Regeneration or The New Birth

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Introduction

Two chief obstacles lie in the way of the salvation of any of Adam's fallen descendants: bondage to the guilt and penalty of sin, bondage to the power and presence of sin; or, in other words, their being bound for Hell and their being unfit for Heaven. These obstacles are, so far as man is concerned, entirely insurmountable. This fact was unequivocally established by Christ, when, in answer to His disciples' question, "Who then can be saved?", He answered, "with men this is impossible." A lost sinner might more easily create a world than save his own soul. But (forever be His name praised), the Lord Jesus went on to say, "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:25, 26). Yes, problems which completely baffle human wisdom, are solvable by Omniscience; tasks which defy the utmost efforts of man, are easily accomplished by Omnipotence. Nowhere is this fact more strikingly exemplified than in God's saving of the sinner.

As intimated above, two things are absolutely essential in order to salvation: deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin, deliverance from the power and presence of sin. The one is secured by the meditorial work of Christ, the other is accomplished by the effectual operations of the Holy Spirit. The one is the blessed result of what the Lord Jesus did for God's people; the other is the glorious consequence of what the Holy Spirit does in God's people. The one takes place when, having been brought to lie in the dust as an empty-handed beggar, faith is enabled to lay hold of Christ, God now justifies from all things, and the trembling, penitent, but believing sinner receives a free and full pardon. The other takes place gradually, in distinct stages, under the Divine blessings of regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. In regeneration, indwelling sin receives its death-wound, though not its death. In sanctification, the regenerated soul is shown the sink of corruption that dwells within, and is taught to loathe and hate himself. At glorification both soul and body will be forever delivered from every vestige and effect of sin.

Now a vital and saving knowledge of these Divine truths can not be acquired by a mere study of them. No amount of pouring over the Scriptures, no painstaking examination of the soundest doctrinal treatises, no exercise of the intellect, is able to secure the slightest spiritual insight into them. True, the diligent seeker may attain a natural knowledge, an intellectual apprehension of them, just as one born blind may obtain a notional knowledge of the colorings of the flowers or of the beauties of a sunset, but the natural man can no more arrive at aspiritual knowledge of spiritual things, than a blind man can a true knowledge of natural things, yea, than a man in his grave can know what is going on in the world he has left. Nor can anything short of Divine power bring the proud heart to a felt realization of this humbling fact; only as God supernaturally enlightens, is any soul made conscious of the awful spiritual darkness in which it naturally dwells.

The truth of what has just been said is established by the plain and solemn declaration of 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Alas that so many evade the sharp point of this verse by imagining that it applies not to them, mistaking an intellectual assent to spiritual things for an experimental acquaintance of them. An external knowledge of Divine truth, as revealed in Scripture, may charm the mind and form ground for speculation and conversation, but unless there is a Divine application of them to the conscience and heart, such knowledge will be of no more avail in the hour of death than the pleasing images of our dreams are of any satisfaction when we awake. How awful to think that

multitudes of professing Christians will awaken in Hell to discover thattheir knowledge of Divine truth was no more substantial than a dream!

While it be true that no man by searching can find out God (Job 11:7), and that the mysteries of His kingdom are sealed secrets until He deigns to reveal them to the soul (Matt. 13:11), nevertheless, it is also true that God is pleased to use means in the conveyance of heavenly light to our sin-darkened understandings. It is for this reason that He commissions His- servants to preach the Word, and, by voice and pen, expound the Scriptures; nevertheless, their labors will produce no eternal fruits unless He condescends to bless the seed they sow and give it an increase. Thus, no matter how faithfully, simply, helpfully a sermon be preached or an article written, unless the Spirit applies it to the heart, the hearer or reader is no spiritual gainer. Then will you not humbly entreat God to open your heart to receive whatever is according to His holy Word in this booklet?

In what follows, we shall, as God enables, seek to direct attention to what we have referred to at the beginning of this booklet as the second of those two humanly insurmountable obstacles which lies in the way of a sinner's salvation, and that is, the fitting of him for Heaven, by the delivering of him from the power and presence of sin. Such a work is a Divine one, and therefore it is miraculous. Regeneration is no mere outward reformation, no mere turning over a new leaf and endeavoring to live a better life. The new birth is very much more than going forward and taking the preacher's hand: it is a supernatural operation of God upon man's spirit, a transcendent wonder. All of God's works are wonderful. The world in which we live is filled with things which amaze us. Physical birth is a marvel, but, from several standpoints, the new birth is more remarkable. It is a marvel of Divine grace, Divine wisdom, Divine power, and Divine beauty. It is a miracle performed upon and within ourselves, of which we may be personally cognizant; it will prove an eternal marvel.

Because regeneration is the work of God, it is a mysterious thing. All God s works are shrouded in impenetrable mystery. Life, natural life, in its origin, in its nature, its processes, baffles the most careful investigator. Much more is this the case with spiritual life. The Existence and Being of God transcends the finite grasp; how then can we expect to understand the process by which we become His children? Our Lord Himself declared that the new birth is a thing of mystery: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). The wind is something about which the most learned scientist knows next to nothing. Its nature, the laws which govern it, the causation, all lie beyond the purview of human inquiry. So it is with the new birth: it is profoundly mysterious.

Regeneration is an intensely solemn thing. The new birth is the dividing line between Heaven and Hell. In God's sight there are but two classes of people on this earth: those who are dead in sins, and those who are walking in newness of life. In the physical realm there is no such thing as being between life and death. A man is either dead or alive. The vital spark may be very dim, but while it exists, life is present. Let that spark go out altogether, and. though you may dress the body in beautiful clothes, nevertheless, it is nothing more than a corpse. So it is in the spiritual realm. We are either saints or sinners, spiritually alive or spiritually dead. children of God or children of the Devil. In view of this solemn fact, how momentous is the question, Have I been born again? If not, and you die in your present state, you will wish you had never been born at all.

—ARTHUR W. PINK.

Chapter 1 - Its Necessity

1. The need for regeneration lies in our natural degeneration. In consequence of the fall of our first parents, all of us were born alienated from the Divine life and holiness, despoiled of all those perfections wherewith man's nature was at first endowed. Ezekiel 16:4, 5 gives a graphic picture of our terrible spiritual plight at our entrance into this world: cast out to the loathing of our persons, rolling ourselves in our own filth, impotent to help ourselves. That "likeness" of God (Gen. 1:26) which was at first stamped on man s soul, has been effaced, aversion from God and an inordinate love of the creature having displaced it. The very fountain of our beings is polluted, continually sending forth bitter springs, and though those streams take several courses and wander in various channels, yet are they all brackish. Therefore is the "sacrifice" of the wicked an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 15:8), and his very ploughing "sin" (Prov. 21:4).

There are but two states, and all men are included therein: the one a state of spiritual life, the other a state of spiritual death; the one a state of righteousness, the other a state of sin: the one saving. the other damning; the one a state of enmity, wherein men have their inclinations contrary to God, the other a state of friendship and fellowship, wherein men walk obediently unto God, and would not willingly have an inward notion opposed to His will. The one state is called darkness, the other light: "For ye were (in your unregenerate days, not only in the dark, but) darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:6). There is no medium between these conditions; all are in one of them. Each man and woman now on earth is either an object of God's delight or of His abomination. The most benevolent and imposing works of the flesh cannot please Him. but the faintest sparks proceeding from that which grace hath kindled are acceptable in His sight.

By the fall man contracted an unfitness to that which is good. Shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Ps. 51: 5), man is a "transgressor from the womb" (Isa. 48:8): "they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Ps. 58:3), and "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). He may be civilized, educated, refined, and even religious, but at heart he is "desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9), and all that he does is vile in the sight of God, for nothing is done from love to Him, and with a view to His glory. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matt. 7:18). Until they are born again, all men are "unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

By the fall man contracted an unwillingness to that which is good. All motions of the will in its fallen estate, through defect of a right principle from whence they flow and a right end to which they tend, are only evil and sinful. Leave man to himself, remove from him all the restraints which law and order impose, and he will swiftly degenerate to a lower level than the beasts, as almost any missionary will testify. And is human nature any better in civilized lands? Not a whit. Wash off the artificial veneer and it will be found that "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 27:19). The world over, it remains solemnly true that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Christ will prefer the same charge in a coming day as when He was here on earth: "Men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19). Men will not come to Him that they might have "life."

