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DISSERTATION

ON

NATIVE DEPRAVITY.

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DISSERTATION.

Within a few years past, the attention of the churches has been drawn to some novel speculations in theology, the nature and tendency of which have excited not a little alarm. With what ingenuousness and frankness of mind, they have been introduced to the consideration of the public, different men will probably form a different judgment, as they have been more or less acquainted with the history of these discussions.

The error to which I am about to refer in these pages, was, I distinctly remember, a few years ago, but delicately hinted at, and very modestly, though assiduously suggested in private conversation. The first assault upon the Doctrine of Native Depravity was from the New-Haven School, and in their own covered way to the field. Some few ministers of the gospel, in high standing, and hitherto supposed to be attached to the doctrines of the Reformation, began to speak with an indefiniteness and looseness on this subject, to which they had not been accustomed. They were not prepared either to

affirm or deny; but their minds seemed to be in a state of painful hesitation and scepticism. *They could not tell;* they did not know, what the Bible taught in relation to the native character of our fallen race. Ask them whether men are born sinners, and they would tell you, *we do not know.* Ask them whether infants possess any moral character, and they would reply, *we do not know.* Ask them whether they are accountable beings; and they would tell you, *we do not know.* Ask them whether they need the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; and they answered, *we do not know.* Ask them what becomes of infants when they die; and they said *we do not know.* Ask them whether death in relation to infants, is by sin; and they still say, *we do not know.*

But this period of hesitation and scepticism has gone by. The scriptural doctrine of native depravity is now boldly denied. Plain and palpable efforts are now made in a number of reviews of the works of Bellamy, Edwards and Dwight, the design of which is to set aside their views on this and other kindred doctrines. For a considerable time past, it has been unhesitatingly maintained, that all mankind are born destitute of moral character, and are neither holy, nor sinful—that though they are destitute of original righteousness, they are free from sin, and have no moral corruption of nature or propensity to evil—that they are perfectly innocent—that they have no

more moral character than animals—and, that they come into existence in the same state in which Adam was before his fall, and in which the holy child Jesus was when he was born in the manger.*

We should have no particular motives to disturb men in these notions, if we did not believe them to be both false and dangerous. But confident of this, we are not at liberty any longer to be silent. We sincerely hope the time has come, when this subject will undergo a faithful discussion. If we are not deceived, *truth* is very precious to us; and we care not how, or through whose instrumentality, we find it. If the doctrine on which we propose to submit a few remarks in the following pages, be not found in the Bible, we have no such attachments to it, and no such habits of thinking, as to be unwilling they should all be broken up. We will surrender ourselves to no theory, no adventurous speculations, no previous mode of thinking. But if we know ourselves, we mean to bow to the decisions of God's holy word. *To the law and to the testimony; if we speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in us.* Most cheerfully do we join issue with a writer whom we very highly esteem, on the other side of the question, and say, "Speak conscience—Christian kindness—God's Holy Word—and I ask for no more."

* *Vid.* The Christian Spectator, and Stuart on the Romans, sparsim.

In opposition to the views we have recited, our object in this dissertation is to show that

INFANTS ARE SINNERS.—

It will greatly facilitate our inquiries, to present as clear and intelligible an ILLUSTRATION AS WE CAN, OF WHAT WE MEAN BY THE DOCTRINE OF NATIVE DEPRAVITY. The Bible affixes a definite idea to the word *Sin*, and a well defined character to the term *Sinner*. In one place it declares, *All unrighteousness* IS SIN. In another it says, *To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it* IS SIN. And in another it says, *Sin is the* TRANSGRESSION OF LAW. It is obvious that sin is predicable only of an intelligent being, and that in such a being, it consists in the transgression of law. It is, as the original word denotes, *missing the mark* of duty—variation from rule—deviation from the right line. It bears relation to some standard. *Where there is no law, there is no transgression. Sin is not imputed where there is no law.* Wherever, therefore, there is a deviation from law, there, and only there, is sin.

