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**ESSAYS**

ON

**THE MEANS OF REGENERATION,**

**FIRST PUBLISHED**

**IN THE**

**QUARTERLY CHRISTIAN SPECTATOR,**

**FOR 1829.**

NEW-HAVEN:

BALDWIN AND TREADWAY, PRINTERS.

1829.

RS50  
T24

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# ESSAYS

ON

## THE MEANS OF REGENERATION,

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by Nathaniel William Taylor.

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### ADVERTISEMENT.

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THESE Essays were originally published in the Christian Spectator for 1829. They are here given to the public in a separate form, but with the same paging as that of the Spectator, to avoid confusion in referring to passages.

The fundamental principle of these Essays is this, that the means of regeneration are never truly used by sinners, until the indivisible moment of time at which their wills submit to God. This principle is most fully developed in the concluding Essay; but is implied, and should be distinctly kept in view, throughout the whole discussion.

The reader is requested to transpose the sentences on the 210th page, beginning with "A similar suspension," etc., and with, "It is in such states alone," etc., which in their present order (resulting from an accident in interlineation) might lead to a conclusion different from the principle stated above.

He is likewise requested to expunge the last sentence of the third Essay, "In our next number," etc.





THE  
**CHRISTIAN SPECTATOR.**

**QUARTERLY---No. I.**

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**MARCH, 1829.**

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**ART. I.—REVIEW OF SPRING ON THE MEANS OF REGENERATION.**

*A Dissertation on the Means of Regeneration.* By GARDINER SPRING, Pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in the City of New-York. New-York: John P. Haven; 1827. 8vo. pp. 50.

It was a high eulogy of the gospel, authorised by its effects in the apostolic age, that *it is the power of God unto salvation*; and it is an inquiry of deep interest, whether there be any method of preaching this gospel, which, by its actual results, would still invest it with the same exalted character. We venture to say, that there is real occasion for this inquiry, at least in one respect; on the part of the ministry of reconciliation; if not for fault-finding in regard to much of the preaching that passes for the exactest orthodoxy. Not that in the preaching to which we refer, the doctrines which constitute the substantial elements of the gospel are not taught,—not that there is not truth enough exhibited to create weighty obligations to obey it,—not that the preaching adverted to does not result in the conversion of some who hear it,—not, in a word that there is not great good done by this preaching;—but rather that it is marred by an imperfection by which it ought not to be marred, and that there is another method of exhibiting the substantial truths of the same gospel, in which it would become still more illustriously the power of God unto salvation.

When we compare the circumstances and effects of apostolic preaching, with those of the preaching of the present age, and see, as we think we do, the superior advantages, and yet the inferior success of the preachers in these days of light, we look with concern for the cause of this difference in results; and we think we find it, in some degree, in the differ-

ent method in which the same gospel is now preached. We think that there is one impression of vital importance to the success of the gospel, which is not made on the minds of men by the preaching of the one, which was distinctly and strongly made by the preaching of the other; and to speak specifically, we think the gospel is *not* now, as it was by apostles, brought before the human mind in the character and relations of a *cause which is to produce an immediate effect*. It is extensively true that preachers do not preach, and hearers do not hear the gospel with such an impression of its efficacy. The sword of the Spirit is used under the conviction that God in his sovereignty has withdrawn from it its ethereal temper, and the anticipation of its powerlessness, by palsying the hand that wields it, becomes the means of its own fulfilment. Actual events which should prove the gospel to be a cause of *immediate* influence on the minds of men, would be looked at with the amazement due only to the distant wonders of a miraculous age; and we hardly know of an annunciation from the pulpit that would be more startling to many, for its supposed extravagance, than that every sinner may become, and is authorised to believe that he may become, a Christian on the spot. Instead of looking for actual facts in accordance with such a declaration; instead of hearing the gospel as a cause whose benign influence may be realized in the immediate transformation of the human character, carnal security sits secure as at a safe distance from its power, and the most sanguine expectations of Christian love, under the most powerful preaching, are, that some *one* of its fortunate hearers may possibly be awakened. The everlasting gospel is preached from Sabbath to Sabbath,—a cause perfectly fitted by divine wisdom to secure the transformation of human character is employed, and though faith may faintly hope that the preaching will show its power in the remote effects of future months or years, yet the balance of probability, in the more common estimation, is as a thousand to one, that it will prove as water spilt on the ground. Thus the work of the preacher has, in the view of multitudes, little more connection with any appropriate effects of the gospel which he preaches, than to stand over the graves of the dead and call them to life, could be supposed to have with the general resurrection at the last day. And dull work it is, and dull work it must be, so to preach and so to hear the gospel.

We know indeed that the obligation of immediate repentance is not denied: by many it is clearly and powerfully inculcated; and right and indispensable it is that this should be done. We know that when it is forcibly urged home upon the conscience,

it produces an agitation which tends to countervail all the causes of sloth and inaction. But then, no one performs this duty the more for being told that it *ought* to be done, while the conviction is also forced on the mind, that *it will not be done*. The conviction of the present practicability of duty, is indispensable to the present performance of duty; and no pressure of obligation is sufficient to counteract the paralyzing persuasion of the utter uselessness of effort. Under the influence of such a persuasion, no motive can reach the mind with its moving power, and unless there be some bright hour or moment in the sinner's probation, when he believes that what God *now* demands, *may now* be done, it never will be done. The opposite conviction is, that it will not now be done; and the belief that this is certain, though consistent with the obligation of duty, is fatal to every effort requisite to the present performance of duty. And such we think is the actual belief adopted and acted upon by great numbers. The conviction which we say is indispensable, never takes a thorough hold of the mind. No time ever arrives in which the duty of turning to God is regarded as one of present practicability, and present urgency,—none in which there is any moving influence which sets the man to the business of turning to God, as a work now on hand, and now to be accomplished. However easy sinners may account the performance of the duty, when they shall be ready to devote to it the requisite time, in a protracted, gradual, well-directed process of preparation, yet the present thorough surrender of the heart to God is esteemed by multitudes as wholly without the limits of all actual occurrences; and in instances fearfully numerous, continuance in sin, and death in sin, is the infallible consequence.

In proof of some great dissimilarity between the mode of preaching the gospel in the apostolic age and at the present day, we ask whence the undeniable fact, of the straight-onward, unembarrassed call to repentance by apostles, contrasted with the conscious hesitation and embarrassment in uttering the same unqualified message, on the part of many a modern preacher? Why in the one case, do we find the open, broad announcement of duty, just as if the preacher intended and expected that men should perform it; and why, in the other, is this annunciation always modified and always weakened by other doctrinal associations, just as if the preacher was afraid that men would do their duty at once? Why no objection from a caviling world about doing nothing, and waiting God's time, under an apostolic summons to duty; and scarcely any thing else heard on this subject from many in our day, but the inconsistency and folly of attempting any thing in the work of their

salvation? We ask also, whence all this discussion about *using the means of regeneration by sinners*, of which in the form and design of it, we find no trace either in the preaching or writings of apostles; and whence this palpable departure from their mode of preaching the gospel to sinners, by telling them *how* to repent, instead of telling them outright to *repent*, and making them feel that this is *now* to be done?—We are not saying that there is no necessity for some philosophical analyses and explanations on this subject, for the purpose of meeting cavils and objections to doctrines according to godliness. But we are constrained to ask, who has created this necessity? And why did not apostles encounter the same embarrassments and objections from those to whom they preached? We believe the true answer to these inquiries is to be found in some peculiarity in *the mode* of preaching the same gospel in these latter days; a peculiarity which so falls in with the tendency of the human heart to avoid the pressure of present obligation, as to result in the anti-apostolic impression on the minds of many, that *nothing* is to be done in the work of conversion, but quietly to wait for a divine influence as the first moving cause of all doings, which are not worse than useless. We further believe that under this impression, a multitude of the ungodly in this land of gospel light are sleeping away their probation.

There is too, we think, when the gospel becomes effectual in the conversion of sinners in our age, compared with similar instances in the apostolic age, a dissimilarity in its effects, which evinces a dissimilarity in the *manner* of their production. Why was it that, under the preaching of Peter to the multitude on the day of Pentecost, “WHEN they heard this, they were pricked in the heart,” and that ON THE SAME DAY, there were added unto the disciples about three thousand souls? Why was it that Paul and Silas had scarcely told the trembling jailor, what he must do to be saved, before they recognized him as a convert to the faith, ‘baptizing him and all his, *straightway*.’ Why were the Saviour’s calls so immediately listened to? Why in following him, did they leave all and leave it at once—leave as it were, by one decisive purpose of obedience to a present call, the dead to bury their dead? And why we may ask does the inspired narrative of the effects of the gospel exhibit it as uniformly, if effectual at all, of such sudden and powerful efficacy upon its listening hearers?—so much so, that the design of this record of facts is most obviously to make the appalling impression, that he who *once* turns away from these messages of grace, has no ground of hope that he shall ever embrace them. Did the young ruler, lovely as he

was, after hearing the gospel from the Master himself, go away sorrowful? this melancholy fact is the last you hear of him. Did Felix tremble—was Agrippa almost persuaded? the catastrophe is the same. How decisive to the same point is the parable of the sower, teaching with a plainness that supercedes all comment, that so far as any genuine effects of the gospel are to be expected, they are to be looked for under the voice of the living messenger. Such however are not the most common views entertained respecting the preaching of the gospel in our days. Such is not the honor conferred by the people on God's own institution; such is not the magnifying of their office by the ministers themselves. There is, if the more prevalent opinion be correct, an indispensable, long, progressive preparation to be made; to be made only by going away from preaching to make up the mind elsewhere on the great question of serving God or mammon, and by a subsequent process of awakening and conviction and anxiety and distress, which, were it gone through with as suddenly as in apostolic days, would be counted altogether spurious and worse than useless. There is the waiting attitude of dependent recipients, ready to take what it may please a sovereign God to give, and to hope that a sufficiently long and patient delay will bring the desired gift. But where is the active moral agent, applying his whole mental energy to the immediate work of turning to God—where is the immutable, definitive purpose of renouncing the world and sin and giving the whole man to Christ and his service, taken at once—taken as it were under the power and pressure of the gospel, as it comes from the mouth of the ambassador of God? Where is the sinner, who under this most vivid and impressive discovery of the realities of the gospel, feels himself to be in the sanctuary of the divine presence, and yields on the spot to the transforming influence, turning once for all, from idols to the living God? So was it in the days of the first preachers of this gospel; and we ask, why under the preaching of the same gospel, we do not now find a correspondence in effects, in the particulars referred to? Shall we be told that a great circumstantial dissimilarity between the conversions under a miraculous dispensation, and those of the present age, is to be expected? We ask for the *proof*, that the *manner* of these conversions was affected at all by the fact alleged? We ask why the same gospel, presented in the same form, and with equal or rather with higher evidence that it is the gospel of God, and presented too to minds not benighted and benumbed by Judaism or heathenism, but enlightened in the knowledge of divine truth from early childhood, should not

be as immediately connected with its appropriate results now as then? Or rather, we ask why under the preaching of some men, (for we have knowledge of some whose preaching and its effects warrant the question,) are the effects of the gospel in *the manner* of them, in entire accordance with the effects produced by the preaching of apostles? Should it be said that a peculiar divine influence attended the gospel in the days of its first propagation; we reply, if by this is meant that an equal degree of this influence would not attend a similar combination of means, as this is made up of the truths preached and the manner of preaching them, that the assertion is wholly gratuitous, and unauthorized. Besides, it is contrary to facts, and to the analogy of providential procedure, that an equally perfect ministration of truth should be attended with a less measure of divine influence now, than in any previous time. These, like the light and heat of the ascending sun, have ever been progressive; and as the transient clouds which diminish his brightness and power are followed with the greater intensity of both, so the gospel rescued from the imperfections of its ministration, is destined to pour its noon-tide splendors on the nations. The volume of inspiration is finished; and the millennial glory of the church is to be accomplished not by the revelation of any new truth or doctrine, but by a more perfect ministration of truth already revealed, and by corresponding effusions of the Holy Spirit. Nor do we well know how to keep our patience with that sloth which appeals to the sovereignty of God to justify its unfruitfulness, and never inquires after that perfection of instrumental activity, which would be 'in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.' There is reason why the ministry should be 'wise to win souls to Christ,' and to the skilfulness and abundance of its labors are we to look, under God, for the predicted glories of Zion.

We have been led into these remarks by the Dissertation before us. What we have said may be sufficient to show, that the views which are adopted respecting the subject discussed by the author, must have an important influence on the mode of preaching the gospel to sinners; and that, to some extent, these views have in fact occasioned departures from that direct and urgent inculcation of immediate holiness, which characterized the preaching of Christ and his apostles. The views of Dr. S. are evidently designed, and in some respects are fitted, to prevent such departures in the form in which they often occur. We propose to give a brief outline of the Dissertation with some passing remarks, and to present our own views of the general subject.

Assuming that there is a general agreement among evangelical men respecting the reality, the necessity, the author, the nature, and the means of regeneration, Dr. Spring justly supposes that on the last of these topics there is some diversity in the specific views of those equally attached to the doctrines of grace. The means of regeneration he comprises in the truth of God, and makes the important distinction between means *as used by God* with unregenerated men, and means *as used by the unregenerated themselves*. Remarking that the means of regeneration which God has appointed are many and various, that he uses them with unfeigned sincerity and urgency, and that all who enjoy these means are under obligation to make such a use of them, as will answer the end of their appointment, he brings us to the inquiry, *how do unregenerate men use the means of regeneration?* This question he answers thus; that they never use them as they ought to use them,—they never use them with sincerity—their use of them is a wrong and sinful use. On the last of these topics Dr. Spring says;

He (God) neither requires nor forbids any external action separated from the heart. He requires a good, and forbids a bad heart; and he requires and forbids nothing but what is an expression of a heart which is either good or evil. But are not the hearts of unregenerate men entirely sinful? and is not all their moral conduct therefore, entirely sinful? The external conduct of men, even when it assumes the most sacred and imposing form, is just as sinful as the heart from which it flows. The only way to prove any action to be sinful, is to show that it is done from a wicked heart. And since unregenerated men always act from a wicked heart, their heart always vitiates their use of the means of regeneration. Nor let it be forgotten, that *the light* which unregenerated men resist in the enjoyment of means, augments and aggravates their sinfulness. pp. 13, 14.

To this, in its popular import, we do most unhesitatingly subscribe. Nothing is plainer to our conviction, than that every act of body and of mind, which can be truly said to be dictated by the heart or governing purpose of the mind, is properly moral, and is either good or evil, as the governing affection or purpose of the heart is good or evil. Nor do we question at all, that unregenerate men commit much sin in what is often termed using the means of regeneration; and we always welcome as of salutary tendency, an unsparing and bold exposure of their guilt in so doing. They read the word of life, they hear it preached, they sit in the sanctuary of God with their thoughts more or less directed to the objects which his truth there discloses to the mind, and still maintain their opposition to its demands; they may retire to their closet under the alarms of conscious guilt, and when alone with their Sovereign and Judge, abhor the necessity of submission to his will, and cherish a heart unshaken in its sordid attachment to the crea-



ture, in the very presence of their Creator. Even a protracted process of conviction, with all its anxieties and tremblings, may still leave an opposing heart struggling against the known obligations of duty and the rightful claims of God; and in this manner, as Dr. Spring justly remarks, unregenerate men often commit more sin than ever before. We cannot suppose that any language when used in its ordinary popular import, can too strongly depict the guilt of men in such transactions with their Maker. For the purpose therefore of popular instruction and useful effect this view of our author, respecting the sinfulness of these doings, is imperiously demanded. It is also abundantly authorized by the Scriptures. In respect to moral character the Bible knows no neutrality. "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."—"He that is not *for* me," saith the Saviour, "is *against* me." The common and necessary employments of life,—the very acts of visible worship done by *wicked* men, are pronounced an abomination to the Lord. Indeed every specific voluntary action, which is dictated by a heart in which the love of God is wanting, is a violation of the precept "whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

We are aware that there are those who disapprove of this popular form of speaking as too unqualified, and who to exempt the sinner from the charge of sin in using the means of regeneration, insist that he may perform actions, even while his heart is actively fixed on the world, to which no moral quality pertains; actions dictated not by the selfish principle of the heart, but simply by constitutional emotions and feelings. Such a distinction, however, we think is not known either in the popular phraseology or in the ordinary conceptions of men. It is, if we understand the case, resorted to for a purpose; and the purpose is really to exempt the sinner from the charge of sin while the sinful, selfish principle remains as firm and active in the heart as ever. Let it then be supposed that there may be external actions dictated merely by constitutional emotions and feelings, and that there is no sin in such actions or feelings, still it is an important question whether the selfish principle remains in full power and dominion in the heart? If so—if a supreme affection for any other object than God is cherished, whether it flow out every moment in overt action or not, then plainly the man is chargeable with present sin. You may suppose him to be cultivating his field to obtain support for a dependant family, —to be eating his necessary food merely to satisfy the cravings of natural appetite—or to be supplicating deliverance from

the wrath to come, merely from the constitutional dread of suffering, and not to subserve any selfish purpose whatever; but, if while so doing he cherishes a stronger affection for any other object than for God, there is 'an idol in his heart.' No matter what the external action is, nor what constitutional feelings prompt it, the affections of the heart are actively given to some object, in perpetual violation of the claims of his Maker. To what purpose then except that of deception, is it, to turn the mind of the sinner merely to external actions or constitutional emotions as sinless, when in the heart, sin is as truly active as in the perpetration of overt iniquity; to what purpose except that of ruin to the soul, are sinners thus led to palliate, or as the case often is, to overlook and disregard what constitutes the essence of all sin. If they are to be told that things sinless are not sin, in proof that real sin is not, why not specify the circulation of the blood, or the breathing of the air, to prove that there is no sin in loving mammon more than God? The truth is, that in the active state of his moral affections, the man has a master, and since that master is not God, Him he hates; and the fact is too palpable and too momentous to be palliated, concealed, or in the least obscured by any expedient.

Dr. Spring next proceeds to show, *how such a use of means is connected with regeneration.* Without now entering on the question whether the use which he describes is connected with regeneration at all, what he says to show that it is not acceptable to God,—that it does not interest in the divine promises,—that it is not making any approximation to holiness,—and that it does not always terminate in regeneration, is to us quite convincing. These views also, as we shall attempt more fully to show hereafter; are decisively called for, and fitted to be highly useful, not only as opposed to errors which are taught by some preachers, but especially as exposing some of the more prevalent and dangerous presumptions of impenitent men.

After some incidental remarks on this part of the subject, the author gives specific affirmative answers to the above leading inquiry, amplifying it thus; "What end do the means of regeneration answer? If the Spirit of God is the cause of holiness, why should not his agency be exerted alone? What is the use of means, if it is not expected they will exert an efficiency in producing a new heart?" To this he answers, that they enlighten the understanding—impress the conscience—illustrate the obduracy of the heart, and exhibit their own powerlessness and the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit.

The encouragement given us to use the means of regeneration with our fellow men, and the great importance of using those which God has appointed and no other, are topics

pertinently introduced and forcibly illustrated. 'Whether it is better for unregenerate men to use the means than to neglect them,' is a question which he answers according to the different import of which it is capable. If it mean, whether they perform any duty, he answers in the negative. If it mean whether they commit more sin in one than in the other, he answers that God only can decide. If it mean whether they who use them are more likely to be saved than those who neglect them, he answers in the affirmative.

To some things advanced on the pages whose contents we have briefly described, we should make exceptions, had we set ourselves to the minute animadversions of eager criticism. The manner in which we should modify some of Dr. Spring's positions will be obvious from the subsequent discussion. We therefore pass to the subject in respect to which chiefly, we have introduced this treatise to the attention of our readers, viz. *the directions to be given by ministers to persons who inquire, what they must do to be saved.* We entirely approve and cordially recommend what Dr. Spring has said on this important topic. It is apparent that he has, (whether all his positions on the general subject be consistent with it or not,) a deep and strong practical conviction, that to preach the gospel to sinners, ministers must testify repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; that he has not by any philosophy respecting the mode of the sinner's dependence on grace, nor by any imagined necessity of harmonizing the fact of dependence with the sinner's obligations or with the practicability of immediate compliance, been led to keep back the summons of God to the immediate performance of known duty; and that he has learned in this respect to preach the gospel as our Lord and his apostles preached it, without a suspicion that by any modifications of his own, he can preach it better than they.

His views on this subject will be seen in the following passages.

I need not say, there exists both in theory and practice, two different and opposite views on this interesting point. There are those whose views of human depravity are such, that they feel great embarrassments in addressing the requisitions of the gospel to the hearts and consciences of unregenerate men, and therefore fail in enforcing those requisitions, and leave them satisfied with their use of means. On the other hand, there are those, whose views of human depravity, though equally humiliating, are such as to present no embarrassments in urging these requisitions upon the sinner, as the commandment of the everlasting God, and as the most powerful means of conviction and conversion. These two different modes of thinking and acting are never brought to the test so thoroughly, as when ministers are laid under the necessity of answering the inquiry of distressed and

convinced sinners, who with all the weight of their sins upon them, and all the horrors of eternity before them, ask, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*

The question is, *shall they be told to do any thing which implies the neglect or postponement of immediate reconciliation to God,—or shall they be cut off from every refuge, and urged without delay, to repent and believe the gospel?*

To this we reply, *The only proper direction to be given them is, REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.* Nothing should relax the force of this pressing obligation. pp. 43, 44.

The preaching of the gospel loses its weight and authority, if ministers feel embarrassed in addressing the requisitions of the gospel to the hearts and consciences of unrenewed men. Many a minister is spoiled because in this most important part of all his duty, he does not know how to engage in his Master's business. And every minister may be satisfied that he has fallen into some error in doctrine if he feels this practical embarrassment. It is the business of a minister so to preach as to leave the impression on the minds of sinners, that he has a right to expect that they will at once cease to do evil, and learn to do well. In such a course of duty he feels strong, He knows that God is with him, and that the consciences of his hearers are with him. And he feels that the truth he utters holds a dominion over the consciences of men, and exerts an authority upon them which nothing can gainsay or resist. p. 47.

We cannot deem it an unimportant matter, that ministers faithfully discharge their duty in this particular. There is no danger in directing men at once to repent and believe the gospel. This is the direction, the wisdom of which is fortified by sound experience. This is the direction of the bible. Witness the conduct of Peter on the day of Pentecost. Witness the interview between the apostles and the anxious jailor at Philippi. Witness the direction of our Lord to a class of men who superseded the obligations to inward holiness by their external observances, when he said, "Cleanse *first* that which is *within*." Witness his reply to the question, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" when he said, "*This is the work of God, that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*" Witness the entire scriptures. This comprehensive direction may be followed, and the sinner may do his duty. This may be followed, and the sinner will be safe. p. 49.

We may not vary from the spirit of these injunctions. There are a thousand ways that lead to hell; there is only one that conducts to heaven. We have nothing to do with conducting our hearers in the way to hell. We may not take upon ourselves the responsibility of deciding which of the numerous ways that lead to that dark abode is the safest and best. God has not decided. The best of them is the way of sin and death. So long as there is this one way to heaven, our business is to direct them thither in this only way. It is a straight and narrow path, but there is no other. Except they repent, they shall all likewise perish. And they have no time to lose in fruitless exertions. The next admonition they hear may be, cut it down. The next place they occupy may be the mansion of the dead. The next assembly to which they are convoked, may be the congregated universe before the Son of Man. p. 50.

Decisive as the reasonings of the author on this point must be, to every mind not more attached to its own philosophizings

than reverent toward the word of God, we cannot but regret that he has not rendered more apparent the consistency between the course he so earnestly and justly recommends, and the doctrine of the sinner's dependence. To exhibit this consistency for the purpose of overthrowing the standing objection of many unrenewed men, *that they have nothing to do because all they shall do will be either vain or sinful*, and of bringing the obligation and the practicability of immediate duty clearly before their minds, appears to be the only important end of discussing the subject. What minuteness of discussion and particularity of statement however are requisite for this purpose, is an inquiry which cannot fail to interest every one, at all acquainted with the different forms in which the subject has been presented.

That the above objection should be fairly met and refuted is certainly important; and in our own view, this is done on the general and incontrovertible principle, that the sinner without using the means of regeneration, (whatever this use may be) will never be regenerated, and that by using them he *may be*. By the exhibition of this simple principle, the sinner is shown to stand in the same relation to the motives to effort in this highest human concern, as that in which he stands to motives in most, not to say in all instances of voluntary action. On this simple principle depends the entire activity of this busy world. Absolute knowledge of success cheers no human effort; and without affirming that some degree of uncertainty is indispensable to secure in man the utmost exertion in any enterprise, it is obvious that to make it a reason for total inaction would be madness; while in many cases the mere possibility of securing an important end is deemed a sufficient reason for the most strenuous exertion. A more decisive reason then, for using the means of regeneration, and of course a more decisive refutation of the sinner's objection that *he has nothing to do*, cannot be demanded than are furnished by the simple principle now stated. The question then naturally arises, why not stop at this point; if the objection be thus summarily refuted, and by so simple a process, why pursue it farther; why agitate so many minute questions about the propriety and sinfulness of unregenerate doings? We are ready to say that we think it would have been well, if many who have ventured far and boldly into this region of theological disputation, had been satisfied to stop at the point specified. Better far had it been, to state a general principle which is true though liable to perversion, than by false specific statements to occasion real embarrassment, and authorize valid objections to the truth. There are however obvious facts, which create, at least in many cases, strong reasons for

greater particularity of statement than is involved in the general principle adverted to. The sinner, averse to duty and ingenious to misapprehend and pervert truth, especially in the form of general propositions, is prone to make false and fatal inferences from the very principle designed to prevent them. When the insufficiency and dangers of one ground of quiet in sin are exposed, he is almost sure to fabricate another, and from the general truth that he can do that with which through the grace of God his regeneration *may be* connected, he frequently derives the inference that his salvation is in such a respect in his own hands, as to quiet all his anxieties in continued sin. This kind of reliance of sinners who cannot otherwise wholly pacify conscience while they do nothing, is not, we apprehend, duly estimated by the ministry, either in respect to its extent or its influence. It is this, if we mistake not, which, combined with the conviction of the uselessness of present efforts directed to the performance of duty, holds the multitude of the ungodly in our orthodox congregations, in those slumbers of death which no thunders of wrath disturb. It is not merely that they are doing nothing *now* because they intend to do something hereafter on the assumption that death and judgment will consult their future convenience in this concern; but it is that they are supposing *that* to be using the means of regeneration which is not. They imagine that reading the scriptures, hearing the gospel preached, and seeking (*praying* they are wont to call it) for renewing grace, with the heart as actively devoted to the world as ever, is doing what renders their regeneration highly probable, if not what interests them in the promises of grace and salvation; or at least, they are quite sure to regard such doings as all that are either necessary or useful in respect to the end, and are hence equally sure never to use the means of regeneration as they must use them or die. And what greatly augments the evil is, that there are ministers of the gospel who directly countenance and advocate these false and dangerous, not to say fatal views of the doings of unregenerate men. Hence it often becomes an imperious duty to expose by specific statement, those errors which result from the perversions of truth when presented in a more general form. Nor are there perhaps any errors in the evangelical portion of the church, which more need a thorough and faithful exposure—none which more impair the efficacy of the ministry or hinder the effusions of the Holy Spirit. In reading the *Christian Observer*, the sermons of Dr. Chalmers, the writings of Mrs. More, and many others of like distinction, as well as in hearing many of the ablest preachers in our own country, we have frequently to lament exhortations and encouragements

addressed to impenitent men, to depend on their own sinful doings for regenerating grace; and it only causes us to grieve the more, that these things exist to mar so much excellence, and to countervail so much talent. The evil is not simply, that the power of such writers and preachers is not brought unimpaired to the point of urging sinners to the immediate performance of duty, but that they virtually excuse the neglect of it, and thus furnish a resting place for rebellion against God. Fortunately indeed such preachers can be, and often are, inconsistent with themselves; and we doubt not that their inconsistency in uttering truth often counteracts in no inconsiderable degree the true tendency of their errors. After all, we so estimate this tendency, we are so confident that sinful men will die in sin if they continue to cherish this dependence on their sinful doings, that we have rarely felt, on witnessing any attempt to take it from them, the reproaches and hostility often occasioned notwithstanding, that matters are the worse for it. Dr. Spring we doubt not has witnessed the errors we deplore, with their practical results in the ministry of brethren whom he reveres and loves; and much is due to him for his faithful attempt to correct opinions so fraught with calamity to the souls of men.

