transforming, renovating, purifying power. Every conversion, every wakened and zealous professor called into the field of christian action, is an advance towards the consummation of this glory. Every inefficient minister, and lukewarm indolent professor, retards the arrival of that day. *There are resources in the church, sufficiently ample, for the conversion of the world within half a century.* To hesitate and delay, in bringing them forth,—what shall we call it? Is it any thing short of high treason, against the King in Zion? The command, and providence, and Spirit of God, are all at present calling for increased activity, prayerfulness, and self-denial. Every conversion, every revival, every phalanx added to the forces of Israel, and every addition to the ministers of Jesus, gives the prospect, of new triumphs, and of still greater conquests. The voice of mercy, the trump of coming victory, even now resounds in the heavens, and as its blasts reach the earth, the spirit-stirring call echoes, and re-echoes, from mountain to mountain, and island, to island, and continent to continent, “prepare ye the way of the Lord, make

straight in the desert an high way for our God."¹ Who will, who can be disobedient to that call?

Let the truth be preached with plainness and pungency,—let the ministers of Jesus cease from their doctrinal disputations, and sectarian jealousies and strifes, and assume their high and holy character and station as *witnesses* for God;—let the members of the church support them by their prayers, and co-operate with them, by their liberality and efforts—and ere long “the glory of the Lord shall be seen upon Zion, and the gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.”² The swelling flood of truth and light, which even now, begins to roll, shall spread, and wave upon wave rise higher and higher, till it rolls its mighty volume round our globe, and the whole “earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”³ Haste the glad hour of universal triumph! Even now let thy voice, Immanuel! call out of thy throne, “praise our God *all* ye his servants, and ye that fear him, *both* small and great,” and the response of a great multitude be heard “as the voice of many waters, as the voice of mighty thunderings, “Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him.”⁴ Let the prospect, though seen in the dimness of futurity, kindle and fire the spirit of every minister and every member of the church of God.

It is a day of bustle and action, and who will sleep at his post? The glory of our God, the triumphs of Immanuel, the happiness of earth, the harvest of souls to be reaped and gathered into the garner of Jehovah, are all intimately connected with the faithful and efficient discharge of our high and holy trust. We are linked to the very throne of God, and the interests of His government

1. Isai. xl. 3. 2 Isai. lx. 2, 3. 3 Isai. xi. 9. 4. Rev. xix. 6, 7.

are connected with the manner and spirit, the zeal and diligence, the faithfulness and perseverance in which we exhibit His truth. We are the channel, through which the mercy of God is to flow out to a guilty world. Let us see to it, that there be no obstructions in us. We are commissioned of the Lord, to lead his hosts to battle. Victory awaits us! Earth shall be subdued! An apostate world shall bow in adoration, at the name of Jesus! How honorable our station! How holy our triumphs! How insignificant the crowns, and grandeur, and honors, and triumphs of a guilty world! Be it ours to take a seat upon the throne with Him who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords! This is the glorious destiny of those that turn many to righteousness.

The triumphs of millennial light and truth, and the flood of glory that shall encompass this little world of ours, will be but the first bright flash from heaven, that shall usher in that eternal series of brilliant displays, which the Almighty Creator shall make of Himself to confirm in its allegiance an intelligent Universe. The whole company of God's redeemed, in whose regeneration and safe conduct to heaven, the ministers of Jesus have an important instrumentality, are but a kind of "first fruits" of His creatures. They are renewed to this intent. "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."¹ The first-fruits were a peculiar offering to God, which had a direct reference to the coming harvest, and an influence upon its being successfully gathered. How vast the thought in reference to the wide spread government of the infinite mind! And how exalted and terrible the responsibilities of the minister of Christ!

We look away from millennial triumphs, and from earth,

¹ James i. 18.

crowded with holy beings in delighted submission to the government of God, and, in wondering gaze, fixed by the bright convergent beams of glory, that an intelligent and peopled universe reflect around Jehovah's throne, are lost in the splendors of the scene. Neither does the analogy of the divine works, nor the unerring testimony of God, require us to believe, that there shall reign a deep eternal solitude throughout the innumerable worlds which God hath made, and that their only design is to shed a few glimmering and twinkling rays on this terrestrial ball. The whole body of the redeemed are the first-fruits of *his creatures*. Each and every one that have been washed in a Saviour's blood, are made *kings* and *priests* unto God,¹ and no doubt from their very titles, will be employed in some sublime way in executing the grand purposes of Jehovah's sway and in bringing in a full revenue of glory to Him, as one vast cloud of incense ascending from an universe teeming with voluntary and delighted subjects of His sway.² What examples of love and devotedness to God, and of high and ennobling communion with Him shall they exhibit! While from the bottomless abyss shall ascend for ever, in dense black columns, the smoke of their torment, who refused to repent and submit to Jehovah's sway, and bearing in indelible characters, the solemn inscription, legible to the whole creation, "THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH," the danger, folly and madness of rebellion shall be fully seen and understood.