Sin is something which has *positive existence.* It is not, as has been affirmed, a mere "principle of defectibility;" a negative existence, nor does it consist in the *mere* want, or absence of holiness.* We hold it to be a very plain

* This notion of sin was adopted by the late Dr. Williams, of England, and Dr. Wilson, of Philadelphia.

truth, that there is no such thing as sin, if it be not some positive existence. A block of marble, a lamb, or an idiot, is destitute of holiness; but their want of holiness is not sin. There is no such thing as the mere want of holiness in an intelligent, rational creature. This moral vacuum is never found in the mind. In every mind that neglects to conform itself to law, there is a reason, a motive for this negligence; and that is, the soul is pre-occupied by its own self-indulgent and sinful inclinations. The mind is like a line or rod which has two faults; one is, that it is *not straight;* the other is, that it *is crooked.* It is as essential to the nature of mind, to be positively holy, or positively sinful, as it is to the nature of a line or rod, to be positively straight, or positively crooked. A being invested with the faculties of perception, reason, and conscience, is under law; and he must either positively fulfill or positively violate it. There is no such thing as the failure to fulfill, without positive violation. The Scriptures no where contemplate any such state of moral character, as the mere defect of holiness, or negative transgression. *He that is not with me is against me.* All *unrighteousness* is sin. Sin would be a very harmless thing if it consisted in the mere defect of holiness. What is mere negation, but nothing? It is neither a cause, nor an effect, and has neither moral quality, nor agent. No being can cause it, none can com-

mit it; nor is it any thing unless it has positive existence.

Sin is an *internal emotion of the mind.* It consists in the disposition, the moral feelings or inclinations of the soul. External conduct, actual or overt transgression is sin, only because it is the expression of wrong feelings of heart. Iniquity that lies concealed in the heart, is as really iniquity as though it were acted out; nor would its sensible forms of transgression ever exist but for the iniquity of the heart.

Sin consists in *a supremely selfish spirit*, whether it be acted out or not. LOVE *is the fulfilling of law.* Not every kind of love; for men may love God and their fellow men from a supreme regard to themselves; and this would imply that they love themselves more than either. The law forbids a spirit that is supremely selfish, and denounces it as crime, and as the sum and substance of all wickedness. *Thou shalt not covet.* There is nothing kind or honorable; equitable or ingenuous; pure, lovely or true, that terminates in self, or that can be gratified when self is on the throne. Selfishness is that *principle* of wickedness, that vitiated *moral taste*, which is antecedent to all other internal emotions, and inclinations of wickedness; which is the source and foundation of them, and which gives them their moral character. This is the spirit which is the germ of enmity against God. This is the

spirit which unbridled and unrestrained, sinks men to all that is *earthly, sensual and devilish;* which comprises and binds together the most depraved affections, and abject vices; which stimulates to every unhallowed emotion, and incites to every foul deed. There is nothing that countervails the pure and lovely spirit of the divine law, which is not the legitimate offspring of that mother monster, *Supreme Selfishness.*

Sin therefore, from its nature, is *a moral and not a natural or physical evil.* It is not pain nor suffering. The famine, the earthquake, the pestilence, are *evils:* but they are natural evils; and no man thinks of accusing or criminating them. We contemplate them with horror and dread, but we never contemplate them as the subjects of blame, nor think of reproving or punishing them. But sin is a different thing. It is criminal, and blameworthy. We reprove, condemn, prohibit and punish it. It is in its own nature detestable and odious. God hates it infinitely, wherever it is found, in every degree and forever.

This is what we mean by sin. I know of no other sin in the empire of Jehovah except this. When we say that men are sinners, we mean to say, they are the doers and perpetrators of this foul deed. Some give expression and palpableness to this odious spirit; some cherish it simply within their own bosoms, and are unable to exhibit it to the eye of men. Some commit it

under great aggravations, and in great enormity; and some in modifications so mild and alluring, that it looks like innocence and virtue. Nor is the vile nature of sin altered by any considerations of *age or infancy* in the being in whose bosom it dwells. What constitutes that living thing, that busy existence, the human soul, a sinner at the age of three-score years and ten, essentially constitutes it a sinner from its birth.

Our illustration of the doctrine of Native Depravity therefore, will not, we think, be misunderstood. We mean by it, that every child of Adam is a *sinner*, and from the moment he becomes a child of Adam. He may not be a sinner in the eye of men, but he is a sinner at heart, and in the sight of God. He sins, not in deed, nor word, but in thought. *The thought of foolishness is sin.* An infant is not a giant, either in form, or wickedness; but he is a *sinful infant.* In body and mind he is a *little infant.* And so in sin, he is a *little infant*—a man in miniature—not the bold and striking portrait, but the perfect miniature of fallen, sinning man.