It is however much to be desired, that in attempting to correct some errors we do not fall into others; and if we may judge from what has been done, peculiar care is requisite that the effort made to extricate the present subject from some difficulties, does not involve it in others scarcely less to be regretted. Here we feel obliged to say, that Dr. Spring, who in most of his leading positions is so entirely correct, has fallen into some inadvertencies. Highly as we approve of the general course of argument by which he opposes the errors to which we have adverted, and confident as we are that what he has said concerning the directions to be given to sinners is truth of the utmost importance, we still believe that he has advanced some positions which, if followed into their legitimate consequences, would leave the subject in inextricable embarrassment. When he says that "God requires men to use the means of regeneration only as expressions of the heart," it seems to us to be equivalent to saying, that God requires sinners to use the means of a new heart with a new heart—or to use the means of commencing holiness with holiness already commenced; a requirement which in our view would not only be quite useless in respect to the end proposed by it, but would be no remote approximation to the solecism of requiring that the end precede the means, or the effect the cause. We do not believe it possible under such a

view of the divine requirement, to impress its obligation on the conscience.

When too the author maintains the absolute necessity of using the means of regeneration, even of *that use of them* which he pronounces *wrong and sinful*, it amounts, in our own estimation, to asserting the absolute necessity of 'doing evil that good may come;' to inculcating continuance in sin, as an indispensable preliminary to the performance of duty. That such a necessity should exist under the government of God, is to us incredible. Nor can we reconcile it with the obligation of immediate holiness. For the necessity asserted is a natural necessity, since by such necessity "the love—cannot be exercised until its object be brought before the understanding;" and the necessity that a sinner should sin in bringing the object before the understanding, is, if we rightly apprehend our author, the necessity that an act 'done from a wicked heart,' should be sinful. In both cases no power to the contrary is supposable, and therefore the necessity of committing sin in order to become holy is a natural necessity, which alike excuses the sin and justifies present disobedience to the divine requirement.

Again, when Dr. Spring confines all the probability of regeneration to the sinful use of the means of regeneration, we think he takes away every reason for any attempt at the immediate performance of duty which can affect a rational being; and that no motive, properly so called, remains to any immediate act or acts, except a sinful use of the means of regeneration. The sinner is assured that no good will in fact result to him from any other course; and what then can induce him to adopt any other? This seems to be presenting, not only a powerful motive to sin, but one which will render void, according to the nature of the human mind, every influence to the immediate performance of duty. For why should a man attempt what he knows will not be done until he has *first* sinfully used the means of doing it?

We have thus frankly stated difficulties with which some of Dr. Spring's positions embarrass the inculcation of immediate holiness on sinners. We do not think that he has made our way clear to the conscience and the heart, with the call to immediate repentance. We regard these embarrassing positions of the author, as inadvertencies into which the mind of a writer is liable to fall, when strongly fixed on some single view of his subject, and which, had he contemplated it under other relations, he would have successfully avoided. These positions are not peculiar to Dr. S. but are to be found in other writers of distinction. We doubt not that if the subject can



be disencumbered of these difficulties, and an unobstructed entrance into the mind of the sinner can be opened to the commands of the Most High, an important service will be rendered to the cause of truth and religion. This we shall venture to attempt, by exhibiting at some length our own views of the general subject.

I. We begin with some explanatory remarks. That the acts and doings of unregenerate men which are designated by Dr. Spring and many others, as those which constitute *using the means of regeneration* are sinful, we have already expressed our full conviction. That these acts should be accurately described in their principle and their nature, that sinners may have knowledge of their moral quality and condemning power, is also in our view of great practical utility. But the error, the grand error on this subject, as we regard it, is, *that these acts and doings which are so obviously sinful, and therefore forbidden by divine authority, should be called using the means of regeneration, and be pronounced (as indeed using the means of regeneration must be) of indispensable necessity to regeneration itself.* The truth is, as we shall attempt to show, that according to all correct usage of terms these acts of the sinner are not *using*—they are, and Dr. Spring adopts the designation in one instance, *abusing* the means of regeneration.

The question then naturally arises, *what are the acts which constitute using the means of regeneration?* We answer, that by *using the means of regeneration* we do not understand any acts which either precede or are to be distinguished from regeneration itself, when this term is used in its more common popular import; but we understand *those acts which, together with another act, are in the more popular use of language, included under the term regeneration.* Regeneration, considered as a moral change of which man is the subject—giving God the heart—making a new heart—loving God supremely, &c., are terms and phrases which in popular use denote a complex act. Each in popular use denotes what in a more *analytical* mode of speaking may be viewed and described as made up of several particular acts and states of mind, or as a series of such acts and states; which are yet so related and connected, that for all ordinary purposes they are sufficiently defined when spoken of in combination and as constituting ONE ACT under one name. Indeed it is of this combination or series of mental acts only, that moral quality can be predicated; since no one act of the process viewed abstractly from the other acts, can be a *moral act*. The act of the

will or heart viewed abstractly from the acts of intellect, is not moral, nor are the acts of the intellect viewed abstractly from the act of the will or heart. That the preference of God to all other objects of affection may be a moral act, it must be, and in all ordinary speech is assumed to be, an intelligent preference. For the homage of beings who are intelligent as well as voluntary, and who can estimate the comparative worth of objects, is the homage which honors God, and which he claims as a moral governor. Indeed what we are now saying of the words and phrases under consideration is true of all complex words, such as walk, sit, read, write, etc. These words in all ordinary speech and writing, are used to denote *one* act, and yet this one act includes a process of mental acts, consisting of the perception and comparison of motives, the estimate of their relative worth, and the choice or willing of the external action. Of course the complex act denoted by a single word may be,—it often is, for necessary purposes, analysed or separated into its several parts, and the complex term is applied to one or more of these parts, as the object of the speaker may require. But we shall have occasion to resume this topic hereafter.

In respect to *the mode of divine operation* in producing a change of heart, we are averse to indulging in speculation. The scriptures, however, authorize us to assert generally, that *the mode of divine influence is consistent with the moral nature of this change as a voluntary act of man; and also that it is through the truth, and implies attention to truth on the part of man.* Any views which contravene in any respect either of these positions, we regard as unscriptural. That the influence of the Divine Spirit in regeneration accords in *the mode* of it with the laws of moral agency and the nature of moral action, is apparent from the distinct recognition in the scriptures of this change as the sinner's duty and the sinner's act,—as his act done in obedience to the divine will, in view of his obligations and in the exercise of his powers as a moral being.\* That the change is through the truth, and implies attention to the truth—the sober, solemn consideration of the objects which truth discloses, prior to the requisite act of the will or heart, will not be doubted by the reader of the sacred volume.

When, however, we speak of the priority of these mental acts, we refer rather to the order of nature than of time. We are aware that the progress of thought and feeling is often as

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\* Ezek. xviii. 31. Matt. xxiii. 26. James, iv. 8. Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. 1 Peter, i. 22.

rapid as that of light, and we no more intend to affirm any *measurable* duration between the first and last act in the series, than when we say the sun must exist before it can shine. On this point it is indispensable, if we would not dispute about mere words, to consider the popular looseness of such terms and phrases, as *before, after, immediate, as soon as, etc.*; and to remember that the degree of definiteness intended, is to be decided, not by the mere words, but by the known object of the speaker. Thus in a case in which some unusual precision of thought is required, we should say the sun must have existed *before* it shone; while in another case, in which the same precision of ideas is not required, we should say with equal truth and propriety, the sun shone *as soon as* it existed. In the one case the object would require that the priority be noticed by the form of speaking; in the other it would not. So in the present case, when we speak of the priority of certain mental acts to the act of the will, it is because, as we shall show hereafter, our object requires this precision of thought and expression. At the same time we intend by it no such priority as renders it improper or untrue to speak, according to popular usage and the more ordinary purposes of instruction, of the entire series of acts as cotemporaneous, and as constituting **ONE ACT** under one term, *regeneration*; or to speak of it as *one act*, the *immediate* performance of which is required of the sinner.

Now from this more popular and comprehensive import of the term *regeneration* we are obliged by the object in view, to depart *when we speak of using the means of regeneration*. As we shall have occasion to illustrate the reason and necessity of this departure in another part of the discussion, we would merely remark here, that we suppose the distinction between using the means of regeneration, and regeneration itself, is a theological rather than a scriptural distinction; and that it has been made solely for the purpose of obviating, what would otherwise be a very formidable objection to the performance of immediate duty, in view of the doctrine of the sinner's dependence. This objection we suppose to be founded wholly in a false *analytical* view of *the mode* of the sinner's dependence, and that therefore it can be refuted only by a similar method of discussion.

Accordingly when we speak of the means of regeneration, we shall use the word *regeneration* in a more limited import than its ordinary popular import; and shall confine it, chiefly for the sake of convenient phraseology, to the act of the will or heart, in distinction from other mental acts connected with it; or to that act of the will or heart which consists in a

preference of God to every other object; or to that disposition of the heart, or governing affection or purpose of the man, which consecrates him to the service and glory of God.\*

In thus confining the term *regeneration* to the act of the will or heart, when we speak of using the means of regeneration, we do not intend to decide any minute questions respecting the precise thing done by the agency of the Spirit; nor whether his interposition does or does not influence other acts beside that of the will or heart. All that our present object requires us to say on these topics is, that regeneration in the popular import of the term is an event which depends on the interposition of the Holy Spirit;—that it *so* depends on this interposition, that whatsoever part of that process of mental acts and states which, in the popular use of the term, constitute regeneration, is produced by this divine interposition, *some part* of the process is preliminary to such interposition, and preliminary also to that which, in the limited use of the word, may be called regeneration; and that whatever acts be regarded as thus preliminary, they are to be regarded and spoken of either as using the means of grace, or as using the means of regeneration. Allowing these things to be so, we have no controversy here with any who may prefer to include more than the act of the will or heart in the term *regeneration*, when they speak of using the means of regeneration.

Applying the word *regeneration* then in some limited import, not precisely defined, we affirm that *there are and must be certain mental acts and states, which in the order of nature at least, precede regeneration; or which precede, as we propose to use the term regeneration, that act of the will or heart, in which God is preferred to every other object.* Of these mental acts and states, our object does not require that we give an accurate analysis. It is sufficient for our purpose, to show that *there are* such acts and states, and that we so far describe them, that it may be understood what class of mental acts we designate as preliminary to regeneration, and as constituting using the means of regeneration. We proceed to say then, that before the act of the will or heart in which the sinner first prefers God to every other object, the object of the

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\*We are aware that some writers have excluded from the word *regeneration*, the moral change of which man is the subject. Dr Hopkins uses the term to denote simply the *operation of God*, in distinction from the effect, which he calls *conversion*. This however, we think is not the most common import of the term *regeneration*. It is certainly not its import when we speak, as almost all theological writers do, of the *nature of regeneration*, of the *author of regeneration*, of the *means of regeneration*, &c. In its ordinary import, it denotes a moral change in man produced by the Holy Spirit, and we have designed to use the word in no instance inconsistently with this sense.

preference must be viewed or estimated as the greatest good. Before the object can be viewed as the greatest good, it must be compared with other objects, as both are sources or means of good. Before this act of comparing, there must be an act dictated not by selfishness, but by *self-love*, in which the mind determines to direct its thoughts to the objects for the sake of considering their relative value, of forming a judgment respecting it, and of choosing one or the other as the chief good. These acts also imply under the presentation of the objects to the mind, an intellectual perception of their adaptiveness to the nature of man as sources or means of happiness; and also an excitement of constitutional susceptibilities in view of the objects, i. e. involuntary propensities, inclinations, or desires, towards each object respectively.

The reality of this process of mental acts previous to an act of preference, is evinced by human consciousness. For whoever supremely loved any object, whose mind in its perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, did not more or less rapidly pass through the process now described? In this statement of mental acts, therefore, we think we have specified facts which no one who reflects on his own experience, can deny, any more than he can deny his existence.

Should any doubt or hesitation in regard to what has just been stated, respecting the process of mental acts, arise in the mind of the reader, it would probably respect the position that the acts of considering and comparing the objects of choice, are dictated not by selfishness but by *self-love*.<sup>\*</sup> To remove all doubts on this point, we deem it sufficient to say, that such an act of consideration as we have described cannot be dictated by selfishness, because the act is not fitted to subserve, but is fitted to defeat, a selfish purpose. What selfish purpose can any one propose to accomplish by thinking of God and com-

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<sup>\*</sup>The term *self-love* has been extensively used as synonymous with the term *selfishness*, and to denote the preference of some object to the general good, as the means of happiness to the agent. Since however there is a real distinction between such a preference or choice, and the general desire of happiness, which fixes on no definite object, but puts the soul upon finding and choosing some object as the means of its happiness, it is important to make the distinction in language. To denote the latter we know of no phrase or term so convenient as *self-love*, while the best usage "in the ordinary language of modern philosophy" fully authorizes this import of the term. "Not only is the phrase *self-love* used as synonymous with the desire of happiness, but it is often confounded (in consequence of an unfortunate connection in their etymology) with the word *selfishness*, which certainly, in strict propriety, denotes a very different disposition of mind. In proof of this it is sufficient to observe, that the word *selfishness* is always used in an unfavorable sense, whereas *self-love* or the desire of happiness is inseparable from our nature as rational and sensitive beings." Stewart's Philosophy—Vol. I. p. 113.

paring him with other objects of affection, for the sake of determining whether he will not henceforth choose God as his chief good instead of the world? Or what kind of selfishness is that, which prompts a man solemnly to consider, whether he will not in heart renounce all inferior good as his chosen portion, for the supreme good. That such acts, done for the sake of forming more clear, correct, and impressive views of the relative value of the objects of choice, and of choosing anew either one or the other as the chief good, should be dictated by the selfish principle, is impossible. The reason for so directing and employing the thoughts is not that the heart is fixed on any definite object as the source or means of the highest happiness. It is not that God is loved supremely on the one hand, nor that the world is loved supremely on the other, which prompts this employment of the thoughts; for they are thus employed for the very purpose of making this choice, i. e. for the very purpose of taking by an act of choice or preference, one or the other as the chief good. These acts of consideration and comparison of the objects of choice are dictated then, not by selfishness, but by the desire of happiness, or self-love, which in its own nature fixes on no definite object as the source of happiness.

This self-love or desire of happiness, is the primary cause or reason of all acts of preference or choice which fix supremely on any object. In every moral being who forms a moral character, there must be a first moral act of preference or choice. This must respect some one object, God or mammon, as the chief good, or as an object of supreme affection. Now whence comes such a choice or preference? Not from a previous choice or preference of the same object, for we speak of the *first* choice of the object. The answer which human consciousness gives, is, that the being constituted with a capacity for happiness desires to be happy; and knowing that he is capable of deriving happiness from different objects, considers from which the greatest happiness may be derived, and as in this respect he judges or estimates their relative value, so he chooses or prefers the one or the other as his chief good. While this must be the process by which a moral being forms his first moral preference, substantially the same process is indispensable to a *change* of this preference. The change involves the preference of a new object as the chief good; a preference which the former preference has no tendency to produce, but a direct tendency to prevent; a preference therefore not resulting from or in any way occasioned by a previous preference of any given object, but resulting from those acts of considering and comparing the sources of happiness, which are dictated by the desire of happiness or self-love.

Nor ought it to be overlooked, that this part of our nature is always with us, be our moral character what it may. It always longs for happiness, without including in itself the act of the will or heart fixed on any given source or object, whence we resolve to seek our happiness : for whether by an act of the will or heart we resolve to seek our chief happiness from one object or another, we still desire to be happy. Whenever we do fix upon the object, self-love primarily prompts to the choice, (not determines it;) and therefore exists prior to the act of will by which we fix our affections on any object as our chief good. To self-love the appeal may always be made, and feelingly made, even in the lowest stages of moral degeneracy, to produce both the conviction and impression, that there is greater good in God than in the world. To this part of our nature, all motives designed to change the governing purpose or supreme affection of the heart, must always be primarily addressed. They cannot be addressed to a *holy* heart, already existing in sinful man. Nor will it be pretended that God proffers gratification to the selfish principle in man as the means of winning him to holiness, since this would have no other tendency than to prevent the change. The motives fitted to destroy the selfish principle, (and such must be all the motives addressed to man to restore him to holiness,) can find nothing in that principle but resistance. If therefore there be not in man a constitutional capacity of happiness from some other source than the world; if man cannot be made to *see* and to *feel* that there is to him greater good in God than in any other object, the motives to holiness might as well be addressed to the trees of the forest, as to men. So certain as man is a moral agent and is properly addressed by motives to holiness, so certain is it, that he has constitutional susceptibilities to that good which these motives proffer; and that, if he is led at all to prefer this good to every other, he is primarily prompted to the choice by the desire of happiness or self-love.

We now proceed to say,

II. *That no acts of the sinner, done while the selfish principle remains active in the heart, constitute using the means of regeneration.*

It will be admitted, that those acts which constitute using these means, are acts which respect divine truth. Since however all such acts do not fall under this denomination, it becomes important to distinguish those which do not, from those which do, by some sure *criteria*. We say then, that those acts which constitute using the means of regeneration, must have either some *tendency* to produce regeneration; or

some necessary or real *connection* with it; or must at least be such as will not infallibly *prevent* it. By these several tests we propose to show, that the acts above specified, do not constitute using the means of regeneration.

In the first place, they have no tendency to produce regeneration; their exclusive tendency being to subserve the selfish purpose of the heart. There is no law of human action more obvious or more universally admitted in the intercourse of life, than that a man's supreme affection or governing purpose, while active in the mind, will dictate and control all his specific voluntary actions. Indeed, to suppose that man, with his heart or will fully set on a given object as his chief good, should voluntarily perform any action which in his view is fitted to defeat his purpose of acquisition and enjoyment, or which is not in his view fitted either directly or indirectly to subserve this purpose, is to suppose him to act voluntarily against his will; to choose and not to choose a given object at the same time, and thus in the strictest sense to be 'divided against himself;' an absurdity sufficiently palpable to silence even Jewish caviling.

It is not however an uncommon opinion that the sinner, while his supreme affections are actively fixed on the world, often acts, not from the selfish principle or worldly purpose of the heart, but simply from constitutional propensities. So indeed it might be, did this principle respect some specific worldly good compared simply with other worldly good. He whose supreme object compared with other worldly good should be honor, might eat and drink, might promote the happiness of kindred, or perform any other voluntary acts which are not incompatible with the pursuit of his chief object, from merely constitutional propensities. But such is not the nature of the selfish principle. It involves not merely a preference of worldly good in one form to worldly good in other forms; but a preference of the world in all its forms of good, to the God who made it. Nor is it merely a passive preference of this object; but in all circumstances of the practicable attainment of the object, becomes an active principle, and constitutes the governing purpose of the man. The object of this principle or purpose, is of course a complex object, comprising all that we include under the term *world*: all that from which man is capable of deriving happiness, and which can come into competition, as an object of affection, with his Maker. This principle then may subserve itself in many forms; i. e. it may seek its gratification, or considered as a purpose, its accomplishment, in a great variety of specific objects, and by a great variety of specific actions. Be the nature how-



ever of the good proposed what it may—be it wealth or honor, kindred or friends, or even life itself—be this good insulated or combined in the objects of the action,—be the actions performed what they may, in all that is done there is a preference of the world to God going out into voluntary action, to secure the object of the preference. Such is, and such must be, the universal law of voluntary action while the selfish principle remains active in the heart. Of all specific voluntary action, the happiness of the agent in some form is the ultimate end; and since all the happiness known to man is comprised in God, or in the world, one or the other must be the object of supreme affection, if any object be thus regarded. To the sinner, therefore, while his affections are actively, and of course, exclusively given to the world, there is no good in God—none in doing his will and promoting his glory, which can move him to action. Preferring the world as his chief good, he looks to it for happiness with ever-wakeful affection, and performs no action which is not exclusively designed, and in his view, fitted to subserve his purpose of worldly enjoyment. Whether he is occupied with the employments of business, the pursuits of pleasure, or the study of divine truth, the end proposed is still the same. Indeed, to the sinner while performing those acts by which he places himself in the light and amid the realities of divine truth, this universal law of voluntary action has its most alarming application; for he now stands as a subject of the living God, in the very sanctuary of his glories, hears his prohibitory mandate, and yet makes *self* his idol.

In further confirmation of this view of the subject, we appeal to the nature of those acts, which may be supposed to constitute exceptions to our general remark. The possibility of some acts of attention to divine truth, dictated by the selfish principle, will not be denied. It will be readily conceded, that he who gives his contemplations to divine truth that he may assail the testimony of God with ridicule and contempt, and that he who perverts the doctrines of christianity that he may escape their practical power, and that he who studies the sacred oracles merely that he may promote projects of ambition, pride, or other worldly advantage, acts from the selfish principle. But it is to be remembered, that acts so flagrantly selfish, are not the only acts in respect to divine truth, that may be dictated by this principle. The sinner may perform such acts with the design to increase his knowledge of the truth, and to feel its power in excited emotion, and yet aim exclusively at a selfish end. In the knowledge of divine truth, and in the mental excitement which respects simply the natural

grandeur and beauty of its objects, to the exclusion of their practical bearing on the conscience, the selfish mind may find high enjoyment. The sinner may be led also to do all this by the customs of the family or community in which he happens to live, by civility to friends, by parental requirement, by the patronage of those on whom he depends, while in fact he is only submitting, and with sensible reluctance, to what he deems an evil, for the sake of some selfish advantage. Or he may do it, because he imagines that thus to act and thus to feel, is all that in his state of weakness can be justly required of him; and with the single intention of securing in this way a tolerable stillness in the conscience, in a course of determined sin. Or he may do it, for the purpose of preventing that degree of hardness of heart, which is the appropriate result of his present neglect of duty, and of turning the results in knowledge and in feeling to some good account hereafter, in the work of his conversion. But who does not see in each instance that every act and every feeling is modified, controlled, and directed, in entire subservience to the selfish principle of the heart? Who cannot distinctly trace, even in the effort to obtain divine knowledge on account of its supposed future advantages, the design to lessen the hazards, or rather to increase the safety, of continuing in present sin, and thus by quieting conscience, to augment the present amount of worldly enjoyment? And who does not perceive that in all this the sinner is as truly aiming to subserve the selfish principle, as if he performed the same acts with the purpose of an infidel?

While then many acts of the sinner may be dictated by the selfish principle, even many in which a cursory observation might not detect its influence, we would now make the inquiry still more particular, and ask for a *specification* of those acts which constitute the exception claimed. The more common answer to this inquiry is, that they are acts dictated by the natural or constitutional desire to avoid future punishment. This answer, we think, is given in very ambiguous phraseology, and with very inadequate views of the subject. We therefore propose to make some discriminations in respect to the import of this language, that we may, if possible, ascertain what it can, and what it does mean.

We ask then, what is the state of mind denoted by the word *desire*? This word, like most others, has in common and correct usage, different meanings; and may denote either an *involuntary* or a *voluntary* state of mind. In the former sense the word is used, when we speak of *desiring* what we do *not choose*; and applied in this import to the present subject, it describes a state of mind in which exemption from punish-

ment is regarded as of real worth, or as we are wont to say, *desirable*, but nevertheless, is *not chosen*. Such desires are by no means necessarily, or rather they cannot be directly, connected with any external voluntary action in regard to their object. Before they can result in such action, they must rise into a preference or choice of the object. Indeed these desires of the sinner in respect to exemption from punishment, are not inconsistent with the most determined iniquity; but are simply the unavoidable result of truth, when so brought before the mind as to excite alarm. They are painful states of mind; few things being more painful or more reluctantly submitted to than the uneasiness with which the mind contemplates an evil known to be inseparable from a chosen course of conduct. Such desires of the sinner, therefore, instead of prompting to voluntary action, encounter, together with the thoughts that occasion them, direct mental resistance, and are if possible, speedily expelled from the mind, along with the unwelcome intruders of which they are the inseparable associates.

Is it then said, that the state of mind intended is *a voluntary state*, and the acts dictated by it, *voluntary acts*; and that sinners do, in this sense of the word, often sincerely desire that God would change their heart, and restore them to holiness, that they may not be forever miserable? We reply, that this cannot be true of the sinner, while the affections of his heart are actively given to the world, and his purpose to obtain his chief happiness from it, remains fixed and unwavering. Can he really prefer, and in this sense sincerely desire deliverance from an evil, when the deliverance involves the sacrifice of that which he sincerely and supremely loves, and with his whole heart purposes to obtain and enjoy? Can he sincerely do an act, or wish God or any other being to do an act, which he knows will defeat the supreme desire and purpose of his heart? With the knowledge that such must be the effect of a change of heart, how can he sincerely desire it? Besides, what is the real object of these supposed sincere desires? Not the excellence of God and the happiness of his service. To suppose this, were to suppose the sinner to love God supremely, while he yet loves the world supremely. Is it then the gift from God of a new heart, as the means of avoiding future punishment, that he desires? We will not assert that such desires are impossible to the sinner in all supposable circumstances; but we say they are impossible *while his supreme affections are actively fixed on the world*. For if a new heart is the means of escaping future punishment, so also is it the renunciation of the present object of the sinner's supreme affection: and to suppose him to desire this gift, is to suppose him sin-

cerely to desire to be crossed and defeated in respect to his governing purpose. Is it then simply exemption from punishment compared with exposure to it, which is the object of the desires or preference in question? We reply that such a preference in the case supposed, is absolutely impossible, except under false views of truth. Exemption from punishment in the present state of the sinner's affections, is a known impossibility; and the preference or choice of a known impossibility, is virtually the choice of a non-entity. It may indeed be said *hypothetically* that one *would* prefer that which is known to be impossible, *if* it were possible. It might be true in some cases, that one *would* prefer flying to walking, *if* it were possible. But no one ever *actually* preferred it, under the conviction of its utter impossibility. Such preferences existing only in the imagination and resting on mere suppositions, are never real acts of the will, and can never result in action. True it is, that the sinner *would* prefer exemption from punishment to exposure to it, *if* it were possible in the present state of his affections. The exemption in this case, would involve no sacrifice. But as God is true, without the voluntary renunciation of the world by the sinner as his chief good, exemption from punishment is impossible; and to prefer it even to exposure to the punishment, while the world is supremely loved, is of course, in the present case, to prefer a *known* impossibility; which is also an impossibility. The sinner, according to the present supposition, prefers the world to all things else; prefers it as it is, in all its connections, and with the known inseparable appendage of such a preference, exposure to endless punishment. How then can he prefer exemption from punishment, when he cherishes the very state of heart from which exposure to punishment is known to be inseparable? Standing on the brink of perdition, he perpetrates the very deed that he knows must plunge him into it. And what is his desire to avoid the doom, but the desire of the murderer to escape death, who reckless of his own life takes that of his fellow at the foot of the gallows? The plain matter of fact, and the only possible matter of fact in the case is, that the sinner, rather than renounce the world for the sake of exemption from punishment, prefers for the sake of the world, to incur exposure to punishment. So little of hyperbole is there in the declaration of divine wisdom, "they that hate me, love death."

We have intimated the possibility through mental error, of desires on the part of the sinner, which involve a preference of exemption from punishment to its endurance. We advert to such desires not merely because they are the only voluntary desires in respect to deliverance from punishment which the

sinner in the case supposed can feel, but because they are in our opinion the identical states of mind, which with the acts dictated by them, are supposed by many to constitute using the means of regeneration.

Any error then, or false assumption adopted by the sinner, which in his view shall remove the present necessity of voluntarily renouncing the world as his chief good, to secure exemption from punishment, and which shall in this way present to his mind simply deliverance from this evil on the one hand, and exposure to it on the other, as the only objects of choice which the case involves, will doubtless result in a preference of the former; and this preference will, with equal certainty, prompt to those acts which he may regard as necessary to secure its object. The fact of such a preference, if we mistake not, is often witnessed in great occasional fervor of supplication, and in other efforts to secure so desirable a result. It may be useful to trace these feelings and acts of sinners to their legitimate source, and to delineate also their true nature.