But through the assiduous and incessant activity, and extatic joys of the redeemed, who once tried a life of rebellion against God, and now commend and glory in unqualified submission, the loyal hosts of God's creatures shall be more than ever confirmed in their allegiance. Oh, what a glorious and transporting prospect opens upon our

¹ Rev. i. 6.

² Eph. 10 & 20—23. Col. i. 20.

enraptured view! The whole company of the redeemed,—renewed in spirit, and won by the instrumentality of the word of truth as preached by the heralds of the cross,—reigning, exulting, and triumphing forever, as the grand pledge for the security, and allegiance of countless myriads of unnumbered worlds of holy and intelligent creatures, spread throughout immensity, and rolling, in their vast cycles, throughout the endless ages of *Eternity!*—How are we lost! What glory awaits the renewed! What honors shall circle the heads of the faithful ambassadors of Jesus, as they look upon the kings and priests of God, exerting their lofty and wondrous influence in the Divine government, and can say, with the Great Apostle of the gentiles, in humbling and adoring gratitude to God for His grace, *These have I begotten through the gospel!*

Here is a prize of highest value! Here are honors far above ambition's loftiest flights! Oh, ye men of God, ye ministers of Jesus, gird on the gospel armor, and push with rapid steps, the conquests of the Lamb. You are now in the field of labor and conflict. On this little theatre of earth, are developing the scenes, that are to throw their shade and character, in some measure, upon the grand drama of Eternity. Here the stupendous plans of infinite wisdom and grace, are beginning to unfold themselves. Here all the desperate battles between Heaven and Hell are to be fought. Here Satan musters his legions, and the Son of God, the gracious Captain of our salvation, puts them to flight. Here the experiment of rebellion against God, is made and repented of, and wanderers and rebels are to be seen returning to their allegiance to the Most High. Here are to be enlisted the troops of Heaven. Here are in training the kings and priests of God. And here, immortal souls, in rich harvest, are to be reaped, and gathered, and secured for the skies! In all as ministers of Christ, we are called to act a conspicuous part

Heavy are our responsibilities! Fearful our trust! One brought home to God, will secure a revenue of glory beyond the power of calculation! Its bearing on other worlds who can tell? Well might we shrink, and cry "Who is sufficient for these things?" But our panoply is from God, and the rich recompense of reward, is enough to urge us forward, in unremitting efforts for the conversion of souls.

First among the holy, shone, as best
Became, the faithful minister of God.

See where he walks on yonder mount that lifts
Its summit high, on the right hand of bliss,
Sublime in glory, talking with his peers
Of the incarnate Saviour's love, and passed
Affliction lost in present joy! See how
His face with heavenly ardor glows, and how
His hand enraptured, strikes the golden lyre!
Oh, who can speak his praise! Great humble man!
He in the current of destruction stood
And warned the sinner of his wo; led on
Immanuel's members in the evil day;
And, with the everlasting arms embraced
Himself around, stood in the dreadful front
Of battle, high, and warred victoriously
With death, and now has come his rest,
His triumph day!

THE END.



ERRATA.

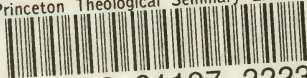
The reader is requested to note the following typographical errors which have occurred in consequence of the author's frequent absence, the infancy of the press, and the occasional illegible characters of the manuscript:

