

BOOK III.

WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

IN

THE NEW CREATION

BY REGENERATION.

CHAP. I.

The new creation completed. Regeneration the especial work of the Holy Spirit. Wrought under the Old Testament, but clearly revealed in the new ; and is of the same kind in all that are regenerate. The causes and way of it being the same in all. It consisteth not in baptism alone ; nor in a moral reformation of life ; but a new creature is formed in it ; whose nature is declared, and farther explained. Denial of the original depravation of nature the cause of many noxious opinions. Regeneration consisteth not in enthusiastic raptures ; their nature and danger. The whole doctrine necessary, despised, corrupted, vindicated.

WE have formerly declared the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing and forming the natural body of Christ. This was the beginning of the new creation, the foundation of the gospel-state and church. But this was not the whole of the work he had to do. As he had provided and prepared the natural body of Christ, so he was to prepare his *mystical body* also. And hereby the work of the new creation was to be completed and perfected. And as it was with respect unto him and his work in the old creation, so was it also in the new. All things in their first production had darkness and death upon them. For the earth was ‘void and without form, and darkness was upon the face of the deep ;’ Gen. i. 2. Neither was there any thing that had either life in it, or principle of life, or any disposition thereunto. In this condition he moved on the prepared matter, preserving and cherishing of it, and communicating unto all things a principle of life whereby they were animated, as we have declared. It was no otherwise in the new creation. There was a spi-

ritual darkness and death came by sin on all mankind. Neither was there in any man living the least principle of spiritual life, or any disposition thereunto. In this state of things the¹ Holy Spirit undertaketh to create a new world, new heavens, and a new earth, wherein righteousness should dwell. And this, in the first place, was by his effectual communication of a new principle of spiritual life unto the souls of God's elect, who were the matter designed of God for this work to be wrought upon. This he doth in their regeneration, as we shall now manifest.

First, *Regeneration* in Scripture is every where assigned to be the *proper and peculiar work* of the Holy Spirit. John iii. 3—6. 'Jesus answered and said unto Nicodemus, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old; can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.' It was an ancient knowing teacher of the church of the Jews, a master in Israel, whom our blessed Saviour here discourseth withal and instructs. For on the consideration of his miracles, he concluded that 'God was with him,' and came to inquire of him about the kingdom of God. Our Saviour knowing how all our faith and obedience to God, and all our acceptance with him, depended on our regeneration, or being born again, acquaints him with the necessity of it, wherewith he is at first surprised. Wherefore he proceeds to instruct him in the nature of the work, whose necessity he had declared. And this he describes both by the cause and the effect of it. For the cause of it he tells him, it is wrought by water and the Spirit. By the Spirit as the principal efficient cause; and by water as the pledge, sign, and token^a of it, in the initial seal of the covenant, the doctrine whereof was then preached amongst them by John the Baptist; or the same thing is intended in a redoubled expression, the Spirit being

^a Si in gratia, non ex natura aquæ, sed ex præsentia est Spiritus Sancti: numquid in aqua vivimus, sicut in Spiritu? numquid in aqua signamur sicut in Spiritu? Ambros. de Spirit. Sanct. lib. 1. cap. 6.

signified by the water also, under which notion he is often promised.

Hereof then, or of this work, the Holy Spirit is the principal efficient cause; whence he, in whom it is wrought, is said to be 'born of the Spirit;' ver. 8. 'so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' And this is the same with what is delivered, chap. i. 13. 'Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' The natural and carnal means of blood, flesh, and the will of man, are rejected wholly in this matter, and the whole efficiency of the new birth, is ascribed unto God alone. His work answers whatever contribution there is unto natural generation, from the will and nature of man. For these things are here compared, and from its analogy unto natural generation, is this work of the Spirit called regeneration; so in this place is the allusion and opposition between these things expressed by our Saviour; 'That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit;' ver. 6. And herein also we have a farther description of this work of the Holy Spirit, by its effect, or the product of it; it is spirit, a new spiritual being, creature, nature, life, as shall be declared. And because there is in it a communication of a new spiritual life, it is called a vivification or quickening, with respect unto the state wherein all men are, before this work is wrought in them and on them, Eph. ii. 1. 5. which is the work of the Spirit alone; for 'it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing;' John vi. 63. See Rom. viii. 9, 10. Titus iii. 4—6. where the same truth is declared and asserted. 'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.'

What we have frequently mentioned, occurreth here expressly; namely, the whole blessed Trinity, and each person therein acting distinctly in the work of our salvation. The spring or fountain of the whole lieth in the kindness and love of God, even the Father. Thereunto it is every where ascribed in the Scripture: see John iii. 16. Eph. i. 4—6. Whatever is done in the accomplishment of this work, it is

so in the pursuit of his will, purpose, and counsel; and is an effect of his love and grace. The procuring cause of the application of the love and kindness of God unto us, is Jesus Christ our Saviour, in the whole work of his mediation; ver. 6. and the immediate efficient cause in the communication of the love and kindness of the Father, through the mediation of the Son unto us, is the Holy Spirit. And this he doth in the renovation of our natures, by the washing of regeneration, wherein we are purged from our sins, and sanctified unto God.

More testimonies unto this purpose, need not be insisted on. This truth, of the Holy Spirit being the author of our regeneration, which the ancients esteemed a cogent argument to prove his Deity, even from the greatness and dignity of the work^b, is in words at least, so far as I know, granted by all who pretend to sobriety in Christianity. That by some others it hath been derided and exploded, is the occasion of this vindication of it. It must not be expected, that I should here handle the whole doctrine of regeneration practically, as it may be educed by inferences from the Scripture, according to the analogy of faith, and the experiences of them that believe; it hath been done already by others. My present aim is, only to confirm the fundamental principles of truth concerning those operations of the Holy Spirit, which, at this day, are opposed with violence and virulence. And what I shall offer on the present subject, may be reduced unto the ensuing heads:

1. Although the work of *regeneration* by the Holy Spirit was wrought under the Old Testament, even from the foundation of the world; and the doctrine of it was recorded in the Scriptures, yet the revelation of it was but obscure, in comparison of that *light* and evidence which it is brought