The error then which in our view is the basis of these desires of the sinner, respects the *nature* of a change of heart, and the *manner* of its production by divine agency. Of the nature of this change, many a sinner has no just conception. The extent of his views respecting it, is, that it is some change in consequence of which the service of God would be rendered easy and even delightful; a change which is produced by the power of God exerted upon him as its passive subject; a change of course which involves no act of self-denial, no voluntary sacrifice, no rending of the heart away from its idols, nothing of the crucifixion and death of the old man by his own act; but rather a change like one supernaturally wrought in some of his constitutional propensities or tastes for certain kinds of food or drink, rendering agreeable what is now unpleasant or even loathsome. Hence the practical assumption on the part of such a sinner, that his exemption from punishment depends not at all on what *he* does, but in the most absolute and exclusive manner on what *God* does; and what is still worse, that the change when produced involves no act of self-denial on his part whatsoever. The consequence is, that the necessity of the present voluntary renunciation of the world, to avoid present exposure to punishment, is altogether excluded from the sinner's practical convictions. The truth that he must renounce the world as the object of supreme affection; that he must, painful and revolting as it is, bid the world as his chief good, a final and an everlasting farewell—the truth that he must do this, or die—a truth which, in its awful infallibility and direct practical bearing on the sinner as an accountable

agent, constitutes the last moral influence that detaches his struggling affections from the world, comes not near him. The connexion between his present love of the world and his exposure to future punishment, as one which is caused and perpetuated by his own act, and which, (such is the mode of divine interposition,) must in deed and in truth be dissolved by his own act, has, in his view, no reality. The affections of his heart, as he supposes, remain fixed on their object the present moment, simply because God has not detached them from it. He makes no effort to withdraw them, since God, without such effort on his part, must in his view do this, if it be done at all. Under this conviction of his own passivity, each successive moment finds him cherishing still his idolatrous affection for the world, and yet *desiring—what?* That God would save him from the punishment that God denounces against the very state of heart which he cherishes. *How?* In a *manner* that dispenses altogether with the sinner's act of renouncing the idol of his heart, and exempts him absolutely from all the sacrifice and painfulness which the act involves,—in a manner that concedes to the sinner the present necessity and propriety of seeking his supreme happiness from the world,—in a manner therefore which dissolves entirely the relation of punishment to sin as an appropriate means of its prevention and renunciation by the sinner. The power of legal penalty as a motive is thus as completely neutralized and made void, as it would be by its repeal on the part of the lawgiver. With such views of the nature of a change of heart and of the *mode* of divine interposition to effect it, the solemn inquiry of life and death becomes simply the abstract question, of so much happiness or so much misery from the hands of God. Doomed in his own conviction to the inaction of a statue in this great concern; his present love of the world licensed by its own necessity; all the painfulness of self-crucifixion dispensed with, which otherwise his heart would abhor and even resist with overt enmity; and having simply to choose endless happiness or endless misery as his allotment in some future crisis of his being, how natural, how unavoidable the desire that God would save rather than destroy? With what fervor of supplication can the sinner now seek deliverance from the wrath to come? We doubt not that such views and such desires have prompted many a sinner, even with cries and tears, to adopt what he regards as the necessary means of averting a doom so dreadful as that which awaits him.

But how obviously does the sinner, entertaining such views, overlook or disregard the decisions of eternal truth? How obviously do such desires, and all acts dictated by them, proceed on the assumption that God *may* interpose to save while the

sinner holds the affections of his heart still rivetted to earth ; and this, when the plainest annunciation of God to him is, *renounce that idol, or perish forever* ; and this, when God in his word and providence forbids the hope of any saving interposition, while the sinner's heart still clings to the forbidden object. Whence comes the delusion ? The world,—his idol,—his god, the sinner will not renounce ; and now, to avoid the power and pressure of the truth that, continuing to cherish the love of it, perdition is inevitable, he vainly dreams in face of God's testimony, that he may and even *must* continue to cherish the idol of his heart—and yet that God *may* interpose to save ;—and thus he desires that it should be. And what is this but assuming that God *may*, and *desiring* that he would, so depart from the immutable principles of his government, as to interpose to save him, while in heart a rebel and still resolved to be so ? And what is this but desiring such an infraction of the principles of eternal rectitude, as shall separate from the present attractive object of the sinner's affections the appalling drawback of future damnation ? And we now ask, are not such desires as selfish as any that a human heart can harbor ? Are they the less so, because the truth of God is turned into a lie, to make way for them ? Plainly in such desires there is nothing but the longings of a selfish spirit, that God would license its love and pursuit of worldly good, by an act of impunity that would desolate his kingdom.

To this conclusion then, unwelcome and forbidding as it may be, truth conducts us, viz. that the only desires involving a preference for deliverance from punishment which the sinner, while the selfish principle remains active in his heart, can feel, are dictated by the selfish principle, are founded in falsehood, and respect a mode of deliverance from the punishment of sin on the part of God, which would subvert his moral government.

We have thus attempted to show, that all the acts of the sinner which respect divine truth, and which are performed while the selfish principle remains active in the heart, are dictated by the selfish principle, and have an exclusive tendency to subserve the selfish purpose of the heart. The only question is, have such acts any tendency to produce holiness in such a heart ? Have acts and doings which exclusively tend to one result, a tendency also to the opposite result ? Do acts which are dictated by the selfish principle, and which are designed, and fitted, and done, only to gratify a selfish purpose of heart, by securing its object, constitute using the means of regeneration ?

Secondly : The acts of the sinner now under consideration,

have no necessary or real connection with regeneration. Contemplated in their true nature and tendency, they are not only designed to subserve some selfish purpose of the heart, and are therefore acts in which the sinner sets at defiance the truth which is God's appointed means of regeneration, but in their most specious form, they are done to quiet the conscience in determined sin, and therefore to strengthen the sinner in his iniquity. Such acts therefore constitute a palpable perversion of divine truth—a flagrant abuse of the appointed means of regeneration. For what difference in this respect can there be, between an act of seeming reverence and one of open contempt, when done for the self-same purpose? But did God design and appoint the perversion and abuse of the truths of his revelation, as the necessary and only method of securing their sanctifying influence on the heart? Do the scriptures or do facts clearly disclose such a necessity? If so, then we say let things be called by their right names; and let sinners be told that a flagrant *abuse* of the truths of divine revelation, is of indispensable necessity to secure their transforming power on the heart. And let this necessity be urged also to vindicate, as so many ways of using the means of regeneration, all those expedients in the form of excuses, apologies, perversions of religious doctrine, the sneers of infidelity, and the virulence of blasphemy, to which the human heart resorts to protect itself in its selfish purposes. Or if these more flagrant acts of the selfish principle are not, then let it be shown why any other acts dictated by the same principle and designed to subserve the same end, are necessary to the regeneration of the sinner.

Further: The acts now under consideration are as truly *sinful* as any acts which the sinner can perform. To resort to infidelity, or to transfer the thoughts away from divine truth to earthly vanities for the purpose of preventing its influence on the heart, is confessedly sinful. Why then is it not also sinful to turn the thoughts to the truth itself, with a fixed resolution to resist its influence, that the world may be better and longer enjoyed? Whatever may be the comparative guilt of different expedients to avoid the power of truth, there is clearly no dispensation in favor of any. Dictated as every such act in the case supposed must be, by the selfish principle, the sacredness of the truth which it respects cannot sanctify either the motive or the act, but tends rather to augment the sin of the agent. The light of truth shines upon his mind, and not only reveals duty and obligation, but discloses all the objects of affection and of terror in the world to come, and yet the sinner looks upon this bright manifestation of glorious and awful realities, with a settled purpose of resistance; and this he does



from motives of profoundest homage to an earthly idol. If this be not a sinful attention to divine truth which is an abomination to God, then what act of man can the God of infinite purity abhor; But is *the commission of sin* necessary to the sinner's becoming holy? Is it necessary in the nature of things or by the sovereign appointment of God, that the sinner should thus imprint the image of Satan on his soul, as the true method of restoring God's image? Surely instead of being urged by the plea of necessity to such acts and doings, the sinner ought, on the authority of God and on pain of his wrath, to be dissuaded from them as earnestly as from any other abomination.

With these things in view, we think that to call any acts dictated by the selfish principle, *using the means of regeneration*, must be regarded as one of the strangest of all theological technicalities. We know indeed that there is a fearless pertinacity in some men, which heeds not the consequences of opinions, however revolting or even monstrous, and it is a striking exemplification of it, when they insist that sinful and abominable to God as these acts of the sinner are, they are still *necessary* to his regeneration. To such we may be permitted to say, how does this differ from an open avowal of the necessity of "doing evil that good may come;" and how far is it from *deserving* the charge which an apostle counted a slander of such deep malignity, as to incur 'a just damnation.'

Again; The acts of the sinner under consideration are not necessary to his regeneration, because his regeneration may be connected with those of a different character. We have already said, that the sinner is the subject of that constitutional desire of happiness, called self-love, to which no moral quality pertains. Let the sinner then, as a being who loves happiness and desires the highest degree of it, under the influence of such a desire, take into solemn consideration the question whether the highest happiness is to be found in God or in the world; let him pursue this inquiry, if need be, till it result in the conviction that such happiness is to be found in God only;—and let him follow up this conviction with that intent and engrossing contemplation of the realities which truth discloses, and with that stirring up of his sensibilities in view of them, which shall invest the world, when considered as his only portion, with an aspect of insignificance, of gloom, and even of terror, and which shall chill and suspend his present active love of it; and let the contemplation be persevered in, till it shall discover a reality and an excellence in the objects of holy affection, which shall put him upon direct and desperate efforts to fix his heart upon them; and let this process of

thought, of effort, and of action, be entered upon as one which is never to be abandoned, until the end proposed by it, is accomplished,—until the only living and true God is loved and chosen, as his God forever; and we say, that in this way the work of his regeneration, through grace, *may be* accomplished. On this course he may *now* enter, instead of rejecting or perverting, or abusing or sinfully using, the truths of God another moment. In this way, he may become a child of God, while truth and duty are present in his thoughts.

Whence then the necessity to the sinner's regeneration, of those acts which are dictated by the selfish principle? Is it that the acts now described are impossible? But man is a moral agent, and therefore possesses those constitutional properties, viz. the self-love, the power of contemplating the objects of choice, and those susceptibilities to the good and evil set before him, which fully qualify him for the process described. Is not this indeed substantially the actual process in every instance of regeneration? Without affirming, what we shall have occasion to prove hereafter, that the transition from sin to holiness without this mental process, is physically impossible, we say, that all the preliminary mental acts and states which are necessary to regeneration may be as rationally accounted for, by tracing them to self-love, as by tracing them to the selfish principle. If the eye of contemplation must be turned and fixed upon the objects which truth exhibits, as indispensable to the requisite impressions on the conscience and to the exercise of right affections of heart,—if the constitutional susceptibilities of the mind must be excited, and direct efforts at the performance of duty be made,—these things may be as effectually done when prompted by self-love, as when dictated by the opposing principle of selfishness. Is it then said, that the continuance of this principle in all its power and strength is necessary to illustrate in the sinner's own experience, the obduracy of his heart, and the triumph of grace in his regeneration? That divine truth should in any circumstances enter the mind of man, without drawing forth its holiest affections to God, is a fact which evinces great hardness of heart. But is this, in the circumstances now supposed, the most *striking* manifestation of his obduracy! The affections of the heart are now supposed to be as actively fixed on the world as ever. Of course no direct efforts to fix the heart on God are or can be made; and therefore the obduracy of the heart, cannot be evinced by the most decisive method of evincing it, viz. the vanity of such efforts. But in the process we have attempted to describe, this mode of evincing to the sinner the hardening power of sin, insures its clearest exhibition. In this process, the sinner, from the desire of happiness, turns his thoughts to

the decisions and discoveries of eternal truth. He sees and feels, that the world taken as his portion in this life, brings with it eternal torment in the next. Through his dread of the misery connected with it, this object of affection loses its attractions, and is, as the case may be, so overcast with gloominess, that his active love and pursuit of it cease. Now too he sees that the supreme good is in God only; and that there is a desirableness surpassing what belongs to all things beside, in becoming a child and an heir of God. Under these convictions and feelings, with far clearer intellectual apprehensions, and a higher excitement of constitutional susceptibilities than are supposable in any other circumstances, he attempts by direct effort to fix his supreme affections on the object so worthy of them; but he attempts it in vain. The heart still withholds its love from a perfect God. That habitude of the soul which results from having its sensibilities so long exercised on earthly vanities, and unexercised on the divine glories, now shows its power not only in stifling the flow of holy affection, but in divesting even God of the aspect of reality. Surely, if the power of sin to stupify and benumb the spirit can be appreciated by the sinner, it must be when he thus summons his heart to fix its affections on God, and summons it in vain. If the triumphs of grace over obduracy and sin can be displayed in the sinner's experience, in accordance with the testimony of the divine word, it is done in the transformation of a heart so dull, so cold, so dead as the sinner thus finds his own to be. Wherefore then, we again inquire, are those acts of the sinner which are dictated by the selfish principle, necessary to his regeneration? In the nature of things they are not necessary, since it is undeniable that the change in regeneration may be effected without them. To suppose them necessary by divine appointment, for the purpose of displaying the grace that renews the heart, is to suppose not only that God has thus rendered the commission of sin necessary to the holiness of the sinner, but that he has adopted a comparatively imperfect mode of manifesting the power of his grace, and preparing the sinner for his song of praise.

Thirdly, The acts of the sinner which we are now considering, have, while continued, an infallible tendency to prevent his regeneration. The tendency of the selfish principle being to subserve and gratify itself in all specific action, amounts to a tendency to protect and perpetuate its own existence. Accordingly we shall see, that the transition of the mind from the supreme love of the world to the supreme love of God, without the suspension of the entire influence of the former, and of all acts dictated by it, is in the most absolute sense impossible. Before the supreme affections of the heart can be trans-

ferred from one object to another, the latter must be made the subject of consideration, and also of comparison with the former, as the means of good ; and this must be done with the design of choosing *anew* one or the other as the supreme good. But so long as the selfish principle continues active in the mind, the only possible voluntary acts, are those which are designed and fitted to subserve and gratify this principle. To this end all the thoughts, so far as they are voluntarily employed, are exclusively directed. The purpose being taken, the grand question in regard to the superior desirableness of its object is decided, and the decision supercedes all further inquiry or consideration, in respect to the comparative worth of any other object. Of course the acts of consideration and comparison requisite to a new choice, are in the present state of the heart or affections effectually excluded from the mind. Indeed the least fluctuation of purpose or hesitation of the mind in regard to the object of supreme regard, instead of being occasioned by the love of that object, is traced by human consciousness to a cause entirely diverse. For who does not know that the supreme love of an object has no tendency to produce hesitation in the pursuit of it. Indeed to suppose the acts of consideration and comparison in respect to two objects to exist in the mind when in fact the choice of one is already made, and the full purpose of heart to obtain it is in active operation, is to suppose the mind to be in a state of decision and of indecision respecting those objects at the same time. A transition therefore from the supreme love of the world to the supreme love of God, without intervening mental acts which involve the suspension of the former and of all acts dictated by it, is impossible.

Again ; to the mind in the state now supposed, the object of its preference is the greatest apparent good, and cannot but be so regarded. This estimate of the object led to the existing preference, and must remain while the preference remains as an active principle. To suppose the contrary, is to suppose either, that a man may prefer to choose an object as the means of his highest happiness without esteeming it as such, which implies a choice without a reason, and is contradicted by human consciousness ; or that he may esteem the object not chosen as the means of his highest happiness, against which the same objections lie ; or that he may esteem each of two objects as the means of his highest happiness at the same time, which is absurd. It being then impossible that the mind, in the state supposed, should esteem any other object as the means of its highest happiness except that on which its supreme affections are fixed, it becomes impossible, without the cessation of this state of the affections, and without some intervening mental acts, that the heart should ever be changed.

The same fatal tendency may be traced in all the specific acts of the sinner, which are dictated by the selfish principle. It will be conceded that when the sinner is actively engaged in worldly pursuits to secure worldly good, either in the form of wealth, of pleasure, or of reputation, and with his thoughts and affections exclusively fixed on his object, there is no hope of his regeneration. What acts of the sinner then, in that state of his affections now supposed, have not the same fatal tendency? True it is, the sinner may employ his thoughts on divine truth; he may read the word of God,—he may hear the gospel preached,—he may even speculate on its doctrines as a professed and zealous advocate. But never are these things done by him, while under the active influence of the selfish principle, without proposing some selfish end. To see that it must be so, we have only to ask, what is his motive? He surely does not act voluntarily without some motive. What then is his motive? It is, perhaps, reputation, since he would not be ignorant where knowledge is commendable,—or it is intellectual entertainment, in circumstances in which time cannot be passed more pleasantly,—or it is to provide a quietus for the conscience, that the world may be better enjoyed,—or it is to secure in some other form his selfish gratification. For what other end can he act, while under the influence of the selfish principle? But are not acts which respect divine truth done from such a principle, and for such a purpose, as truly adapted to prevent the sanctifying influence of truth, as any other acts? Is there not a palpable perversion of truth,—a gross abuse of it, which must, while persevered in, defeat the end for which the truth is revealed? Nor is this the only light in which the subject ought to be viewed. Never does the sinner, under the influence of the selfish principle, direct the thoughts *in such a manner* to divine truth, that it can reach and break down that principle. Never does he direct his thoughts, or even suffer them to be directed to truth, without devising and adopting some expedient for the very purpose of resisting and preventing its proper influence on the mind; never without voluntarily forming, either by perversions, or false connections, or direct denials, such views of truth, of his relations to it, and its relations to him, as tend to protect his supreme affection for worldly good; never, without freely, deliberately, and with fixed purpose of heart, resolving not to come under the full practical power of the truth. How can it be otherwise? How can a man while regarding the world as his chief good, and resolutely resolved to secure this kind of happiness as all that he values, voluntarily consent to place himself under an influence which he knows would defeat his object, and render him, according to his present estimate of

things, completely miserable? How can he consent thus to have his all, his very gods, taken from him?

What human consciousness shows to be true on this point, he who knew what was in man most explicitly declares. "Every one," says he, "that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." The sentiment is no other than that the sinner under the active influence of the selfish principle, never does and never will by his own act, place himself under the cloudless light of divine truth. He knows that it would make discoveries too painful to be endured. It would show him to himself. It would show him to himself under God's condemnation. It would scatter to the winds all his false hopes of salvation, impart to the object of present affection as its inseparable appendage, the terrors of coming wrath, and shed gloom and midnight over all the bright prospects of his present career in iniquity. To look with a steady eye upon himself in such a condition and upon the world under such an aspect,—how forbidding, how wretched! To consent to this, while he regards the world as his supreme and only good, would be choosing misery for its own sake.

Is it said, that by the preaching of the word and by other methods, truth may be so forced upon the mind that the selfish principle itself, will prompt earnest desires to avoid the punishment of sin? We reply that such *desires* considered as voluntary states of the mind, under just views of truth, are impossible. "God tempteth no man." Least of all, does God in presenting the motives to holiness, furnish even a possible temptation to the selfish principle to act in a selfish manner. On the contrary, he has rendered it impossible, that the sinner with just views of truth, should either desire or seek deliverance from punishment as the dictate of the selfish principle, by rendering it a *known* impossibility, that the principle should subserve itself in this way. In this respect, both in the present and a future world, the truth of God excludes all hope, extinguishes all desire, and paralyzes all effort, in an eternal night of despair. True it is, that involuntary desires to avoid punishment, may be excited by exhibiting to the sinner his exposure to it. But such desires, as we have shown, are sure to be strenuously resisted, and if possible to be wholly excluded from the mind, and can therefore prompt to no voluntary action. Urge home then upon the selfish heart of the sinner, the solemn consideration of future punishment. You will indeed awaken the involuntary desire to avoid the evil; but along with it you will awaken aversion or even enmity towards the God who threatens such a doom. And while the hopelessness of deliverance will prevent all effort to accomplish it, the selfish principle will infallibly assume

the decisive form of malignant emotion. So that in proportion to the clearness and power in which you press on the sinner, while under the active influence of this principle, the alternative of repentance or perdition, he will abhor that alternative, and the God who creates it. When was it known or heard, that God or any other being arrayed himself in open and determined opposition to the governing purpose of a human heart, and was not hated? To urge upon the selfish heart, therefore, the painful necessity of submission to God, is, as one has said, "but using oil to extinguish fire."

Is it then said, that the sinner may certainly be induced to look at the necessity of renouncing the world to escape future punishment, and that he may thus be led soberly to consider his ways, and to ponder the wisdom of his present choice, and to bethink himself whether he will not resort to the only source of true happiness? This we readily admit. But the question is, what can prompt to such acts of consideration? Not surely the selfish principle. This never prompted a sinner to such meditations for such a purpose. The selfish principle never put a sinner upon a course of sober contemplation to frustrate his main object. When was it known that one's governing purpose employed the mind in devising ways and means of defeating itself? The acts of consideration now supposed, therefore, instead of being dictated by the selfish principle, are to be traced to a very different origin. The truths presented to the mind have touched some other sensibility of the man. Instead of being induced to ponder thus soberly the things of eternity in order to subserve the selfish principle, this principle, for the time being, has lost its controlling power, and his sober contemplations are prompted by that first and essential principle of our nature, the desire of happiness. The man is not thinking and acting to accomplish any worldly, selfish purpose whatsoever; but, as a being capable of happiness and desiring it, is considering whether he will not, for the purpose of obtaining the highest degree of it, renounce every inferior object of affection, for the supreme good. The case therefore now stated, shows that the only supposable acts of a sinner with which his regeneration can be connected, involve the suspended influence of the selfish principle; and how impossible it is, that without such a suspension, the heart should be changed. So entirely does this principle, while active in the mind, control and direct the thoughts, and modify and check all the constitutional emotions and feelings in subserviency to itself; so entirely does it employ them on the things of earth and of time; so absolutely does it enlist the whole man to secure its own gratification, protection, and perpetuity, that it shuts every avenue of the mind against the

sanctifying approach of truth. No dungeon was ever more firmly barred, or more deeply dark, than all the inner chambers of the soul, when under the active tyranny of this principle. How profoundly conscience sleeps! How is every sensibility to the excellence and worth of divine realities hushed! How relentless too in its dominion, and how desperate and triumphant in its resistance of truth and of the God of truth! Were there no other access to the inner man, except through this principle of the heart; were there nothing to which the motives of the gospel could be addressed but the hardihood of this fell spirit—no way to overcome this ‘strong man’ except by direct assault, then for aught we can see, the *moral* transformation of the soul were hopeless, even to Omnipotence.

We have thus attempted to show, that *no acts of the sinner, done while the selfish principle remains active in the heart, constitute using the means of regeneration*; first, as they have no tendency to produce the change; secondly, as they have no necessary or real connection with it; and thirdly, as they have a direct and fatal influence to prevent it.

We have dwelt the longer on this part of the subject, not merely to expose doctrinal error, but chiefly on account of the dangerous practical tendency of inculcating it upon sinners. The position appears to us incontrovertible, that so long as the sinner believes that any acts done while the selfish principle remains active in the heart, are necessary to his regeneration, he will never be regenerated. The whole tendency of such a belief is to lead him on in this mode of *using*, or rather *abusing*, the means of regeneration; and of course to prevent every effort to detach the affections of the heart from the world, and to fix them on God. While he regards the course proposed, as that which furnishes the only hope of his regeneration, why should he, or rather how can he, adopt any other? We are aware that exhortations to this course have been pronounced important and even indispensable, in order that the sinner may learn in his own experience its utter uselessness, and thus be led to despair of all efforts of his own. Despair of all efforts of his own, when life and death depend, under God, on effort! This would either sink him at once into sullen devotedness to sin, or awaken the frenzy of ‘a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.’ Despair of all efforts of his own, even of all efforts to love God, or to think of him! This were death. That he may learn in his own experience, the uselessness of the course proposed? But why not let him know its uselessness at the outset? Cannot such truth be communicated by instruction; and must a sinner continue in sin, to discover how vain it is to perpetrate iniquity as the means of holiness? Why not then, instead of



leaving him to ascertain the uselessness of such a course by experiment, give him instruction according to truth? Why exhort him to the doing of that as the means of an end, which is confessedly useless in respect to that end? He may die and go to judgment in his sins, while making the experiment. Why then put his soul in jeopardy, by teaching falsehood? Do you say, that you inculcate the necessity of immediate repentance? Be it so. But you also inculcate *the necessity* of previous sin! And if the sinner adopts your instructions on this point, he must regard the sinful acts inculcated as all that are necessary or useful to the end in view. He must believe that these *may be*, and that nothing else will be connected with his regeneration. To resort to these acts as using the means of regeneration, i. e. to continue in sin, will therefore be all that will be attempted. Neither the practicability of immediate duty nor its obligations will so reach the mind as to prompt to corresponding action. The very objects which truth presents, as those on which to fix the thoughts and affections, and which should be his instant and whole concern, will under this relation be unthought of. Instead of an active agent summoning his powers of action to the immediate performance of duty, you will see only a statue-like being, waiting in motionless dependence to receive what, in sovereign kindness, may be given; or rather you will see the moral agent active only to prevent his regeneration. Regeneration, conversion, giving God the heart, call it what you will, though always to be ascribed to the interposing grace of God, is ACTION on the part of the sinner; and can never take place, unless the objects of holy affection are brought before the mind as objects on which the affections *are now to be fixed*. But this view of these objects is in absolute contrariety to the views produced by inculcating the necessity of prior sinful action; and the sinner can no more give his heart to God in holy affection while performing such action, than were he exclusively occupied in perpetrating any other abomination. It is not then merely the impropriety and error of calling such acts and doings using the means of regeneration, but it is the inculcation of them as such upon sinners, in view of its fatal tendency, which we deplore. We do not say, that the auspicious inconsistency of urging the duty of immediate repentance does not often counteract this tendency; nor that sinners do not in their own experience often learn the vanity of such efforts and the falsehood of such teaching, and act under the conviction that present duty must be a present act; but we say that the true uncounteracted tendency of such teaching is fatal—that its appropriate effect is continued sin and final ruin.

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ART. I.—ON THE MEANS OF REGENERATION.

[Continued from page 40.]

IN our last number, we availed ourselves of Dr. Spring's Dissertation on the means of regeneration, to call the attention of our readers to what we deem one of the most important topics in Christian theology. We have intentionally dwelt, however, chiefly on those points, which Dr. Spring was led, by the nature of his design, to leave untouched; and having introduced the subject to our readers in connection with his essay, we shall give to our future remarks the form of an independent discussion.

We stated in our last number, that regeneration or conversion is a change in the heart of man, of which God is the author; that man in experiencing this change is not a passive recipient, but an active being, transferring his affections from the world to God, as the object of his supreme regard; that this change takes place, therefore, in consistency with the laws of our mental constitution; or, in other words, that God in regeneration does not alter the structure of the mind, or violate the laws of moral agency, but that he secures by his immediate intervention, in a manner which we can never comprehend, an entire and permanent change in the *choice* which we make between Himself and the world, as objects of supreme affection. It is equally obvious from the nature of moral agency, and from the declarations of the Scriptures, that such a change can never take place, except in the view of motives—of divine truth contemplated by the mind; or, in other words, that there are *means* of regeneration.

We maintained in our last number, however, that while the *selfish* principle continues its active influence in the heart, no contemplation of motives—no meditation on divine truth, can properly be considered as a using of these means. Whatever springs from selfishness is in its very nature sinful; and who will affirm, that sin is the means of holiness, or that any act of the mind dictated by rebellion against God has a tendency to subdue or even to diminish that rebellion? Still, however, as we then remarked, there must be means of regeneration; there must be a contemplation of motives in the light of truth—a comparison of the objects of choice, which, in the order of nature at least, precedes the decisive act of giving the soul to God. To resolve this difficulty, we stated that, in our view, these preparatory acts are *implied* and *included* in the term regeneration when taken in its popular import; that when these acts are spoken of as “a using of the means of regeneration,” the term regeneration is employed in a *restricted*, theological sense, to denote that ultimate act of the will, in which the soul under the influence of the Holy Spirit, chooses God as its supreme good; and that divine truth does not become a means to this end, until the selfish principle, so long cherished in the heart, is suspended; and the mind is left to the control of that constitutional desire for happiness which is an original principle of our nature. Then it is, we apprehend, that God and the world, are contemplated by the mind as objects of choice, substantially as they would be by a being who had just entered on existence, and who was called upon for the first time to select the one or the other as his supreme good. A similar suspension of the selfish and worldly principle, may take place, though in a less degree, at various intervals antecedent to the state described above, as included under the term regeneration in its popular import. It is in such states alone, we conceive, that the means of regeneration are ever used.

We shall now proceed, in accordance with our original design, to show

III. That those acts which are thus dictated by the instinctive desire of happiness, and which are prior to that act of the will or heart called regeneration in the *restricted* sense of the term, constitute the sinner's using the means of grace.

1. Our first argument on this part of the subject will be derived from those principles, which control the correct use and interpretation of *language* on a topic of this nature. And here we shall endeavor to present the subject in such a light, as to remove one of the principal difficulties with

which it has commonly been encumbered, as well as to support the proposition which we have stated above.