The question, WHETHER INFANTS ARE CAPABLE OF MORAL CHARACTER, is vital to this whole discussion. And here we have to make and illustrate but a single enquiry. Has the infant a SOUL—a *rational, immortal soul?* Of the period of its mere animal existence, we do not predicate moral character. It is not the investiture with a mere animal frame, that constitutes the being human;

but the mysterious union of the body and the soul: and of every such existence moral character can be predicated. If God has breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and it has become a *living soul;* though its body is a little thing—a mere mass of organic matter fitted up for the living spirit to dwell in, and to die, and return to dust when the spirit takes its flight to her own eternity, yet is it a spiritual, acting existence, and possesses a character as *really* as it will possess it in the ages of eternity.

Of the essence of the human soul, even in adults, we know nothing. Of the properties essential to its existence, we know all that is necessary for us to know, from our own consciousness, and the testimony of Him that made it. So far as we have any thing to do with the soul in moral science, and especially in the present discussion, it consists of *natural faculties* and *moral dispositions.* Its natural faculties are Perception, Reason, Conscience and Memory. We call these *natural faculties*, in distinction from moral dispositions, because they are independent of the Will, and belong to the intellectual and not to the moral character. We perceive, reason, remember, and approve or condemn our moral conduct, whether we wish to do it or not. The *moral dispositions* are those internal operations, or emotions of the mind, which can be compared with a rule of action, commanding what is right and prohibiting what is wrong—and that whether

it be written or unwritten law, natural or revealed, the law of reason and conscience, or the law of God. They constitute what the Scriptures mean by the *heart* in distinction from the natural faculties and the external conduct. Nor is there any holiness or sin except what is found in these moral dispositions. Take away these, and if we except the essence of the soul, there is nothing left but the natural faculties, nothing which deserves praise or blame, nothing which a rule of action either requires or forbids. Its natural faculties, and moral dispositions therefore, comprise all that is known concerning the soul, as the subject of divine government.

Now these natural and moral properties are essential *to the soul's existence.* They belong to the infant of a day old, as really as to the man of eighty. Who ever heard or conceived of a living immortal soul, without natural faculties, and moral dispositions? Every infant that has attained maturity enough to have a soul, has such a soul as this. It is a soul which perceives, reasons, remembers, feels, chooses, and has the faculty of judging of its own moral dispositions. *Conscience* belongs to the soul as really as perception and reason. This a late and distinguished writer acknowledges, though in the same discussion he denies that infants are capable of sinning. His words are, "It may be said with truth, that moral sense, conscience, reason, judgment, are all attributes of the natural man; that they are

pura naturalia."* One of the obvious distinctions between men and the inferior animals is, that men have a *conscience.* Inferior animals have no faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong, or moral good and evil, and no moral sense. This is what renders them incapable of moral action. Nor can any growth or enlargement of the faculties they possess, any superadded strength to their perceptions, their memory, or their preferences, or any improvement in their imitative powers, or instinct, impart this faculty of moral discernment or moral sense. But the youngest human soul possesses this, as the immediate gift of its Creator. There is no more reason to believe that an infant is destitute of conscience, than that it is destitute of intelligence, or even of a soul. Conscience belongs to the soul, as really as veins, arteries, muscles and membrane belong to the body. It is a remarkable fact, that even those who deny the doctrine of Infant Depravity, cannot give a definition of the human soul, without investing it with such attributes as render it impossible for it not to possess a moral character. A writer who denies this doctrine, in giving an account of the human soul says, "It is the *nature* of the human soul, to perceive, to compare, to judge. God formed it to be a thinking being. The power of choosing or refusing in the view of motives, and with a knowledge of right and wrong, is that moral nature which every

* Stuart on the Romans, Excursus 5th.

accountable being receives from the hand of his Creator."* Hence those who have denied a moral character to infants, have by their own philosophy, been led to deny or doubt whether infants have any souls at all.