- For *our*, 13th line from the foot of page 13th, read *an*.
and, 5th line from the top of 14th, *used*.
 Introduce the word **EXCEPT**, before *on*, in the 13th line of page 17.
 For *their*, in 14th line from top of page 19th, read *his*.
 Erase the second note on page 24th, *see Dr. &c*.
 For the running title of Chapter, iv. viz. "THE PERSONALITY OF THE SPIRIT continued," substitute **THE DEITY OF THE SPIRIT**.
 For *in*, in 11th line from top of page 61st, read *on*.
civility, in 4th do. foot of 62d, *senility*.
 Introduce *is*, before *spoken*, in the 8th line of page 65.
 For *or*, in 6th line from foot of page 72d, read *nor*.
an, in 15th do. do. 74th. *in*.
But, in 18th do. do. 78th, *and*.
would, in 4th do. from top of 83d, *could*.
 Strike out the first dash in the 11th line from the foot of page 83, and let the clause read, "*infinite spaces generating by rotation, solids of finite capacity*."
 For *there*, in 4th line from top of page 84th, read *their*.
 Strike out the words *and reject*, in 3d line from the top of page 89.
 For *men*, in 4th line from the foot of page 90th, read *them*
discordant, 9th do. do. 91st, *disordered*.
we, 3d do. top of 96th, *be*.
toute, 8th do. do. 143d, *tout*.
that given, 11th do. foot of 165th, *that a given*.
would, 13th do. do. 173d, *could*.
at, 6th do. do. 178th, *and at*.
is reference, 6th do. top of 177th, *is no reference*.
gases, 15th do. do. 179th, *gases*.
 In the note to page 180, for *Compte de Cayhes*, read *Comte de Cayles*; and for Baron de Guimen, read Baron de Grimm.
 For *will it said*, in 9th and 10th lines from the foot of page 180, read *will it be said*.
hath, in 1st line from top of page 184th, read *had*.
necessitibilities, on 3d line from the foot of page 201, read *susceptibilities*.
influence, 3d line from top of page 206, read *inference*.
exserereas, 5th line of note from foot of page 209, read *exserere eas*.
Die and cap, in 2d page, Dei. and vi. page, 266.
preactive, 8th do. from top of page 212, read *free active*.
in which, 13th do. do. page 224, read *in possession of which*.
deficient, 10th do. do. 271, read *different*.
deprivation, 8th and 13th do. from foot of page 280, read *depravation*.
suffering, in 10th line from top of page 288, read *punishment*.
principle, in 11th from foot of 288, read *principles*.
presumable to suppose, 8th do. 291, read *presumable*.
properties, 3d do. 292, read *nature*.

ERRATA.

- Transfer the note of interrogation, from after *to be so* in the 12th line of page 297, to the end of the next sentence after *nature*.
- For *power*, in 2nd line of note on page 312, read *people*.
the—capacity, in 8th line from top of page 326, read—*the capacity*.
 or in 7th line from foot of page 329, read *of*.
first, in 9th line from the top of page 332, read *just*.
operation, in 4th line from foot of note to page 333, read *asseveration*.
his in 5th line from top of page 336, read *man's*.
cannot, in 7th line do. 339, read *cannot but*.
- Strike out *the*, before *meditating*, in 4th line from foot of page 343.
- For *when*, in 11th line from foot of page 350, read, *where*.
reverently, in 5th line from top of page 351, read *universally*.
receive, in 15th do. do. page 352, read *secure*.
his, in 12th line from foot of page 352, read *man's*.
men, in 11th do. do. page 353, read *Mary*.
began, in 1st line on top of page 358, read *began*.
in the chapter, do. of page 362, read *in the second chapter*.
effect, in 16th line from foot of page 364, read *affect*.
- Strike out entirely the last line at the foot of page 376, viz. *for the sin of Adam—unless the expression be under*.
- After the last line of the text, in page 384, introduce that which stands at the foot of page 376, and let the sentence read, *That they personally are punished for the sin of Adam—unless the expression be understood, &c.*
- For *dependences*, in 6th line from foot of page 389, read *dependence*.
sensitive, 8th line from top of page 401, read *sensual*.
aceldamer, 11th do. do. 403, read *aceldama*.
their, in 7th do. foot of page 405, read *these*.
possessing, in 2d do. do. 412 read *professing*.
place, in 9th do. from top of 418, read *effect*.
pruriency, in 12th do. from foot of page 418, read *pruriency*.
adopts, in 12th do. from top of page 420 read *adapts*.
evidence, in 13th do. do. 423, read *credence*.
he, in 9th do. do. 424, read *it*.
then, in 6th do. at foot of page 428, read *there*.
effects, in 14th do. from top of page 434, read *affects*.
current, in 2d line from foot of page 472, read *currents*.
beheld, in 13th do. do. 527, read *belied*.
were not in 10th line from top of page 546, read *were not to be*, and for *instantly be exercised*, in same line read, *be, instantly exercised*.
another, in 13th line from top of page 549, read *any other*.
fully, in 11th do. from foot of page 550, read *virtually*.
- Remove the words, *that of*, in 2d line from foot of page 352, and insert them, after *than*, in the same line.
effects, in 4th line from top of page 557, read *affects*.
working, in last line of page 557, read *workers*.
properly, in 7th line from foot of page 564, read *profusely*.
important, in 5th line do. page 600, read *incessant*.
forbids, in 5th do. do. 601, read *permits*.

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