That the word regeneration *may* be used sometimes in a comprehensive, and sometimes in a restricted sense, is obvious, in the first place, from the nature of language. Many words in common use are *complex* terms, which include a number of particulars, in connection with some one leading idea. In using such terms, we sometimes embrace all these particulars, and sometimes confine ourselves to the leading idea, according to the object which we have in view. The word *write*, for example, in its limited and specific import, denotes the act of tracing characters on paper; in its comprehensive signification, it expresses the complex act of originating and recording our thoughts. In the one sense a *writer* is an amanuensis; in the other, he is the author of a literary production. The word *faith*, in its restricted meaning, is simply an act of the understanding; in its wider and more ordinary acceptation, it comprehends those affections of the heart, which correspond to the truths believed. When the prophet exhorts the Israelites, "*turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die,*" the command most obviously enjoins that amount, at least, of thoughtfulness respecting their guilt and danger, which was absolutely necessary to a change of conduct. But when the psalmist says, "*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies,*" a limited import is given to the word in question; and the thoughtfulness which was implied in the former case, is distinctly expressed in the latter. *Repentance*, in its common acceptation, includes *godly sorrow* and the act or purpose of *reformation*. But when the apostle says, "*godly sorrow worketh repentance,*" the latter word is taken in the restricted sense of reformation alone, to the exclusion of that mourning for sin, which is always implied in the comprehensive and ordinary sense of the term. Thus, without multiplying examples which present themselves continually in the most common concerns of life, it is obvious, that words are used with greater or less latitude of signification, according to the object which they are designed to answer. Nor does the least ambiguity result from this change when properly made; for, in every such case, there are two circumstances or facts, which give entire precision to the meaning of the word. The one is, that the *absurdity* of any other meaning than the one intended; is too gross and palpable, to be imputed to any writer or speaker of ordinary understanding. The other is, that the *object* of the speaker will, in all ordinary cases, be so obvious, that no honest mind can doubt as to the meaning intended. Hence, it has always

been a leading principle in the interpretation of language, that words are to be taken in a wider or a more restricted sense, according to the scope of the passage, and the obvious design of the speaker.\*

In applying these principles to the case before us, it can hardly be necessary to prove, that in the language of the Scriptures and of common life the command "make you a new heart," "repent of this thy wickedness," "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," implies and includes those previous acts of the understanding, which from the nature of the human mind are necessary to an act of choice. Thus too, in the ordinary concerns of life, when parental or civil authority requires any voluntary action, it uniformly adopts the same mode of command; comprising under a single complex term the subject matter of the requirement. In directing a child, for example, to *walk*, to *sit*, or to *write*, these single terms are regarded by every one as sufficiently intelligible; without specifying all those previous mental acts, which in the nature of things are indispensable to the one enjoined. These being always understood and known as inseparable from the duty enjoined, are properly considered as implied and included in the single comprehensive term, which is employed to describe that duty.

But, on the other hand, when a *distinction* is specifically made, when preceding acts of the mind are spoken of as *means* which terminate in the performance of an act or duty, it is equally clear that the word, expressive of that act or duty, is no longer to be taken in its *comprehensive*, but in its *limited* and specific import. Yet a want of due attention to this fact, has been a prolific source of fierce logomachy, respecting the means of regeneration. Previous to regeneration in the ordinary sense of the term, men are represented in the scriptures as enemies to God. Every act is treated as a persistence in rebellion, and the very "ploughing of the

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\* An apposite example is furnished by the use of the word *regeneration* itself, in relation to a different subject. In ordinary cases this term includes two things, a radical and permanent change in the heart of men, and an immediate and extraordinary interposition of God, to secure the existence of such a change. But when we say that "God is the author of *regeneration*," the latter term is obviously restricted, by the nature of the statement, to the *change* alone. In all discussions relating to this change as a mental phenomenon, and to the means by which it takes place, the word has this restricted import, for it is the *result* alone to which our attention is directed. How unjust, then, would it be to call any one an Arminian, or to charge him with disbelieving that God is the author of *regeneration*, because from the nature of the discussion, he was led to contemplate this *change* in the heart of a man as a mental phenomenon, and to speak of it as an exercise of moral agency. Yet this injustice, we believe, has sometimes occurred.

wicked" is declared to be "sin." One class of divines, therefore, struck with the absurdity of considering sinful actions as a means of holiness, have totally denied that any act of the sinner previous to a change of heart is a using of the means of regeneration. Another class, arguing correctly from the nature of the human mind, and the express declarations of the Scriptures, that such means do exist and must be used previous to a change of heart, have fallen into the error of maintaining that *sinful* acts and doings constitute a using of these means. For they ask, "must not using the means of regeneration be prior to regeneration itself? Are not all men unregenerate previous to regeneration? And are not the acts of unregenerate men sinful?" Now the obvious distinction to which we have alluded, between the comprehensive and the restricted import of the term in question, resolves the whole difficulty. A using of the means of regeneration there certainly must be, if by regeneration is meant the final act of giving the heart to God. But if the term regeneration is taken in its popular import, then those preceding acts under the influence of the selfish principle, on which convicted sinners are so much accustomed to rely, are not a using of the means of regeneration, nor have they any tendency towards such a result. Take the word regeneration in its limited and specific import in the one case, and in its ordinary and comprehensive one in the other, and the controversy is ended.

The plausible argument from the comprehensive language of the Scriptures, to prove that sinful acts constitute using the means of regeneration, is thus shown to be entirely inconclusive. It is in fact an argument in words, and not in respect to things; for the thing intended and denoted by the term *regeneration*, when used for the more general purpose of ordinary discourse, is in a material respect different from the thing denoted by it, when used in reference to the means in question. Nor is this all. If there are other than sinful acts to which the phrase *may be* applied, then to these acts, if it be used with propriety or truth, it *must be* applied. There is no avoiding this conclusion, when it is admitted that there are acts which sustain the relation of using these means; for the phrase must be understood as applied not to acts which in the nature of things *cannot*, and which every one knows *cannot*, but to acts which *can*, sustain the relation which the language describes.

The same conclusion is confirmed by the *known object* of theologians, in adopting this phraseology. We have already said that the distinction between using the means of regene-

neration and regeneration itself, is a theological rather than a Scriptural distinction. By this we do not intend, that it is not authorized by the Scriptures. But when it is considered that the formal statement of it is unknown in the sacred volume, it becomes an interesting and important enquiry, why this distinction should be so frequently and formally made and insisted on by theologians. The necessity of the distinction, then, is occasioned by the unguarded manner in which the gospel has sometimes been preached. We refer to the exhibition which we think is often made, of the *mode* of the sinner's dependence on the grace of God in regeneration; a *mode* which dispenses with all *preliminary* acts on the part of the sinner, and thus denies the doctrine of using the means of regeneration: Be this, however, as it may, it is undeniable, that a very common objection to the immediate performance of duty, is derived from the doctrine of our dependence on divine grace.

To meet and overthrow this objection, is the very *object* of the distinction which theologians have made between using the means of regeneration, and regeneration itself. And here, if we would see how this distinction refutes the objection in question, we must see the precise nature and form of the objection itself. This objection then is not, as it is often supposed to be, that the doctrine of dependence exempts the sinner from the obligation to 'make him a new heart and a new spirit;' but that it renders all *effort* to do this on the part of the sinner nugatory and useless. It is not, that there is no *obligation* to perform the duty, but that there is no *propriety* or *reason* in attempting to perform it. The former objection though very common, and though drawn from the doctrine of man's dependence, is not to be refuted by any views of using the means of grace or regeneration. The *obligation* to repentance rests entirely on another basis, viz, the nature and condition of man as a moral being under the moral government of God. This obligation would exist whether there were means of regeneration to be used or not; it would exist though God had revealed his purpose to withhold his renewing grace from every human being. Nor are any truths more obviously consistent than the sinner's obligation and dependence; since nothing can be plainer than that he may be under obligation to do what, through perverseness of heart, *he never will do* without the interposition of divine grace. Indeed, it is not an uncommon fact to find sinners admitting fully their obligations to immediate repentance, and still insisting, that in view of their dependence, there is nothing to be done on their part, i.e. that there is no good

and sufficient reason for acting rather than for not acting in this concern; and that they have only to wait as they are for a divine interposition. This is the objection, as we conceive, in its true form and force, for the refutation of which, the distinction between *using the means of regeneration*, and regeneration itself, is resorted to by theologians; at least, if it is resorted to with any propriety. Had this objection never been started, the simple direct commands of the Scriptures in their comprehensive popular form, would have been sufficient for every practical purpose.

Now it is to be particularly noticed, that this objection is a metaphysical objection, being founded entirely in a metaphysical view of the *mode* of the sinner's dependence on grace. And it is also worthy of notice, that such might be *imagined* to be the mode of the sinner's dependence, that it would in fact be inconsistent with the propriety of effort on his part, and thus render his objection valid. Thus common sense and sound reason would decide in every case, in which the thing to be done is known to depend in *every* respect on the agency of another, and in *no* respect on any act or acts of ours. How absurd and foolish would the world regard the man, who should soberly make the attempt to cross the ocean, or to visit another planet by flying, on the assumption that God might interpose to enable him to accomplish the excursion! But why so absurd and foolish? Simply, because there are no efforts or acts related to or connected with such an event, as the *means* of it. So, if it be a known truth, that no act or effort, on the part of the sinner, sustains the relation of a means to the requisite interposition of Him on whom he depends, then to act or attempt to act, would also be folly in the extreme. It would be so for this good and sufficient reason, that nothing is to come from acting more than from *not* acting. Nor is the case altered at all in this respect, by the fact that dependence on divine grace results from the sinner's perverseness of heart. This fact does indeed materially affect the question of his *obligation*, but not the question of the *propriety* or *reasonableness* of effort. The known certainty, that nothing will result from acting more than from not acting, annihilates the power of motive. It is then obvious, that there is a *mode* of dependence supposable, which if real, and made known to the sinner, would be palpably inconsistent with the propriety of action or effort on his part, in the work of conversion; a *mode* of dependence which wholly excludes all preliminary acts on the part of the sinner as the means of regeneration, or as having any necessary or real connexion with it. It is on the assumption that this *mode* of dependence



is the *real mode*, that the sinner's objection exclusively rests.

Here then we see the *object* of theologians, in maintaining the doctrine of using the means of regeneration. It is to overthrow the sinner's objection to acting, by subverting its very foundation. It is to show, that the *real mode* of the sinner's dependence is *not* that which dispenses with all preliminary acts on his part, but a *mode* which requires such acts as indispensably necessary to his regeneration. But, as we have shewn, there are no such acts, unless the term regeneration be used in a restricted import; and unless those acts be intended, which are included in the comprehensive import of the word. There are no other acts which do not constitute a palpable perversion and abuse of the means of regeneration,—no others which do not tend directly to prevent it,—no others which are not sinful and abominable to God,—no others, therefore, which can be supposed for a moment to constitute using the means of regeneration. If then it be admitted that there are such acts, and that this language is used with propriety and truth, then the *object* of the writer or speaker who adopts it shews that the term regeneration must be used in a restricted import; and that the acts which we have specified are and must be the acts which are intended, if the language be used with propriety or truth.

We appeal, in the second place, to the use of similar phraseology in analogous cases. If the phrase *using the means of regeneration* is fitted to convey any meaning to the minds of men generally, then there must be some analogous use of similar phraseology, the meaning of which being well understood, shows what is and must be meant by this phrase. That the language is not so peculiar, *unique*, or technical, as to be unintelligible without definition, but that there is a similar use of terms on other subjects, which shews at once what specific mental acts it must designate, will be obvious on a little reflection. By using the means of regeneration, it will be readily conceded is meant using divine truth—the instructions and counsels of God which are given to men respecting their moral conduct and their highest interests. Here then we shall see the perfect analogy between this mode of speaking, and that which prevails among men in like cases. Should it be said of a profligate son, who had long disregarded and perverted a father's counsels, that at length *he made such a use of them*, as resulted in a thorough reformation of character; or of one who by an undue reliance on his own sagacity, and skill in business, had ruined his fortune, that he afterward *made so good a use of the advice or counsel* of a more expe-

rienced friend, that he retrieved the calamity and attained to great worldly prosperity, the language would be exactly analogous to that now under consideration. The question then is, what acts and doings of the son for instance, would such language be understood to describe? Not surely those in which he at first perverted, and even ridiculed, or in any way through a perverse temper resisted, the counsels and warnings of parental love and wisdom; not those by which he banished sober reflection, and whose direct and exclusive tendency was to render void the instructions given. Common sense cannot so view the matter, but at once decides that the acts, and the only acts of the son which have any connection with his reformation as the *means* of it, were those acts of sober consideration and thoughtfulness which were dictated by a regard to his own well-being,—acts of consideration prompted exclusively by the love of happiness, while yet the purpose of reformation was not adopted,—acts of consideration which led to some just comparison of his present course to ruin with that proposed by parental kindness, and to such vivid and impressive views of the folly of the one and the wisdom of the other, as resulted in the decisive purpose of reformation. We now ask what acts of the sinner must be denoted by the phrase *using the means of regeneration*, if the language be used with the least pretence of being intelligible? We ask not how theologians have used it, or how they have defined its import? But we ask, what must be its import as language of ordinary use, when interpreted according to the true and only just principles of interpretation? Will it be doubted whether there is, between the instance of reformation now supposed and that of the sinner, an exact analogy in the mental process? Not by any one who admits that regeneration involves a moral change, or a moral act on the part of the sinner; and with any who deny this we have now no controversy. Why then does the phrase using the means of reformation, viz. parental counsel, by a wayward son, denote the acts of consideration, comparison, etc. and the phrase using the means of reformation, viz. God's counsel, by a sinner, not denote similar acts of consideration? Is it said, that the reformation of the one is not, and that of the other is, produced by the power of God? Undoubtedly. But does the power of God in this work, dispense with all preliminary thought and feeling on the part of the sinner, even with one single thought or one feeling which would be requisite in the natural process? This cannot be proved. Besides, if the cases are so diverse that the language cannot be truly applied in both to the same class of mental acts, then

when applied to the case of the sinner, it is wholly arbitrary and technical, and for aught that appears, any other language would be as descriptive as this. But this will not be maintained. We say, therefore, that as language similar to that of actual use in analogous cases, and which has acquired by such usage a precise meaning, the phrase *using the means of regeneration* must denote the same general class of mental acts, which are denoted by the similar phraseology in the cases referred to. In other words, the phrase in question is either wholly arbitrary and technical, and can therefore convey no ideas, or it must denote those acts of consideration, comparison, etc. which are dictated by self-love.

We appeal, in the third place, to the language of the Scriptures. Here, however, according to what we have already said, it is not pretended that the Scriptures formally and expressly teach, that any acts constitute using the means of regeneration. But we claim that they do, in various forms of expression, plainly recognize that distinction in the acts or succession of acts which we have specified, and also the relation of the one as the means of the other. Thus one class of passages exhibit all religion as consisting in knowledge, wisdom, understanding, etc. The moral transformation of the sinner is represented as accomplished by God's "*shining* into the heart, and giving the light of the *knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In these passages, the mode of description, is obviously intended to give peculiar prominence to the operations of the intellect, as blended with the affections of the heart in right moral action. Without insisting that the language is decisive to the priority of the intellectual acts, it clearly shows that the religion of the Bible, or the moral transformation of sinners, does not consist in the affections of the heart, viewed abstractly from other mental acts, but in their combination.

Another class of passages, however, explicitly assert the existence of that mental process which we have described, and its priority to the act of the will or heart. We give the following as specimens of numerous passages which might be cited. "I *thought on* my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."—"Because he *considereth* and turneth away from his wickedness, he shall save his soul alive." "And when *he came to himself*, he said, how many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father." Every reader of the Scriptures will be reminded by these passages of a great variety of others of the same class. Now we ask what is that thoughtfulness of his ways, which the psalmist so dis-

tinguishes from his turning to God, and what that consideration which the prophet also distinguishes from the same act in the same manner? Is it thoughtfulness dictated by the selfish, worldly principle of the heart? We flatter ourselves that we have already said enough to show the impossibility of this. Let then common sense judge, whether the mental state described by these terms is, or can be any other than that state of sober consideration of interest and duty, by which a sinner must be brought to embrace the religion of the gospel, and to which the whole system of divine truth is designed to bring him, by its appeals to his own well-being in time and eternity? In respect to the description given of the process of thought and feeling in the case of the returning prodigal, we would ask, whether it is in the power of man to produce a more exact philosophical or metaphysical statement of the mental process, than that given by our Lord? By this we do not mean that the language is the abstract language of the science of mental philosophy; but that in popular language, the facts—the mental phenomena as philosophers call them, are most accurately described. “When he came to himself.” What is this, if it does not imply those acts of consideration and reflection which respect his true interest, which result in some just estimation of his own well-being, and which, as we have said, are dictated not by selfishness, but by self-love. “He said how many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!” What is this, but the act of comparing the comfortable and happy condition of the servants, with his own wretched situation, as a voluntary exile from his paternal home; what but a mental process, not designed to cherish and strengthen the purpose of riotous living, or to devise the ways and means of accomplishing such a purpose, but consisting of those acts which are fitted to the perception of things as they are in truth, tend to an estimate of things according to truth, involve the suspension at least of the previous practical purpose of the heart, result in the excitement of constitutional emotion toward another object, and by their own proper tendency prompt to the resolution, “I will arise, and go to my father!” We think that any philosopher may be safely challenged to give a more correct metaphysical account of a mental process, than that given by our Lord in this instance; and we cannot help remarking, that, in our view, the case is one of hundreds beside, which show, that not the *facts* or truths of philosophical or metaphysical science are unintelligible; but simply that the *language* of the science is unobvious to the great majority of minds. The

language of the philosopher is abstract and scientific, and made up of unusual combinations, while the *facts* of all true philosophy are known to children, are among the most intelligible facts to common people, are constantly recognized and described by them, and need only to be expressed in their language, to be known by them as their most familiar acquaintance. And though we doubt not the utility and even the necessity of what may be called philosophical or metaphysical discussion, for the purposes of overthrowing error and establishing truth, yet there are few cases, in which any important philosophical or metaphysical position cannot be reduced to a popular truth by popular language. To have said, that 'the will of the prodigal was as the greatest apparent good,' might have been to many very obscure or even unintelligible language; but to describe the same fact as our Lord has done, or to say, that when the unhappy youth saw how much happier he should be at his father's house, than in his present condition, he resolved to return thither, is what a child can understand as well as the philosopher. We would here still farther remark, that our Lord has elsewhere advanced, as an universal proposition, the general principle for which we contend. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." In this very obvious phraseology, we are taught that whatsoever we esteem the means of our highest happiness, on that the supreme affections of the heart will be fixed. And it is necessary only to ask, whether such an estimate does not include the same mental process of consideration and comparison which we have described, and whether therefore our Lord has not expressly taught the same connection between this mental process, and the act of the will or heart, for which we contend.

Many other passages equally decisive to our purpose, might be adduced from the Scriptures. We shall cite but one more. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." This precept, although of the same general import with another, "enter ye in at the strait gate," is more specific in its language, as it formally expresses the strenuousness of effort involved in the duty enjoined. Whatever reference our Lord may have had in this passage to the final acceptance of sinners, still the precept is nothing less, than his authoritative summons to all men to ply their powers of moral agency in the most direct, intent, and strenuous exertion to the work of personal holiness; and must respect this work in its commencement, as well as in its progress. We have then in this passage not merely the general comprehensive form of the precept to "enter in at the strait gate;" but we have the same complex

duty enjoined in a form of phraseology, which expressly recognizes the complex nature of the act. The word 'strive' denotes the most strenuous exertion of which man is capable; and its present connection distinguishes this effort from the act of entering in at the strait gate. The precept, therefore, expressly calls the sinner to the highest and most perfect exercise of all his powers and properties as a moral being, in the work commanded. It includes, of course, such an exercise of the intellect, that property of the soul by which man is qualified to perceive and understand truth and duty,—of the conscience and all the constitutional susceptibilities to good and evil, properties by which man is qualified to feel the influence of obligation and of motives,—and of the will or heart, that property by which he is qualified to love and hate, to choose and refuse. In this view of the text, though it includes the right act or exercise of the will or heart, as every moral precept must, it also includes by formal specification that class of mental acts or exercises, by which a moral being must use truth and its motives, to secure their proper influence on the heart. These acts and exercises, together with the right act of the will or heart, are all that the precept can respect; while the obvious necessity of the former to the existence of the latter, shows that they are included in the precept; and without affirming, that the precept in any other application would be unintelligible and therefore useless, there is an obvious pertinency in this application, which is quite decisive of its correctness. Every part of the entire mental process is one of peculiar difficulty to the sinful mind; and is in fact the very thing and the only thing to which difficulty pertains, and on account of which effort is requisite. To the mind unexercised in the contemplation of divine things, the most strenuous effort is necessary to bring divine truth and its objects distinctly in view. It is not by suffering thought and feeling to flow on in their accustomed channels, and to go wandering "like the fool's eyes to the ends of the earth," that the work of turning to God is to be achieved. The thoughts and the feelings must be turned off and away from their wonted objects,—from objects of sense to the invisible things of God's revelation, and to these must be given that intent contemplation, and that engrossed sensibility, which shall invest them with the character of realities, and thus secure their proper influence on the mind. This is the work of difficulty which is to be done; and to its accomplishment, effort, strenuous effort—effort involving the exercise of all the powers and capacities of moral agency, is indispensable. And the exclusive pertinency of our Lord's

precept to this fact, shows its exclusive application to this fact. The mental process then which we have denominated using the means of regeneration, consists of the very acts in the commencement of a religious course, which are distinctly recognized, and expressly comprised, in this divine injunction, "strive to enter in at the strait gate."

From the remarks which have now been made on this part of the subject, it appears that in the more common and comprehensive language of the Scriptures, the moral change in man termed *regeneration* is spoken of as a complex act; that, in other instances, the more analytical mode of speaking is adopted, and a distinction clearly made between the specific acts, which constitute the complex act; that the priority of some of these acts to others, and their necessary connexion with them, are distinctly recognized, and that although the former are not expressly termed *using the means of regeneration*, in the Scriptures, yet that for the purposes of theological discussion, the principles of usage and actual usage, fully authorize the theologian to designate one part of the mental process as the means of another part; and that the acts of the sinner which we have designated as using the means of regeneration, are the only acts of the sinner to which the designation can be applied with propriety or truth.

2. In further support of our leading proposition, that the mental acts already described, constitute using the means of grace, we next allege their *tendency* to produce regeneration. By this, however, we do not intend to assert an *invariable* connection, between this kind of mental acts and the act of the will or heart. The former may be in *kind* what we have described them to be, and yet they may be greatly modified by circumstances, and be very imperfect in degree. The intellectual perceptions and views dictated by self-love, as distinguished from selfishness, and the consequent excitement of the constitutional susceptibilities, may be so enfeebled, checked, and counteracted, by the previous habitudes of the mind, as to result in the re-adoption of the wrong moral preference, and a more absolute confirmation in iniquity. Nor do we intend that a *direct* tendency to a change of heart pertains to the first act in the process; but that, when self-love prompts the first act of sober consideration, there is in this act a tendency to augmented feeling, and that this feeling tends to fix contemplation, and this again to deeper feeling; and that thus, by the mutual action and reaction of thought and feeling, the process, were there no effectual counteracting influence, would go on until it termi-

nated in a change of heart. Nor do we intend, in what we advance on this subject, to imply, that the strivings of the Divine Spirit, when self-love prompts the first act of serious consideration, are not necessary to overcome counteracting tendencies, and to continue that process of fixed contemplation and deepening emotion, which are requisite to a change of heart. Still less do we intend to assert, that these acts are ever performed in such a manner, as to result in a change of heart, without the influence of the Holy Spirit. The facts, however, which we have conceded, only confirm the truth of our present position; for they clearly imply a counteraction of the tendency which we assert, and the counteraction of a tendency is decisive proof of its existence.

The tendency, then, now claimed for the class of mental acts under consideration, may be evinced in many forms. And, in the first place, it may be inferred from the moral agency of man. As a moral agent, man is *qualified* in respect to constitutional powers and properties, to perform without divine grace, what God requires of him. If not, then without grace he can be under no obligation to perform it, nor chargeable with sin for its non-performance. The requisite divine aid would be a matter of justice, and "grace would be no more grace." But if man without divine grace is a moral agent, then he is qualified so to consider, compare, and estimate the objects of choice as means of happiness, and capable also of such constitutional excitement in view of the good and evil set before him, as might result in giving his heart to God, without grace. Such acts and states, therefore, have a *tendency* to such a result. But if they have this tendency according to the constitution of man as a moral agent, and would, if uncounteracted, be followed by a change of heart without grace, then they must have the same tendency, when man gives his heart to God through grace. The act of giving God the heart, must take place in perfect accordance with the laws of moral agency and of voluntary action. If the interposing grace violate these laws, the effect cannot be *moral* action; and it *must* violate these laws, if it dispense with the class of mental acts now under consideration. Whatever, therefore, be the influence which secures a change of heart in the sinner, the change itself is a *moral* change, and implies the exercise of all those powers and capacities of the moral agent, which in the nature of things are essential to a *moral* act. Of course, the act of giving God the heart implies the identical mental acts and states, on the part of the sinner, with all their connections, relations, and tendencies, when it is done through a divine



influence, which it would imply, were it to be done without such an influence. Since, therefore, the acts which we have specified have the tendency claimed, according to the nature of moral agency and moral action, it follows that they have this tendency, when moral action take place through the grace of God.

Again, the reason commonly assigned for the necessity of a divine influence in regeneration, implies the tendency now claimed. This reason is not, that truth and motives viewed in relation to the moral agency of man, are insufficient to produce a change of heart, but that when presented to the mind of the sinner, their influence is counteracted by the perverseness of the heart. Now, this is a full concession, that when truth and motives are objects of attention or consideration by the sinner, there is an influence *tending* to a change of heart, which is sufficient to produce, and which, if uncounteracted, would produce the change. What then are the acts of attention on the part of the sinner, from which this *tendency* results? Not surely acts of attention dictated by a selfish heart, and designed and fitted to subserve a selfish purpose. These, as we have shown, can have no tendency but to prevent a change of heart. Not surely any acts dictated by a holy heart already existing. This would be impossible. There must, then, either be some other acts of attention to truth and motives, to which this tendency pertains, or the reason assigned for the necessity of divine influence in regeneration, is not the true reason. But we ask what acts can these be, except those which we have specified as having this tendency? The reason, then, assigned for the necessity of divine influence to change the heart of the sinner, instead of proving that there is no tendency in the acts specified to produce the change, proves that there is such a tendency.

Further, to suppose the previous mental acts to have no true and proper tendency to occasion the act of the will or heart in regeneration, is to deny the commonly received doctrine of motives in voluntary action. There can be no motives without objects of choice; nor can these become motives properly so called, without that entire mental process in respect to them which we have described. For nothing can be called a motive, except that in respect to which the mind may, or does, act voluntarily. But what is plainer than that the mind cannot act voluntarily in respect to any objects, without those acts of perception and comparison which we have specified as necessary to such action. What we call motives, then, viewed abstractly from these

mental acts, are, so far as any connection with voluntary action is concerned, absolute non-entities. "Nothing" says President Edwards, "can induce or invite the mind to will or act any thing, any further than it is perceived, or in some way or other in the mind's view," "and every thing which is properly called a motive, has some degree of tendency to move and excite the will." To suppose, therefore, the act of the will or heart now termed regeneration to take place without these previous mental acts, and to suppose no tendency towards the act of will to pertain to these acts, is to suppose an act of the will without a motive, an effect without its cause. But this is to adopt the doctrine of the self-determining power of the will, in one of its grossest forms, and with what we shall now assume to be its notorious absurdities.

Once more, we argue the truth of our present position from the tendency of *divine truth* to produce the regeneration of the sinner. We speak of the tendency of truth to this result, not as addressed to the selfish principle of the heart, but as addressed to man in his character of a moral agent. Nor do we confound *tendency* with actual *efficiency*; but while we assert the one, we deny the other. For what purpose, then, we ask, is the revelation of God given to men? For what is it *professedly* given, if not to 'bless them in turning them from their iniquities?' But if this is the design of the gift, then to deny its fitness and tendency to this end, in view of its nature and the nature of man as a moral agent, is not only to deny that *truth* is the means of regeneration, but is likewise to impeach either the wisdom or the goodness of its author. Besides, if this system of truth has not this tendency, if it brings no moral influence upon the human mind tending to secure right moral action, what is the guilt of rejecting it; and why, for so doing, is an unbelieving world condemned to an aggravated doom? Is there no influence, no tendency in the gospel to produce holiness in the human heart, more than in the truths of the abstract sciences? Does the man who rejects the doctrines of *Newton's Principia*, deserve for it the same condemnation which he deserves who rejects the gospel of Christ? If not, then we ask, why not; except that the latter possesses what the former does not possess—a tendency direct and powerful to produce the moral transformation of sinful men?