Nor is it any evidence that infants are destitute of a moral character, that it is not strongly indicated by external symbols. A man in a swoon furnishes no external indications of a moral character; no, not so much as an infant. Sir Isaac Newton, wasted and emaciated and prostrated by typhus fever, so that he cannot move a limb or muscle, or even speak, furnishes no external indications of moral character; no, not so much even as an infant; nor can he make himself heard, or make his wants known, half so well. And yet who doubts that adults under all this physical prostration, have a moral character? Neither intellectual nor moral character are always visible to the eye of sense. What if an angel stooping from his high abode, should look down upon such men as Dr. Fitch, and Dr. Taylor, and say within himself—Who are these men that inhabit yonder planet, and what are they doing that they make so much noise in the world? I cannot discover any operations of mind or heart in them. It may be that their intellectual and moral powers may be hereafter developed; but I doubt very much whether they are capable of moral action. They have, it is

* Christian Spectator for June, 1829, p. 348.

true, "no original righteousness;" but they are quite "*innocent, innocuous,*" and most certainly do not possess any intellectual or moral character! Would not his Creator reprove his presumption and scepticism, and tell him that these apparently abject creatures are very distinguished men, and a very different order of beings from what they appear to be in the judgment of one who has ventured so rashly to decide on their endowments?—And is it not possible that an angel may be as far above Dr. Fitch and Dr. Taylor, as these distinguished men are above infants? The little infant may have a moral character, though the opposers of the doctrine of Native Depravity do not believe it; he may have a moral character, though it were known only to angels; or even only to the great and heart-searching God. And this view of the subject is the only one which accords with the account the Scriptures give of the moral character of infants.

If there be any such deficiency in the intellectual or moral constitution of an infant as incapacitates it for moral character, it must exist either in the *nature* of that constitution, or the *degree* of it. If it be in its *nature*, then is the soul of man from its very nature incapable of moral character, nor is there any thing in its spiritual and immortal existence, that ensures its moral character at any future period. It is an immaterial, immortal spirit; but it has no powers of moral character, and never can have without

possessing new faculties and a new nature. And what sort of *soul* is that which must be thus transformed before it can be capable of a moral character? But if the deficiency is found in the *measure and degree* of this intellectual and moral constitution, so that the soul requires no new faculties, but simply growth and enlargement; how is this deficiency to be supplied? There would be no difficulty in answering this question, if at its original creation the soul were *in any degree* capable of moral exercises. But by the hypothesis under consideration, it is not capable of moral exercise in any degree, and requires growth and enlargement to become capable. How then is this spiritual, immortal existence to become capable of moral exercises? Mind does not grow like a vegetable. It cannot be enlarged by granulation, or by any gradual accession to its bulk and size. *It expands and becomes vigorous only by action.* But if the hypothesis on which we are animadverting be true, it is impossible for it ever to become more expanded and vigorous. It is not capable of exercise in the least degree. It has nothing to begin with. I ask then again how is this deficiency to be supplied? If this hypothesis be true, it never can be supplied, but must either be endued with new faculties, or remain inactive and incapable of moral character forever. If then every human being possesses at its birth, an immaterial, immortal soul, he is at the instant of his creation

capable of possessing a moral character; and is from his nature a moral and accountable being, under a law which he either obeys or transgresses. If his moral feelings are not right, they are wrong; and if he is not a holy and virtuous being, he is a sinner.

Should it be said that even upon the principles here contended for, it is impossible for the soul of an infant to possess a moral character until *after* it is created, and therefore *some* time must elapse between its creation and its moral character, and therefore it cannot literally *commence* its existence a sinner; we are constrained to say this is a mere metaphysical quibble. As well might it be said, there is *some conceivable time* between the creation of matter and its essential properties, as to say there is some conceivable time between the creation of mind and its moral character. The sun, for example, is the source of light and heat; and at the instant of its creation, it shines and warms. No more is there a measurable period of time between the creation of the sun, and the emission and diffusion of its beams, than there is a measurable period of time between the creation of the soul and its accountable character. There is no more difficulty therefore in conceiving an infant to be capable of moral character, than there is in conceiving an adult to be so. Under the uniform government of the Most High, who has every where established the laws of mind as well as of matter, and who governs

the intellectual and moral as well as the physical universe, moral dispositions and moral character, though differing greatly in degree, are essentially the same in both, and are the uniform result of the same intellectual and moral constitution. And if it be not so, in what light are we to consider infants as the creatures of God? What are the rights of their Creator? What are their own responsibilities? Obviously, he has no rights over them except as a mere sovereign. Moral government, he has none.—Nor have they any moral responsibilities. And what becomes of them as the creatures of God, if they die in infancy? They have no moral character. They are responsible to no tribunal. They are not annihilated, because the soul is immortal. Either then, they must remain through interminable ages devoid of moral character and responsibility, or form their moral character in another and future state of existence.