By the fall man contracted an inability to that which is good. He is not only unfitted and unwilling, but unable to do that which is good. Where is the man that can truthfully say he has measured

up to his own ideals? All have to acknowledge there is a strange force within dragging them downward, inclining them to evil, which, notwithstanding their utmost endeavors against it, in some form or other, more or less, conquers them. Despite the kindly exhortations of friends, the faithful warnings of God's servants, the solemn examples of suffering and sorrow, disease and death on every side, and the vote of their own conscience, yet they yield. "They that are in the flesh (in their natural condition) cannot please God" (Rom. 8:18).

Thus it is evident that the need is imperative for a radical and revolutionary change to be wrought in fallen man before he can have any fellowship with the thrice holy God. Since the earth must be completely changed, because of the curse now resting on it, before it can ever again bring forth fruit as it did when man was in a state of innocency; so must man, since a general defilement from Adam has seized upon him, be renewed, before he can "bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4). He must be grafted upon another stock, united to Christ, partake of the power of His resurrection: without this he may bring forth fruit, but not "unto God." How can any one turn to God without a principle of spiritual motion? How can he live to God who has no spiritual life? Row can he be fit for the kingdom of God who is of a brutish and diabolical nature?

2. The need for regeneration lies in man's total depravity. Every member of Adam's race is a fallen creature, and every part of his complex being has been corrupted by sin. Man's heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). His mind is blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4) and darkened by sin (Eph. 4:18), so that his thoughts are only evil continually (Gen. 6:5). His affections are prostituted, so that he loves what God hates, and hates what God loves. His will is enslaved from good (Rom. 6:20) and opposed to God (Rom. 8:7). He is without righteousness (Rom. 3:10), under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10) and is the captive of the Devil. His condition is truly deplorable, and his case desperate. He cannot better himself, for he is "without strength" (Rom. 5:6). He cannot work out his salvation, for there dwelleth no good thing in him (Rom. 7:18). He needs, then, to be born of God, "for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Gal. 6:15).

Man is a fallen creature. It is not that a few leaves have faded, but that the entire tree has become rotten, root and branch. There is in every one that which is radically wrong. The word "radical" comes from a Latin one which means "the root," so that when we say a man is radically wrong, we mean that there is in him, in the very foundation and fiber of his being, that which is intrinsically corrupt and essentially evil. Sins are merely the fruit, there must of necessity be a root from which they spring. It follows, then, as an inevitable consequence that man needs the aid of a Higher Power to effect a radical change in him. There is only One who can effect that change: God created man, and God alone can re-create him. Hence the imperative demand, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). Man is spiritually dead and naught but all-mighty power can make him alive.

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men" (Rom. 5:12). In the day that Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, he died spiritually, and a person who is spiritually dead cannot beget a child who possesses spiritual life. Therefore, all by natural descent enter this world "alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18), "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). This is no mere figure of speech, but a solemn fact. Every child is born entirely destitute of a single spark of spiritual life, and therefore if ever it is to enter the kingdom of God, which is the realm of spiritual life (Rom. 14:17), it must be born into it.

The more clearly we are enabled to discern the imperative need of regeneration and the various reasons why it is absolutely essential in order to a fallen creature being fitted for the presence of

the thrice holy God, the less difficulty are we likely to encounter when we endeavor to arrive at an understanding of the nature of regeneration, what it is which takes place within a person when the Holy Spirit renews him. For this reason particularly, and also because such a cloud of error has been cast upon this vital truth, we feel that a further consideration of this particular aspect of our subject is needed.

Jesus Christ came into this world to glorify God and to glorify Himself by redeeming a people unto Himself. But what glory can we conceive that God has, and what glory would accrue to Christ, if there be not a vital and fundamental difference between His people and the world? And what difference can there be between those two companies but in a change of heart,out of which are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23): a change of nature or disposition, as the fountain from which all other differences must proceed—sheep and goats differ in nature. The whole mediatorial work of Christ has this one end in view. His priestly office is to reconcile and bring His people unto God; His prophetic, to teach them the way; His kingly, to work in them those qualifications and bestow upon them that comeliness which is necessary to fit them for the holy converse and communion with the thrice holy God. Thus does He "purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived" (1 Cor. 6:9). But multitudes are deceived, and deceived at this very point, and on this most momentous matter. God has warned men that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9), but few will believe that this is true of them. Instead, tens of thousands of professing Christians are filled with a vain and presumptuous confidence that all is well with them. They delude themselves with hopes of mercy while continuing to live in a course of self-will and self-pleasing. They fancy they are fitted for Heaven, while every day that passes finds them the more prepared for Hell. It is written of the Lord Jesus that "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21), and not in their sins: save them not only from the penalty, but also from the power and pollution of sin.

To how many in Christendom do these solemn words apply, "For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful" (Ps. 36:2). The principal device of Satan is to deceive people into imagining that they can successfully combine the world with God, allow the flesh while pretending to the Spirit, and thus "make the best of both worlds." But Christ has emphatically declared that "no man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24). Many mistake the force of those searching words: the true emphasis is not upon "two," but upon "serve"—none can serve two masters. And God requires to be "served"—feared, submitted unto, obeyed; His will regulating the life in all its details, see 1 Samuel 12:24, 25. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10).

3. The need for regeneration lies in man's unsuitedness to God. When Nicodemus, a respectable and religious Pharisee, yea, a "master in Israel," came to Christ, He told him plainly that "except a man be born again" he could neither see nor enter the "kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5)—either the Gospel-state on earth or the Glory-state in Heaven. None can enter the spiritual realm unless he has a spiritual nature, which alone gives him an appetite for and capacity to enjoy the things pertaining to it; and this, the natural man has not. So far from it, he cannot so much as "discern" them (1 Cor. 2:14). He has no love for them, nor desire after them (John 3:19). Nor can he desire them, for his will is enslaved by the lusts of the flesh (Eph. 2:2, 3). Therefore, before a man can enter the spiritual kingdom, his understanding must be supernaturally enlightened, his heart renewed, and his will emancipated.

There can be no point of contact between God and His Christ with a sinful man until he is regenerated. There can be no lawful union between two parties who have nothing vital in common. A superior and an inferior nature may be united together, but never contrary natures. Can fire and water be united, a beast and a man, a good angel and vile devil? Can Heaven and Hell ever meet on friendly terms? In all friendship there must be a similarity of disposition; before there can be communion there must be some agreement or oneness. Beasts and men agree not in a life of reason, and therefore cannot converse together. God and men agree not in a life of holiness, and therefore can have no communion together (Condensed from S. Charnock).

We are united to the "first Adam" by a likeness of nature; how then can we be united to the "last Adam" without a likeness to Him from a new nature or principle? We were united to the first Adam by a living soul, we must be united to the last Adam by a quickening Spirit. We have nothing to do with the heavenly Adam without bearing an heavenly image (1 Cor. 15:48, 49). If we are His members, we must have the same nature which was communicated to Him, the Head, by the Spirit of God, which is holiness (Luke 1:35). There must be one "spirit" in both: thus it is written, "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). And again God tells us, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). Nor can anything be vitally united to another without life. A living head and a dead body is inconceivable.

There can be no communion with God without a renewed soul. God is unable on His part, with honour to His law and holiness, to have fellowship with such a creature as fallen man. Man is incapable on his part, because of the aversion rooted in his fallen nature. Then how is it possible for God and man to be brought together without the latter experiencing a thorough change of nature? What communion can there be between Light and darkness, between the living God and a dead heart? "Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3). God loathes sin, man loves it; God loves holiness, man loathes it. How then could such contrary affections meet together in an amicable friendship? Sin has alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18), and therefore from His fellowship; life, then, must be restored to us before we can be instated in communion with Him. Old things must pass away, and all things become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

Gospel-duties cannot be performed without regeneration. The first requirement of Christ from His followers is that they shall deny self. But that is impossible to fallen human nature, for men are "lovers of their own selves" (2 Tim. 3:2). Not until the soul is renewed, will self be repudiated. Therefore is the new-covenant promise, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 11:19). All Gospel duties require a pliableness and tenderness of heart. Pride was the condemnation of the Devil (1 Tim. 3:6), and our first parents fell through swelling designs to be like unto God (Gen. 3:5). Ever since then, man has been too aspiring and too well opinionated of himself to perform duties in an evangelical strain, with that nothingness in himself which the Gospel requires. The chief design of the Gospel is to beat down all glorying in ourselves, that we should glory only in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:29-31); but this is not possible till grace renews the heart, melts it before God, and moulds it to His requirements.