The question, then, is, *how* has the revelation of God this tendency? Has it any such tendency when presented to animals, machines, stocks, stones, or dead men? Has it the same tendency, when presented to living men, if they are

incapable of any other state of mind than that of absolute thoughtlessness and indifference in regard to its truths; or if the only sensibility of their nature, is a state of heart which must infallibly hate and resist the truth, and every object which it reveals? Clearly not; and if this be all, the tendency of truth to turn man from sin to holiness, is imaginary. For what is a tendency to produce a change in any subject, when viewed abstractly from the properties of the subject itself? What is the tendency of water to dissolve salt, or of fire to explode gunpowder, aside from the properties of these substances? And what is the tendency of divine truth to turn the sinner to holiness, if there be nothing in the nature of his mind, which renders him susceptible to the influence of truth? The question, then, still recurs, *how* has truth this tendency? We answer, by its solemn appeals of life and death to the principle of self-love, or the natural desire of men for happiness. God proposes to man, as a being capable of happiness, an immeasurably greater amount of it, by changing the object of his supreme affections. He threatens endless misery, if the sinner does not change it. And when God declares to such beings as men, truth so momentous, they may well take the matter into serious consideration. This, indeed, they cannot do, to subserve any selfish purpose of worldly enjoyment. But they can do it, to see and judge whether the testimony of God be not true; or, if they already believe it, to deepen the conviction of the truth. They can do it, to see and judge whether it would not be wise, no longer to 'reject the counsel of God, against themselves.' They can do it, to decide whether they will not henceforth take God for their portion instead of this world. It is in this way, and in this way only, that the revelation of God has that tendency to the moral transformation of men which is worthy of its divine author. By appealing with its motives, not to the selfish principle of the heart, but to self-love, it not only finds direct access to the mind of the moral agent, but it reaches the ultimate seat and source of every moral preference, and of all the subsequent movements of moral agency. It reaches a part of the nature of man which is always with him, and compels him, even in the lowest stages of moral degeneracy, to feel its power. Man can never become insensible to happiness; nor to the truth that he sacrifices his own well-being as a self-destroyer. This truth, as it is presented to the mind by the testimony of God, in respect to its nature and the mode of exhibition, embodies the sum total of all the moral influence which God uses in his revelation. Man may, indeed, stifle and counteract the sensation which it produces, but it

will be evinced in the pain of conscious resistance; it will thrill in the secret chambers of the soul. God tells the sinner, that it is better to obey than to disobey HIM. The thought conveyed to the mind of the sinner is an arrow in his sentient nature. It penetrates, it fastens, it is felt. The appropriate tendency of the feeling is to *the voluntary act of sober, solemn consideration*.—This act the sinner has power to do or to avoid. And here the mental process of using the means of regeneration either begins, or does not begin. If he thus considers, it begins; and now the appropriate tendency of consideration is to deepen emotion; and thus by the mutual influence of thought and feeling, the tendency of the mind to that entire mental process which we have described, and the tendency of the process to a change of heart, become undeniable and conspicuous in human consciousness. When, therefore, we speak of the tendency of divine truth to produce regeneration, or the moral transformation of the sinner, it must be that tendency which results from this truth, when presented to the mind of the sinner; or, what is the same thing, from those mental acts of attention to the truth, consideration of it, etc. which we have attempted to describe. Aside from these acts, divine truth can no more have such a tendency, when addressed to the minds of sinners, than if it were addressed to the winds of heaven or to the billows of the ocean.

Nor will this tendency of this mental process be justly appreciated, without adverting more distinctly to one or two of the facts which it involves. Particularly, the suspension of the active influence of the selfish principle, deserves our notice. We have, perhaps, already presented, from the nature of mental operations, sufficient proof of the reality of this state of mind. To trace, however, somewhat more minutely its nature and progress, with the manner in which it is evinced to our observation, may contribute to just views of our subject. Every act, then, of sober consideration, employed on the great truth that our supreme good is to be found only in the service of God, when dictated exclusively by self-love, implies, for the time being, the suspended influence of the selfish principle. Such suspension, however, does not necessarily prevent the thoughts and desires of the mind from recurring, as it were, *instantly* to the object of selfish affection, nor the affection itself from resuming *instantly* its accustomed activity and power. Indeed, the tendency to this, from the previous habitudes of the mind, is direct and powerful. It is, however, to be remembered, that the mind is capable of opposite *tendencies* at the same time;

and that, in the present case, there are tendencies opposite to that specified,—the tendency of excited self-love to sober consideration, and of this to deepen such excitement. When these tendencies are not successfully counteracted by opposing tendencies, when, by the strivings of the Spirit, they are perpetuated and increased, then it is that the selfish principle not only suffers temporary suspensions, but grows weaker and weaker in each instance of its returning activity and dominion; until at some point before the heart fixes on God, the power and influence of this principle wholly cease from the mind. Who that has been familiar with the phenomena of religious revivals, and has watched with attentive eye the mental process of awakening, conviction, and conversion, can fail to have witnessed the facts we speak of? It is not claimed that this process, or that any part of it, is, or must be, of long continuance. But who has not seen it commencing in the sober thoughtfulness of a moment, perhaps under the utterance of a single sentence; and going on, perhaps as rapidly as the order of nature allows, in the deeper and still deeper impressions which result from the arrested attention of the mind? Who has not traced this process of thought and feeling, not perhaps in entirely excluding after one momentary suspension of the selfish principle, the recurrence of worldly thoughts, desires and affections, but in weakening the power of that principle, till its suspension became more absolute, and till the objects of that principle lost their former interest, and became matters of comparative indifference? Or, when the mind is strongly impressed with 'the powers of the world to come,' who has not seen the pursuits of pleasure and of business regarded with disgust and irksomeness; and, as it were, attended with no thought, no purpose, no action to secure those objects, which once absorbed the whole man? Who that has been familiar with these scenes, has not heard from the sinner the plaintive language of deep emotion; 'it is not the world which I desire. I see—I feel its vanity. I see the certainty and the justice of the fearful doom to which the pursuit of it leads its votaries. I desire a more substantial good, and most of all an interest in the Savior of sinners?' We now ask, is it possible, that in such a mind, the selfish principle, or worldly purpose of the heart still retains its active power and efficient influence? Can these facts be accounted for, without admitting the fact of the suspension of the selfish principle, in its controlling dominion in the mind!

Nor is this fact to be regarded as an incredible phenomenon; nor even as peculiar to the mind under powerful con-

victions of sin and its dangers. It is decisively evinced in every change of a man's practical purposes and pursuits; as when avarice takes the place of ambition in the heart, or the love of pleasure the place of avarice. It is also still more decisively manifest in many cases of deep and settled melancholy, produced by blighted prospects of earthly happiness, and especially in instances of suicide. In these cases, the mind has no good—no object of supreme affection. It has nothing connected with existence, to love. The world in all its forms of enjoyment has lost its charms, while from God, no good is hoped for, desired, or sought. The expectation of good connected with existence having ceased, all active desires of it expire, all active pursuit of it is abandoned, and existence itself becomes insupportable. Even in the case of the convinced sinner, it is not perhaps too much to say, that, in many instances, nothing prevents the catastrophe of terminating life by his own hand, but the apprehension of greater misery, and the sustaining assurance to the 'wounded spirit,' that 'with God there is forgiveness.'

Connected with this suspension of the selfish principle, there is yet another state of mind involved in the process we are considering, which demands attention; viz. the truly sincere desires of the sinner for acceptance with God. The language of the sinner, when in the case supposed, he expresses his disgust with the world as an object of supreme affection, and also his earnest desire of an interest in the Savior, we regard as in one respect the language of sincerity and truth. But here let us not be misunderstood. We do not, then, suppose, that the state of mind of which we now speak respects the inherent excellence of the objects of holy affection, or that these are, on *this* account, the object of one desire or affection of the sinner's heart. We do not even suppose, that this state of mind even implies those distinct and adequate conceptions or views of the true nature of these objects, which are requisite to holy love. What we intend is, that he desires acceptance with God, or an interest in Christ, contemplated simply under one relation, viz. *as the only means of deliverance from punishment*. Nor is this a selfish state of mind, but rather a state of mind which is necessarily involved in the mental process of turning from sin to holiness. The supreme affections of his heart being detached from the world, the grand obstacle to his preferring a deliverance from punishment, to the only object that can come into competition with it, is removed. Such a deliverance he does in fact prefer to all that the world can give; and it is easy to see, therefore, that he must desire an interest

in Christ as the necessary means of this deliverance, and not as in any respect the means of worldly enjoyment. The active love of the world as his supreme good, is suspended in the mind; and, in desiring an interest in the Savior, it is no part of his object or motive, to render it subservient to any selfish, worldly purpose. Regarding the world with disgust, and even with terror, desiring above all which the world can give him, deliverance from future punishment, and knowing the necessity of an interest in Christ as the only means of this end, how can he as a sensitive being fail to desire it? Instead therefore of involving either selfish or holy affection, this desire of the sinner is the mere dictate of his sensitive nature, fixing on an interest in divine mercy, as the known and necessary means of escaping what above all things he desires to escape, the fearful doom of endless death.

Here, then, we advert to the state of the sinner's mind, as involving the two facts which we have attempted to describe. The supreme affections of his heart, being detached from the world, a grand and fatal obstacle to fixing them upon some other object is removed. The unalterable necessity of so doing, to secure the end which he above all things desires, viz. deliverance from eternal death, is known and felt, and on this account, with strong emotion he desires a compliance with the terms of mercy. And now according to the laws of voluntary action, nothing is wanting to lead forth the heart in holy affection to God, but those clear, just, and vivid views of his glories, which according to the same laws are necessary to the act. Here, however, the heart hesitates and withholds its love. While self-love awakens intense desires to comply with the terms of mercy, while it powerfully and successfully prompts the mind to look toward the only proper object of supreme affection, that the heart may fix upon it, still the object is too dimly seen. Whatever may be the correctness of the intellectual convictions, and the desirableness of becoming a child of God, the faculties and sensibilities of the mind now labor under the benumbing influence of sin, and divine realities are yet too remote and unreal, to draw forth the affections of the heart. The fact that the constitutional faculties and susceptibilities have been unexercised on divine things, has resulted in an appalling mental inertness and stupefaction. The transcendent glories of God are yet veiled by the cloud which previous sin has cast over the mind. Still, however, it is to be remembered that the sinner, disgusted with the former idols of his heart, and feeling deeply his exposure to the wrath of God, strongly desires, be the appointed means what they may, to escape the dreadful doom;

that he is *willing* to fix, and does in fact fix the eye of contemplation upon the object of holy affection, and does, with such glimpses of its glories as he may obtain, feel their attractions and summon his heart to that love of God his Savior, which is the only condition of his mercy.

We now ask, is there no tendency in these acts and states of the sinner's mind, to carry the soul forth to God in holy love? We do not affirm, that this tendency will not be effectually counteracted by opposing causes, unless the grace of God even at the moment of the nearest approximation to holy love, interposes to secure the act. But we ask, is there not a tendency which, if wholly *uncounteracted*, would flow out in holy love to God? Can the vanity of the world be thus seen and felt, its insufficiency to bless, and its power to destroy, be thus justly appreciated; can God be intellectually known, looked upon with the eye of fixed and thoughtful contemplation, and heard inviting the miserable transgressor to Himself; can his sensibility to life and death be thus roused, and fixed in intense desire upon making God his friend, in view of the only condition of his friendship, and yet there be no tendency in such a state of mind towards the love of God, and confidence in his mercy?

On this part of the subject, we are willing to submit the question at issue, even to the most hardened sinner, who knows the truths respecting God and himself; confident that even he, with all his resistance of truth, has so felt its power that his own consciousness shall respond to what we assert. We ask him, then, if his thoughts, in the form of sober contemplation, have never been so employed, (it may be but for a passing moment,) that he has felt a tendency and an impulse toward a more thorough consideration of the great concerns, brought to his mind by the revelation of God. We ask him, if he has not been conscious of a deliberate purpose to turn his thoughts away from this truth of God to other objects, and if the act itself was not attended with that mental uneasiness and pain, which are inseparable from the folly and the guilt of thus slighting, and dismissing from thought, the things of his peace. We now ask him to suppose that, instead of suffering the selfish love of the world thus to enter into conflict with the truth of God, instead of suffering an opposing heart thus to struggle with the dictates of his understanding and his conscience, and to resist by perversion, delusion, and falsehood, what he knew to be everlasting truth, and thus plunging from its light into the darkness he loved, he had even yielded to another moment's consideration,—if he does not know that the power and pressure of the truth would



have been augmented, and augmented to a degree that would have required a difficult and painful struggle to resist,—a struggle of doubtful issue ; and if this was not the very reason why he refused further consideration. Could he avoid consideration without choosing to avoid it, and could he choose to avoid it without a reason or a motive? We ask him to suppose that he had turned his thoughts away from the world and its vanities, instead of turning them from God and eternal realities,—and this, not for a few moments only, but in some prolonged, intent and solemn consideration of the things testified of God, would he not have seen himself, in his present character and eternal prospects, to be exactly what God says he is,—a sinner, guilty and lost, without hope and on the brink of everlasting perdition ; would not this view of himself have broken up his present security in sin, blasted his high hopes, and arrested his eager pursuit of earthly joys ; would he not have trembled, when thus looking into the dark world of hell ; and was not the known certainty of all this, the very reason why he shut out the light of truth from his mind? And we ask him yet again, whether, had he suffered these thoughts and these feelings, uncounteracted and unresisted, to occupy and engross the mind, and had he given himself up to such views and emotions as he might be supposed to do, were death looking him in the face, he might not also have been willing to relinquish the idol of his heart, and to be saved even by the Son of God, from the fiery indignation which he would have seen to be coming upon him. Now we say, it is in vain to deny the facts which these interrogatories are designed to disclose. They are known in the consciousness of every sinner, living under the light of divine truth. They involve thoughts and feelings which, when truth is presented to his mind, he cannot avoid, and make known to him its power, and what its effects would be, were he still to think of it. These are the very thoughts and the very feelings *in kind*, which in their progressive degrees, we have described as constituting the means of regeneration. In this manner, God in what he does to restore the sinner to holiness, obliges him to be conscious of the requisite process of thought and feeling, whether he will or not. The sinner can indeed resist and arrest this progress of thought and feeling, but cannot prevent its commencement. He can turn his attention away from the objects to which God calls it. He can dislodge the truth and its effects from his mind ; and can thus, as we have said, either begin or not begin, *to use* the means of regeneration. But when God has once addressed him with his truth, he has felt its power ; he has learned its effects ; and he knows

from his own consciousness, what these effects are in *kind*, and what they would be in *degree*, were they not voluntarily counteracted. He has felt enough to know, that he cannot open his understanding, his conscience, his sensibilities to good and evil,—all the avenues of the inner man through which truth can reach him, and yet feel nothing. He knows that to suspend the operation of the selfish, worldly purpose of his heart, to lay aside its artifices, its sophistry, and its delusions, to abandon his voluntary resistance of truth, and to place himself before its uncounteracted power, would be to place himself under the pressure of great mountains. He knows, that truth, by its appeals to his self-love with the assurance that, if he will take this world for his portion in this life, he must have eternal torment for his portion in the next, would impart to the present object of affection an aspect of insignificance, and shed over it even a gloom and a terror, the true tendency of which is to break down his love of it, to make him feel that happiness is not to be drawn from these broken cisterns, and that it is not, as sinners in this state of feeling are accustomed to express it, ‘the world which he desires.’ He knows that the same system of truth, by appealing to the same principle of his nature, though it should not awaken his heart to love, would prepare him to welcome Christ as a deliverer from wrath. He knows, too, that with its manifestations of God, it would attract, and draw, and almost irresistibly charm his heart into love. Glories are revealed, on which no being, whose nature is fitted to discover and appreciate such excellence, can look in sober contemplation without feeling their attractions. We do not say, that the contemplation will result in holy love, but we say, that in proportion to its intensity and the vividness of its perceptions, it will make known to human consciousness a *tendency* to produce love, direct and powerful and not easily resisted. Common sense and sound philosophy alike admit the sentiment ascribed by Milton to the arch-fiend, when looking on the celestial purity and grace of an unfallen fellow-angel. And if such a spirit

“ — felt how awful goodness is, and saw  
Virtue in her shape how lovely,”

in this faint and imperfect image of God, how shall man fix the eye of steady contemplation on the Great Reality, and be untouched and unmoved by his glories? No. Men as well as

devils, would they think, would also feel. They know it. They know, too, that this is the very reason, that they refuse to think. The Savior charged both the fact, and the reason of the fact, upon the consciousness of them that do evil. Their refusal to come to the light is the fact; and the conviction that they should feel its influence, in deep impressions of guilt and danger, is the reason of the fact. They know both the tendency and the effect of placing themselves unshielded and unprotected before the truths of divine revelation; and therefore they will not bare their bosoms to these arrows of the Almighty.

If, then, the sinner is a moral agent, and the change in regeneration is a moral act; if the reason assigned by many orthodox divines for the necessity of a divine influence in regeneration is the true reason; if the mind cannot act voluntarily, except in the view of motives which have a tendency to voluntary action; if the truths of God's revelation have any tendency to turn man, considered as a moral agent, from sin to holiness, and if, on this account, there is guilt in resisting them; if the reason of such resistance, on the part of the sinner, is the known tendency of attention to truth to conduct his mind through a process of thought and feeling which tends to a change of heart; then the mental acts and states which we have been considering, have, according to the laws of moral agency and the nature of moral action, a *tendency* to produce regeneration. Unless, therefore, the Spirit of God, in regenerating the sinner, violates the laws of moral agency, and destroys the nature of moral action, it follows that these acts have the same tendency, when the sinner is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. By this decisive characteristic of *tendency*, then, the mental acts and states which have been specified, are shown to constitute using the means of regeneration.

In our next number we shall resume the subject; and shall show, from other considerations, the existence and the influence of the tendency in question.

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ART. VI.—ON THE MEANS OF REGENERATION.

In our last number, we entered upon the argument to show, that those acts which are dictated by the desire of happiness, and which, in the order of nature, are prior to that act of the will or heart, called regeneration in the *restricted* sense of the term, constitute using the means of regeneration by the sinner. In support of this position, we offered two arguments; one derived from those principles which control the use and interpretation of language on subjects of this nature; the other from the *tendency* of the acts specified, to produce regeneration. In further proof of our position, we now remark,

3. That the mental process which we have described, has a real and necessary connection with regeneration. By this we mean, that regeneration often takes place in connection with this process, and never takes place without it. This we shall attempt to prove as a matter of fact, from legitimate testimony, from the nature of voluntary action generally, and from the nature of regeneration itself.

First, from legitimate testimony. It has been extensively maintained, that regeneration often takes place in a manner,

which wholly precludes the preliminary mental process for which we contend; that it sometimes occurs in earliest infancy, or even in the profoundest sleep; and that the transition from enmity to love, without one intervening thought of God, is no unusual event. But how is it possible for us to know that such assertions are true? Who has looked into the heart of another and *seen* the emotion of love arising there, while yet there was absolutely no thought, no image, no contemplation of the Being who was the object of that love? Can the existence of such a state of mind be *inferred* from the suddenness of the change, as it is sometimes presented to our view? But who can trace, in all cases, the rapid glances of thought even in his own mind; much more, who can trace them in the mind of another? The whole mental process of united thought and feeling, for which we contend, *need not* occupy any measurable duration. Along with the perception of the object, the emotion may instantaneously rise into the liveliest exercise.

Shall we rely then on the testimony of those who state the fact in question, as one established by their own consciousness; who tell us that the love of God first stole upon their hearts, they know not how; at a moment when the very thought of His being and perfections had passed away from the mind? But the whole history of the human intellect shows, how liable we are to be deceived by the rapidity of our mental operations. How often, especially in cases of high mental excitement, do thoughts and feelings come over the mind without leaving the slightest trace on the memory, of the process by which they were awakened! Christians tell us, indeed, of delightful manifestations and discoveries of God, which involve the liveliest exercises of love and joy;—that these manifestations were made when the thoughts were far remote from God;—that the transition in their feelings was like the flowing in of light, where all was previous darkness. But who, in such a case, would expect an accurate analysis of thought and emotion? To continue the allusion, who would expect the progress of the light, or the motions of the eye to be carefully noticed, along with the sudden and enrapturing vision of a reconciled God? Besides, the statement itself concedes, the very point at issue; for what is a manifestation or discovery in which nothing is perceived or thought of? Where can the man be found whose intelligence and habits of mental analysis entitle him to confidence, who has testified, or who will testify to the fact of his loving God without thinking of God? Cases may occur, indeed, in which many thoughts and feelings, from the rapidity of the

process, be unnoticed by the mind; for the high excitement of such a state almost absolutely forbids an accurate analysis of our mental operations. But this failure to observe the phenomena, can weigh nothing against the universal experience of mankind, that every exercise of the affections or act of the will, must have an object toward which it is directed.

If it be said that the change does not consist in any mental exercise or act, but respects some *constitutional property* of the mind, which precedes all mental exercises or acts; then we reply, that the reality of the change cannot be known by consciousness, since we can be conscious *only* of mental acts or exercises. But to *infer* the reality of such a change on the philosophical principle, that the exercise of right affection necessarily implies it, is to substitute a philosophical inference for a matter of fact; and this, in a case in which the question is not what can be proved by philosophical deduction, but what is known as a matter of consciousness. We say then, that the testimony under examination destroys itself, and this in two respects. The one is, that it is testimony to a fact which is a known impossibility in the nature of things, viz. that of loving an object without thinking of it; the other, that if *this* were possible in the nature of things, the witness could never know it to be a fact.

What then is the general testimony of the children of God on this subject? How uniformly do they tell us, that prior to their change of character, their thoughts were turned in sober contemplation to the truths which respect their eternal well-being; that the transition from sin to holiness involved new and peculiar views of God, of the Redeemer, of the divine law and government, and of the plan of salvation; that the things of divine revelation assumed the aspect of reality, and that the things of earth and time dwindled into insignificance; and that it was in connection with such contemplations and comparative estimates of the glory of God, the excellence of the Savior, and the bliss of heaven, that the heart awoke to the holy affections of love, gratitude, and joy. Whatever, therefore, may be the piety, the sincerity, and the honesty of him who testifies that he loved God, while God was unseen by the eye of solemn contemplation, we may be sure that his testimony results from some mistake in the analysis of the mental phenomena. Such a mistake may be easily traced to causes, whose influence is quite consistent with the piety of the witness. Without therefore impeaching his integrity, we reject his testimony, and maintain that the only testimony of uninspired men on the point before us, which is admissible,

is that which affirms the priority of intellectual acts to moral affections.

We now appeal to the testimony of inspired witnesses, and ask, have we the testimony of one such witness to the reality of his own regeneration, or that of others, without the preliminary acts which we have described? We are aware that one text has been relied on as proof, that a change of heart precedes all acts of attention to truth; viz. "whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things spoken of Paul." We will not here make it a question whether the phrase, 'whose heart the Lord opened,' describes the regeneration of this woman; nor whether the *attention* specified was dictated by a renewed heart. Conceding in these respects what some commentators deny, we maintain that according to the context, this change of heart occurred when the apostle 'spake unto the women,' and when Lydia was listening to his instructions. The fact, therefore, in respect to preliminary intellectual acts, in this case, was exactly what we maintain it to be, in all cases of regeneration.—We ask then for a solitary instance, in which the opposite fact is expressed or implied in the scriptural record. We do not, indeed, suppose, that in every recorded instance of the moral transformation of the sinner, the preliminary mental process is specifically delineated. But we maintain that while in some cases, the language adopted is the comprehensive language of popular usage, and as such, expresses by just interpretation, the complex act which involves this process; in other instances the language is so far explicit, as to place the reality of this process beyond all debate. The following passages are given as specimens. "I *thought* on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." "Of his own will begat he us, with the word of *truth*." "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the *truth* through the Spirit,—being born again, by the *word* of God." "I have begotten you through the *gospel*." "When they *heard* this, they were pricked in the heart, etc." Now we need not ask in view of these passages of the divine word, what is frequently the fact; but we ask whether they are not designed to exhibit what is uniformly the fact? Do they not decisively prove that the change in regeneration is universally connected with acts of attention to truth? Can they be considered as describing unique or peculiar cases? When it is considered, that to this specific mode of describing the fact there is no exception in the scriptures, is not this mode to be regarded as descriptive of the fact in all instances of its occurrence? What scriptural warrant can be adduced for an opposite conclusion?—But not to rest the matter here. We

have the direct negative testimony of an apostle, in the broad and unqualified form of an universal principle. "How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?" In this passage we have the distinct recognition of the principle, that truth can never be followed by its appropriate effects, unless it become the object of thought and attention. The scriptural account of the matter of fact, then, is testimony to a universal fact, viz. that regeneration is always through the truth. Nor can we, in view of this testimony, its abundance, its uniformity, and its design, well suppress our surprise at the no uncommon opinion, that the change in regeneration has no necessary connection with truth, or with any acts of the sinner employed on the objects which truth presents; and that the change itself is of such a nature, and takes place in such a manner, that it is quite immaterial whether the sinner be asleep or awake; we had almost said, whether he be dead or alive. Nothing is plainer to our mind, than that the scriptures ascribe regeneration to God through the truth; and of course, through attention to truth on the part of the sinner; and that they thus exhibit the fact, not as it is or may be merely in some instances, but as it is and must be in all instances. If this be not the design of the scriptural exhibition, there may be as many exceptions to the fact, as there are instances of it; or rather there is nothing in the scriptures to forbid the supposition, that more sinners are converted without truth than with it. In that case, the preaching of the gospel, the circulation of the bible, and the instruction of the human mind in the knowledge of God, if to *some* extent connected with, are in no sense *necessary*, to the moral transformation of sinful men. God might as well, so far as such necessity or any real utility in the exhibition of truth is concerned, have commanded his ministers to go forth 'blowing ram's horns,' for the conversion of the world, as commission them to publish the glorious gospel. Nor do we say this in any other mood than in that of the sober gravity, with which it has often been substantially uttered from the sacred desk. The sentiment is the legitimate consequence of the opinion, that the scriptures do not decide that regeneration is *always* through the truth. This being granted, what is there in the inspired record of facts, to exempt an institution of God from the reproach of uselessness, and the high enterprise of the world's regeneration, by publishing the messages of his grace, from that of folly? Where then, we demand, is the warrant for the opinion, that regeneration is not always through the truth? Not we say in facts to be found in the inspired record; but in facts judged to be facts, by fallible, erring men; and judged



to be such, in circumstances in which not a particle of confidence is due to the judgment of the wisest.

Secondly, we infer the truth of our present position from the nature of voluntary action. We have already said that it is impossible for man to transfer the supreme affection of the heart from one object to another, without the preliminary mental process under consideration. An opposite opinion, however, has been adopted by some respectable divines. Admitting that the change in regeneration consists in an act of choice or preference, they have held that it may and does take place, without the preliminary knowledge of its objects, and of course without those previous acts of perception, comparison, etc. for which we contend. This opinion, groundless as it may appear to some minds on the mere statement of it, has been advanced and defended we think, with sufficient frequency and confidence, to deserve some consideration.

On this question, the appeal must be ultimately made to human consciousness. Did the mind of man, then, ever prefer one object to another, without some knowledge or perception of the objects; without some consideration and comparison of their relative value as means of happiness? Does not human consciousness reply, never—the thing is unknown and impossible? Why then is not this decisive on the point, that without the same mental process, the supreme affections of the heart are never transferred from the world to God.

We have already had occasion to say, that to deny the *tendency* of the acts specified, to produce a change of heart, is to maintain the doctrine of the self-determining power of the will. But to affirm that the change in regeneration is an act of will, and yet that it may take place without preliminary acts of thought, is a still more flagrant assertion of this absurd and well-nigh exploded opinion. It is virtually saying that men may act voluntarily without motives,—that they may prefer, without preferring some object; than which nothing can be more preposterous.

Again, that perception and thought do always precede acts of choice, is one of those first truths on which we must rely as infallible, or there is no truth on which we can thus rely. For what objects can a man be sure that he perceives, considers, and compares, if not the objects of his choice? If this principle be denied, the very proof of the being and perfection of God, is subverted in its fundamental principle; for who can prove the existence of an *intelligent* spirit as the creator of the universe, if it be once admitted, that acts of will with their appropriate effects, may exist without preliminary acts of intellect.

Again we inquire, was there ever an attempt made by a human being to change the purpose of another human being, without assuming the necessity of preliminary acts of thought, on the part of the latter? Why else the invariable resort, in all such cases, to reasons, motives, arguments, and all the diversified forms of presenting truth or falsehood to the mind? Why, unless it be assumed, that it is impossible to reach the will or heart, except through the intellect?