^b Similiter ex Spiritu secundum gratiam nos renasci, Dominus ipse testatur dicens; quod natum est ex carne, caro est, quia de carne natum est; et quod natum est de Spiritu, Spiritus est, quia Spiritus Deus est. Claret igitur spiritualis quoque generationis auctorem esse Spiritum Sanctum, quia secundum Deum creamur et Filii Dei simus. Ergo cum ille nos in regnum suum per adoptionem sacræ regenerationis assumpserit, nos ei quod suum est denegamus? ille nos supernæ generationis hæredes fecit, nos hæreditatem vindicamus, refutamus auctorem: sed non potest manere beneficium cum author excluditur; nec author sine munere, nec sine auctore munus. Si vindicas gratiam, crede potentiam; si refutas potentiam, gratiam ne requiras. Sancti igitur Spiritus opus est regeneratio ista præstantior, et novi hujus hominis qui creatur ad imaginem Dei author est Spiritus, quem utique meliorem hoc exteriori esse nostro homine nemo dubitaverit. Ambros. de Sp. San. lib. 2. cap. 9.

forth into by the gospel. This is evident from the discourse which our blessed Saviour had with Nicodemus on this subject. For when he acquainted him clearly with the doctrine of it, he was surprised, and fell into that inquiry which argued some amazement; 'How can these things be?' But yet, the reply of our Saviour manifests, that he might have attained a better acquaintance with it out of the Scripture, than he had done. 'Art thou,' saith he, 'a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?' Dost thou take upon thee to teach others, what is their state and condition, and what is their duty towards God, and art ignorant thyself of so great and fundamental a doctrine, which thou mightest have learned from the Scripture? For, if he might not so have done, there would have been no just cause of the reproof given him by our Saviour. For it was neither crime nor negligence in him, to be ignorant of what God had not revealed. This doctrine, therefore, namely, That every one who will enter into the kingdom of God, must be born again of the Holy Spirit, was contained in the writings of the Old Testament. It was so in the promises, 'That God would circumcise the hearts of his people, that he would take away their heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh, with his law written in it,' and other ways as shall be afterward proved.

But, yet we see, that it was so obscurely declared, that the principal masters and teachers of the people, knew little or nothing of it. Some, indeed, would have this regeneration, if they knew what they would have, or, as to what may be gathered of their minds, out of their great swelling words of vanity, to be nothing but reformation of life, according to the rules of the Scripture. But Nicodemus knew the necessity of reformation of life well enough, if he had ever read either Moses or the prophets. And to suppose that our Lord Jesus Christ proposed unto him the thing which he knew perfectly well, only under a new name or notion which he had never heard of before: so to take an advantage of charging him with being ignorant of what indeed he full well knew and understood, is a blasphemous imagination. How they can free themselves from the guilt hereof, who look on regeneration as no more but a metaphorical expression of amendment of life, I know not. And if it be so,

if there be no more in it, but as they love to speak, becoming a new moral man, a thing which all the world, Jews and Gentiles understood; our Lord Jesus was so far from bringing it forth into more light, and giving it more perspicuity, by what he teacheth concerning regeneration, the nature, manner, causes, and effects of it, that he cast it thereby into more darkness and obscurity, than ever it was delivered in, either by Jewish masters, or Gentile philosophy. For, although the gospel do really teach all duties of morality with more exactness and clearness, and press unto the observance of them, on motives incomparably more cogent than any thing that otherwise ever befel the mind of man to think or apprehend; yet, if it must be supposed to intend nothing else in its doctrine of the new birth or regeneration, but those moral duties and their observance, it is dark and unintelligible; I say, if there be not a secret mysterious work of the Spirit of God, in and upon the souls of men, intended in the writings of the New Testament, but only a reformation of life, and the improvement of men's natural abilities in the exercise of moral virtue, through the application of outward means unto their minds and understandings, conducting and persuading thereunto; they must be granted to be obscure, beyond those of any other writers whatsoever, as some have not feared already to publish unto the world concerning the Epistles of Paul. But so long as we can obtain an acknowledgment from men, that they are true, and in any sense the word of God, we doubt not but to evince, that the things intended in them, are clearly and properly expressed, so as they ought to be, and so as they are capable to be expressed: the difficulties which seem to be in them, arising from the mysterious nature of the things themselves contained in them, and the weakness of our minds in apprehending such things, and not from any obscurity or intricacy in the declaration of them. And herein, indeed, consists the main contest whereunto things with the most are reduced. Some judge that all things are so expressed in the Scripture, with a condescension unto our capacity, so as that there is still to be conceived an inexpressible grandeur in many of them beyond our comprehension. Others judge on the other hand, that under a grandeur of words and hyperbolical expressions, things of a meaner and a lower sense are in-

tended, and to be understood. Some judge the things of the gospel to be deep and mysterious, the words and expressions of it to be plain and proper: others think the words and expressions of it to be mystical and figurative, but the things intended to be ordinary and obvious to the natural reason of every man. But to return.

Both regeneration and the doctrine of it were under the *Old Testament*. All the elect of God, in their several generations, were all regenerate by the Spirit of God. But in that ampliation and enlargement of truth and grace under the gospel, which came by Jesus Christ, who brought life and immortality to light, as more persons than of old were to be made partakers of the mercy of it, so the nature of the work itself is far more clearly, evidently, and distinctly revealed and declared. And because this is the principal and internal remedy of that disease which the Lord Christ came to cure and take away, one of the first things that he preached was the doctrine of it. All things of this nature before, even from the beginning of the world, lay hid in God; Eph. iii. 9. Some intimations were given of them in 'parables and dark sayings,' חֲדָוִת מִן קֶרֶם, Psal. lxxviii. 2. in types, shadows, and ceremonies, so as the nature of the grace in them was not clearly to be discerned. But now when the great physician of our souls came, who was to heal the wound of our natures, whence we 'were dead in trespasses and sins,' he lays naked the disease itself, declares the greatness of it, the ruin we were under from it, that we might know and be thankful for its reparation. Hence no doctrine is more fully and plainly declared in the gospel, than this of our regeneration by the effectual and ineffable operation of the Holy Spirit. And it is a consequent and fruit of the depravation of our nature, that against the full light and evidence of truth now clearly manifested, this great and holy work is opposed and despised.

Few, indeed, have yet the confidence in plain and intelligible words to deny it absolutely. But many tread in the steps of him who first in the church of God undertook to undermine it^c. This was Pelagius, whose principal artifice,

^c Denique quomodo respondeat advertite, et videte latebras ambiguitatis falsitati præparare refugia, ita ut etiam nos cum primum ea legimus, recta vel correcta prope-modum gauderemus. August. de Peccat. Orig. cap. 18.