Without a new nature we cannot perform Gospel-duties constantly. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" (Rom. 8:5). Such a mind cannot long be employed upon spiritual things. Prickings of conscience, terrors of Hell, fears of death, may exert a temporary influence, but they do not last. Stony-ground may bring forth blades, yet for lack of root they quickly wither away (Matt. 13). A stone may be flung high into the air, but ultimately it falls back to the earth; so the natural man may for a time mount high in religious fervor, but sooner or later it shall be

said of him, as it was of Israel, "their heart was not right with Him, neither were they stedfast in His covenant" (Ps. 78:37). Many seem to begin in the Spirit, but end in the flesh. Only where God has wrought in the soul, will the work last forever (Eccl. 3:14: Phil. 1:6).

As regeneration is indispensably necessary to a Gospel-state, so it is to a state of heavenly glory. It seems to be typified by the strength and freshness of the Israelites when they entered into Canaan. Not a decrepit and infirm person set foot in the promised land: none of those that came out of Egypt with an Egyptian nature, and desires for the garlic and onions thereof, with a suffering their old bondage, but dropped their carcasses in the wilderness; only the two spies who had encouraged them against the seeming difficulties. None that retain only the old man, born in the house of bondage; but only a new regenerate creature, shall enter into the heavenly Canaan. Heaven is the inheritance of the sanctified, not of the filthy: 'that they may receive an inheritance among them which are sanctified through faith that is in Me' (Acts 26:18). Upon Adam's expulsion from paradise, a flaming sword was set to stop his reentering into that place of happiness. As Adam, in his forlorn state, could not possess it, we also, by what we have received from Adam, cannot expect a greater privilege than our root. The priest under the law could not enter into the sanctuary till he was purified, nor the people into the congregation: neither can any man have access into the Holiest till he be sprinkled by the blood of Jesus: Hebrews 10:22" (S. Charnock).

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Said Christ, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). For whom? For those who have, in heart, "forsaken all" to follow Him (Matt. 19:27). For those who love God (1 Cor. 2:9) love the things of God: they perceive the inestimable value and beauty of spiritual things. And they who really love spiritual things, deem no sacrifice too great to win them (Phil. 3:8). But in order to love spiritual things, the man himself must be made spiritual. The natural man may hear about them and have a correct idea of the doctrine of them, but he receives them not spiritually in the love of them (2 Thess. 2:10), and finds not his joy and happiness in them. But the renewed soul longs after them, not by constraint, but because God has won his heart. His confession is "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Ps. 73:25). God has become his chief good, His will his only rule, His glory his chief end. In such an one, the very inclinations of the soul have been changed.

The man himself must be changed before he is prepared for Heaven. Of the regenerate it is written, "giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). None are "made meet" while they are unholy, for it is the inheritance of the saints; none are fitted for it while they are under the power of darkness, for it is an inheritance in light. Christ Himself ascended not to Heaven to take possession of His glory till after His resurrection from the dead, nor can we enter Heaven unless we have been resurrected from sin. "He that hath wrought (polished) us for the self-same thing (to be clothed with our Heavenly house) is God," and the proof that He has done this is, the giving unto us "the earnest of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 5:5); and where the Spirit of the Lord is "there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17), liberty from the power of indwelling sin, as the verse which follows clearly shows.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). To "see" God is to be introduced into the most intimate intercourse with Him. It is to have that "thick cloud" of our transgressions blotted out (Isa. 44:22), for it was our iniquities which separated between us and our God (Isa. 58:2). To "see" God, here has the force of enjoy, as in John 3:36. But for this enjoyment a "pure heart" is indispensable. Now the heart is purified by faith (Acts 15:9). for faith has to do with God. Thus, a "pure heart" is one that has its affections set upon things above,

being attracted by "the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 17:15). But how could he enjoy God who cannot now endure the imperfect holiness of His children, but rails against it as unnecessary "strictness" or puritanical fanaticism? God's face is only to be beheld in righteousness.

"Follow peace with all, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). None can dwell with God and be eternally happy in His presence unless a radical change has been wrought in him, a change from sin to holiness. This change must be, like that introduced by the fail, one which reaches to the very roots of our beings, affecting the entire man: removing the darkness of our minds, awakening and then pacifying the conscience, spiritualizing our affections,, converting the will, reforming our whole life. And this great change must take place here on earth. The removal of the soul to Heaven is no substitute for regeneration. It is not the place which conveys likeness to God. When the angels fell. they were in Heaven, but the glory of God's dwelling place did not restore them. Satan entered Heaven (Job 2:1), but he left it still unchanged. There must be a likeness to God wrought in the soul by the Spirit before it is fitted to enjoy Heaven.

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50). If the body must be changed ere it can enter Heaven, how much more so the soul, for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" (Rev. 21:27). And what is the supreme glory of Heaven? Is it freedom from toil and worry, sickness and sorrow, suffering and death? No: it is, that Heaven is the place where there is the full manifestation of Him who is "glorious in holiness"—that holiness which the wicked, while presumptuously hoping to go to Heaven, despise and hate here on earth. The inhabitants of Heaven are given a clear sight of the ineffable purity of God and are granted the most intimate communion with Him. But none are fitted for this unless their inner being (as well as outer lives) have undergone a radical, revolutionizing, supernatural change.

Can it be thought that Christ will prepare mansions of glory for those who refuse to receive Him into their hearts and give Him the first place in their lives down here? No, indeed; rather will He "laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh" (Prov. 1:26). The instrument of the heart must be tuned here on earth to fit it to produce the melody of praise in Heaven. God has so linked together holiness and happiness (as He has sin and wretchedness) that they cannot be separated. Were it possible for an unregenerate soul to enter Heaven, it would find there no sanctuary from the lashings of conscience and the tormenting fire of God's holiness. Many suppose that nothing but the merits of Christ are needed to qualify them for Heaven. But this is a great mistake. None receive remission of sins through the blood of Christ, who are not first "turned from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18). God subdues their iniquities whose sin He casts into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). Pardoning sins and purifying the heart are as inseparable as the blood and water which flowed from the Saviour's side (John 19:34).

Our being renewed in the spirit of our mind and our putting on of the new man "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:23, 24), is as indispensable to ameetness for Heaven, as an having the righteousness of Christ imputed to us is for a title thereto. "A malefactor, by pardon, is in a capacity to come into the presence of a prince and serve him at his table, but he is not in the fitness till his noisome garments, full of vermin be taken off" (S. Charnock). It is both a fatal delusion and wicked presumption for one who is living to please self to imagine that his sins have been forgiven by God. It is "the washing of regeneration" which gives evidence of our being justified by grace (Titus 3:5-7). When Christ saves, He indwells (Gal. 2:20), and it is impossible for Him to reside in a heart which yet remains spiritually cold, hard, and lifeless. The supreme pattern of holiness cannot be a Patron of licentiousness.

Justification and sanctification are inseparable: where one is absolved from the guilt of sin, he is also delivered from the dominion of sin, but neither the one nor the other can be until the soul is regenerated. Just as Christ's being made in the likeness of sin s flesh was indispensable for God to impute to Him His people's sins (Rom. 8:3), so it is equally necessary for us to be made new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) before we can be, legally. made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). The need of our being made "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4) is as real and as great as Christ's taking part in human nature, ere He could save us (Heb. 2:14-17). "Except God be born, He cannot come into the kingdom of sin. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of righteousness. And Divine power—the power of the Holy Spirit, the plenipotentiary and executant of all the will of Godhead—achieves the incarnation of God and the regeneration of man. that the Son of God may be made sin, and the sons of God made righteous" (H. Martin).

How could one possibly enter a world of ineffable holiness who has spent all his time in sin, i.e., pleasing self? How could he possibly sing the song of the Lamb if his heart has never been tuned unto it? How could be endure to behold the awful majesty of God face to face, who never before so much as saw Him "through a glass darkly" by the eye of faith? And as it is excruciating torture for the eyes that have been long confined to dismal darkness, to suddenly gaze upon the bright -beams of the midday sun, so it will be when the unregenerate behold Him who is Light. Instead of welcoming such a sight "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev. 1:7); yea, so overwhelming will be their anguish, they will call to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us. and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:17). And, my reader, that will be yourexperience, unless God regenerates you!