Once more, suppose the doctrine of volition or acts of will without preliminary acts of thought, should become true; what, it might be asked even with consternation, would the world become? The entire influence on which depend the order and peace of every earthly community would cease; the grand apparatus of motives now relied on to control human action, the use of intellect and reason, and judgment, these essential attributes of moral agency, would all be dispensed with. It is useless, therefore, to argue such a point. Men will as soon believe that gun-powder will explode without fire, water freeze without cold, the eye see without light, and the body live without food, as they will for *practical* purposes believe, that the soul can will or prefer, without the acts of perceiving, considering, and comparing the objects of its preference. Why then, we ask, is that which is so absolutely incredible; which no man, not even the metaphysical theologian, can believe in respect to any other act of the will or heart, to be believed in respect to the act of the will or heart, in regeneration? Why is it, that all the world receive it as an infallible truth, that man in transferring the affections of the heart from one object to another, does it in view of the objects, and of their real or supposed relation to his happiness in all cases, except when he transfers them from the world to his Maker? Why, in that change which constitutes in man a new moral character, renders him a loyal subject of the most High, and gives him a title to the heavenly inheritance, must the use of intellect and reason be dispensed with? In a word, why may not the preference of the living God to all idols, be an *intelligent* preference? That the opposite opinion has any foundation in reason or in the scriptures, is in our view incredible. It is rather to be traced to certain other preconceived opinions, which in the way of deduction lead to it, and though supposed to be scriptural, are as groundless as this. To these we now give some consideration.

In order to defend the doctrine of the depravity of infants, some have supposed it necessary to maintain that sinful acts of the will are in such a sense cotemporaneous with the very existence of the soul, or rather so essential to the being of a

soul, as to preclude the priority of all other acts. Hence they infer that holy acts of will may, and do exist, in the regeneration of infants without other preliminary acts. Our object is not to discuss the question respecting the depravity of infants; nor to impugn the opinions of those who maintain, that the infant possesses that knowledge of God and of other objects which is requisite to a choice of one or the other, and that he actually makes an intelligent moral preference of the world to God, at the indivisible moment of his birth. On the question respecting *the instant*, in which moral agency and sin commence, we have little controversial ardor. What we contend for on this point is, that every human being sins as soon as he is capable of sinning. Our concern now is simply with the opinion, which denies all intellectual action prior, in the order of nature, to acts of choice or preference. And all controversy on this point may, we think, be terminated by adverting to the different import of the same form of expression, when used with the looseness and indefiniteness of popular speech, and when used with philosophical or metaphysical precision. We have already had occasion to illustrate this difference. We would however remark here, that nothing is more frequent, than to speak of the cotemporaneousness of two events in the most unqualified terms, when a *strict* cotemporaneousness is not intended; much less, that which excludes all priority of one to the other, in the order of nature. How common, for example, to speak of having entered upon some business, or having engaged in some conversation with a friend, *as soon as* we met. But who would infer, that a sufficient time did not intervene for passing the common salutations of civility? The principle which controls the use of language in such cases is, that there is nothing between the events spoken of as cotemporaneous, which requires minute specification, and which may not be left to the good sense and candor of the reader or hearer to judge of, without the danger of error or misapprehension. If there be any book whose language is to be interpreted on the principle now stated, that book is the Bible. Let it then be so interpreted, like the language of ordinary life, by sound common sense, and rigid integrity, and in all necessary cases, it will be surely interpreted. Thus interpreted, who will pretend that the scriptures ever intended to teach either directly or by implication the philosophical axiom that a soul cannot be a soul without moral action; or that sinful acts of the will are, even in the order of nature, strictly cotemporaneous with the soul's existence,—or that the soul can and does choose, without perceiving the objects of its choice? Who will exalt these axioms to

the rank of scriptural doctrines, or make them the basis of his reasoning and his faith? We think that controversial ardor in defending such positions for doctrinal purposes, may well be abandoned.

But it will doubtless be said, that although the change in regeneration be an act of preference or choice, the fact of its production by the Holy Spirit, dispenses altogether with the intervention of truth or motives. None can attach higher importance, even in a practical respect, to the doctrine of divine influence in regeneration than we do. But how does the necessity of such influence, affect the necessity of truth and motives in voluntary action? Cannot He who formed the mind of man; reach it with an influence of his Spirit, which shall accord with all the laws of voluntary and moral action? Because motives, without a divine interposition, will not secure this moral change in sinful man, and because they have no positive efficiency in its production, must God in producing it, dispense with motives altogether? Must the appropriate connection between motives and acts of will, or between the exercise of affections and the perception of their objects be dissolved, and have no place? Must God, if by his grace he brings sinners to give him their heart in holy love, accomplish the change in such a manner that they shall have no prior perception or view of the object of their love; and know not what or whom they love, or wherefore they love Him, rather than their former idols? Does a consistent theology thus limit the Holy one, and oblige him to accomplish the veriest impossibility in transforming the moral character of sinful man? We ask for the proof, that God cannot secure right moral action in man, consistently with the laws of moral agency, and the essential nature of moral action. Plainly, if there is time enough to fix the supreme affections of the heart on any object, there is time enough to think of that object. It is therefore wholly gratuitous to suppose, that the Divine Spirit, in the production of this change in man, must in any respect modify the nature of the change itself, or dispense with the appropriate means of its production. It must still be the act of the sinner, the act of transferring the supreme affections of his heart from all inferior objects to God his Maker. It must still be an act of preference, and, therefore, an act which in its very nature involves the perception and comparison of the objects which it respects. To deny this, because a divine influence is necessary to secure the change, is not only unauthorized by a particle of evidence, but it is a virtual restriction of omnipotence itself, by a most dishonorable necessity; that of violating the laws of moral agency to

secure right moral action, and of destroying the very nature of right moral action by the supposed manner of its production.

But in contradiction to this principle, very unguarded language is often used on this subject. That God can regenerate sinners without the use of means on their part,—that the use of them has no necessary connection with the event itself,—that God can accomplish this change without truth, or attention to truth, as he can rear a harvest without the cultivation of the earth or the planting of the seed, are assertions which are frequently made, and which are supposed to express a truth, essential to secure the praise of this divine work to Him to whom it is due. And if we mistake not, it is this supposed practical bearing of this view of the subject rather than legitimate evidence, which has so extensively exalted it into an article of faith. To consider the subject under this relation may be necessary to secure, at least in some minds, the conclusiveness of our present argument.

We ask, then, whether those of whom the apostle testifies, that they were *begotten through the truth*, had no sufficient ground of gratitude and praise for their regeneration? Even allowing that God can and does regenerate some sinners without attention to truth on their part, what reason for gratitude have they, which those have not, who are begotten through the truth? Is any gift of God the less valuable—a less decisive expression of his will, or a less impressive manifestation of his goodness, because it comes to us through the use of appointed means? Why, then, it is reasonable to ask, has God adopted this method of conveying to his dependent creatures, all his providential bounties; why, (for the divine word demands the concession of the fact,) with comparatively few exceptions, does he thus convey the blessings of his grace? Why should the gratitude of the renewed sinner, flow forth in feebler notes of praise, for the grace that wakes his heart to the love of God, because the same grace first reveals to thought, the glories of Him whom he loves?

But it will also be said, that we dishonor God by a virtual denial of his power. We answer that God is not dishonored nor his power denied, by affirming that he cannot accomplish that which involves a contradiction. Want of power is not the reason of the failure of the event, for no increase of power could accomplish it. This objection, however, brings us to the real point in question, viz. is it not impossible in the nature of things, that God should regenerate a sinner, without those acts of attention to truth which we have described.

On this topic, we might ask whether the very theologians, whose position we controvert, have not uniformly denied the self-determining power of the will, and maintained the necessary connection between motives and volition; and whether, therefore, consistency does not oblige them, with their views of the nature of regeneration, to admit that the change never takes place without those preliminary acts which we have specified? We appeal to what we have already said, and inquire whether an act of loving God, or of preferring him to all things beside, does not imply the act of perceiving God, and comparing him with other objects of affection, as truly as it implies the existence of the being who loves; and whether there is not, therefore, as palpable a contradiction in supposing that a sinner should love God without these acts, as that he should love God without existing? But is it dishonorable to God, or a denial of his power, to say that he cannot cause a being to act who does not exist?—A sinner love God without thinking of God; aye, and more than all things beside, without a thought of any thing beside? Can such a fact be found throughout the wide range of human consciousness? Could any one know whom or what he loved, if he had no previous thought or perception of the object on which the affection was fixed?—Why did the heart, if guided by no preliminary thought of the object of affection, go forth to the glorious Being who claimed it? And how can the sinner know and testify that affections thus blindfold and benighted, with nothing seen, known, or thought of, as their object, did not, after all, stumble and fall on some earthly idol, instead of fixing on the living God?

But it will also be said, that the view now controverted is the only view which magnifies the power of God, as it exhibits his power in the only conspicuous manner which is fitted to secure the acknowledgment of his special interposition. To this our reply is, that an effect produced through the intervention of means which are known not to produce it of themselves, furnishes the same decisive manifestation of the power of God, as if it were produced without means. The raising of the dead *by a word*, displays the power of God no less than the same event without this preliminary summons. In the regeneration of the sinner, the fact is known, that truth and motives have not, but that God has, produced the change. How, then, does the instrumentality of truth, obscure the exhibition of his power? Let the mind yield its conviction to the testimony of God, that through the perverseness of the heart of sinful man, his moral transformation is as truly hopeless without the power of God, as a resurrection of the

body from the grave, and who would fail to acknowledge alike the hand of omnipotence in both events? But it ought also to be considered, whether that view of the interposition of God which we controvert, does not greatly detract from the glory of his grace as displayed in this world of sin. According to that view, the *decisive* manifestations of the power of God in the regeneration of sinners, are only occasional and rare; since it must be conceded that in most instances of that change, his renovating agency is through the truth. According to the view now advocated, such a manifestation of the power of God, is furnished in every instance of regeneration. Not to say, then, that the tendency of the former view is to cherish a sort of isolated gratitude, and a spiritual pride in the subjects of the change, as if they, even compared with other children of God, were his peculiar favorites; how obviously does it enfeeble the display of the grace of God in accomplishing this world's redemption? In the one case, here and there an individual is prepared to recognize with grateful praise the power of God in his moral transformation. In the other, the same song bursts from every heart of that multitude which no man can number, echoing the same testimony of gratitude to the Author of salvation.

There is yet another consideration to which we shall briefly advert. It is now conceded, that the change in regeneration is a *moral* change; a holy act to which pertains moral excellence. Now such acts must possess their essential and distinguishing characteristics. What then are these characteristics of a moral act, if intelligence in the agent, and the exercise of intelligence in the act, are not? Can we abstract the use of intellect from the voluntary acts of any being, and suppose these to have no connection with it, and still pronounce them moral acts? Can the agent himself, can God, can any being feel complacency, or moral approbation, in the blind affections or preferences of an agent, who knows not whom or what he loves, or why or wherefore he loves one object rather than another? Conceive, if you can, of such an affection or state of heart as being the great practical principle of men; suppose it to carry its subjects forward in the same specific course of action and to produce the same results in human happiness, as would the intelligent love of God,—what moral quality does it possess, to distinguish it from the useful labors of the patient ox, or the benign influences of the rolling sun? True, God would be glorified in his wisdom and his power, by the creation and government of such beings, as he now is by the motions and influences of the heavenly bodies. Shall we then award to these bodies

our moral approbation, and apply to their movements the principles of estimating merit and demerit, and of assigning rewards and punishments? True, there would be a glorious display of the handy work of the Creator in these imaginary agents, and in the results of the propelling force ascribed to them,—a striking manifestation of God in the laws of instinct and of matter; but where would be the moral agent capable of bearing God's moral image? It is a truth often overlooked, in theological discussion, that God as a moral governor, can be glorified only by the love and service of beings who are intelligent as well as voluntary. Without such beings, there could be no acts of intelligent communion between God and his creatures, no acts of kindness from him to recipients appreciating his gifts, and no songs of praise to recognize his goodness and his grace. There would be none to distinguish between right and wrong, between God and other objects of affection,—none to admire, to love, to trust, to thank, to serve, to enjoy God, and give a reason for their homage. The great Benefactor of all would be unknown. The moral Governor of moral beings would be unacknowledged and unserved. God, without a creature endowed with reason and qualified to correspond with Him and heaven, would sit upon his throne, the solitary spectator of the laws of matter and the acts of instinct. To such results, does the controverted position lead us. The scale of created being rising from mere animal existence toward God himself, becomes a chasm, and the world 'a solitary waste, like the barren magnificence of its rocks and its deserts.'

There is therefore no irreverence toward God, in affirming the absolute impossibility of moral action without the preliminary use of intellect, and of course the impossibility of a sinner's regeneration without the preliminary acts, which we have designated as using the means of this moral transformation. And not only so; but we humbly conceive that hereby we give to God the honors which others deny him—the honors of a perfect moral Governor of moral beings, who by his law has decided that to be right moral action in them, which is so in Himself, and which is so according to the immutable nature of things. And if we have any knowledge on which we can rely as real, any that can justify us in ascribing *moral* perfection to God himself, it is this knowledge respecting the nature of right moral action. Nor do we see why we should hesitate to affirm the impossibility that a part should be equal to the whole in respect to a moral action, any more than to a material body. It is intelligence as well as will, which likens man to his Maker, and it is the combined exercise of these



properties in this image of God, that constitutes obedience to his will, and qualifies for his fellowship forever.

We maintain, then, that the scriptures do not, in what they teach respecting the commencement of sin, the regeneration of infants, or the necessity of divine influence, furnish the shadow of a reason for supposing, that the change in regeneration in its connection with other mental acts, differs from other acts of the will or heart. Of course all the reasons which exist for the universal and unhesitating belief, that acts of the will or heart, in all other cases, imply preliminary acts, exist to support the same conclusion in respect to the change in regeneration. It follows then, admitting the change in regeneration to consist in an act of preference, that it is preceded by those acts of perceiving and comparing the objects of preference, which we denominate using the means of regeneration.

Secondly, we infer the truth of our present position from the nature of regeneration. In our previous discussion, we have proceeded on the ground that the change in regeneration is a moral change, and that it is so, not merely as it is *followed* by right moral action, but as it *consists* in right moral action. Our present object is to show that such is the nature of the change, and that as such, it necessarily involves those acts which we have termed using the means of regeneration.

That we may not be misunderstood on this important subject, we shall offer a few remarks explanatory of our views. In maintaining, then, that the change in regeneration consists in an act of the will or heart, involving a preference of God to all inferior objects, we make a broad, and as we think intelligible, distinction between this act of the will, and other acts of the will, which may be called specific or subordinate acts.

Every man considered as an accountable subject of God's moral government, has some object of supreme regard; and this may be said to be either God or the world. This state of mind contemplated in its diverse relations, or rather modifications, is designated by different terms and phrases; as love, supreme love, supreme affection, disposition, governing purpose, purpose of heart, predominant inclination, etc. etc. When it is considered as excited by the mere contemplation of its object, and the comparison of it with other objects, it is commonly spoken of as an affection, or the supreme affection of the soul. Thus considered, it has been called by some, an *immanent* volition, or act of will; as one which in *such cases*, does not *go out* in other acts either of body or mind. In other cases, however, it is the

known nature and infallible tendency of this state of mind, to go out into subordinate action; and as such, i. e. as a state of mind which *disposes* to such subordinate action, when opportunity or occasion is furnished, it is called the *disposition*. Thus the supreme love of the world, in its true nature and tendency *disposes* its subject to those subordinate volitions and external actions, which are appropriate to its ultimate end or object. So also the supreme love of God disposes the mind to the performance of all those subordinate voluntary acts, which are known to be necessary to please and glorify God; viz. acts of prayer and praise, acts of kindness, charity, meekness, honesty, etc.

Nor is this all. This state of mind is also infallibly connected with those particular voluntary actions which are necessary to the attainment of its ultimate end. It is not a mere passive inactive preference, like that of which the mind is the subject, in the contemplation of two pictures, or two landscapes of unequal beauty. It respects objects, which in the very nature of things, involve the necessity of action; and of action by which an ultimate end is to be obtained. He who loves the world supremely, will act for the world, that he may obtain worldly good; and he who loves God supremely will act for God, that he may glorify and enjoy him forever. Accordingly this state of the mind involves in its very nature a *purpose to act*, in respect to an ultimate end, and thus considered, is called a man's *governing purpose*.

Further, this state of mind is a fixed and permanent principle of action. Not that it is incapable of change; for of the possibility of this, the apostacy of our first parents is decisive. But when the purpose is once taken it is not only *formed* as one which is not to be changed, but it is susceptible of a degree of strength, which will secure its perpetuity. Indeed to fix on an object or end "with full purpose of heart," is the grand and only security which can be furnished by any possible state of the mind, that the purpose itself will remain, and that the course of action requisite to its accomplishment will be performed. This governing purpose of the soul is not by any necessity of nature fluctuating and fitful; nor is it formed and formed again in each successive instance of particular action, and so made up of as many successive volitions, as there are subordinate voluntary acts necessary to its accomplishment. It is a purpose taken, as it were, once for all; a purpose fixing on some object as the supreme good, and consists in being "of one mind" respecting it. It is a purpose which in its highest strength, becomes a

fixed, permanent principle, to control the soul in all subsequent specific action; a purpose always ready to act for its object, and to avoid and resist whatever may oppose or defeat the accomplishment of its end. To see in striking exhibition, these characteristics of the supreme affection or governing purpose of the soul, we need only to look at its development in a Cæsar or a Bonaparte; and we need only to suppose the love of God and the purpose to glorify him, to exist in equal strength and completeness in the human heart, to see what high, if not absolute, perfection it would give to human character.

It ought, however, to be remarked, that the supreme affection or governing purpose of the heart, may be so imperfect *in degree*, that through the power of temptation, it shall be subject to occasional intermissions or suspensions, in its active control or influence on the mind. Hence the occasional aberrations from duty in specific action, and even the performance of such specific acts of duty from other principles or motives, on the part of the children of God in this world. This important mental phenomenon may be illustrated by an example, which shall show it to be a familiar fact. Two men may be supremely avaricious; and yet in the one, the love of money may possess a degree of strength, far superior to that of the same affection in the other. Now it is easy to see, that the strength of the avaricious principle in the former, may be proof against all temptation to act in any instance inconsistently with that principle; while through the comparative weakness of the same principle in the other, and by strong appeals to the tender sympathies of humanity, he may, at least occasionally, be induced to give liberally of his substance, for the relief of human suffering. So in respect to the holy principle. In the man Christ Jesus, it had a strength and perfection which set all temptation at defiance; while the weak apostle, that denied his Lord in the hour of temptation, has been too closely imitated by all his fellow disciples in every age. And as in the one case, when the power of the temptation subsides, and the supreme affection of the heart resumes its former activity and dominion, deep regret follows in view of the incongruous action, so in the other, like the penitent Peter, every real christian weeps over his imperfections and his sins.

Once more, this supreme affection, or governing purpose of the soul, is that which constitutes *character*. "As a man thinketh," i. e. deviseth or purposeth, "in his heart, so is he." As he supremely loves the one or the other, he is a servant of God, or a servant of Mammon. This universal judgment is

founded in the known connection between principle and practice; and as such, is distinctly recognized by our Lord in describing character. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Nor, in this world of imperfection, do we ever properly speak of character, as belonging to single or occasional subordinate acts, but solely to the governing principle or purpose of the man, as developed in his actions. No one, for example, denominates another an angry or a passionate man, on the ground of a single instance of resentment. We do not deny to the imperfectly sanctified in this world, the character of the children of God, on account of their occasional departures from duty, or the incongruity of specific acts with their governing principle. That principle, being evinced by their habitual deportment, is known with all its imperfection and weakness, to be real, and to be destined through grace, to absolute perfection and power in a future world. It constitutes, therefore, in the view of all men who admit its reality, that substantial difference of character between good men and bad men, which is to widen forever, preparing the one for the blissful presence of God, and the other for the society of the devil and his angels.

When we say, then, that the change in regeneration consists in *action*, we mean that it is the introduction into the soul by the grace of the Holy Spirit, of that supreme love of God which constitutes a preference of God to all things beside,—which involves a disposition and purpose of heart to do his will in all specific conduct, as a permanent controlling principle, and which, though imperfect in its strength in this world, will attain to that perfect and ceaseless vigor in the heavens, which will consecrate the redeemed spirit to the delightful service of God, without defect and without intermission forevermore.

In proof of our position that this change consists in *action*, we might appeal to some of our most distinguished divines;—to Edwards, who, in respect to the nature of this change says, "God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, viz. OUR OWN ACTS. The effect is our ACT AND OUR DUTY."—These things are agreeable to that text, "God worketh in you both to *will* and to *do*."\* Hopkins says, "in this renovation, there is the operation of the cause, which is the work done by the Spirit of God; and there is the effect,

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\* Works, Vol. V. p. 473.

which consists in the *exercises* of the regenerate, in which they are active, and agents."\* Dwight, in examining the question whether the influence of the Divine Spirit is irresistible, cites this passage from 110th Psalm; "Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power;" and says, "This promise respects the very subject now under consideration.—In the day of Christ's power, his people *are willing*. The influence which he exerts on them by his Spirit, is of such a nature, that their *wills*, instead of attempting any resistance to it, coincide with it readily and cheerfully."—He also says, "all virtue is nothing else but voluntary obedience to truth."† But our object is to rely not on this respectable human authority, but on the decisions of the scriptures. We shall attempt to show, that in many decisive forms, the inspired oracles represent this change in man as *his act*.

In the first place, we advert to that class of texts, which require the change in express commands. "Make you a new heart and a new spirit."—"Put off the old man," etc.,—"and be renewed in the spirit of your mind;"—"put on the new man," etc. Now we ask, whether these commands do not explicitly require of man the identical change, which takes place in regeneration? We ask, whether they do not make this change the duty of man, as decisively as a divine command can make any thing his duty; and whether the commands of God, can make any thing the duty of man but action? To suppose the sacred writers to use language in any other manner, is to suppose them to use it to no purpose, and the bible itself to be a sealed book.

Another class of passages describes the change as having actually taken place. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man." Here the change is described as *action*,—as something done by its subjects, if language can thus describe it.

A third class describes the effect of the divine operation, still more definitely in respect to the kind of action. "God worketh in you both *to will and to do*." "The fruit of the Spirit is love."—We ask if *willing* and *doing* are not action? And what is that love which is the fruit of the Spirit, if not a supreme affection involving preference? Such are the effects ascribed by an apostle to the operation of the Divine Spirit; and he who, on the authority of his philosophizings about cause and effect, affirms the necessity of some prior change, must do it on his own responsibility.

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\* System, etc. Part II. c. 4, sect. 2.

† Theology, Sermon. 72, and 76.

Other passages exhibit the entire effect of the transforming power of God, as consisting in *doing* righteousness. "Every one that doeth righteousness, hath been begotten of Him." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." Again, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous." But what is it to do righteousness, but to perform right specific actions from a right principle or purpose of heart? On what authority, then, is it said, that something beside this, constitutes a man personally righteous? Besides, the apostle exhibits this, as the peculiar and distinguishing character of the regenerated. But if something else constitutes that character, then the apostle has not, as he professes to do, specified that which constitutes the grand distinction between "the children of God and the children of the devil."

In other passages, the regenerated man is styled a *new creature*. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." When we see a degraded, vicious, abandoned man, thoroughly reformed, exhibiting by his sobriety, industry, and well regulated deportment, a decisive change in his practical principle, what is more natural than to say in customary language, he is a *new creature*—he has become a *new man*? "These forms of speech," says one, "are so significant and popular that they have passed into proverbs, and that in various countries and languages; and hence they are used in the scriptures as plain and familiar representations of this great change." To interpret this language, then, to denote any other change than that moral change which consists in transferring the supreme affections of the heart to God, with its appropriate influence on the life, is doing palpable violence to the language. Is it said that in the present case, there is a peculiarity, viz. that the new man is said to be *created*? True; but created in what? 'Created in righteousness; created unto good works.' And what is righteousness but *doing* righteousness; and what are good works, but right external actions, done from a right principle or purpose of heart?

A passage often cited, and relied upon, to support the opposite view of the subject, is, in our view, decisive of the correctness of that which we maintain. "That by these, ye might be partakers of the divine nature." By what? By "exceeding great and precious promises." But what have promises to do with this change except as furnishing motives to it? And with what have motives to do, except with voluntary action?

The scriptures, then, in describing the change in regeneration, exhibit it uniformly and without an exception, as consisting in action on the part of man,—as that transferring of the supreme affection of the heart from all inferior objects to God, which is itself a mental act, and becomes a fixed principle of all subordinate right action. In some instances this change in the affections of the heart or governing purpose of the soul, is represented as constituting the change; in other forms of expression, it is combined with its appropriate results in specific action. But in both, the whole of the change is made to consist in voluntary action; in something done by the sinner as an agent, and in nothing distinct from action.

In further confirmation of our views of the subject, we appeal to the sum of the divine requirements. "Love," saith an apostle, "is the fulfilling of the law;" and our Lord has expressly taught that on the two commandments, which require love to God and to our neighbor, "hang all the law and the prophets." But it is claimed, that the change in regeneration is some change in the nature of man, even in the constitutional properties of the soul,—that this is the ground, reason, or cause of all holy action, and is itself the very essence of a holy character, the sum and substance of all holiness. What then becomes of the fact, that LOVE is the fulfilling of the law; the sum of all that God requires of man? God, according to this view of the change in regeneration, has not required the very sum, substance, and essence of holiness, but merely a change preparatory to it. Besides, how is the fact that love is the fulfilling of the law, and that on this requirement hang all the law and the prophets, consistent with those commands of the Most High by prophets and apostles, which require men to make *themselves a new heart and a new spirit*, and to put off the old man and to put on the new man, unless we suppose that one and the same thing is required, in different forms of expression? To say that a *new heart* and a *new spirit*, and putting off the old man and putting on the new, is not action,—that it does not consist in love to God with its appropriate results in the life, but in some change of the substantial nature or properties of the soul, which is the *cause* of right action, is to say that an inspired prophet and apostle did require that of men, which the law of God does not require, but something essentially diverse; and not only so, but required this change in the created properties of the soul, when not this, but LOVE is pronounced by our Lord to be the *sum of all* the divine requirements.

We appeal to the true import of the terms and phrases, which, as it will be readily granted, properly describe this

change. What, for example, is the true import of the phrase, a *new heart*? The word *heart* is doubtless used in different connections to denote different things. In the command, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," the word obviously means the *power* of loving God. A *new heart* then, cannot denote a *new power* of loving God, which man does not already possess, for he is required to love with this power. Nor can a *new heart* denote any *new constitutional property* of the soul, which is *diverse* from the power of loving; for the word was never properly used to denote such a property of the soul. What then can the phrase, a *new heart*, denote, but the exercise of holy love, or *new supreme affections*? Who can refuse, at least, to admit the propriety of using this phrase to describe the fact, that a sinner has transferred the supreme affections of his heart from the world to God? Who that interprets the language of the bible according to its true simplicity, with no philosophical theory to support, and with a single eye to discover its true meaning, can give any other import to the phrase?

If we advert to other synonymous phraseology, it will lead us to the same result. For example, what does the phrase, a *holy heart*, a *right heart*, etc. denote, but a heart in the exercise of holy or right affections? Can this language denote any thing but this, according to any correct usage? Can any thing, but a heart with its supreme affections fixed on God, constitute a *right heart*, or a *holy heart*, in a subject of his government? Can holiness be predicated of a heart in which there is as yet no holy affection? What possible reality can be denoted by the phrase, if it be not a heart which loves God supremely? Is it said, that it denotes a very different thing, even a *holy disposition*? But what is a *holy disposition*, but that state of the heart, which disposes its subject to please God, and to do His will in all specific action? None surely will deny that such a state of heart, is *properly* called a *holy disposition*. But what state of the heart when God is *not loved*, can thus *dispose* its subject to do his will? A man *disposed* to serve and glorify God in all his conduct, who has not the love of God in him! A *holy disposition* without one holy or right affection! But, we may be told, a *holy disposition* is prior to the exercise of all holy affections, and is a *disposition to love God*. But is a disposition to love God, *holy* while as yet God is *not loved*? Is the thing aimed at in this use of the word *disposition*, any thing but that constitutional tendency to choose happiness even in God, which wicked men often feel when halting between two opinions,—between the service of God and the service of Mammon? any thing, incon-



sistent with the existence of a similar mental tendency or disposition to prefer the world as the supreme good ; and which may, not to say commonly does, terminate in such a preference? We repeat, then, the question, can a *holy* disposition be predicated of a heart, in which *the love of God is not* ; in which of course, there is no *holy affection*, and in which, according to all correct popular usage of language, the love of the world is supreme? Once more, when was the word *disposition* correctly used, to denote that of which moral quality is predicable, in any other import than that now maintained? When we speak of a worldly disposition, what does all the world understand by it, but that preference of the world to God, or that supreme love of the world, which *disposes* its subject to pursue worldly good by the requisite course of specific action? When we speak of an ambitious or avaricious *disposition*, what do we mean, but that supreme love of fame, or that supreme love of wealth, which disposes the subject to act for its acquisition? Let then, this language, and all similar language, be interpreted according to correct usage, and the question whether the change in regeneration consists *in action*, is decided. For usage shows that the phrase *a holy disposition* was never correctly used to denote any thing but a holy heart ; and that the phrase *a holy heart*, was never correctly used to denote a heart destitute of supreme love to God.