Mihi pene persuaserit hanc illum gratiam de qua quæstio est confiteri; quo mi-

which he used in the introduction of his heresy, was in the clouding of his intentions with general and ambiguous expressions, as some would be making use of his very words and phrases. Hence, for a long time, when he was justly charged with his sacrilegious errors, he made no defence of them, but reviled his adversaries as corrupting his mind, and not understanding his expressions. And by this means as he got himself acquitted in the judgments of some, less experienced in the sleights and cunning craftiness of them who lie in wait to deceive; and^d juridically freed in an assembly of bishops; so in all probability he had suddenly infected the whole church with the poison of those opinions which the proud and corrupted nature of man is so apt to receive and embrace, if God had not stirred up some few holy and learned persons, Austin especially, to discover his frauds, to refel his calumnies, and confute his sophisms; which they did with indefatigable industry and good success. But yet these tares being once sown by the envious one, found such a suitable and fruitful soil in the darkened minds and proud hearts of men, that from that day to this they could never be fully extirpated; but the same bitter root hath still sprung up unto the defiling of many, though various new colours have been put upon its leaves and fruit. And although those who at present amongst us have undertaken the same cause with Pelagius, do not equal him either in learning or diligence, or an appearance of piety and devotion, yet do they exactly imitate him in declaring their minds in cloudy ambiguous expressions, capable of various constructions until they are fully examined, and thereon reproaching (as he did) those that oppose them as not aright representing their sentiments, when they judge it their ad-
 nus in multis ejus opusculi locis sibiipsi contradicere videretur. Sed cum in manus meas et alia venissent quæ posterius latiusque scripsit, vidi quemadmodum etiam illic gratiam nominare sed ambigua generalitate quid sentiret abscondens, gratiæ tamen vocabulo frangens invidiam, offensionemque declinans. Id. de Grat. Christ. lib. 1. cap. 37.

Vid. August. lib. 1. cont. Julianum, cap. 5. lib. 3. cap. 1. lib. de gest. Pelag. cap. 30. epist. 95. ad Innocent. Epist. Innocent. ad August.

Negant etiam quam ad sacram Christi virginem Nemehiadem in oriente conscripsimus, et noverint nos ita hominis laudare naturam ut Dei semper addamus auxilium (verba Pelagii quibus respondet Augustinus), istam sane lege, mihi que pene persuaserat, hanc illam gratiam de qua quæ quæstio est confiteri. Id. ubi supra.

^d Fefellit judicium Palæstinum propterea ibi videtur purgatus; Romanam vero ecclesiam, ubi cum esse notissimum scitis fallere usque quaque non potuit, quamvis et hoc fuerit utrumque conatus. Tanto judices fefellit occultius, quanto exponit ista versutius. August. lib. de peccat. Orig. cap. 16.

vantage so to do, as the scurrilous clamorous writings of S. P. do sufficiently manifest.

Secondly, Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is the *same work*, for the *kind* of it, and wrought by the same power of the Spirit in all that are regenerate, or ever were, or shall be so, from the beginning of the world unto the end thereof. Great variety there is in the application of the outward means, which the Holy Spirit is pleased to use and make effectual towards the accomplishment of this great work. Nor can the ways and manner hereof be reduced unto any certain order. For the Spirit worketh how and when he pleaseth, following the sole rule of his own will and wisdom. Mostly, God makes use of the preaching of the word, thence called an 'ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls;' James i. 21. and the incorruptible seed, by which we are born again; 1 Pet. i. 21. Sometimes it is wrought without it; as in all those who are regenerate before they come to the use of reason, or in their infancy. Sometimes men are called, and so regenerate, in an extraordinary manner, as was Paul; but mostly they are so in and by the use of ordinary means, instituted, blessed, and sanctified of God to that end and purpose. And great variety there is also in the perception and understanding of the work itself, in them in whom it is wrought. For in itself it is secret and hidden, and is no other ways discoverable but in its causes and effects. For as 'the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit;' John iii. 8.

In the minds and consciences of some this is made known by infallible signs and tokens. Paul knew that Christ was formed and revealed in himself; Gal. i. 16. So he declared that whoever is in Christ Jesus 'is a new creature;' 2 Cor. v. 17. that is, is born again, whether they know themselves so to be or no. And many are in the dark, as to their own condition in this matter, all their days; for they 'fear the Lord, and obey the voice of his servant (Christ Jesus), and yet walk in darkness and have no light;' Isa. l. 10. They are 'children of light;' Luke xvi. 8. John xii. 36. Eph. v. 8. 1 Thess. v. 5. and yet 'walk in darkness and have no light;' which expressions have been well used and improved by some, and by others of late derided and blasphemed.

And there is great variety in the carrying on of this work towards perfection, in the *growth* of the new creature, or the increase of grace, implanted in our natures by it : for some, through the supplies of the Spirit, make a great and speedy progress towards perfection ; others thrive slowly, and bring forth little fruit ; the causes and occasions whereof are not here to be enumerated. But notwithstanding all differences in previous dispositions, in the application of outward means in the manner of it, ordinary or extraordinary, in the consequents of much or less fruit, the work itself, in its own nature, is of the same kind, one and the same. The elect of God were not regenerate one way, by one kind of operation of the Holy Spirit, under the Old Testament, and those under the New Testament another. They who were miraculously converted, as Paul, or who upon their conversion had miraculous gifts bestowed on them, as had multitudes of the primitive Christians, were no otherwise regenerate, nor by any other internal efficiency of the Holy Spirit, than every one is at this day, who is really made partaker of this grace and privilege. Neither were those miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit, which were visible unto others, any part of the work of regeneration, nor did they belong necessarily unto it. For many were the subjects of them, and received miraculous gifts by them, who were never regenerate ; and many were regenerate who were never partakers of them. And it is a fruit of the highest ignorance and unacquaintance imaginable with these things, to affirm that in the work of regeneration, the Holy Spirit wrought of old miraculously, in and by outwardly visible operations, but now only in a human and rational way, leading our understanding by the rules of reason, unless the mere external mode and sign of his operation be intended. For all ever were and ever shall be regenerate by the same kind of operation, and the same effect of the Holy Spirit on the faculties of their souls. Which will be farther manifest if we consider :