When the Lord Jesus said "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6) He not only intimated that every man born into this world inherits a corrupt and fallen nature, and therefore is unfit for the kingdom of God; but also that this corrupt nature can never be anything else but corrupt, so that no culture can fit it for the kingdom of God. Its tendencies may be restricted, its manifestations modified by education and circumstances, but its sinful tendencies and affections are still there. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, prune and trim it as you may. For good fruit, you must have a good tree or graft from one. Therefore did our Lord go on to say, "And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This brings us to consider.

Chapter 2 Its Nature

We have now arrived at the most difficult part of our subject. Necessarily so, for we are about to contemplate the workings of God. These are ever mysterious, and nothing whatever can be really known about them, save what He Himself has revealed thereon in His Word. In endeavoring to ponder what He has said on His work of regeneration two dangers need to be guarded against: first. limiting our thoughts to any isolated statement thereon or any single figure the Spirit has employed to describe it. Second, reasoning from what He has said bycarnalizing the figures He has employed. When referring to spiritual things. God has used terms which were originally intended (by man) to express material objects, hence we need to be constantly on our guard against transferring to the former erroneous ideas carried over from the latter. From this we shall be preserved if we diligently compare all that has been said on each subject.

In treating of the nature of regeneration, much damage has been wrought, especially in recent years, by men confining their attention to a single figure, namely, that of the "new birth," which is only one out of many expressions used in the Scriptures to denote that mighty and miraculous work of God within His people which fits them for communion with Him. Thus, in Colossians 1:12, 13 the same vital experience is spoken of as God's having "made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Regeneration is the commencement of a new experience, which is so real and revolutionizing that the one who is the subject of this Divine begetting is spoken of as a "new creature"; "old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). A new spiritual life has been imparted to the soul by God, so that the one receiving it is vitally implanted into Christ.

The nature of regeneration can, perhaps, be best perceived by comparing and contrasting it with what took place at the fall, for though the person who is renewed by the Spirit receives more than what Adam lost by his rebellion, yet, the one is, really, God's answer to the former. Now it is most important that we should clearly recognize that no faculty was lost by man when he fell. When man was created, God gave unto him a spirit and soul and body, Thus, man was a tri-partite being When man fell, the Divine threat "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" was duly executed, and man died spiritually. But that does not mean that either his Spirit or soul, or any part thereof, ceased to be, for in Scripture "death" never signifies annihilation, but is a state of separation. The prodigal son was "dead" while he was in the far country (Luke 15:24), because he was separated from his father. "Alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18) describes the fearful state of one who is unregenerated, so does "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim 5:6), that which is dead spiritually is dead Godwards, while alive in sin the spirit and soul and body, each being active against God.

That which took place at the fall was not the destruction of either portion of man's threefold being, but the vitiating or corrupting of them. And that, by the introduction of a new principle within him, namely, sin, which is more of a quality than a substance. But let it be stated very emphatically that a "nature" is not a concrete entity but rather that which characterizes and impels an entity or creature. It is the nature of gravitation to attract, it is the nature of the wind to blow, it is the nature of fire to burn. A "nature" is not a tangible thing, but a principle of operation, a power impelling to action. Thus, when we say that fallen man possesses a "sinful nature," it must not be understood that something as substantial as his soul or spirit was added

to his being, but instead, that the principle of evil entered into him, which polluted and defiled every part of his constitution, as frost entering fruit spoils it.

At the fall, man lost none of the faculties with which the Creator had originally endowed him, but he lost the power to use his faculties Godwards. All desire Godwards, all love for his Maker, and real knowledge of Him, was lost. Sin possessed him: sin as a principle of evil, as a power of operation, as a defiling influence, took complete charge of his spirit and soul and body, so that he became the "servant" or slave "of sin" (John 8:34). As such, man is no more capable of producing that which is good, spiritual, and acceptable to God, than frost can burn or fire freeze: "they that are in the flesh (remain in their natural and fallen condition) cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). They have no power to do so, for all their faculties, every part of their being, is completely under the dominion of sin. So completely is fallen man beneath the power of sin and spiritual death, that the things of the Spirit of God are "foolishness" unto him, "neither can he know them" (1 Cor. 2:14).

Now that which takes place at regeneration is the reversing of what happened at the fall.. The one born again is, through Christ, and by the Spirit's operation, restored to union and communion with God; the one who before was spiritually dead, is now spiritually alive: John 5:24. Just as spiritual death was brought about by the entrance into man's, being of the principle of evil, so spiritual life is the introduction of a principle of holiness. God communicates a new principle, as real and as potent as sin, Divine grace is now imparted. A holy disposition is wrought in the soul. A new temper of spirit is bestowed upon the inner man. But no new faculties are created within him, rather are his original faculties enriched, ennobled, and empowered. Just as man did not become less than a threefold being when he fell, so he does not become more than a threefold being when he is renewed. Nor will he in Heaven itself: his spirit and soul and body will simply be glorified, i.e., completely delivered from every taint of sin, and perfectly conformed to the image of God's Son.

At regeneration a new nature is imparted by God. But again we need to be closely on our guard lest we carnalize our conception of what is denoted by that expression. Much confusion has been caused through failure to recognize that it is a person, and not merely a "nature" which is born of the Spirit: "ye must be born again" (John 3:7), not merely something in you must be; "he which is born of God" (1 John 3:9). The same person who was spiritually dead—his whole being alienated from God—is now made spiritually alive: his whole being reconciled to God. This must be so, or otherwise there would be no preservation of the identity of the individual. It is the person, and not simply a nature which is born of God: "Of His own will begat He us" (James 1:18). It is a new birth of the individual himself, and not of something in him. The nature is never changed, but the person is—relatively, not absolutely.

The person of the regenerate man is essentially the same as the person of the unregenerate: each having a spirit, and soul and body. But just as in fallen man there is also a principle of evil which has corrupted every part of his threefold being, which "principle" is his "sinful nature" (so-called because it expresses his evil disposition and character as it is the "nature" of swine to be filthy), so when a person is born again another and new "principle" is introduced into his being, a new "nature" or disposition, a disposition which propels him Godwards. Thus, in both cases, "nature" is a quality rather than a substance. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" must not be conceived of as something substantial, distinct from the soul of the regenerate, like one portion of matter added to another; rather is it that which spiritualizes all his inward faculties, as the "flesh" had carnalized them.

Again; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" is to be carefully distinguished from that "spirit" which every man has in addition to his soul and body: (see Num. 16:22; Eccl. 12:7; Zech. 12:1). That which is born of the Spirit is not something tangible, but that which is spiritual and holy, and that is a quality rather than a substance. In proof of this compare the usage of the word "spirit" in these passages: in James 4:5 the inclination and disposition to envy is called "the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." In Luke 9:55 Christ said to His disciples, "ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," thereby signifying, ye are ignorant of what a fiery disposition is in your hearts. See also Numbers 5:14; Hosea 4:12, 2 Timothy 1:7. That which is born of the Spirit is a principle of spiritual life, which renovates all the faculties of the soul.

Some help upon this mysterious part of our subject is to be obtained by noting that in such passages as John 3:6, etc., "spirit" is contrasted from the "flesh." Now it should scarcely need saying that "the flesh" is not a concrete entity, being quite distinct from the body. When the term "flesh" is used in a moral sense the reference is always to the corruption of fallen man's nature. In Galatians 5:19-21 the "works of the flesh" are described, among them being "hatred" and "envying," in connection with which the body (as distinguished from the mind) is notimplicated—clear proof that the "flesh" and the "body" are not synonymous terms. In Galatians 5 the "flesh" is used to designate those evil tendencies and affections which result in the sins there mentioned. Thus, the "flesh" refers to the degenerate state of man's spirit and soul and body, as the "spirit" refers to the regenerate state of the spirit and soul—the regeneration of the body being yet future.

The privative (darkness is the privative of light) or negative side of regeneration, is that Divine grace gives a mortal wound to indwelling sin. Sin is not then eradicated nor totally slain in the believer, but it is divested of its reigning power over his faculties. The Christian is no longer the helpless slave of sin, for he resists it, fights against it, and to speak of a helplessvictim "fighting," is a contradiction in terms. At the new birth sin receives its death-blow, though its dying struggles within us are yet powerful and acutely felt. Proof of what we have said is found in the fact that while sin's solicitations were once agreeable to us, they are now hated. This aspect of regeneration is presented in Scripture under a variety of figures, such as the taking away of the heart of stone (Ezek. 36:26), the binding of the strong man (Matt. 12:29), etc. The absolute dominion of sin over us is destroyed by God (Rom. 6:14).