In the second place, we advert briefly to the character of God as the moral governor of men. What, then, we ask, does a moral governor, from the very nature of the relation, *aim* to secure in his subjects, but right moral action? What is a moral government, but the influence of authority, aided it may be by other influences, designed to secure right moral action through the medium of law? Now in this character, and under this relation, God pre-eminently reveals himself to men. Throughout his word and his providence, all other relations in which he makes himself known are subservient to this. What is the bible but a revelation of truth, designed and fitted exclusively to this ultimate end, as far as man is concerned, of leading him to right moral action? What is there here, but authority, and law, and rewards, and penalties, intreaties and exhortations, and warnings, mingling with the manifestations of love and kindness, grace and mercy, and all this enforced by the strivings of the Divine Spirit, to prevail on man to act right? What too are all the dispensations of the providence of God ; what are his daily bounties but so many displays of that goodness which "leadeth to repentance;" what the trials of His appointment, but pater-

nal chastisement inflicted for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness? And what too is the end of the great atonement by the blood of His Son, if not to redeem unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works? And what the end for which the Holy Spirit is sent into this world, but to bring sinful men to purify their souls, in obeying the truth through the Spirit?—Thus, all that God does, and all that He says in respect to man, terminates in the grand end of his moral government, even man's perfection in character and consequent perfection in happiness. For this end, he gave his law in Eden on man's creation; for this end, he promised a Savior on man's apostasy; for this end, he promulged his law on Sinai to a chosen nation, and by a series of dispensations in judgment and in mercy, signalized them as his people and himself as their God; for this end, to shadow forth his great designs in futurity, he instituted a system of rites and ceremonies the most impressive and sublime; for this end, Israel's altars smoked for ages with myriads of animal victims; for this end, the harp of prophecy was strung, and sounded its sweetest notes; for this end, in the fulness of time the promised messiah came into the world, as its deliverer from sin and King of holiness; for this end, he commissioned his servants to bear the tidings of the great salvation to every creature; for this end, the Holy Ghost, the sanctifier, goes with them; for this end, the counsels of God, formed in eternity, are executed in time, in the revolutions of kingdoms, and the falling of sparrows; for this end, the earth shall one day receive her king, and confess in obedient homage, that he is Lord; for this end, our earthy bodies shall return to dust, and be fashioned again like unto Christ's glorious body; for this end, time shall be no longer; for this end, a judgment is to come; for this end, hell with its darkness and chains and wailings, and heaven with its songs and thrones and glories are prepared; for this end, God reigns over all and will reign forevermore, the blessed and only potentate; even for this end,—to rear, perpetuate, and bless a kingdom of subjects obedient to his will in holy action. All is a system of manifestation and influence,—a system of manifestation to reveal the glory of God, and a system of influence to secure the moral transformation of man, in voluntary allegiance to his and heaven's sovereign. Is such the system, then, which God has adopted; is such its ultimate and exclusive end in respect to man; do all its known tendencies, and bearings, and influences, terminate in this one end, and would it, if uncounteracted by human perverseness, infallibly accomplish this end; is there from the beginning of the book of God's revelation, and the book of

his providence, not a sentence nor a word concerning any other ultimate end in respect to man, of this stupendous moral machinery? Where then is the warrant for the opinion, that before there can be the least possible fitness in God's moral government to secure its end, viz. right moral action in men, He must *literally re-create* them, and qualify them to perform right action by changing the *substantial properties* of their very being? We are guilty of no injustice in thus assuming, that if the change in regeneration does not consist in *action*, it must consist in a change of the *substantial properties* of the soul. For there can be only two things in the human mind; on the one hand, its actions, and on the other, its substance and essential properties, out of which those actions spring. If, then, the change in regeneration does not consist in action, it must, with intuitive certainty, consist in a change of the substance, or of the essential properties of the soul,—or in other words it must be a physical effect. But can this be? Can it be, that before it is possible for God himself to secure right moral action in these creatures of his power, he must make them over again, mending his original work of creation, and by new physical powers constitute them moral and accountable subjects of his government? Was it a task too hard for Omnipotence to make them at first complete moral agents, capable alike of holy and of sinful action; and must we, after all the evidence of his own declarations and doings to the contrary, believe that the Moral Governor of the universe, exercises his dominion in this world, over beings as incapable of right moral action as the stones of the street? For ourselves, we cannot admit this and yet confide in the sincerity and revere the majesty of Him that sitteth on the throne.

And what have we in the form of argument to set against evidence so unequivocal and satisfactory, from the word and providence of God? Philosophy—philosophy about cause and effect—a philosophy, as we shall attempt to show, altogether false, and contradictory to every dictate of the competent, unperverted reason of man, and of the testimony of God.

Those, then, whose opinions we now controvert, must maintain that the scriptures teach the necessity of a change in the physical properties of the human soul, in order to secure holy action in man. We ask, then, how it happens, that they come to think so; how it is, that they can so interpret the language of the sacred volume? In our view, it is owing to their philosophy. They first suppose certain things to be true in the nature of things which are not true,—to be a part of the reali-

ty of things which are not a part, and then consider the scriptures as teaching, either directly or indirectly, the truth of their philosophical assumptions. This we shall attempt to prove.

As the basis of their scriptural doctrine, then, we say, they assume as a fundamental and infallible principle, *that every event must have a cause*. The truth of this principle; as applied to physical phenomena, is unquestionable. Nor do we deny it, even as applied to voluntary action, provided the word *cause* is used to denote what Edwards uses it to denote, in his Essay on the Will, viz. the *reason* or *occasion*, why a thing is as it is, rather than otherwise. But such is not the sense in which the word *cause* is used by those whose opinion we now controvert. They insist that the word can have but one meaning, that the *cause* of voluntary action is an *efficient* cause;—i. e. they maintain that the reason why a man performs sinful action rather than holy action, and *vice versa*, is a cause which, in its very nature, precludes *all power* in man to act or will otherwise than he does; a cause which is connected with its effect by the same kind of necessity, which connects causes and effects in the physical or material world. Hence this form of their doctrine, that man must possess a *sinful nature* as a part of the *very substance of the soul*, to be the *cause* of sinful action; and also a *holy nature* as a part of the *very substance of the soul*, to be the *cause* of holy action.\*

Now we maintain, that the above principle is a mere philosophical assumption; a decision concerning what is true in the nature of things, which is made solely on the authority of reason. And we further say, that it is simply and solely on the infallibility of this philosophical assumption, that the bible is made to teach the necessity of a change in man's physical being, as the *cause* of holy action. For let it once be supposed, that the assumed principle is *known* to be false, as we know it to be false, that two and two are five, and who could suppose it to be taught by the language of inspiration? Plainly, the necessity of a physical change in man as the necessary cause of holy action, is first assumed as a possible truth, or the book of God could not be supposed to teach it. We do not here deny the propriety of using our reason or philosophy in judging of possible truth; but we ask whether this particular decision of reason is a decision of right reason;—whether this philosophy is a true, or a false philosophy. Who then can prove, that the reason why there is sinful action rather than holy action is an *efficient cause*;—that the

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\* That mankind are sinful *by nature* is a cardinal doctrine of our faith. See this subject more fully explained in the Christian Spectator, for the present year, page 376.

omnipotent God cannot create beings with powers, which qualify them as truly to perform right action as wrong, or to exercise holy as to exercise sinful affection, and this without giving them either a *sinful* or a *holy nature* prior to moral action? And if this be possible to an omnipotent Creator, how can it be proved that man is not in fact such a being?—Did not the first parents of our race perform *sinful* action, without having a previous sinful nature given them? And if beings previously holy can perform sinful acts without a previous sinful nature; why may not beings previously sinful perform holy acts, without a previous *holy nature*? Can the contrary be proved by human consciousness? But every human being *knows*, and is authorized to rely on this knowledge, (if he can rely on any,) as infallible, that his volitions and preferences are not effects produced by *efficient causes*, and in the same manner in which the sensation of burning is produced by fire, hunger by the want of food, or the falling of bodies by gravitation. Every human being knows that he has power to will otherwise than he does, as well as he knows, that he has power to will at all. But further. The scriptures most unequivocally teach that sinful men possess every constitutional power and property requisite to the exercise of perfect love to God. The law of God itself limits man's duty by *his* powers to perform it. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all *thy* heart, and with all *thy* soul, and with all *thy* mind, and with all *thy* strength." Has man then, *no* heart, *no* soul, *no* mind, *no* strength, qualifying him to love God? God saith, he has. What then more unauthorized than to assert that God cannot create beings capable of holy action, unless he gives them a holy nature? and what becomes of the philosophical assumption, on which the supposed scriptural doctrine is made to rest, viz. that the very nature of man—the substantial properties of his very being, must be changed in regeneration, to qualify him to love God? Plainly, this philosophy is a false philosophy, and the doctrine founded upon it is not to be found in the bible, unless the sacred book contains palpable contradictions.

There is yet another objection, which is esteemed by many still more formidable. It is said, that the view of the change in regeneration now maintained, compared with that which supposes it to consist in a literal creation of some new substantial property of the soul itself, greatly detracts from the display of divine power in its production. This objection, though we often hear it, we always hear with surprise. For, in the first place, how is the power of God displayed by changing any substantial property of the soul, more than in its original creation? If God creates men moral agents in respect to all their constitutional propensities, and thus qualifies them to

perform right moral action, then we have, in their original creation, the very display of divine power contended for. Not indeed a display of his power in creating at first a sinful nature in man, and afterwards a holy nature by way of emendation in his original work ; but we have a display of his power in creating man a complete moral agent, and as truly capable of performing right, as wrong moral action. Besides, how is the power of God displayed at all, by the supposed physical change? The mind of man itself can be conscious of no such change, but simply and solely of its effects in holy affections or acts. But if man be a complete moral agent in respect to every power and property requisite to the exercise of right affections, then no constitutional change can be necessary to such affections. Their existence of course can be no proof of the reality of such a change. And how is the power of God displayed by a supposed change, of whose reality there is no proof? The change *itself*, then, viewed abstractly from its effects, can furnish no display of the interposing power of God. Nor can it do this, through the medium of these effects, except it be first assumed that right affections *cannot* exist without such a change ; i. e. except on the philosophical assumption that man is not a free, moral agent. But is such an assumption necessary that we may honor God in the work of regeneration? Must we deny man's moral and accountable agency, in order to see and admire the power of God in man's moral transformation? Is God honored by the denial of this fundamental fact ; a fact which lies at the basis of his moral government, of all moral obligation and moral character in man, of all the grace of God in man's redemption, and of all those high relations between man and his Maker, which are associated with the grandeurs of eternity? It is true, God is glorified by the displays of his power in all physical phenomena ; and not least in the wonderful structure of a human soul with all the faculties of moral agency. Must he then literally re-create this structure and these faculties, that we may duly admire his power to create beings capable of right moral action? Far otherwise. In this respect, God creates men in his own image. His work is perfect, and displays his glory as their Creator. Now, pre-eminently as a Moral Governor, God would show himself to moral beings, and to secure their admiring homage, cause all the glories of this relation to pass before them. In the execution of this design, he will not eclipse these glories, nor make any display of his power that shall subvert his moral administration, or man's responsibilities.

If, then, man be a complete moral agent, the power of God in his regeneration is not displayed by the production of any physical change in the human soul. Nor can this display of

divine power depend at all, strictly or properly speaking, on the *nature* of the change. For it is a change which man himself, as a moral agent, is qualified, required, and bound to accomplish. That we may recognize the power of God, then, in this transformation, we must rely on his own testimony respecting the facts in the case, together with the coincidence of these facts and this testimony. We have then the testimony of God to the fact, not that man *cannot* change his own heart, but to the fact that although he *can*, he *never will change it*; to the appalling fact of a voluntary perverseness of heart, which will forever render vain and ineffectual all truth and motives, and which alike deserves perdition, and secures continuance in rebellion against the Most High; to the fact, that this giant rebel never was and never will be reclaimed to God, but by the power of God. With this testimony of the divine word, facts, as estimated by every intelligent and candid observer, are in entire coincidence. Shall we not, then, recognize the power of God in the moral transformation of sinful men, unless we suppose him to change the very structure of the soul itself, and thus to mend his original work of creation? Could such a work of divine power be compared with that, which by changing the moral affections, changes the moral character of such a rebel against God, as man is? When light, and truth, and motives, the glories of God, the joys of heaven, the terrors of hell,—all that can attract and all that can awe in eternity, have been presented to his heart in vain; and when we have the testimony of God, that without his interposition all will be in vain, is it then no exhibition of the power of God, to awaken in such a heart, the pure affections and holy purpose, that constitute the character of angels and bind them to His throne forever? Were we to witness a similar transformation in that leader of apostacy from God, who raised the standard of revolt in heaven itself,—could we see his unquenched hate and malice, changed into a seraph's love, could we see the exalted powers of that fell spirit consecrated by such love to his Maker's service, and look on his moral character thus beaming in its primeval glories, should we confess no power of God in the transformation? Can we then witness a similar change in the fit associates of that spirit,—a change involving in its nature the moral purity and moral dignity, which shall liken them to God, and place them on the thrones of his upper sanctuary; and then stop to admire changes in any mere physical phenomena? Surely, if there be any display of the power of God by which He is glorified, it is that by which He restores through His Spirit, his moral image to moral beings in the degradation and guilt of an otherwise hopeless rebellion. This is that new creation, compared with which all other works of God 'will neither be remembered, nor come into mind.'

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ART. I.—ON THE MEANS OF REGENERATION.

In concluding our remarks on the means of regeneration, we shall,

I. Briefly consider the ground which has now been gone over, with a view to obviate any objections to the statements which we have made.

We have endeavored to show, in the first place, that no acts of the sinner, previous to regeneration in the scriptural and popular sense of that term, can properly be called a using of the means of regeneration. All such acts—"the thoughts of the wicked"—"the way of the wicked"—"the sacrifice of the wicked"—are spoken of in the scriptures, as an abomination to the Lord.

We stated, in the second place, that from the nature of the human mind, an object must be seen in order to be loved. In taking God for our portion, therefore, *two* mental acts, at least, are united in the same indivisible moment of time, viz. a contemplation of His character, and a loving or choosing Him, as our supreme good. But, in the ordinary language of the scriptures and of common life, no such minute analysis is brought into view. One term embraces both—the ultimate act of choice or love, and the preliminary state of mind which results in that ultimate act. Thus the command of God, "my son give me thy heart," necessarily supposes a complex act of thought and choice, in respect to the divine character. The terms "regeneration," "conversion," etc. which describe the state of the soul in which this command is obeyed, denote therefore a *complex* state of the intellect and the affections, at the indivisible moment of the change in question. Who would doubt, if informed that another had been "*regenerated*," whether the first exercise of love in the renewed heart, was dependent on a contemplation of divine truth?" "Sanctify them through thy *truth*," are the words of our Sa-



viour Himself. The term regeneration in such cases, is used in what we have called its *comprehensive* sense ; and we have shown it to be a general principle of language, that words have sometimes a wider, and sometimes a more restricted signification, according to the circumstances of the case contemplated.

We stated, in the third place, that the term regeneration would never have been used except in its popular and *comprehensive* sense, if impenitent sinners had been as candid and honest in the concerns of their salvation, as in the ordinary affairs of life. For who that interprets language according to its ordinary signification, could be expected to doubt whether the command "make you a new heart," was designed to put sinners to the immediate performance of their duty? But a reluctance to the discharge of this duty, has filled their mouths with objections and excuses. Most of these have been derived from the doctrine of man's dependence for holiness, on divine grace. "Grant that I am *able*, says the sinner,—grant that I am *bound* to love God, without a moments' delay. It is a doctrine of your creed, that I shall never in *fact* do it, unless the Holy Spirit shall interpose to secure that result. Every motive to exertion is, therefore, taken away. If I am to be saved, I shall be saved ; and if I am to perish, I shall perish, do what I will." Now, it must be acknowledged, that some persons have so preached the doctrine of dependence, as to furnish ground for this objection. If there is no *tendency* in any act of the human mind, towards the change in regeneration—no one thing, on the sinner's part which makes it more *probable* than another that God will renew the soul—the objection is well-founded, and every motive to exertion is annihilated at once. Divines however, have generally maintained, that there are *means* of regeneration to be used by sinners. And in thus distinguishing between regeneration and the means of its attainment, they have used the term regeneration in a *restricted*, theological sense, to denote that ultimate act of holy choice or love, in which the use of these means terminates as their appropriate end. They seem, however, from not noticing this difference between the *restricted* and the *comprehensive* sense of the term regeneration, to have fallen into an error. They have considered the *sinful* doings of the unregenerate as a *using* of these means. If they have not in direct terms justified such a using of the means of grace, they have at least imagined that it was *necessary*, to produce the result in question. Against this doctrine we contended at large, as contradictory to sound reason by making sin the means of holiness—as sanctioning a neg-

lect of present duty, and furnishing a resting place for rebellion against God.

The question therefore arises, in the fourth place, where do *we* place the using of the means of regeneration? We answer, under regeneration *itself*, in the *comprehensive* sense of that term—in those acts of contemplating divine truth, which we have spoken of as necessarily co-existing with the act of choice or love, denominated regeneration in the restricted, theological meaning of the word. Up to that moment, the selfish principle had predominated in the soul, and no acts performed under its influence could be a using of the means of grace. But at that moment, by the influence of the divine Spirit, the selfish principle ceases to predominate in the heart. At that moment, God and divine things stand before the soul, no longer pre-occupied by supreme selfishness and love of the world. At that moment, this view of God, and divine things becomes *the means of regeneration*. A mind thus detached from the world as its supreme good, instantly chooses God for its portion, under the impulse of that inherent desire for happiness, without which, no object could ever be regarded as *good*—as either desirable or lovely. There are sometimes periods during the progress in conviction of sin, at which the selfish principle appears for a moment to be nearly suspended in its operation—and when the sinner seems almost ready to yield up all for his salvation. At such times he may be verging towards the state described; but it is only when the selfish principle *finally ceases to predominate in the soul*, that in the proper sense of the phrase, he ever uses the means of regeneration. In that moment—which is properly esteemed an *indivisible* moment—and in that only, does the sinner, so use the truth of God, that it can, according to the laws of mental action, become the means of a right act of the will or affection of the heart.\* All his previous perceptions of divine objects were so obscure and inadequate, his sensibilities were so far from the requisite excitement and direction, through the counter-

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\*We wish here to correct an error of the press, which occurred by interlineation, on page 210. The reader is requested to transpose the sentences beginning with "A similar suspension, etc.," and with "It is in such states alone, etc." We would also remark, that we did *in form* make a distinction between that *kind* of mental acts, (vide p. 222, etc.) which when counteracted by opposite mental tendencies does not, and when uncounteracted, does constitute using the means of regeneration. We did not, however, give as much prominence to this distinction, perhaps, as might have been desirable, to prevent misapprehension. Dele also the sentence on p. 234. "In our next number, etc."

acting influence of the selfish principle—this principle itself, in the form of earthly affection, was so far from relinquishing its final hold of its object, (though it may have ceased *actively* to pursue it) that without a farther change in these respects, the heart will never yield. This farther advance in respect to the suspension of the selfish principle—in respect to the vividness of the intellectual perception—and in respect to the degree of excitement in the susceptibilities of the mind, must take place in every instance of regeneration.

It will be seen, therefore, that according to the principles here advanced, *there is no neutrality in respect to moral character, in men.* Some persons, we believe, have supposed us to maintain, that, in using the means of regeneration, there is a *protracted* period, or succession of periods, in which man is neither a saint nor a sinner—neither regenerate nor unregenerate. Against such a conclusion we expressly guarded by saying, that we affirmed *no measurable duration* between the first and last act of the process of regeneration—no such *priority* of one act to another, as renders it improper or untrue to speak of the entire series of acts as *cotemporaneous*; and as constituting *ONE ACT*, the immediate performance of which is required of the sinner.

It is surely admitted by most men, that a change of affection, or of purpose, or an act of the will, may take place in an instant, or as it is often expressed, be instantaneous. Nor had we supposed that a doubt or difficulty could be started on the ground that, an act of the will necessarily implies the perception and comparison of the objects of choice. Neither President Edwards in laying down the fundamental principle, in his Essay on the Will, viz. that "*the will is as the greatest apparent good,*" nor the orthodox divines who have admitted the principle, ever supposed that it amounted to a denial of the doctrine of *instantaneous* regeneration. If our readers will take the trouble to consult the Essay alluded to, they will see, that what we have said respecting the mental process under consideration, amounts substantially to nothing more, than the fundamental principle of that celebrated treatise.\*

It may be well to remark here, that a distinction is to be made between what often takes place in fact, and what is necessary in the nature of things. Thus it may be true in fact, from the influence of causes already specified, that the *influence* of the selfish principle in prompting *to its appropriate*

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\*Vide Works, vol. v. pp. 17, 22.

*overt acts*, suffers momentary suspensions; and then again, and even instantly, resumes its wonted dominion. Or, this suspended influence of the principle may be perpetuated through some measurable duration, the thoughts be directed to divine and eternal things, and the susceptibilities of the mind be engrossed in strong and deep emotion. Or, in more common language, there may be a state of pungent conviction more or less protracted. And yet all this may be a very diverse state of mind from that which properly constitutes using the means of regeneration, and which is connected with the final act in giving God the heart. Nor do we doubt, that there is often thought enough and feeling enough expended in states of prolonged conviction, were it concentrated in one decisive effort of the soul, to secure through the grace of God, the actual submission of the heart. Nor is there any necessity in the nature of things for this delay. There is no more a necessity that God's truth should not at once secure its appropriate effects on the mind, than that any other truth should not. Accordingly, as we have before shown, if the truth of God, when presented to the mind, does not secure its proper effect, there is *blame-worthiness* on the part of the sinner. He is a moral agent, and bound to the performance of the complex act, which constitutes the required duty. He sins therefore in not *instantly* performing this complex act. If we are asked, how he can sin, when according to the supposition the selfish principle is suspended in regard to its appropriate overt acts; we answer, that *such a suspension* of that principle as we have described, is neither the *annihilation* of the principle, nor the suspension of *all its influence* on the mind. It is no more the *annihilation* of the principle, than is its suspended influence in the production of overt acts of body and mind, during profound sleep. In both cases it prompts to no such acts. It is, however, truly and properly considered as a real, unchanged state of the mind; and as the basis on which we should predicate present character. As in the one case, the principle or purpose of the man will wake up to its wonted influence in overt action, and thus evince its continued existence during sleep; so in the other, under the removal of the present causes of the suspension supposed, the principle will resume its influence, and thus show that it was not dead, though in *one respect* asleep. There is,—and so the experience of every one must testify, as in cases of highly excited fear,—this power of the mind to suspend its governing principle of action in respect to its appropriate acts; which though for the time it gives place to the mere desire of self-preser-

vation, does not involve in a moral respect, the renunciation of the selfish principle itself, nor the sinfulness of its subject.

Nor does the suspension of this principle in the production of *its appropriate overt acts*, imply the entire suspension of *all* influence from the selfish principle, on the mind. As we have shown, its influence may be still evinced in *another* form; in enfeebling the perceptions and benumbing sensibility, and thus rendering divine things too remote and unreal to draw forth the affections of the heart. In point of fact then, though it is by no means necessary that it should be so, the process of conviction may be in most instances a prolonged process, and yet in its continuance the sinner be wholly inexcusable. It may be true, that this process always will be a prolonged process, compared with what it ought to be, while sinners are taught that it *must* be so. And yet it may be equally certain, that the true process which constitutes using the means of regeneration, together with the act of the will or heart, may occupy but an indivisible moment. We therefore say, and regard it as highly important to say, that sinners, in a state of prolonged conviction, (even in that degree of it, in which the selfish principle ceases to dictate its appropriate overt acts,) only go on in sin; and that they are properly considered as *not using* the means of regeneration, until, in some indivisible moment, there is a suspension of the *entire* influence of the selfish principle; connected with that perception and estimate of the mind, which result in the right act of the will—in other words, until the moment in which the complex act of duty is done.

But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the mental process described does require what, in the strictness of philosophical statement, may be styled a measurable duration. Even in that case, our views are embarrassed with no difficulties, which do not equally pertain to the scriptural representations of the subject. The scriptures expressly teach that consideration and thoughtfulness are necessary to the regeneration of the soul. If then a measurable period of time *is* implied in such consideration, they either exhort men to *sinful* consideration as a means of holiness, or they admit of an interval during the time of consideration, in which the man is neither a saint nor a sinner. The former will not be maintained. If, then, a momentary interval is implied in the statements of the scriptures, how are they to be vindicated from the charge of inconsistency in maintaining, that all men are either sinners or saints? We answer; their vindication is complete, according to those principles of usage in respect to language, which we have already stated and defended.

If the *complex act*, the mental process of turning to God does require in the nature of things a measurable portion of time, then that time according to every correct principle of legislation, is *allowed* by the lawgiver; and when speaking of the sinner in respect to *moral action*, or moral character, the lawgiver cannot with propriety, and therefore does not in fact, make any account of that *interval*. To suppose otherwise, would be to suppose that he required an act to be done *sooner* than it can be done in the nature of things. This will not be pretended. Suppose a parent or master to require an act of obedience, the performance of which in the nature of things, requires some short period of measurable duration. Does it accord with common usage, with propriety or good sense, to raise the question of obedience or disobedience, the question of neutrality or allegiance, during the performance of the thing required; i. e. while the act of obedience is in process? When the sinner according to the scriptural account of the process, is *considering* or thinking of his ways, while as yet the act of turning has not taken place, is it credible that the language of such a book as the bible, should recognize the intervening moment, for the sake of deciding on the moral character of the sinner during such an interval? Is it credible that in view of such a fact, the Son of God, when deciding the general principle for popular practical purposes, should hesitate to say, 'that he that is not for me is against me,' lest some quibbling critic bidding farewell to common sense, should charge him with falsehood, in view of the known interval which is *indispensable* to a change of character?

While therefore, we think, that these principles would vindicate the sacred writers, and ourselves also, even on the supposition of a measurable duration, we wish by no means to be understood to admit such duration, as requisite to the performance of duty. The sinner with the knowledge of God and of duty, is qualified as a moral agent, and therefore is bound to give his heart to God *instantly* in supreme affection; and to fail to do it, is to disregard of course, the most distinct and solemn annunciation of duty from the Eternal King. He stands before God a sinner under just condemnation, up to the indivisible moment, in which he so uses the means of regeneration, as to give his heart immediately to God.

But a second objection from a different quarter may be urged against the view which we have taken of this subject. "Thus to narrow down the using of the means of regeneration to the *identical* moment of regeneration itself," it may be said, "is in fact to deny that there is any such thing as a us-

ing of those means at all." We answer, that we have *expressly denied this* with respect to all those acts, which impenitent sinners commonly regard as a using of the means in question. The only *use* which a man is authorized to make of divine truth, is *instantly to obey it*. A moment's delay—the act of dwelling upon it in protracted contemplation, while the heart remains unsubdued—is not a using of truth for the purpose of obedience, but of prolonged rebellion.

But some persons in urging this fact upon sinners, have gone to the opposite extreme. They have shut out and denied any connection whatever, between divine truth and a change of spiritual affections. But the scriptures assure us, that we are "begotten *through* the truth." The truth, then, is the *means* of regeneration. But it cannot become such a means, without being *present* to the mind. With reference to the object in view, it has no existence except as it is perceived. He then, who so turns his mind to the contemplation of truth as to make a new moral choice, uses that truth for the purpose designed by God—uses it as the *means* of regeneration. Any thing short of this is not a using, but an abusing of the means in question. Now we have no strong partialities for the expression "using the means of regeneration," as thus applied. We would contend for things, rather than for words. Views, as we said before, have extensively prevailed concerning the nature of regeneration, and the manner in which this change is produced, which either on the one hand, connect it with sinful acts, or on the other, deny all connection with any prior acts whatever. The consequence has been, either that sinners have felt themselves authorized to commit sin as the necessary means of regeneration; or to wait in total inaction, for God to interpose and effect the change. To expose and correct these errors then, we deem it of vital importance to show, that there are acts which are not sinful—and yet which *may* be done, and which *must* be done, by the man, or he will never be regenerated.

While, therefore, we have attempted to justify the phraseology of "using the means of regeneration," we frankly say, that we do not think we should have attempted its vindication, had it not become in some degree sanctioned by extensive theological usage. What we deem important is, that the *mental process* which we have described should in the cases, and for the purposes specified, be clearly exhibited. At the same time, we are so fully convinced of the adaptation and utility of the *comprehensive* phraseology in respect to the great end of preaching the gospel, that we do not believe

there would have been the least occasion for any analysis of the mental process in regeneration, were it not for the errors to which we have adverted. These errors however prevail to such an extent and are of such dangerous practical tendency, that their exposure imperiously calls for the labors of all who are set for the defence of the gospel. So long as the impression remains, on the minds of sinful men, that they are as likely to be regenerated without direct effort in the performance of duty as with it, the propriety of such effort will be denied; and either those sinful doings or that stupidity in sin, which alike terminate in death, will be perpetuated.