1. That the condition of all men as unregenerate is *absolutely the same*. One is not by nature more unregenerate than another. All men since the fall, and the corruption of our nature by sin, are in the same state and condition towards God. They are all alike alienated from him, and all alike under his curse ; Psal. li. 5. John iii. 5. 36. Rom. iii. 19. v. 15—18. Eph. ii. 3. Tit. iii. 3, 4. There are degrees of

wickedness in them that are unregenerate ; but there is no difference as to state and condition between them, all are unregenerate alike. As amongst those who are regenerate, there are different degrees of holiness and righteousness, one, it may be, far exceeding another ; yet there is between them no difference of state and condition, they are all equally regenerate. Yea, some may be in a greater forwardness and preparation for the work itself, and thereby in a greater nearness to the state of it than others ; but the state itself is incapable of such degrees. Now it must be the same work for the kind and nature of it, which relieves and translates men out of the same state and condition. That which gives the formal reason of the change of their state, of their translation from death to life, is and must be the same in all. If you can fix on any man from the foundation of the world, who was not equally born in sin, and by nature dead in trespasses and sins, with all other men, the man Christ Jesus only excepted, I would grant that he might have another kind of regeneration than others have, but that I know he would stand in need of none at all.

2. The *state whereinto men are brought* by regeneration is the same. Nor is it, in its essence or nature, capable of degrees, so that one should be more regenerate than another. Every one that is born of God is equally so, though one may be more beautiful than another, as having the image of his heavenly Father more evidently impressed on him, though not more truly. Men may be more or less holy, more or less sanctified ; but they cannot be more or less regenerate. All children that are born into the world, are equally born, though some quickly outstrip others in the perfections and accomplishments of nature. And all born of God are equally so, though some speedily out-go others in the accomplishments and perfections of grace. There was then never but one kind of regeneration in this world, the essential form of it being specifically the same in all.

3. That the efficient cause of this work, the grace and power whereby it is wrought, with the internal manner of the communication of that grace, are the same, shall be afterward declared. To this standard then all must come. Men may bear themselves high, and despise this whole work of the Spirit of God, or set up an imagination of their own in the room thereof ; but whether they will or no, they must be

tried by it ; and no less depends on their interest in it, than their admission into the kingdom of God. And let them pretend what they please, the true reason why any despise the new birth, is, because they hate a new life. He that cannot endure to live to God, will as little endure to hear of being born of God. But we shall by the Scripture inquire what we are taught concerning it, and declare both what it is not, of things which falsely pretend thereunto, and then what it is indeed.

First, Regeneration doth not consist in a participation of the ordinance of *baptism*, and a profession of the doctrine of *repentance*. This is all that some will allow unto it, to the utter rejection and overthrow of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the dispute in this matter is not whether the ordinances of the gospel, as baptism, do really communicate internal grace unto them, that are, as to their outward manner of their administration, duly made partakers of them, whether *ex opere operato*, as the Papists speak, or as a *federal* means of the conveyance and communication of that grace which they betoken and are the pledges of ; but whether the outward susception of the ordinance, joined with a profession of repentance in them that are adult, be not the whole of what is called regeneration. The vanity of this presumptuous folly, destructive of all the grace of the gospel, invented to countenance men in their sins, and to hide from them the necessity of being born again, and therein of turning unto God, will be laid open in our declaration of the nature of the work itself. For the present, the ensuing reasons will serve to remove it out of our way.

1. Regeneration doth not consist in these things which are only outward signs and tokens of it, or at most, instituted means of effecting it. For the nature of things is different and distinct from the means, and evidences or pledges of them. But such only is baptism, with the profession of the doctrine of it, as is acknowledged by all who have treated of the nature of that sacrament. 2. The apostle Peter really states this case, 1 Pet. iii. 21. ‘ In answer whereunto, even baptism doth also now save us ; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.’ The outward administration of this ordinance considered materially,

reacheth no farther, but to the washing away of the filth of the flesh, but more is signified thereby. There is denoted in it the restitution of a good conscience unto God, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, or a 'conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God;' Heb. ix. 14. and quickened by virtue of his resurrection unto holy obedience; see Rom. vi. 3—7. 3. The apostle Paul doth plainly distinguish between the outward ordinances, with what belongs unto a due participation of them, and the work of regeneration itself; Gal. vi. 15. 'In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature.' For as by circumcision the whole system of Mosaical ordinances is intended, so the state of uncircumcision, as then it was in the professing Gentiles, supposed a participation of all the ordinances of the gospel. But from them all he distinguisheth the new creation, as that which they may be without, and which being so, they are not available in Christ Jesus. 4. If this were so, then all that are duly baptized, and do thereon make profession of the doctrine of it, that is, of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, must of necessity be regenerate. But this we know to be otherwise. For instance; Simon the magician was rightly and duly baptized, for he was so by Philip the evangelist; which he could not be without a profession of faith and repentance; accordingly, it is said that 'he believed;' Acts viii. 13. that is, made a profession of his faith in the gospel. Yet he was not regenerate, for at the same time he had no part or lot in that matter, his heart not being right in the sight of God, but was in the 'gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity;' ver. 21. 23. which is not the description of a person newly regenerate and born again. Hence the cabballistical Jews, who grope in darkness after the old notions of truth that were among their forefathers, do say, that at the same instant wherein a man is made 'a proselyte of righteousness,' there comes a new soul into him from heaven, his old Pagan soul vanishing or being taken away. The introduction of a new spiritual principle, to be that unto the soul which the soul is unto the body naturally, is that which they understand, or they choose thus to express the reiterated promise of taking away the 'heart of stone,' and giving a heart of flesh in the place of it.