But we rest not the argument on the ground of human philosophy. Our appeal is to the testimony of God. Has God revealed the doctrine of Native Depravity? This is the question.

The Bible informs us that Native Depravity IS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE APOSTACY OF OUR FIRST ANCESTOR. I find in the Bible such declarations as these. *Through the offence of one, many are dead. Judgment was by one to condemnation. By one man's offence, death reigned by one. By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men*

to condemnation. By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners. In Adam all die. What is the import of these declarations? Is it not, to say the least, that such is the connection between the apostacy of our first ancestor, and the character of all his descendants, that it might have been predicted from the day of his apostacy, that every one of his descendants would come into the world sinners? Is it not, that the universal sinfulness of mankind is to be ascribed to the first offence of the first man; and that his apostacy introduced sin and death among all his natural descendants, from generation to generation? Our minds need not here be perplexed with systems and theories, if we assent to this *great fact* that for his apostacy a righteous God has determined to bring all his posterity into the world sinners. By the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, many of the Reformers meant that innate moral depravity of heart, and consequent condemnation, which came upon all his posterity by his first offence. This appears to me to be the doctrine of imputation, and the doctrine of Native Depravity, as they are taught in the passages we have just recited. By the wise appointment of a righteous God, this primitive sin constituted all his posterity sinners. When he fell, prospectively considered, they fell; and from the moment of his apostacy, the entire race, of every age and every condition, down to the last infant that should be born on the earth,

rose up to the view of the divine mind, as lost and ruined by their iniquity. Such is the condition to which the first apostacy introduced the race.

We have in these texts then a declaration of the doctrine of Native Depravity. If sin and condemnation come upon all the posterity of Adam, then are they sinners as soon as they become his posterity. If not, then multitudes of his posterity never become sinners at all, because they die in their infancy. It is supremely frivolous to say, that "Adam's sin was connected with the sin and consequent condemnation of *all* his posterity,"* if a large portion of his posterity live and die without being sinners in any sense. How can this be true, if infants are innocent? If this concession means any thing, it must surely mean that by the disobedience of Adam, all *will become sinners, if they live long enough*! But this is not the doctrine of Paul. This is not the doctrine of Christ, when he says, *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.* This was not the doctrine of the Patriarchal age, when it was demanded, *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? What is man that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?* Nor is this the doctrine of any of the analogies of nature; where we see that all creatures, throughout the vegetable and animal kingdoms, which come into being in a series of generations, produce each its own likeness. Nor

* *Vid.* Stuart's Excursus.

is it the doctrine of the intellectual and moral kingdoms; where, without some counteracting influence, all the peculiarities of intellect, genius, temper and moral disposition, distinguish the son and the sire. Nor was this the doctrine taught in the early history of our race, when in the Mosaic narrative of the birth of Seth, it is said, *Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image;* plainly recognising the humbling fact, that the children of Adam were born with the same depraved character with their apostate father. That there is this connection between the sin of Adam and all his posterity, is obvious from the plain declarations of Paul in the passages above recited, and cannot be denied without impugning their obvious meaning. The opposite of this position is, that a large portion of Adam's race live and die, and death passes upon them without their possessing any moral character whatever.

Nor is it any argument against this general consideration, that in nothing is the resemblance between the parent and the child so strong and so uniform as in moral depravity; for this only proves the peculiar strength and uniformity of this moral bond, and the peculiar accordance of facts, with the doctrine of the Bible. Nor is it any objection to this view of the subject, that the moral character of infants depends not on their immediate ancestor, but on their connection with Adam; for God reveals the one, and not the

other. Neither the Bible nor experience shows that there is any natural connection between the piety of the father, and the native character of the son. All that is said on this point is only reasoning against Paul.* And we may also remark, that it is altogether an assumption that Native Depravity is uniform and invariable, in all circumstances, ages and individuals, and is incapable either of diminution, increase, or modification. This cannot be proved. And if I mistake not, it is generally conceded that it is capable of all; and often expresses itself in wonderful accordance with the *peculiar* moral temperament of the depraved parent.†

Again: The Bible affirms that the CHILDREN OF MEN *are all gone aside, and are altogether become filthy;* that the HEART *is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;* and that MAN is a being so *abominable and filthy*, that he *drinketh in iniquity like water.* The Bible affirms, that ALL *have sinned and come short of the glory of God;* that *Jews and Gentiles are* ALL *under sin;* that *by the deeds of law shall* NO FLESH *be justified;* and *that the* WHOLE WORLD *is guilty*

* *Vid.* Stuart's Excursus.