The positive side of regeneration is that Divine grace effects a complete change in the state of the soul, by infusing a principle of spiritual life, which renovates all its faculties. It is this which constitutes its subject a "new creature," not in respect of his essence, but of his views, his desires, his aspirations, his habits. Regeneration or the new birth is the Divine communication of a powerful and revolutionizing principle in the soul and spirit, under the influence of which all their native faculties are exercised in a different manner from that in which they were formerly employed, and in this sense "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). His thoughts are "new," the objects of his choice are "new," his aims and motives are "new," and thereby the whole of his external deportment is changed.

"By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). The reference here is to subjective grace. There is an objective grace, inherent in God, which is His love, favour, goodwill for His elect. There is also a subjective grace which terminates on them, whereby a change is wrought in them. This is by the infusion of a principle of spiritual life, which is the spring of the Christian's actions. This "principle" is called "a new heart" and a "new spirit" (Ezek. 36:26). It is a supernatural habit, residing in every faculty and power of the soul, as a principle of holy and

spiritual operation. Some have spoken of this supernatural experience as a "change of heart." If by this expression be meant that there is a change wrought in the fallen nature itself, as though that which is natural is transformed into that which is spiritual, as though that which was born of the flesh ceased to be "flesh," and became that which is born of the Spirit, then, the term is to be rejected. But if by this expression be meant, an acknowledgement of the reality of the Divine work, which is wrought in those whom God regenerates, it is quite permissible.

When treating of regeneration under the figure of the new birth, some writers have introduced analogies from natural birth which Scripture by no means warrants, in fact disallows. Physical birth is the bringing forth into this world of a creature, a complete personality, which before conception had no existence whatsoever. But the one who is regenerated had a complete personality before he was born again. To this statement it may be objected, Not a spiritual personality What is meant by this? Spirit and matter are opposites, and we only create confusion if we speak or think of that which is spiritual as being something concrete. Regeneration is not the creating of a person which hitherto had no existence, but the renewing and restoring of a person whom sin had unfitted for communion with God, and this by the communication of a nature or principle of life, which gives a new and different bias to all his old faculties. It is altogether an erroneous view to regard a Christian as made up of two distinct personalities.

As "justification" describes the change in the Christian's objective relationship to God, so "regeneration" denotes that intrinsic subjective change which is wrought in the inclinations and tendencies of their souls Godwards. This saving work of God within His people is likened unto a "birth" because it is the gateway into a new world, the beginning of an entirely new experience, and also because as the natural birth is an issuing from a place of darkness and confinement (the womb) into a state of light and liberty, so is the experience of the soul when the Spirit quickens us. But the very fact that this revolutionizing experience is also likened unto a resurrection (1 John 3:14) should deliver us from forming a one-sided conception of what is meant by the "new birth" and the "new creature," for resurrection is not the absolute creation of a new body, but the restoration and glorification of the old body. Regeneration is also called a Divine "begetting" (1 Pet. 1:3), because the image or likeness of the Begetter is conveyed and stamped upon the soul. As the first Adam begat a son in his own image and likeness (Gen. 5:3), so the last Adam has an "image" (Rom. 8:29) to convey to His sons (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

It has often been said that in the Christian there are two distinct and diverse "natures," namely, the "flesh" and the "spirit" (Gal. 5:17). This is true, yet care must be taken to avoid regarding these two "natures" as anything more than two principles of action. Thus in Romans 7:23 the two "natures" or "principles" in the Christian are spoken of as "I see another lawin my members, warring against the law of my mind." The flesh and the spirit in the believer must be conceived of as something very different from the "two natures" in the blessed person of our Redeemer, the God-man. Both the Deity and humanity were substantial entities in Him. Moreover, the "two natures" in the saint result in a necessary conflict (Gal. 5:17), whereas in Christ there was not only complete harmony, but one Lord."

The faculties of the Christian's soul remain the same in their essence, substance, and natural powers as before he was "renewed," but these faculties are changed in their properties, qualities and inclinations. It may help us to obtain a clearer conception of this if we illustrate by a reference to the waters at Marah (Ex. 15:25, 26). Those "waters" were the same waters still, both before and after their cure. Of themselves in their own nature, they were "bitter," so as the people could not drink of them; but in the casting of a tree into them, they were made sweet and

useful. So too with the waters at Jericho (2 Kings 19:20, 21), which were cured by the casting of salt (emblem of grace, Col. 4:6) into them. In like manner the Christian's affections continue the same as they were in their nature and essence, but they are cured or healed by grace, so that their properties, qualities and inclinations are "renewed" (Titus 3:5), the love of God now being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

What man lost by the, fall was his original relation to God, which kept all his faculties and affections within proper exercise of that relation. At regeneration the Christian received a new life, which gave a new direction to his faculties, presenting new objects before them. Yet, let it be said emphatically, it is not merely the restoration of the life which Adam lost, but one of unspeakably higher relations: he received the life which the Son of God has in Himself, even "eternal life." But the old personality still remains. This is clear from Romans 6:13, "but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The members of the same individual are now to serve a new Master.

Regeneration is that which alone fits a fallen creature to fulfill his one great and chief duty, namely, to glorify his Maker. This is to be the aim and the end in view in all that we do: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). It is the motive actuating us and the purpose before us which gives value to each action: "When thine eye (figure of the soul looking outward) is single (having only one object in view—the glory of God), the whole body is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, the body is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34). If the intention be evil, as it certainly is when the glory of God is not before us, there is nothing but "darkness," sin, in the whole service.

Now fallen man has altogether departed from what ought to be his chief end, aim, or object, for instead of having before him the honour of God, himself is his chief concern; and instead of seeking to please God in all things, he lives only to please himself or his fellow-creatures. Even when, through religious training, the claims of God have been brought to his notice and pressed upon his attention, at best he only parcels out one part of his time, strength and substance to the One who gave him being and daily loadeth him with benefits, and another part for himself and the world. The natural man is utterly incapable of giving supreme respect unto God, until he becomes the recipient of a spiritual life. None will truly aim at the glory of God until they have an affection for Him. None will honour Him supremely whom they do not supremely love. And for this, the love of God must be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), and this only takes places at regeneration. Then it is, and not till then, that self is dethroned and God enthroned; then it is that the renewed creature is enabled to comply with God's imperative call, "My son, give Me thine heart" (Prov. 23:26).

The salient elements which comprise the nature of regeneration may, perhaps, be summed up in these three words: impartation, renovation, subjugation. God communicates something to the one who is born again, namely, a principle of faith and obedience, a holy nature, eternal life. This though real, palpable, and potent, is nothing material or tangible, nothing added to our essence, substance or person. Again: God renews every faculty of the soul and spirit of the one born again, not perfectly and finally, for we are "renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). hut so as to enable those faculties to be exercised upon spiritual objects. Again; God subdues the power of sin indwelling the one born again. He does not eradicate it, but He dethrones it, so that it no longer has dominion over the heart. Instead of sin ruling the Christian, and that by his own willing subjection, it is resisted and hated.

Regeneration is not the improvement or purification of the "flesh," which is that principle of evil still with the believer. The appetites and tendencies of the "flesh" are precisely the same after the new birth as they were before, only they no longer reign over him. For a time it may seem that the "flesh" is dead, yet in reality it is not so. Often its very stillness (as an army in ambush) is only awaiting its opportunity or a gathering up of its strength for a further attack. It is not long ere the renewed soul discovers that the "flesh" is yet very much alive, desiring to have its way. But grace will not suffer it to have its sway. On the one hand the Christian has to say, "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18). On the other hand, he is able to declare, "Christ liveth in me, and the life which 1 now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself "for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Some people find it very difficult to conceive of the same person bringing forth good works who before brought forth nothing but evil works, the more so when it be insisted upon that no new faculty is added to his being, that nothing substantial is either imparted or taken from his person. But if we rightly introduce the factor of God's mighty power into the equation, then the difficulty disappears. We may not be able to explain, in fact we are not, how God's power acts upon us, how He cleanses the unclean (Acts 10:15) and subdues the wolf so that it dwells with the lamb (Isa. 11:6), any more than we can thoroughly understand His working upon and within us without destroying our own personal agency; nevertheless, both Scripture and experience testify to each of these facts It may help us a little at this point if we contemplate the working of God s power in the natural realm.