Secondly, Regeneration doth not consist in a *moral re-*

formation of life and conversation. Let us suppose such a reformation to be extensive unto all known instances. Suppose a man be changed from sensuality into temperance, from rapine to righteousness, from pride and the dominion of irregular passions, unto humility and moderation, with all instances of the like nature which we can imagine, or are prescribed in the rules of the strictest moralists. Suppose this change be laboured, exact, and accurate, and so of great use in the world. Suppose also that a man hath been brought and persuaded unto it, through the preaching of the gospel, so escaping 'the pollutions that are in the world through lust, even by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' or the directions of his doctrine delivered in the gospel; yet, I say, all this, and all this added unto baptism, accompanied with a profession of faith and repentance, is not regeneration, nor do they comprise it in them. And I have extended this assertion beyond what some among us, so far as I can see, do so much as pretend unto, in their confused notions and sophistical expressions about morality, when they make it the same with grace. But whatever there may be of actual righteousness in these things, they do not express an inherent habitual righteousness, which whosoever denies, overthrows the gospel, and all the whole work of the Spirit of God, and of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But we must stay a while. This assertion of ours is by some not only denied but derided. Neither is that all, but whoever maintains it, is exposed as an enemy to morality, righteousness, and reformation of life. All virtue, they say, is hereby excluded, to introduce, I know not what imaginary godliness. But whether we oppose or exclude moral virtue or no, by the doctrine of regeneration or any other, God and Christ will in due time judge and declare. Yea, were the confession of the truth consistent with their interests, the decision of this doubt might be referred unto their own consciences. But being not free to commit any thing to that tribunal, unless we had better security of its freedom from corrupt principles and prejudices than we have, we shall at present leave all the world to judge of our doctrine, with respect unto virtue and morality, by the fruits of it, compared with theirs, by whom it is denied. In the mean time we affirm that we design nothing in virtue and morality,

but to improve them by fixing them on a proper foundation, or ingrafting them into that stock whereon alone they will thrive and grow to the glory of God, and the good of the souls of men; neither shall we be moved in this design by the clamorous or calumnious outcries of ignorant or profligate persons. And for the assertion laid down, I desire that those who despise and reproach it, would attempt an answer unto the ensuing arguments whereby it is confirmed; with those other which shall be insisted on in our description of the nature of the work of regeneration itself; and that upon such grounds and principles as are not destructive of Christian religion, nor introductive of atheism, before they are too confident of their success.

If there be in, and required unto, regeneration, the^e infusion of a *new, real, spiritual* principle into the soul and its faculties, of spiritual life, light, holiness, and righteousness; disposed unto, and suited for, the destruction or expulsion of a contrary, inbred, habitual principle of sin and enmity against God, enabling unto all acts of holy obedience, and so in order of nature antecedent unto them; then it doth not consist in a mere *reformation of life* and moral virtue, be they never so exact or accurate. Three things are to be observed for the clearing of this assertion, before we come to the proof and confirmation of it. As, 1. That this *reformation of life*, which we say is not regeneration, or that regeneration doth not consist therein, is a *necessary duty*, indispensably required of all men. For we shall take it here for the whole course of actual obedience unto God, and that according to the gospel. Those indeed by whom it is urged and pressed in the room of regeneration, or as that wherein regeneration doth consist, do give such an account and description of it, as that it is, or at least may be, foreign unto true

^e Per inhærentem justitiam intelligimus supernaturale donum gratiæ sanctificantis, oppositum originali peccato, et in singulis animæ facultatibus reparans et renovans illam Dei imaginem, quæ per peccatum originale fœdata ac dissipata fuit. Originale peccatum mentem tenebris implevit, hæc infusa gratia lumine cælesti collustrat. Istud, cor humanum obstinatione et odio Dei ac divinæ legis maculavit, hæc infusa justitia cor emollit et amore boni accendit et inflanmat. Postremo illud affectus omnes atque ipsum appetitum rebellionis infecit; hæc renovata sanctitas in ordinem cogit perturbatas affectiones, et ipsam rebellem concupiscentiam dominio spoliavit, et quasi sub jugum mittit. Davenant. de Justit. Habit. cap. 3.

Fides tanquam radix imbre suscepto hæret in animæ solo; ut cum per legem Dei excoli cœperit surgant in ea rami qui fructus operum ferant. Non ergo ex operibus radix justitiæ, sed ex radice justitiæ fructus operum crescit. Origen. lib. 4. in Epist. ad Roman.

gospel-obedience, and so not contain in it one acceptable duty unto God, as shall afterward be declared. But here I shall take it in our present inquiry, for that whole course of duties, which in obedience towards God, are prescribed unto us. 2. That the principle before described, wherein regeneration, as *passively* considered, or as wrought in us, consists, doth always certainly and *infallibly* produce the *reformation of life* intended. In some it doth it more completely, in others more imperfectly, in all sincerely. For the same grace in nature and kind is communicated unto several persons in various degrees, and is by them used and improved with more or less care and diligence. In those therefore that are adult, these things are inseparable. Therefore, 3. the difference in this matter cometh unto this head; we say and believe that regeneration consists in *spirituali renovatione naturæ*; ‘in a spiritual renovation of our nature:’ our modern Socinians, that it doth so, in *moralī reformatione vitæ*, ‘in a moral reformation of life.’ Now as we grant that this spiritual renovation of nature will infallibly produce a moral reformation of life; so if they will grant that this moral reformation of life doth proceed from a spiritual renovation of our nature, this difference will be at an end. And this is that which the ancients intend by first receiving the Holy Ghost, and then all graces with him^f. However if they only design to speak ambiguously, improperly, and unscripturally, confounding effects and their causes, habits and actions, faculties or powers and occasional acts, infused principles and acquired habits, spiritual and moral, grace and nature, that they may take an opportunity to rail at others for want of better advantage, I shall not contend with them. For allow a new spiritual principle, an infused habit of grace, or gracious abilities to be required in and unto regeneration, or to be the product or the work of the Spirit therein, that which is ‘born of the Spirit being spirit,’ and this part of the nature of this work is sufficiently cleared. Now this the Scripture abundantly testifieth unto.

^f Is qui Spiritus Sancti particeps efficitur, per communionem ejus sit spiritualis pariter et sanctus. Didym. lib. 1. de Sp. Sanct. p. 218. inter opera Hieronymi.

Qui Spiritu Sancto plenus est statim universis donationibus Dei repletur, sapientia, scientia, fide cæterisque virtutibus. Id. ibid.

Nunquam enim accipit quisquam spirituales benedictiones Dei, nisi præcesserit Spiritus Sanctus; qui enim habet Spiritum Sanctum consequenter habebit benedictiones. Idem. p. 220.