† Dr. Stuart does not fairly allege the objection against President Edwards in his Commentary on Rom. 5: 19. p. 241. He says, "President Edwards must on his own principles admit, that we should *all* have fallen, had we like Adam been placed in a state of holiness. The corruption therefore, by his own arguments, would have been *just as universal as it now is*, if all men had been placed on trial in a state of innocence." This does not follow. Adam was for a season, perhaps a long season, perfectly holy. But this is not true of any of his posterity. According to Dr. Stuart, they fall as soon as they are capable of falling. How then are the cases parallel?

before God. Now a plain man who desires his decisions should be formed by God's Holy Word, would, one would think, view these and similar declarations, as including the entire race from the youngest to the oldest, and from the first apostacy, down to the end of time. If infants belong to the *children of men;* if they have a *heart* and soul; then from the moment they are human and the descendants of Adam, are they sinners. The reply to this has been, that infants cannot be included in these declarations, because from the nature of the case, *they are incapable of sinning!* This is a very compendious way of settling the question. The man who makes this declaration, sits in the chair of philosophy, and prejudges the case. He first decides that infants are incapable of sinning, and then he comes to the Bible to inquire what God says concerning the moral character of infants. He first decides that infants are incapable of sinning, and then every text must be interpreted according to his previous decision.* But who knows best whether infants are capable of sinning? the God only wise, or the presumptuous objector? The history of the church, and the present state of it in our country are melancholy proofs of the pernicious influence of false philosophy in limiting and defining the import of God's Holy Word. No man has a right to say, with the Bible in his hand, that infants are incapable of sinning. No man can

* *Vid.* Christian Spectator, Review of Harvey and Taylor.

prove upon the principles of sound philosophy, that infants are incapable of sinning.*

The Bible informs us that MEN ARE BORN IN INIQUITY, AND CONCEIVED IN SIN. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* Can there be any doubt as to the import of this confession? The object of this psalm, one would think could not be mistaken. It expresses the feelings of a genuine penitent, and is strikingly descriptive of the remorse, self-abasement, confusion and anguish of soul, he felt in view of his sins. Nor was it enough for him to confess his outward sins, without bemoaning his inward defilement. Nor did he know where to stop in this confession, until he had gone back to the very commencement of his existence, and confessed that he was *born in iniquity, and in sin did his mother conceive him.* A late writer, as we conceive, unhappily, inquires in respect to this text, "To whom then does the iniquity spoken of in this place belong? To the *mother* or the child? I venture to say that exegetical conside-

* Prof. Stuart, in his 5th Excursus, subjoined to his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, frequently affirms that infants are incapable of sinning; and yet in the same discussion, p. 541, he has the following remarks: "Whatever then may be the degradation in which we are now born, degradation compared with the original state of Adam, we are still born *moral agents; free agents;* with faculties to do good, yea, all the faculties that are needed. Elsewhere he says, "Plainly they may be moral and free agents, before they can read the Scriptures!" We leave the author to vindicate himself from this palpable inconsistency. To us it appears, that if we are born moral agents—free agents, it is no unsound conclusion that we are born capable of sinning. The author must have forgotten the ancient authority of Plautus, that "a man cannot sup and blow at the same time."

rations alone considered must leave this case doubtful." But what is there either in the nature of the case, the scope and connection of the passage, the circumstances or history of the writer, or the analogy of faith, that encourages such an interpretation? Is it, that David was not the offspring of lawful and honorable wedlock? No. Is it that there is any recorded reproach against his parents in the sacred history? No. Is it that it is the special duty of men to confess the sins of their mothers? Is it that in their most humble and penetential frames, good men are prone to bewail the sins of their parents as well as their own.* Or is it that infants are *incapable of sinning!* We have known that error had made rapid strides in the land; but we had not thought it had come to this.

The Bible inquires, *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? What is man that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?* Arminians and Pelagians have said, that the subject referred to in these passages is the natural frailty of man, and not his moral impurity. But with what evidence of the truth, common sense and piety must judge. Turn to the 14th and 15th chapters of

*I have had access to the first English Commentaries, and not a few of them, who all agree in referring this text to the sin of the Psalmist himself. Rosenmuller, a neologist, says of this 5th verse, "Hæret *in natura tota mea,* jam unde *ab ertu* meo, et innnata mihi pravitas. Dicit itague vates, se tunc etiam, cum *a matre* conciperetur, uteroque gestaretur, peccato fuisse infectum." We may not agree with Rosenmuller as to the use he makes of this text, but this alters not his interpretation.