The views which we have taken, are in no degree liable to a third objection which has sometimes been suggested. It has been supposed, that to maintain the *necessity* of any acts in order to regeneration, virtually implies the propriety of exhortation to the performance of such acts; which is obviously inconsistent with the divine requirement of immediate duty. We answer, that *the necessity* of those acts, which we have called using the means of regeneration, does not imply the propriety of requiring the separate performance of them as *a duty*, or as *moral action*. On the contrary, every such exhortation is in our view, directly fitted to the purpose of self deception and ruin. Nothing can be required of the sinner as *duty*, but duty,—nothing as *a moral act*, but *a moral act*. Using these means therefore, viewed abstractly from the will or heart, is not a moral act, is not performing a duty; for as we have said, the *moral act*—the *duty*, involves both. To make any other impression on the mind of the sinner, is to make a false impression in respect to one of the most vital of all the subjects of ministerial instruction. We may indeed, be compelled by the objections of the sinner to remind him, that what we have called using the means of regeneration, is *necessary*; both as leading to the right act of the will or heart, and as part of the complex act of duty. For what moral excellence could there be in the exercise of *mere* love without a knowledge of the character which is loved; or in a simple act of choice, unattended by a consciousness of duty? These then are never to be separated in our directions to sinners. We must urge upon them the complex requirements, to repent—to love God—to give God the heart, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. These, involving as they do, complex mental action—these, which, when subjected to a philosophical analysis, embrace the acts, which constitute using the means of regeneration, and also the act of the will or heart—are the requirements, and substantially the only requirements,



which are clothed with God's authority as a moral Governor ; and short of these, the ambassador of God may deliver no message to rebels under his government. And we ask why he should deliver any other? Do they need to know what constitutes the terms of divine mercy? Then let the divine messenger deliver his message intelligibly—let him unfold that which is to be done on their part, in its nature, its elements,—showing the very thing in its constituent parts, as “ a scribe well instructed.” Let him do this, according as the ignorance or mistakes of his hearers may demand, and what can he better do to give them the knowledge necessary to a compliance with the divine requirements? Let him do this, in respect to those who misapprehend or pervert the doctrine of their dependance on grace ; and what can he better do to correct their misapprehensions, and counteract their perversions? Let him do this, with any degree of analysis or specification which the exigency of the case may demand ; and what does he do after all, but, with God's authority, summon men to obey God's commandments? Let him do this, and he does not tell the sinner to use the means of regeneration, and stop at this point, and wait for God to convert him ; but he tells him to put himself with all his powers as an intelligent, voluntary, moral being to the performance of every part of the complex act, which constitutes his duty. And whether in a form more or less analytical, describing with greater or less speciality, the several essential parts of the moral act, and that which is involved in its performance, he only inculcates truly and wisely in an analytic form, what in other circumstances is properly and wisely inculcated in a comprehensive form. Does he, for example, urge the sinner to thoughtful consideration, he does not,—he cannot, without serious error, leave him to conclude that *thus* to consider, is all that is required. Nor can he specify any *other* mental acts, as all that are to be performed, while the act of the will or heart is not included in the requirement. The whole, and not a part, must be comprised in the exhortation. If he exhorts the sinner to “ strive to enter in at the strait gate,” he cannot without serious error, mean that the understanding and the conscience with other susceptibilities of the mind merely, are to be exercised ; and that the faculty of the will or heart is to be excused from its appropriate act. *All* the powers and properties of the soul, the understanding to see the truth, the susceptibilities to feel it, the will or heart to choose the objects presented by it, must be put into requisition by the faithful summons of God's faithful ambassador ; and each and all must be charged to perform its appropriate and necessary part in

the act of duty, on pain of eternal perdition. And thus it is, that the commands of the Most High *may* be brought, and thus they *must* be brought, whether in a comprehensive or analytic form, upon the conscience and heart of the sinner. And now, we ask, what is the difference in things,—what the difference in the subject matter of the requirement, whether it be made in the one form of phraseology or in the other? In either case, the self-same thing is required, viz. that exercise of the powers of man as a moral being, which constitutes the performance of right moral action. Who will say, that a given exercise of the intellect, conscience, etc. is not *in the order of nature* prior to the right act of the will or heart, and necessary to it? Who will say that to denominate the former the means of the latter, and yet to include the whole as the duty and instant duty of the sinner, is to change the subject matter of God's requirements? Does the love which God requires of men consist in a mere *instinctive* emotion? Is regeneration a mere physical change, rising in the mind like bodily sensations through the efficacy of physical agents? No. It is a change wrought by God upon an intelligent being; who has, in the very change itself, some just view of the reasons for it, and some just estimate of his own high obligations to it; and who with his eye fixed on God, can say from his knowledge of all other objects of affection, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on the earth that I desire beside thee." To require of the sinner, then, such an exercise of intellect conscience, etc., together with the right act of will or affection of heart, is the very thing which God requires; and what according to our views of using the means of regeneration, must also be required by every one who speaks to his fellow sinners, in the name of God.

The last objection which we shall consider is this, that our scheme dispenses with the influences of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, if not in words, at least in fact. But how have we done this? By stating that the soul is renewed through the intervention of divine truth? This is the doctrine of the bible. "Of His own will begat He us with the *word of truth*." By affirming that man is *active* in the change in question? This is abundantly declared in the scriptures. "I thought on my ways and *turned* my feet unto thy testimonies." Nor is there any thing in such a statement, in the least contradictory to other declarations of the scriptures, which make the Holy Spirit the author of regeneration. Both statements are sometimes brought together in the same passage. "YE have *purified* your souls in *obeying* the truth through the SPIRIT." Our principle is simply that of Edwards. "God produces all

and we *act* all." When we say, therefore, that the soul in regeneration chooses God as its portion "under the impulse of its inherent desire for happiness," we are not excluding the influence of the divine Spirit. We are simply stating the great principle of Edwards, that "the will is *as* the greatest apparent good." For how could any thing appear *good* to a being, who had no capacity of happiness? It would, indeed, be wonderful if Calvinists should charge us with error, for maintaining the very principle by which Edwards overthrew Arminianism. The Arminians contended for a self-determining power, and Edwards refuted their principle by showing, that the will is always *as* the greatest apparent good. Our statements respecting the intervention of truth, and the activity of men in regeneration, were intended to oppose what we shall call, for want of a better name, the doctrine of PHYSICAL REGENERATION. This doctrine places the change in question *back* of action, in the structure or constitution of the soul itself. Such views we think equally repugnant to the scriptures and to the nature of moral agency. But in opposing them, our whole system of reasoning proceeds on the supposition, that God is the author of the change in regeneration.

II. We proceed to consider the advantages of the view, which we have given of using the means of regeneration, as it shows the consistency of exhortations to immediate duty, with the doctrine of the sinner's dependence. This it does,

1. As it shows the way, and the only way, in which the immediate performance of duty can be regarded as practicable by the sinner. By this we mean, that the sinner is authorized to regard immediate compliance with duty as an event which *may* in fact take place. It is not sufficient to urge upon the sinner the present performance of duty, on the ground that he possesses all the powers of a moral agent which qualify him instantly to perform it. It is necessary to the actual performance of duty, that the sinner believe, that it *may prove to be a fact*, that he shall perform it. The calls of the gospel in this world of hope are not converted into mockery, by the assurance, to any individual, that they will not be obeyed. True it is, that no sinner ever will enter on the mental process we have spoken of, without a divine influence on the mind; and it is equally true, that God may do more for the same sinner at one time than at another. Still, that duty may ever be done, it must be regarded by the sinner as an event, which *may in fact take place*; and this, on the ground that the grace, which will result in the performance of duty, *may* attend the present call to duty.

Never does the sinner come to the decisive effort, without this conviction. And thousands will look back, throughout eternity, with joy to the moment, when under this conviction they were induced to say,

I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away, I know,  
I shall forever die.

We maintain, then, that the sinner, when required to love God, or to make him a new heart, is authorized to believe, not indeed, that he *shall*, but that it *may be the fact* that he will, instantly obey the requirement. Every command of the Most High is an unqualified claim for immediate action—an unqualified claim for present obedience. True, it is supposable, that God might enforce these claims on beings who are hopelessly lost. But then is it credible, that in a world of mercy like this where the calls and overtures of mercy are made to all, that God accompanies these calls with the assurance to any, that present obedience is to be utterly despaired of? God under an avowed economy of grace, require instant action on pain of eternal death, and then by the assurance (of its present utter impracticability,) cut the sinews of all action, annihilate every motive to action, and render it as hopeless as it would be by the annihilation of the agent! God as a Lawgiver use the language of hope to His guilty, dependent creatures, and God as the Dispenser of grace, contradict it and utter only the language of despair! Such chicanery might disgrace an earthly monarch who would tantalize his subjects in the ruin and wretchedness of guilt. But does it mar the administration of the Eternal's throne? God forbid. Under the distinct and solemn annunciation from that throne, "give me thine heart," who shall say that it meaneth not so, or that he is doomed to another moment's disobedience?

Further; Common sense decides, that if it is a known or revealed truth, that the sinner under a present call to duty will not act unless God do more than God is now doing, then let the sinner wait till God does do more. Why should he act or attempt to act, or even think of acting, though called by the summons of God to instant duty? What reason is there, why a man should act or even think of acting in a given manner, in given circumstances, when he knows or believes, that he never shall act in this manner in these circumstances? No matter, as it respects the *reasonableness* of acting, what the *ground* of the certainty is, that he shall not act, if this certainty be known or believed. That criminal *perverseness* of heart is the ground of the certainty, does indeed make a very matreial difference in respect to the sinner's *obligation to act*. Still,

if in this case, *he knows he shall not act*, the futility and consequent unreasonableness of acting, are as obvious as if the certainty were caused by chains of adamant.

Action too in this case would be in the most absolute sense, impossible. Man act voluntarily, with the unqualified conviction, that he shall not act? Then may he act voluntarily without motives—for what motive can secure the performance of an action, which he knows he shall not perform? Being authorized, or rather required to deny the present reality of a divine influence that will result in right action, reason says, common sense says, a world says—wait for that influence—let the sinner sleep on and sleep away the hours of probation, waiting for God to move him to right action.

We might here appeal to the whole tenor of the scriptures; we might ask why does God, by intreaties and expostulations, by warnings and threatenings, addressed to sinners, crowd the great concern of their salvation into the passing moment? Why, unless He would have them believe, that what He requires them now to do, *may in fact now be done*? We might appeal also to the nature of the subject; and ask, why should not such truth as God's truth, take instant effect on the mind of man, as well as any other truth? If the drowning man, seizes instantly the arm, proffered for his deliverance, how long must it take the sinner, with the knowledge of his guilt and condemnation, and of a Savior able and ready to save from endless death, to entrust his soul to His keeping? or, with the glories of a perfect God revealed, to love Him? Why may not that which man as a moral agent can do the next moment, without the influence of the Holy Spirit, be done the next moment, through the influence of this Divine Agent?—We have already referred to the testimony of facts, as furnished by the inspired word. We might show, that the preaching of the most successful ministers of this and of every other age, is distinguished by this grand peculiarity, impressed on their own minds, and on the minds of their hearers, viz. the conviction that what *ought now* to be done, *may in fact now be done*. Are we asked, whether this conviction will secure the conversion of the sinner? That is not the question. But the question is, will any sinner ever turn to God without this conviction? And what man or angel knows, that with this conviction, he *will not* instantly awake to his eternal interests, and set himself to the work of turning to God, and thus by the power of the Holy Ghost, actually accomplish it? Has not God proclaimed salvation to a lost world? Is He not carrying on its redemption in actual results? Are there not hundreds and thousands in our own land of devoted believers in the Lord Jesus, and fellow-heirs of his glory, who were lately going as thoughtless in the path to

endless ruin, as other thousands now are? Is there one of the multitude, who embraced the Savior without believing that he might do it, when he did it? God is on the mercy seat, proclaiming to all, that *now* is the accepted time, that *now* is the day of salvation. He commands, with the authority of a Being of infinite perfection. He invites and entreats with the tenderness and sincerity of the author of redemption. He spreads around us the scene of his wonderful working, and calls us to look upon the monuments of the grace of a present God. He speaks, and all hear;—and who is the sinner that may not *now* obey the summons of his God?

We say then, that the sinner under the call to present duty is authorized to believe in the *practicability* of present duty: and that the view we have taken of using the means of regeneration, shows the way, and the only way, in which it may prove to be a fact, that such duty will be done. According to these principles, duty never was done, it never will be done, it never can be done in any other way; in this way, it may prove to be the fact that it will be done and done now. What better, what more pressing reasons then can be addressed to the sinner for entering on its performance at once? Doing this, duty may be done, and heaven obtained. Neglecting this, duty never will be done, and the soul is lost forever. Who, under the summons of God, to duty and to life, will sleep in sin another moment? Who that comes with God's commission to the heart, shall hesitate to repeat and urge, singly and alone, the call of the Most High to immediate duty?

The view which we have given of using the means of regeneration, shows the consistency of exhortations to immediate duty, with the doctrine of dependence:

2. As it secures to this doctrine its true practical influence on the mind of the sinner. According to the principles which we have advanced, there is no ground of certainty, that the renewing grace, or the grace which secures the performance of duty, *will attend* any call to duty, addressed to any individual sinner. Here, as we shall now attempt to show, lies the practical power of the doctrine of dependence, viz. in the fearful uncertainty, which it imparts to the great question of the sinner's regeneration.

This doctrine is insisted on with great frequency, and exhibited with great prominence in the sacred volume. It was taught with great plainness, and pressed in all its pungency and all its mysteriousness, upon the wondering Nicodemus, by the Savior himself. As a constant theme in the instructions of the Apostles, it was used to impart a nothingness to themselves and to their ministry; to annihilate as it were all other power but the power of God, and thus to display His glory, as the Author of eternal salvation. It cannot we think be doubted, that such a doctrine of the sacred oracles has a

most important practical tendency, nor what this tendency is in respect to those who are yet in their sins. For how can a guilty being like man, know the truth of this doctrine and not read in it, the uncertainty of his own preparation for eternity? Is it not an alarming truth, that such a being is thus dependent on the will of that God, whom he has always provoked, and whom he still provokes, to destroy him forever? Does not every mind perceive at once, not only that the practical tendency of this doctrine is to alarm the sinner, but that this tendency results directly from the fearful uncertainty which it imparts to the great question of eternal life and death? We do not ask, as we might, whether it would be possible without this doctrine, so to alarm the sinner as to excite him to flee from the wrath to come; but we ask, would there be the same reason for alarm, which there now is? Or, were the grace on which the sinner depends *known* to be at his own disposal, always furnished and ready for his use until the hour of death; would he not take new courage to go on in his iniquity? Plainly, it is only when the event of compliance with the terms of life, is seen to depend on the unpromised and uncertain grace of an offended God, that the doctrine of dependence carries its agitating power into the guilty bosom. And why, we ask, if this be not the *designed* influence of this doctrine on the sinful mind,—why is all connection between the doings of the unregenerated and God's renewing grace, so dissolved by the frowns of His displeasure on all such doings? Why is the ground of this dependence on God, so unequivocally presented, as consisting not in the sinner's inability as a moral agent, which excuses from duty; but in the inability of a moral perverseness, which is the most appalling aggravation of guilt? Why is the high and uncontrollable sovereignty of God in the gifts of his grace, so clearly announced and so formally and triumphantly defended against the murmurings of the ungodly, and the man that dares to open his mouth against it, encountered with the sternest severity of apostolic reproof? Have we no evidence that this is an unwelcome truth, and unwelcome because it is terrible, and terrible because it shows man's eternal destiny to depend on the unknown counsels of an offended God? Why the solemn and reiterated charge not to grieve,—not to resist the Holy Ghost? Why the solemn asseveration, that He shall not always strive with man? Why these monitory cautions, if there is no danger of being abandoned by His heavenly influence? Why, if there is no giving up to a reprobate mind, and to strong delusions that infallibly terminate in damnation,—why are we expressly told of those on whom this judgment lights even in this world? Why the absolute assurance, that some shall call, and not be answered, seek and not find; and that even He who redeemed sinners by his blood, will for their contempt of his mercy laugh at their calamity

and mock when their fear cometh? Why, without one word of exception or qualification throughout the sacred volume, in respect to all preliminary acts and doings as the ground of hope, is the sinner "shut up to the faith;" and all that can cheer or sustain his guilty bosom, fixed to the single point of duty with the mere "peradventure" that God will give him repentance? Why is all this, if God does not design to impart a fearful uncertainty to the prospect of the sinner's conversion?

We are still further confirmed in our opinion on the present subject, by comparing the practical tendencies of the two opposite views. We doubt not, that those who hold out to the sinner a high expectation of conversion, do so because they deem it a useful encouragement. And yet we are convinced that the true tendency of this view and of the encouragement it gives, is to confirm sinners in the stupidity of sin, and to defeat the end designed. We have already exposed the tendency of that hope and encouragement, which are derived from any acts of the sinner, previous to those which enter into the performance of duty. The same fatal tendency, results from the abstract belief, that the grace of God is, and always will be, ready for the sinner's use. We know how the sinner loves this world; and with what determination of purpose he still resolves to enjoy the pleasures of sin; how prone he is to presume on life, and to quiet present apprehensions of future misery, by a delusive confidence that he shall at last escape it. And what is better fitted to confirm this confidence, than the assurance or even a high probability, that the grace of God is, and ever will be, ready to renew the heart? It is the belief of thousands, who remain quiet in sin, that they shall infallibly, or with a high degree of probability, induce God to interpose and save them, before it shall be too late. It is this very presumption indeed which holds them in these death-like slumbers from which no accents of mercy—no, nor the note of the second death, can rouse them. Their very orthodoxy by a slight perversion, becomes their ruin. They believe in their dependence on God; but they also believe, that the necessary grace is, and will be ready for their use, when they shall be ready to use it. This is that grand opiate of the adversary by which he holds enthralled multitudes, under the light of salvation, in their guilty sleep of moral death. And thus it is, that the true practical bearing of the doctrine of man's dependence on grace, is fatally impaired or destroyed. Can there be a doubt on this point? Suppose the sinner to know that he is to be called the next hour to the judgement seat of that God, on whose sovereign will he depends for his preparation to appear before Him; could he sleep in sin, quietly relying on what he intends to do hereafter? Who does not see that to destroy this presumptuous reliance on futurity, these hopes and ex-



pectations from futurity, must also be destroyed? And who does not see, that the doctrine of dependence on God, like the assurance of sudden death, tends to destroy such hopes? What if the sinner may and shall live long? This doctrine shows him that his regeneration, and of course his salvation, must depend after all, on the counsels of a sovereign and offended God. It thus throws doubt and uncertainty over all his fond anticipations from futurity; and exhibits the fearful hazard of final perdition, which he incurs by the God-provoking purpose of delaying repentance. In this view of his dependence, a painful, oppressive uncertainty, an agitating anxiety must be felt by the sinner, utterly incompatible with that quietness of spirit, which the opposite view is fitted to foster, in the mind. He may indeed exclude it from his belief, and even from his thoughts, but can he steadily look at the fact, that by his own perverseness of heart, he has placed his salvation in the hands of an angry God; and as he thinks of His high counsels, and eternal retribution, be obliged to say, "perhaps heaven—perhaps hell—is my portion," and still remain at ease? He may as well look into the pit of everlasting burnings, without emotion. If there is any embodying of the entire moral influence of the Gospel, any bringing it to bear as "the power of God" upon the sinner, and thus constraining him to the most strenuous and unyielding effort, instantly to comply with the terms of life, it is done by just views of the sinner's dependence on the grace of God. Here in one comprehensive presentation, and in their combined power, he sees his helplessness, his guilt, his danger, and his only hope.

Nor shall we be prepared fully to appreciate the practical power of this doctrine, without adverting to one peculiarity of the case. It is not, then, the case of one, who with all his heart *desires* some object or end of difficult attainment. Were it thus, then indeed high and confident expectation of success, would have no tendency to prevent instant and vigorous effort. But such is not the case of the sinner. It is not that of a drowning man, who is to be prompted to efforts to escape death, in the cold waters that threaten to swallow him up. But it is that of a sinner, who has chosen the world for his portion,—his all; who here finds a warm and genial home, with all he can desire to gladden existence; and who is led to cheer his heart amid his joys, and to prolong his happy residence, with hopes of ultimate safety. It is such a being who is to be constrained by a hastening destruction, to forsake all that his heart holds dear. And the question is, when will danger prompt him to flight? When it is supposed on the one hand to be attended by a fair prospect of escape by efforts, deferred to a future day; or, when on the other hand, so far as he has the least warrant to believe, such effort must be made now or never. True it is, the uncertainty of life is a sufficient reason to prevent the delay of a moment. Spread then, the deepest

and most chilling shade on the prospect of life ; but how uniformly in the hey-day of health and strength, does the sinner still regard death as distant, with a confidence which frequent deaths, and sudden deaths, and deaths in sin, around him, can scarcely agitate. Can we then only repeat, "life is frail and death is near," and leave him to his dreams? How confidently does he cheer his spirit with the belief, that though others die without expecting death, or preparing for it, he shall be favored with timely monitions of its approach? The case is peculiar, and it calls for all that truth can utter. The sinner loves his sins—he loves the world—he is averse to God and His service, and will persist in his chosen way, till these presumptuous hopes of salvation are cut off. If then you would rouse him from his lethargy,—if you would suffer him to have no rest in sin, throw on his prospect the gloom and the forebodings in which truth invests it. His salvation, by his own perverseness, is forfeited into the hands of a sovereign and an offended God. Point then the thoughtless man to God's high counsels, and show him that God, who will save or destroy, "as seemeth good in His sight."

With this view of the practical tendency and influence of the doctrine of dependence, perfectly accords the view we have taken of using the means of regeneration. According to the principles which we have advanced, the gift of renewing grace cannot be inferred from the nature, tendency, or relations of any prior acts of the sinner ; for their whole tendency is to prevent his regeneration. It cannot be inferred from any divine promise, but is thrown into fearful uncertainty by the divine threatenings. It cannot be inferred as necessary to create the sinner's obligation to immediate duty ; or to vindicate the justice of God in the execution of the sentence of his wrath. Whether, therefore, this blessing be given or withheld in respect to individual sinners, is an inquiry which according to the views we have maintained in the previous discussion, as well as according to the scriptural doctrine of dependence, must be left with the sovereignty of God, whose secret counsels, no human eye can penetrate.

We now invite the attention of the reader, to the ultimate conclusion aimed at, in the preceding discussion ; viz. THE PROPRIETY OF EXHORTATIONS TO IMMEDIATE DUTY, IN VIEW OF THE SINNER'S DEPENDENCE ON THE GRACE OF GOD. We ask then, in view of the principles advanced, to what shall sinful men be exhorted by the ministry of reconciliation, except to the immediate performance of duty? Shall they be exhorted to any acts or doings, *prior* to those which enter into the performance of duty? But all such acts of the unregenerate are sinful, and the subject of God's unqualified prohibition and abhorrence. Shall they be told to take the attitude of passive recipients of a divine influence, and thus to come to the mercy seat as suppliants, and wait on God in persevering importunity, to change *the very constitution* of the soul, which God has given them? This would

be preposterous; no such change is needed, nor was ever wrought in the soul of man. Shall they then be required to ask in this manner, for a new heart, be it what it may? But how can they supplicate God for this blessing, when He frowns on all supplication not dictated by a holy heart? Shall they, then, be allowed, (as would be to their liking) to do nothing, except to lay themselves down in the sloth and stupidity of sin; and under the call of God to duty, wait for God to do something more than He is now doing, to move them to right action? This would be death. No sinner ever was, and no sinner ever will be converted in this state of inaction. Shall they then be told, that there are certain acts, which, though dictated by a sinful heart, and therefore sinful, are yet *necessary*; and though not to be required, are still to be done? Such acts are not *necessary*; but on the contrary have a direct and fatal tendency to prevent regeneration, and must be utterly abandoned, or the heart can never be changed. Shall they then be invited to take some neutral ground, and to perform acts which are neither holy nor sinful? But the Lawgiver knows no such acts in accountable subjects—no interval of accountable existence in which failure in duty is not sin,—no movement of a moral being, which is not towards heaven or towards hell. Shall they then plead, that there are some acts, which as elementary parts of the complex act of duty, have no moral quality? But these are unknown and undistinguished by God from the moral act itself. They occupy no *time*; they are essential parts of the act of duty; and the question of the moral state of man during their performance, might as well be decided by an appeal to the action of the nerves and muscles of the body. Shall it then be said, there is no hope for sinners; and that they have only to yield themselves to the gloom and sullenness of despair, or to its agonizing frenzies, even in a world of mercy? But we have shown them the way, and the only way, in which they *may*, and in which they are fully authorized to believe that they *may*, instantly comply with the terms of salvation, even *by putting themselves at once to the act of compliance*. Shall it be said, that it is uncertain whether the grace which will result in this mode of action, will be actually afforded, so that of course, this action is itself uncertain, and therefore irrational? We ask, then, what human act can be rational? Who ever thought, that the reasonableness of action depends on the previous known certainty that we shall act? The action proposed to the sinner, he is authorized to regard as that which *may* in fact be done. Not to perform it is to take the responsibility of going to hell, when he is fully warranted to believe that he *may* go to heaven. Shall he now say, that if this be so, then he may still cheer himself in his sins with the probability, that the requisite grace will hereafter attend the call to life, and that he shall be regenerated by this grace at some future hour of merciful visitation? God, in mercy to his soul, authorizes no such consolation in the delay of repentance; but imparts to such a purpose, and even to the thought of it, the terrors of an anticipated reprobation.

Thus the principles which we maintain, shut the sinner up to an immediate compliance with the terms of life. Not, on the one hand, that he should despair of the regenerating grace of that God, who cheers these hours of His forbearance with the assurance, that "He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Not, on the other, that there is hope for the sinner, from any acts except those which are in-

volved in the direct performance of duty. No mercy, no grace, no compassion of God is revealed to authorize continuance in sin. Each passing moment of prolonged probation, should indeed be hailed as more auspicious to his conversion, than any future moment can be; and should, as such, be consecrated, with instant and decisive effort, to the very act of giving his heart to God and his soul to Christ. And not only so; but all future moments of life, instead of being viewed as bright with hope; and cheered with the prospect of successful effort, should be regarded as overcast with that uncertainty, apprehension, or even despair, which may be necessary to destroy all reliance on any future effort and to concentrate the whole energy of the soul in one present act of duty. True, delightfully true it is, that God is now on the mercy seat, and with the call to life, wears the smile of inviting love, to allure the sinner to return to Him by penitence and faith. But along with this attractive influence by which He draws, with "the chords of love and the bands of a man," He pours on the way of the sinner, who would persist in determined sin, the tempest and the fire of His indignation. In that path stands death, with which the sinner has made no covenant. In that path, even at the first step in it, a sin-avenging God may meet him—or, a reprobating God may say of him, "he is joined to idols, let him alone."

To right moral action—to duty—to compliance with God's terms of salvation, be the form of describing it what it may, and to this only, is the sinner to be exhorted by him, who comes with God's commission, to reclaim a sinful world from ruin. We need not say, how diverse from the other, this view of the subject must be in its practical influence, both on those who hear, and those who bring the message of salvation. The former instead of believing, that they are to take simply the attitude of passive recipients, and like statues to wait for a divine blessing, would feel themselves to be agents pressed and urged to instant *action*, by the moving message of wrath and of mercy. The later, instead of comforting themselves in the unfruitfulness of their ministry, by referring it to the counsels of irresistible grace, would find the way open for the summons of heaven's high sovereign to the conscience and the heart of his rebellious subjects, and would wield the weapons of their warfare not with a faint heart and palsied arm, but with the skilfulness and vigor of men who would expect and whom the world would expect, to produce results. These weapons, would thus become mighty through God, and the prayer of the church, 'thy kingdom come,' would sooner be answered. Oh! when shall the day arrive, when the plain truths of the bible—the awful and enrapturing truths of the bible, shall thus become 'the power of God unto salvation?' When shall the gospel be preached and heard with the impression, that it is designed to be a cause of present efficacy? When shall this conviction possess the mind of its preachers, and rouse them to that zeal and strenuousness in effort, which become them as workers together with God! And when, by relying on Him 'without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy,' shall their labors be crowned not merely with the occasional conversion of a sinner, but with the results of Apostolic days!