2 Cor. v. 17. 'If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.' This new creature is that which is intended, that which was before described, which being born of the Spirit is spirit. This is produced in the souls of men by a creating act of the power of God^g, or it is not a creature; and it is superinduced into the essential faculties of our souls, or it is not a new creature; for whatever is in the soul, of power, disposition, ability, or inclination unto God, or for any moral actions, by nature, it belongs unto the old creation, it is no new creature. And it must be somewhat that hath a being and subsistence of its own in the soul, or it can be neither new nor a creature. And by our apostle it is opposed to all outward privileges; Gal. v. 6. vi. 15. That the production of it also is by a creating act of almighty power the Scripture testifieth; Psal. li. 10. Eph. ii. 10. And this can denote nothing but a new spiritual principle or nature wrought in us by the Spirit of God. No, say some, a new creature is no more but a changed man; it is true, but then this change is internal also; yes, in the purposes, designs, and inclinations of the mind: but is it by a real infusion of a new principle of spiritual life and holiness? No, it denotes no more but a new course of conversation; only the expression is metaphorical, a new creature is a moral man, that hath changed his course or way. For if he were always a moral man, that he was never in any vicious way or course, as it was with him, Matt. xix. 18—20. then he was always a new creature. This is good gospel, at once overthrowing original sin, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine I am sure was not learned from the fathers, whereof some used to boast: nay, it is much more fulsome than any thing ever taught by Pelagius himself, who, indeed, ascribed more unto grace than these men do, although he denied this creation of a new principle of grace in us, antecedent unto acts of obedience^h. And this turning all Scripture expres-

^g Sicut in natiuitate carnali omnem nascentis hominis voluntatem præcedit operis diuini formatio, sic in spiritali natiuitate qua veterem hominem deponere incipimus. Fulgent. de Incarnat. et Grat. Christ. c. 29.

Forma præcessit in carne Christi, quam in nostra fide spiritaliter agnoscamus; nam Christus Filius Dei, secundum carnem de Spiritu Sancto conceptus et natus est: carnem autem illam nec concipere virgo posset nec parere, nisi ejus carnis Spiritus Sanctus operetur exordium. Sic etiam in hominis corde nec concipi fides potuit nec augeri, nisi eam Spiritus Sanctus effundat et nutriat. Ex eodem namque Spiritu renati sumus, ex quo Christus natus est. Idem. cap. 20.

^h Adjuvat nos Deus (the words of Pelagius) per doctrinam et revelationem suam,

sions of spiritual things into metaphors, is but a way to turn the whole into a fable, or at least to render the gospel the most obscure and improper way of teaching the truth of things that ever was made use of in the world.

This *new creature*, therefore, doth not consist in a *new course of actions*, but in renewed faculties, with *new dispositions*, power, and *ability*, to them and for them. Hence it is called the divine nature; 2 Pet. i. 4. ‘He hath given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature.’ This *θεία φύσις*, this ‘divine nature,’ is not the nature of God, whereof in our own persons we are not subjectively partakers. And yet a nature it is, which is a principle of operation, and that divine or spiritual; namely, an habitual holy principle, wrought in us by God, and bearing his image. By the promises, therefore, we are made partakers of a divine supernatural principle, of spiritual actions and operations, which is what we contend for. So the whole of what we intend is declared, Eph. iv. 22—24. ‘Put off, concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt, according to deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.’ It is the work of regeneration, with respect both to its foundation and progress, that is here described. (1.) The foundation of the whole is laid in our being ‘renewed in the spirit of our mind;’ which the same apostle elsewhere calls, being ‘transformed in the renovation of our minds;’ Rom. xii. 2. That this consists in the participation of a new, saving, supernatural light, to enable the mind unto spiritual actings, and to guide it therein, shall be afterward declared. Herein consists our ‘renovation in knowledge, after the image of him who created us;’ Col. iii. 10. And, (2.) the principle itself infused into us, created in us, is called the ‘new man;’ ver. 24. that is, the new creature before mentioned; and called the ‘new man,’ because it consists in the universal change of the whole soul, as it is the principle of all spiritual and moral actions. And, [1.] it is opposed unto the ‘old man;’ ver. 23. ‘put off the old man

dum cordis nostri oculus aperit, dum nobis, ne præsentibus occupemur, futura demonstrat, dum diaboli pandit insidias, dum nos multiformi et ineffabili dono gratiæ cælestis illuminat. August. lib. de Grat. cont. Pelag. et Cælest. cap. 7.

and put on the new man ;' ver. 22. 24. Now this old man is the corruption of our nature, as that nature is the principle of all religious, spiritual, and moral actions, as is evident; Rom. vi. 6. It is not a corrupt conversation, but the principle and root of it. For it is distinguished both from the conversation of men, and those corrupt lusts which are exercised therein, as to that exercise. And, [2.] it is called the new man, because it is the effect and product of God's creating power, and that in a way of ' a new creation ;' see Eph. i. 18. Col. ii. 12, 13. 2 Thess. i. 11. and it is here said to be ' created after God ;' ver. 24. Now the object of a creating act is an instantaneous production. Whatever preparations there may be for it, and dispositions unto it, the bringing forth of a new form and being by creation, is in an instant. This, therefore, cannot consist in a mere reformation of life. So are we said herein to be the ' workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works ;' Eph. ii. 10. There is a work of God in us preceding all our good works towards him. For before we can work any of them, in order of nature, we must be the workmanship of God, created unto them, or enabled spiritually for the performance of them. -

Again, This *new man*, whereby we are born again, is said to be *created in righteousness and true holiness*. That there is a respect unto man created in innocency, wherein he was made in the image of God, I suppose will not be denied. It is also expressed, Col. iii. 10. ' You have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.' Look then what was, or wherein consisted, the image of God in the first man, thereunto answers this new man, which is created of God. Now this did not consist in reformation of life, no, nor in a course of virtuous actions; for he was created in the image of God, before he had done any one good thing at all, or was capable of so doing. But this image of God consisted principally, as we have evinced elsewhere, in the uprightness, rectitude, and ability, of his whole soul, his mind, will, and affections, in, unto, and for, the obedience that God required of him. This he was endowed withal, antecedently unto all voluntary actions whereby he was to live to God. Such, therefore, must be our regeneration, or the creation of this new man in us. It is the begetting, infusing, creating, of a new saving principle

of spiritual life, light, and power in the soul, antecedent unto true evangelical reformation of life, in order of nature, enabling men thereunto, according unto the mind of God.