In the natural realm every creature is not only entirely dependent upon its Maker for its continued existence, but also for the exercise of all its faculties, for "in Him we live, and move (Greek, 'are moved') and have our being" (Acts 17:28) Again; as the various parts of creation are linked together, and afford each other mutual support—as the heavens fertilize the earth, the earth supplies its inhabitants with food, its inhabitants propagate their kind, rear their offspring, and cooperate for the purpose of society—so also the whole system is supported, sustained and governed by the directing providence of God. The influences of providence, the manner in which they operate on the creature, are profoundly mysterious: on the one hand, they are not destructive of our rational nature, reducing us to mere irresponsible automatons: on the other hand they are all made completely subservient to the Divine purpose.

Now the operation of God's power in regeneration is to be regarded as of the same kind with its operation in providence, although it be exercised with a different design. God's energy is one, though it is distinguished by the objects on which, and the ends for which, it is exerted. It is the same power that creates as upholds in existence: the same power that forms a stone, and a sunbeam, the same power that gives vegetable life to a tree, animal life to a brute, and rational life to a man. In like manner, it is the same power that assists us in the natural exercise of our faculties, as it is which enables us to exercise those faculties in a spiritual manner. Hence "grace" as a principle of Divine operation in the spiritual realm, is the same power of God as "nature" is His process of operation in the natural world.

The grace of God in the application of redemption to the hearts of His people is indeed mighty as is evident from the effects produced. It is a change of the whole man: of his views, motives, inclinations and pursuits. Such a change no human means are able to accomplish. When the thoughtless are made to think, and to think with a seriousness and intensity which they never formerly did; when the careless are, in a moment, affected with a deep sense of their most important interests: when lips which are accustomed to blaspheme, learn to pray; when the proud are brought to assume the lowly attitude and language of the

penitent; when those who were devoted to the world give evidence that the object of their desires and aims is a heavenly inheritance: and when this revolution. so wonderful has been affected by the simple Word of God, and by the very Word which the subject of this radical change had often heard unmoved, it is proof positive that a mighty influence has been exerted, and that that influence is nothing less than Divine—God's people have been made willing in the day of Hispower (Ps. 110:3).

Many figures are used in Scripture, various expressions are employed by the Spirit, to describe the saving work of God within His people. In 2 Peter 1:4 the regenerated are said to be "partakers of the Divine nature," which does not mean of the very essence or being of God, for that can neither be divided nor communicated—in Heaven itself there will still be an immeasurable distance between the Creator and the creature, otherwise the finite would become infinite. No, to be "partakers of the Divine nature" is to be made the recipients of inherent grace, to have the lineaments of the Divine image stamped upon the soul: as the remainder of that verse shows. being "partakers of the Divine nature" is the antithesis of "thecorruption that is in the world through lust."

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 this transforming miracle of God's grace in His people is declared to be a "changing" into the image of Christ. The Greek word there for "change" is the one rendered "transfigured" in Matthew 17:2. At Christ's transfiguration no new features were added to the Saviour's face, but His whole countenance was irradiated by a new light; so in 2 Corinthians 4:6 regeneration is likened unto a "light" which God commands to shine in us—note the whole context of 2 Corinthians 3:18 is treating of the Spirit's work by the Gospel. In Ephesians 2:10 this product of God's grace is spoken of as His "workmanship," and is said to be "created," to show that He, and not roan, is the Author of it. In Galatians 4:19 this same work of God in the soul is termed Christ's being "formed" in us—as the parents' seed is formed or molded in the mother's womb, the "likeness" of the parent being stamped upon it.

We cannot here attempt a full list of the numerous figures and expressions which the Holy Spirit has employed to set forth this saving work of God in the soul. In John 6:44 it is spoken of as a being "drawn" to Christ. In Acts 16:14 as the heart being "opened" by the Lord to receive His Truth. In Acts 26:18 as the opening of our eyes, a turning us from darkness unto light, and the power of Satan unto God. In 2 Corinthians 10:5 as the "casting down imaginations. and every high thing that exalteth itself against the know1edge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." In Ephesians 5:8 as being "light in the Lord." In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 it is designated the "sanctification of the Spirit." In Hebrews 8:10 as God's putting His laws into our mind and writing them on our heart—contrast the figure in Jeremiah 17:1! Thus it should be most apparent that we lose much by limiting our attention to one figure of it. All we have given, and still others not mentioned, need to be taken into consideration if we are to obtain anything approaching an adequate conception of the nature of that miracle of grace which is wrought in the soul and spirit of the elect, enabling them to henceforth live unto God.

As man was changed in Adam from what he was by a state of creation, so man must be changed in Christ from what he is by a state of corruption. This change which fits him for communion with God, is a Divine work wrought in the inclinations of the soul. It is a being renewed in the spirit of our minds (Eph. 4:23). It is the infusion of a principle of holiness into all the faculties of our inner being. It is the spiritual renovation of our very persons, which will yet be consummated by the regeneration of our bodies. The whole soul is renewed, according to the image of God in knowledge, holiness and righteousness. A new light shines into the mind, a

new power moves the will, a new object attracts the affections. The individual Is the same, and yet not the same. How different the landscape when the sun is shining, than when the darkness of a moonless night is upon it—the same landscape, and yet not the same. How different the condition of him who is restored to health and vigor after having been brought very low by sickness; yet it is the same person.

The very fact that the Holy Spirit has employed the figures of "begetting" and "birth" to the saving work of God in the soul, intimates that the reference is only to the initial experience of Divine grace: "He which hath begun a good work in you" (Phil. 1:6). As an infant has all the parts of a man, yet none of them come to maturity, so regeneration gives a perfection of parts, which yet have need to be developed. A new life has been received, but there needs to be growth of it: "grow in grace" (2 Pet. 3:18). As God was the Giver of this life, He only can feed and strengthen it. Thus, Titus 3:5 speaks of "the renewing" and not the "renewal" of the Holy Spirit. But it is our responsibility and bounden duty to use the Divinely-appointed means of grace which promote spiritual growth: "desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2); as it is our obligation to constantly avoid everything which would hinder our spiritual prosperity: "Make not provision for the flesh to the lusts" (Rom. 13:14), and cf. Matthew 5:29, 30; 2 Corinthians 7:1.

God's consummating of the initial work which we experience at the new birth, and which He renews throughout the course of our earthly lives, only takes place at the second coming of our Saviour, when we shall be perfectly and eternally conformed to His image, both inwardly and outwardly. First, regeneration; then our gradual sanctification; finally our glorification. But between the new birth and glorification, while we are left down here, the Christian has both the "flesh" and the "spirit," both a principle of sin and a principle of holiness, operating within him, the one opposing the other: see Galatians 5:16, 17. Hence his inward experience is such as that which is described in Romans 7:7-25. As life is opposed to death, purity to impurity, spirituality to carnality, so is now felt and experienced within the soul a severe conflict between sin and grace. This conflict is perpetual, as the "flesh" and "spirit" strive for mastery. From hence proceeds the absolute necessity of the Christian being sober, and to "watch unto prayer."

Finally, let it be pointed out that the principle of life and obedience (the "new nature") which is received at regeneration, is not able to preserve the soul from sins, nevertheless, there is full provision for continual supplies of grace made for it and all its wants in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are treasures of relief in Him, whereunto the soul may at any time repair and find necessary succour against every incursion of sin. This new principle of holiness may say to the believer's soul, as David did unto Abiathar when he fled from Doeg: "Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard" (1 Sam. 22:23). Sin is the enemy of the new nature as truly as it is of the Christian's soul, and his only safety lies in heeding the requests of that new nature, and calling upon Christ for enablement. Thus we are exhorted in Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

If it ever be a time of need with the soul, it is so when it is under the assaults of provoking sins, when the "flesh" is lusting against the "spirit." But at that very time there is suitable and seasonable help in Christ for succour and relief. The new nature begs, with sighs and groans, for the believer to apply to Christ. To neglect Him, with all His provision of grace, whilst He stands calling on us, "Open to Me . . . for My head is filled with dew and My locks with the drops of the night" (Song of Sol. 5:2), is to despise the sighing of the poor prisoner, the new nature, which sin is seeking to destroy, and cannot but be a high provocation against the Lord.