Hereunto accords that of our Saviour, Luke vi. 43. 'A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit, neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit;' compared with Matt. vii. 18. The fruit followeth the nature of the tree. And there is no way to change the nature of the fruit, but by changing the nature of the tree which brings it forth. Now all amendment of life in reformation is but fruit; Matt. iii. 10. But the changing of our nature is antecedent hereunto. This is the constant course and tenor of the Scripture, to distinguish between the grace of regeneration, which it declares to be an immediate supernatural work of God in us and upon us, and all that obedience, holiness, righteousness, virtue, or whatever is good in us, which is the consequent, product, and effect of it. Yea, God hath declared this expressly in his covenant; Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. Jer. xxxi. 33. xxxii. 39, 40. The method of God's proceeding with us in his covenant is, that he first washeth and cleanseth our natures, takes away the heart of stone, gives a heart of flesh, writes his law in our hearts, puts his Spirit in us, wherein, as shall be evidenced, the grace of regeneration doth consist. The effect and consequent hereof is, that we shall walk in his statutes, keep his judgments and do them; that is, reform our lives, and yield all holy obedience unto God; wherefore these things are distinguished as causes and effects. See, to the same purpose, Rom. vi. 3—6. Col. iii. 1. 5. Eph. ii. 10. iv. 23—25. This I insist upon still, on supposition, that by reformation of life, all actual obedience is intended. For as to that kind of life which is properly called a moral course of life, in opposition to open debaucheries and unrighteousness, which doth not proceed from an internal principle of saving grace; it is so far from being regeneration or grace, as that it is a thing of no acceptance with God absolutely, whatever use or reputation it may be of in the world.

And yet further, This work is described to consist in the *sanctification of the whole spirit, soul, and body*; 1 Thess. v. 23. And if this be that which some men intend by reformation of life and moral virtue, they must needs win much esteem, for their clearness and perspicuity in teaching spiritual

things. For who would not admire them for such a definition of morality,—namely, that it is the principal sanctification of the whole spirit, soul, and body, of a believer, by the Holy Ghost. But not to dwell longer on this subject, there is no description of the work of regeneration in the Scripture, in its nature, causes, or effects, no name given unto it, no promise made of it, nothing spoken of the ways, means, or power, by which it is wrought, but is inconsistent with this bold Pelagian figment, which is destructive of the grace of Jesus Christ.

The ground of this imagination, that *regeneration consists in a moral reformation of life*, ariseth from a denial of original sin, or an inherent habitual corruption of nature. For the masters unto the men of this persuasion tell us, that whatever is of vice or defilement in us, it is contracted by a custom of sinning only. And their conceptions hereof do regulate their opinions about regeneration. For if man be not originally corrupted and polluted, if his nature be not depraved, if it be not possessed by, and under the power of, evil dispositions and inclinations, it is certain that he stands in no need of an inward spiritual renovation of it. It is enough for such an one, that by change of life he renounce a custom of sinning, and reform his conversation, according to the gospel, which in himself he hath power to do. But as it hath been in part already manifested, and will fully, God assisting, be evinced afterward, that in our regeneration the native ignorance, darkness, and blindness, of our minds are dispelled, saving and spiritual light being introduced by the power of God's grace into them, that the pravity and stubbornness of our wills are removed and taken away, a new principle of spiritual life and righteousness being bestowed on them, and that the disorder and rebellion of our affections are cured, by the infusion of the love of God into our souls; so the corrupt imagination of the contrary opinion, directly opposite to the doctrine of the Scriptures, the faith of the ancient church, and the experience of all sincere believers, hath amongst us of late, nothing but ignorance and ready confidence produced to give countenance unto it.

Thirdly, The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, doth not consist in *enthusiastical raptures, ecstasies, voices*, or any thing of the like kind. It may be, some such things have been, by some deluded persons, apprehended or pre-

tended unto. But the countenancing of any such imaginations, is falsely and injuriously charged on them, who maintain the powerful and effectual work of the Holy Spirit in our regeneration. And this some are prone to do, wherein whether they discover more of their ignorance, or of their malice I know not, but nothing is more common with them. All whom in this matter they dissent from, so far as they know what they say, or whereof they affirm, do teach men to look after enthusiastic inspirations, or unaccountable raptures, and to esteem them for conversion unto God, although in the mean time they live in a neglect of holiness and righteousness of conversation. I answer, If there be those who do so, we doubt not, but that, without their repentance, the wrath of God will come upon them as upon other children of disobedience. And yet, in the mean time, we cannot but call aloud, that others would discover their diligence in attendance unto these things, who, as far as I can discern, do cry up the names of virtue and righteousness, in opposition to the grace of Jesus Christ, and that holiness which is a fruit thereof. But for the reproach now under consideration, it is, as applied, no other but a calumny and false accusation. And that it is so, the writings and preachings of those who have most diligently laboured in the declaration of the work of the Holy Spirit in our regeneration, will bear testimony at the great day of the Lord. We may, therefore, as unto this negative principle, observe three things: 1. That the Holy Spirit in this work doth ordinarily put forth his power in and by the use of means. He worketh also on men suitably unto their natures, even as the faculties of their souls, their minds, wills, and affections, are meet to be affected and wrought upon. He doth not come upon them, with involuntary raptures, using their faculties and powers, as the evil spirit wrests the bodies of them whom he possesseth; his whole work, therefore, is rationally to be accounted for, by and unto them who believe the Scripture, and have received the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. The formal efficiency of the Spirit, indeed, in the putting forth the exceeding greatness of his power, in our quickening; which the ancient church constantly calleth his inspiration of grace, both in private writing, and canons of councils, is no otherwise to be comprehended by

us, than any other creating act of divine power; for as we hear the wind, but know not from whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of God; yet, these two things are certain herein: (1.) That he worketh nothing, nor any other way, nor by any other means, than what are determined and declared in the word. By that, therefore, may, and must, every thing, really belonging, or pretended to belong, unto this work of regeneration, be tried and examined. (2.) That he acts nothing contrary unto, puts no force upon, any of the faculties of our souls, but works in them and by them suitably to their natures; and being more intimate unto them, as Austin speaks, than they are unto themselves, by an almighty facility he produceth the effect which he intendeth.