At the beginning, God entrusted Adam and Eve with a stock of grace in themselves, but they cast it away, and themselves into the utmost misery thereby. That His children might not perish a second time, God, instead of imparting to them personally the power to overcome s-in and Satan, has laid up their portion in Another, a safe Treasurer; in Christ are their lives and comforts secured (Col. 3:3). And how must Christ regard us, if instead of applying to Him for relief, we allow sin to distress our conscience, destroy our peace, and mar our communion? Such is not a sin of infirmity which cannot be avoided, but a grievous affront of Christ. The means of preservation from it is to hand. Christ is always accessible. He is ever ready to "succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2: 18). O to betake ourselves to Him more and more, day by day, for everything. Then shall each one find "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

All men are by nature the children of wrath, and do belong unto the world, which is the kingdom of Satan (1 John 5:19), and are under the power of darkness. In this state men are not the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and have no meetness for Heaven. From this terrible state they are unable to deliver themselves, being "without strength" (Rom. 5:6). Out of this state God's elect are supernaturally "called" (1 Pet. 2:9), which call effectually delivers them from the power of Satan and translates them into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). This Divine "call," or work of grace. is variously denominated in Scripture: sometimes by "regeneration" (Titus 3:5), or the new birth, sometimes by illumination (2 Cor. 4:6), by transformation (2 Cor. 3:18), by spiritual resurrection (John 5:24). This inward and invincible call is attended with justification and adoption (Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:5), and is carried on by sanctification in holiness. This leads us to consider its effects.

Chapter 3 Its Effects

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Though the wind be imperious in its action, man being unable to regulate it; though it be mysterious in its nature man knowing nothing of the cause which controls it; yet its presence is unmistakable, its effects are plainly evidenced: so it is with every one that is born of the Spirit. His secret but powerful operations lie beyond the reach of our understanding. Why God has ordained that the Spirit should quicken this person and not that, we know not, but the transforming results of His working are plain and palpable. What there are, we shall now endeavor to describe.

1. The illumination of the understanding. As it was in the old creation, so it is in connection with the new. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). That was the original creation. Then came degeneration: "And the earth became without form and void (a desolate waste) and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Next came restoration: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, Let there be light: and there was light." So it is when God begins to restore fallen man: "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

The Divine illumination which the mind receives at the new birth is not by means of dreams or visions, nor does it consist in the revelation of things to the soul which have not been made known in the Scriptures. Not so, the only means or instrument which the Holy Spirit employs is the written Word: "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps. 119:130). Hitherto, God's Word may have been read attentively, and much of its teaching intellectually apprehended; but because there was a "vail" upon the heart (2 Cor. 3:15) and so no spiritual discernment (1 Cor. 2:14), the reader was not inwardly affected thereby. But now the Spirit removes the vail, opens the heart to receive the Word (Acts 16:14), and powerfully applies to the mind and conscience some portion of it. The result is that, the one renewed is able to say "One thing 1 know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). To particularize:

The sinner is now enlightened in the knowledge of his own terrible condition. He may, before this, have received much scriptural instruction, subscribed to a sound creed, and believed intellectually in "the total depravity of man"; but now the solemn declarations of God's Word concerning the state of the fallen creature are brought home in piercing power to his own soul. No longer does he compare himself with his fellows, but measures himself by the rule of God. He now discovers that he is unclean, that his heart is "desperately wicked," and that he is altogether unfit for the presence of the thrice holy God. He is powerfully convicted of his own awful sins, feels that they are more in number than the hairs of his head, and that they are high provocations against Heaven, which call for Divine judgment on him. He now realizes that there is "no soundness" (Isa. 1:6) in him, and that all his best performances are only as "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6), and that he is deserving of nought but the everlasting burnings.

By the spiritual light which God communicates in regeneration the soul now perceives the infinite demerits of sin, that its "wages" can be nothing less than eternal death, or the loss of Divine favor and a dreadful suffering under the wrath of God. The equity of God's law and the fact that sin righteously calls for such punishment is humbly acknowledged. Thus his mouth is

"stopped" and he confesses himself to be guilty before God, and justly liable to His awful vengeance, both for the plague of his own heart and his numerous transgressions. He now realizes that his whole life has been lived in utter independence of God, having had no respect for His glory, no concern whether he pleased or displeased Him. He now perceives the exceeding sinfulness of sin, its awful malignity, as being in its nature contrary to the law of God. How to escape the due reward of his iniquity, he knows not. "What must I do to be saved?" is his agonizing cry. He is convinced of the absolute impossibility of contributing anything to his deliverance. He no longer has any confidence in the flesh; he has been brought to the end of himself.

By means of this illumination the renewed soul, under the guidance of the Spirit through the Word, now perceives how well-suited is Christ to such a poor, worthless wretch as he feels himself to be. The prospect of obtaining deliverance from the wrath to come through the victorious life and death of the Lord Jesus, keeps his soul from being overwhelmed with grief and from sinking into complete despondency because of the sight of his sins. As the Spirit presents to him the infinite merits of Christ's obedience and righteousness, His tender compassion for sinners, His power to save, desires for an interest in Christ now possesses his heart, and he is resolved to look for salvation in no other. Under the benign influences of the Holy Spirit, the soul is drawn by some such words as, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavily laden, and if will give you rest," or "him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out," and he is led to apply to Him for pardon, cleansing, peace, righteousness, strength.

Other acts besides turning unto Christ flow from this new principle received at regeneration, such as repentance, which is a godly sorrow for sin, an abhorring of it as sin, and an earnest desire to forsake and be completely delivered from its pollution. In the light of God, the renewed soul now perceives the utter vanity of the world, and the worthlessness of these paltry toys and perishing trifles which the godless strive so hard to acquire. He has been awakened from the dream-sleep of death, and things are now seen in their true nature. Time is precious and not to be frittered away. God in His awesome Majesty is an object to be feared. His law is accepted as holy, just and good. All of these perceptions and actions are included in that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. In some these actions are more vigorous than in others, and consequently, are more perceptible to a man's self. But the fruits of them are visible to others in external acts.

2. The elevation of the heart. Rightly does the Lord claim the first place: "he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37). "My son, give Me thine heart" (Prov. 23:26) expresses God's claim: they "first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5) declares the response of the regenerate. But it is not until they are born again that any are spiritually capacitated to do this, for by nature men are "lovers of their own selves" and "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:2, 4). When a sinner is renewed, his affections are taken off his idols and fixed on the Lord (1 Thess. 1:9). Hence it is written "with the heart (the affections) man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10). And hence, also, it is written, "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be accursed" (1 Cor. 16:22).

"And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Deut. 30:6). The "circumcising" of the heart is the "renewing" of it, severing its love from all illicit objects. None can truly love God supremely till this miracle of grace has been wrought within him. Then it is that the affections are refined and directed to their proper objects. He who once was despised by the soul, is now beheld as the "altogether lovely" One. He who was hated (John 15:18), is now loved above all others. "Whom have I in heaven

but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Ps. 73:25) is now their joyous confession.

The love of God has become the governing principle of the life (2 Cor. 5:13). What before was a drudgery is now a delight. The praise of man is no longer the motive which stimulates action; the approbation of the Saviour is the Christian's highest concern. Gratitude moves a hearty compliance with His will. "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God" (Ps. 139:17) is now his language. And again, "the desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee. With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early" (Isa. 26:8, 9). So too the heart is drawn out to all the members of His family, no matter what their nationality, social position, or church-connection: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

3. The emancipation of the will. By nature, the will of fallen man is free in only one direction: away from God. Sin has enslaved the will, therefore do we need to be "made free" (John 8:36). The two states are contrasted in Romans 6: "free from righteousness" (v. 20), when dead in sin; "free from sin" (v. 18), now that we are alive unto God. At the new birth the will is liberated from the "bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8:21 and cf. 2 Pet. 2:19) and rendered conformable to the will of God (Ps. 119:97). In our degenerate state the will was naturally rebellious, and its practical language was, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?" (Ex. 5:2). But the Father promised the Son, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Ps. 110:3), and this is accomplished when God "worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13 and cf. Heb. 13:21).

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall seek My judgments, and do them" (Ezek. 36:26, 27). This is a new covenant promise (Heb. 8:10), and is made good in each renewed soul. The will is so emancipated from the power of indwelling sin as to be enabled to answer to the Divine commands according to the tenor of the new covenant. The regenerated freely consent to and gladly choose to walk in subjection to Christ, being anxious now to obey Him in all things. His authority is their only rule, His love the constraining power: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words" (John 14:23).