This great work, therefore, neither in part nor whole, consists in raptures, ecstasies, visions, enthusiastick inspirations, but in the effect of the power of the Spirit of God on the souls of men, by and according to his word, both of the law and the gospel. And those who charge these things on them, who have asserted, declared, and preached it, according to the Scriptures, do it probably to countenance themselves in their hatred of them, and of the work itself. Wherefore, 2. where by reason of distempers of mind, disorder of fancy, or long continuance of distressing fears and sorrows, in and under such preparatory works of the Spirit, which sometimes cut men to their hearts in the sense of their sin, and sinful lost condition, any do fall into apprehensions or imaginations of any thing extraordinary in the ways before-mentioned, if it be not quickly and strictly brought unto the rule, and discarded thereby, it may be of great danger unto their souls, and is never of any solid use or advantage. Such apprehensions for the most part are either conceptions of distempered minds, and discomposed fancies, or delusions of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light, which the doctrine of regeneration ought not to be accountable for. Yet I must say, 3. That so it is come to pass, that many of those who have been really made partakers of this gracious work of the Holy Spirit, have been looked on in the world, which knows them not, as mad, enthusiastic, and fanatical. So the captains of the host esteemed the prophet that came to anoint Jehu; 2 Kings ix. 11. And the

kindred of our Saviour, when he began to preach the gospel, said, He was ‘besides himself,’ or ecstatical; Mark iii. 21. and they went out to lay hold of him. So Festus judged of Paul; Acts xxvi. 24, 25. And the author of the Book of Wisdom gives us an account what acknowledgments some will make when it shall be too late, as to their own advantage; chap. v. 3—5. ‘They shall say, crying out, because of the trouble of their minds, This is he whom we accounted a scorn, and a common reproach; we fools esteemed his life madness, and his latter end to have been shameful; but how is he reckoned among the sons of God, and his lot is among the holy ones.’ From what hath been spoken it appears;

Fourthly, That the work of the Spirit of God in regenerating the souls of men, is diligently to be inquired into by the *preaching of the gospel*, and all to whom the word is dispensed. For the former sort, there is a peculiar reason for their attendance unto this duty. For they are used and employed in the work itself by the Spirit of God, and are by him made instrumental for the effecting of this new birth and life. So the apostle Paul styles himself the father of them who were converted to God, or regenerate, through the word of his ministry; 1 Cor. iv. 15. ‘Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.’ He was used in the ministry of the word for their regeneration, and therefore was their spiritual father, and he only, though the work was afterward carried on by others. And if men are fathers in the gospel to no more than are converted unto God by their personal ministry, it will be no advantage unto any, one day, to have assumed that title, when it hath had no foundation in that work as to its effectual success. So, speaking of Onesimus, who was converted by him in prison, he calls him ‘his son whom he had begotten in his bonds;’ Philem. 10. And this he declared to have been prescribed unto him as the principal end of his ministry, in the commission he had for preaching the gospel; Acts xxvi. 17, 18. Christ said unto him, ‘I send thee unto the Gentiles to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;’ which is a description of the work under consideration. And this is the principal end of our ministry also. Now

certainly it is the duty of ministers to understand the work about which they are employed, as far as they are able, that they may not work in the dark, and fight uncertainly, as men beating the air. What the Scripture hath revealed concerning it, as to its nature, and the manner of its operation; as to its causes, effects, fruits, evidences, they ought diligently to inquire into. To be spiritually skilled therein, is one of the principal furnishings of any for the work of the ministry, without which they will never be able to divide the word aright, nor shew themselves workmen that need not be ashamed. Yet it is scarcely imaginable with what rage and perversity of spirit, with what scornful expressions, this whole work is traduced, and exposed to contempt. Those who have laboured herein, are said 'to prescribe long and tedious trains of conversion, to set down nice and subtle processes of regeneration, to fill people's heads with innumerable swarms of superstitious fears and scruples about the due degrees of godly sorrow, and the certain symptoms of a thorough humiliation;' pp. 306, 307. Could any mistake be charged on particular persons in these things, or the prescribing of rules about conversion to God and regeneration, that are not warranted by the word of truth, it were not amiss to reflect upon them, and refute them. But the intention of these expressions is evident, and the reproach in them is cast upon the work of God itself. And I must profess, that I believe the degeneracy from the truth and power of Christian religion; the ignorance of the principal doctrines of the gospel; and that scorn which is cast, in these and the like expressions, on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, by such as not only profess themselves to be ministers, but of a higher degree than ordinary, will be sadly ominous unto the whole state of the reformed church amongst us, if not timely repressed and corrected. But what at present I affirm in this matter, is, 1. That it is a duty indispensably incumbent on all ministers of the gospel, to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the nature of this work, that they may be able to comply with the will of God, and grace of the Spirit in the effecting and accomplishment of it, upon the souls of them unto whom they dispense the word. Neither without some competent knowledge hereof, can they discharge any one part of their duty

and office in a right manner. If all that hear them are born dead in trespasses and sins, if they are appointed of God to be the instruments of their regeneration, it is a madness which must one day be accounted for, to neglect a sedulous inquiry into the nature of this work, and the means whereby it is wrought. And the ignorance hereof, or negligence herein, with the want of an experience of the power of this work in their own souls, is one great cause of that lifeless and unprofitable ministry which is among us.

2. It is likewise the duty of all to whom the word is preached to inquire also into it; it is unto such to whom the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. 'Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith, prove your own selves; know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except you be reprobates.' It is the concernment of all individual Christians, or professors of Christian religion, to try and examine themselves what work of the Spirit of God, there hath been upon their hearts; and none will deter them from it, but those who have a design to hoodwink them to perdition. And, (1.) the doctrine of it is revealed and taught us. 'For secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of the law;' Deut. xxix. 29. And we speak not of curious inquiries into, or after, hidden things, or the secret veiled actions of the Holy Spirit; but only of an upright endeavour to search into, and comprehend, the doctrine concerning this work, to this very end, that we might understand it. (2.) It is of such importance unto all our duties, and all our comforts, to have a due apprehension of the nature of this work, and of our own concernment therein, that an inquiry into the one and the other cannot be neglected without the greatest folly and madness. Whereunto we may add, (3.) the danger that there is of men being deceived in this matter, which is the hinge whereon their eternal state and condition doth absolutely turn and depend. And certain it is, that very many in the world do deceive themselves herein. For they evidently live under one of these pernicious mistakes; namely, that, [1.] either men may go to heaven, or enter into the kingdom of God, and not be 'born again;' contrary to that of our Saviour, John iii. 6. or, [2.] that men may be 'born again,' and yet live in sin, contrary to 1 John iii. 9.