4. The rectification of the conduct. A tree is known by its fruits. Faith is evidenced by works. The principle of holiness manifests itself in a godly walk. "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29). The deepest longing of every child of God is to please his heavenly Father in all things, and though this longing is never fully realized in this life—"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (Phil. 3:12)—nevertheless he continues "reaching forth unto those things which are before."

"Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine whereto ye were delivered" (Rom. 6:17 mar.). The Greek word for "form" here signifies "mold." Observe how this figure also presupposes the same faculties after the new birth as before. Metal which is molded remains the same metal it was previously, only the fashion or form of it is altered. That metal which before was a dish, is now turned into a cup, and thus a new name is given to it: cf. Revelation 3:12. By regeneration the faculties of the soul are made suitable to God and His precepts, just as the mould and the thing molded fit one another. As before the heart was at enmity against every commandment, it is now molded to them. Does God say, "Fear Me," the renewed heart answers, "I desire to fear Thy name" (Neh. 1:11). Does God say, "Remember the sabbath day

to keep it holy," the heart answers, "the sabbath is my delight" (Isa. 58:13). Does God say, "love one another," the new creature finds an instinct begotten within him to do so, so that real Christians are said to be "taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9).

A change will take place in the deportment of the most moral unconverted man as soon as he is born from above. Not only will he be far less eager in his pursuit of the world, more scrupulous in the selection of his company, more cautious in avoiding the occasions to sin and the appearance of evil, but he realizes that the holy eye of God is ever upon him, marking not only his actions, but weighing his motives. He now bears the sacred name of Christ, and his deepest concern is to be kept from everything which would bring reproach upon it. His aim is to let his light so shine before men that they may see his good works and glorify his Father which is in Heaven. That which occasions him the deepest distress is not the sneers and taunts of the ungodly. but that he fails to measure up to the standard God has set before him and the conformity to it after which he so much yearns. Though Divine grace may preserve him from outward falls, yet he is painfully conscious of many sins within: the risings of unbelief, the swellings of pride, the oppositions of the "flesh" to the desires of the "spirit." These occasion him deep exercises of heart and lead to humble and sorrowful confessions unto God.

It is of great importance that the Christian should have clear and scriptural views of what he is both as the subject of sin and of grace. Though the regenerate are delivered from the absolute dominion of sin (Rom. 6:14), yet the principle of sin, the "flesh" is not eradicated. This is clear from Romans 6:12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof": that exhortation would be meaningless if there were no indwelling sin seeking to reign, and no lusts demanding obedience. Yet this is far from saying that a Christian must go on in a course of sinning: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9), the reference there being to the regular practice and habit of sinning. Nevertheless, prayerful heed needs to be constantly paid to this word, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:34).

The experiences of Paul, both as a subject of sin and of grace, are recorded in Romans 7. A careful reading of verses 14-24 reveals the fact that grace had neither removed nor purified the "flesh" in him. And as the Christian today compares his own inner conflicts, he finds that Romans 7 describes them most accurately and faithfully. He discovers that in his "flesh" is no good thing and he cries "O wretched man that I am." Though he longs for fuller conformity to the image of Christ, though he hungers and thirsts after righteousness, though he is under the influence and reign of grace, and though he enjoys real fellowship with God, yet, at seasons (some more acutely felt than others) he feels that though with the mind he serves the law of God, yet with the flesh the law of sin. Yea, every experience of reading the Word, prayer, meditation, proves to him that he is, in his fallen nature, "carnal, sold under sin," and that when he would do good, evil is present with him. This is a matter of great grief to him, and causes him to "groan" (Rom. 8:23) and yearn the more for release from this body of death.

But ought not the Christian to "grow in grace?" Yes, indeed. Yet let it be said emphatically that growing "in grace" most certainly does not mean an increasing satisfaction with myself. No, it is the very opposite. The more I walk in the light of God, the more plainly can I see the wiliness of the "flesh" within me, and there will be an ever-deepening abhorrence of what I am by nature. "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18) is not the confession of an unbeliever, nor even of a babe in Christ, but of the most enlightened saint. The only relief from this distressing discovery and the only peace for the renewed heart is to look away from self to Christ and His perfect work for us. Faith empties of all self-

complacency and gives an exalted estimate of God in Christ.

A growth "in grace" is defined, in part by the words that immediately follow: "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). It is the growing realization of the perfect suitability of Christ to a poor sinner, the deepening conviction of his fitness to be the Saviour of such a vile wretch as the Spirit daily shows me I am. It is the apprehension of how much .1 need His precious- blood to cleanse me, His righteousness to clothe me, His arm to support me, His advocacy to answer for me on High, His grace to deliver me from all my enemies both inward and outward. It is the Spirit revealing to me that there is in Christ everything that I need both for earth and Heaven, time and eternity. Thus, growing in grace is an increasing living outside of myself, living upon Christ. It is a looking to Him for the supply of every need.

The more the heart is occupied with Christ, the more the mind is stayed upon Him by trusting in Him (Isa. 26:3), the more will faith, hope, love, patience, meekness, and all spiritual graces be strengthened and drawn forth into exercise and act to the glory of God. The manifestation of growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ is another thing. The actual process of growing is not perceptible either in the natural or in the spiritual sphere; but the results of it are—mainly so to others. There are definite seasons of growth, and generally the Christian's spiritual graces are growing the most while the soul is in distress through manifold temptations, mourning on account of indwelling sin. It is when we are enjoying God and are in conscious communion with Him, feasting upon the perfections of Christ, that the fruits of the Spirit in us are ripened. The chief evidences of spiritual growth in the Christian are a deepening hatred of sin and loathing of self, a higher valuation of spiritual things, and yearning after them, a fuller recognition of our deep need and dependency on God to supply it.

Regeneration is substantially the same in all who are the subjects of it: there is a spiritual transformation, the conforming of the soul unto the image of God: "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). But although every regenerated person is a new creature, has received a principle of faith and holiness which acts on every faculty of his being, and is indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit, yet God does not communicate the same measure of grace (Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 4:16) or the same number of talents to all alike. God's children differ from each other as children do at their natural birth, some of whom are more lively and vigorous than others. God, according to His sovereign pleasure, gives to some a fuller knowledge, to others stronger faith, to others warmer affections—natural temperament has much to do with the form and color which the manifestation of the "spirit" takes through us. But there is no difference in their state: the same work has been performed in all, which radically differentiates them from worldlings.

"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2). Does not this clearly denote, yea, require, that the "saints" shall exercise a distinguishing holiness and live quite otherwise than the world? Could one who now takes the Lord's name in vain be righteously appointed to sit in judgment upon those who profane it? Could one who lives to please self be a fit person to judge those who have loved pleasure more than God? Could one who has despised and ridiculed 'puritanic strictness of living,' sit with Christ as a judge on those who lived in rebellion against Him? Never: instead of being the judges of others, all such will find themselves condemned and executed as malefactors in that Day.

"The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11). "Grace and glory" are inseparably connected: they differ not in nature, but

in degree. "Grace" is glory begun; "glory" is grace elevated to the acme of perfection. 1 John 3:2 tells us that the saints shall be "like Him," and this, because they will "see Him as He is." The immediate vision of the Lord of glory will be a transforming one, the bright reflections of God's purity and holiness cast upon the glorified will make them perfectly holy and blessed. But this resemblance to God, His saints do here, in measure, bear upon them: there are some outlines, some lineaments of God's image stamped upon them, and this too is through beholding Him. True, it is (comparatively speaking) through a glass darkly, yet "beholding" we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory (from one degree of it to another) as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

In conclusion, let both writer and reader test and search himself in the presence of God, by these questions. How stands my heart affected toward sin? Is there a deep humiliation and godly sorrow after I have yielded thereto? Is there a genuine detestation of it? Is my conscience tender, so that my peace is disturbed by what the world calls "trifling faults" and "little things?" Am I humbled when conscious of the risings of pride and self-will? Do I loathe my inward corruption? What engages my mind in sea sons of recreation? Are my affections dead toward the world an alive toward God? Do I find spiritual exercises pleasant and joyous or irksome and burdensome? Can I truthfully say, "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth (Ps. 119:103)? Is communion with God my highest joy? Is the glory of God dearer to me than all the world contains?

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