Job, and read them, and then say, whether the writers are not speaking of man's moral impurity. And if they are so, then are they speaking of man's original corrupt nature; and then do they prove that every man who is born into the world is a sinner.* It is true that the persons who utter these sentiments are Eliphaz and Job; and though throughout the most of this book they are engaged in a discussion in relation to the government of God, in which each expresses different and opposite sentiments, and therefore both cannot be true; yet do both throughout the whole of the discussion adopt this undisputed truth, the moral corruption of men from their birth. This therefore was the received doctrine of Job and his three friends, who were the most venerable men, and men most distinguished for their piety in the world. And here let it be remarked, that the writer of this book of Job lived within a few generations of the flood. And it is not probable, if the sentiment that infants are innocent had been handed down by tradition from the days of Adam and Noah, and had generally prevailed with the early patriarchs, that the doctrine of Native Depravity would have been so clearly recognised by all parties in this discussion.

The Bible declares that THE WICKED ARE

*Rosenmuller does indeed consider the former of these passages, as an appeal *ad misericordiam*, but he at the same time recognises in them, the doctrine in question. "Quid, inquit, hominem punis, ob peccata ad quæ suapte natura est proclivis, et quæ ex vitiosa indole naturæ suæ, quum immundus sit origine, vitare non potest?"

ESTRANGED FROM THE WOMB: THEY GO ASTRAY AS SOON AS THEY BE BORN, SPEAKING LIES. In remarking on this text, the author to whom we have before referred says, "When this latter affirmation, in its *literal sense*, can be made out, then may we take the former part of the verse in its literal sense."* No doubt the latter affirmation is figurative; and what does it denote if not that all men naturally possess a deceitful character? But where is the necessity of considering the former part of the verse in a figurative sense? If the passage will bear a literal sense, we ought to understand it literally. If the nature of the subject, or the scope of the passage, or other texts of Scripture require a figurative meaning, we are justified in giving it such a meaning, but not without. The writer just referred to says, "It is a good rule of interpretation, never to depart from the usual sense of words, unless there be an imperious reason for it." There is no such necessity in the present instance. No comment can add to the declaration, "They are estranged from *the womb*, they go astray as *soon as they be born*."†

The Bible informs us, that *The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* The Hebrew word rendered *youth*, will justify the rendering, *childhood and infancy.* It designates

* *Vid.* Stuart's Excursus.

† Rosenmuller in expounding this text says, "Abalienati sunt impii ab omni pietatis et justitiæ cura inde *ab utero*, male agunt inde a *natiritate* sua; malitia ïs est innata."

the whole period of early life, from infancy to mature manhood; and therefore may be applied to any portion of this period as the context may require.* In this passage it seems plainly to mark the earliest period. So true is it that man thinks, devises and loves wickedness from his birth.

The Bible tells me that *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.* The bearing of this text on this subject has been strenuously denied. It must be admitted that the original word here translated *flesh*, when taken by itself, is used in a great variety of senses in the Scriptures.† The word often means *men*, and frequently with the

* The word here used נעורים designates the whole period of early life, from infancy to mature manhood; and therefore may be applied to any portion of this period. Sometimes one portion, sometimes another, and at others the whole is included. It is a derivative from נער which is used for an *infant*, a *lad*, a young man; as in Exod. 2 : 6. "Behold the *babe* wept." Heb. הנה־נער פכה Judges 13 : 5. "The child shall be called a Nazarite *from the womb*"—Heb. הנער And again in the 7th verse. So in 1 Sam. 1 : 24, "And when she had weaned him she took him up—and the *child* was *young*." The Heb. here is peculiar הנער־נער the child, a child, i. e. small or young, which seems to show that *young child* was the original and proper meaning of the term.

In other cases it is used for boys, youth, and even men. Of Joseph, Gen. 41 : 12, and Solomon when king, 1 Kings 3 : 7.

The abstract נעוריים has therefore as the context requires, either the sense of childhood and infancy, or of youth. Gen. 46 : 34. "Thy servants have been shepherds from our *childhood*."

Such expressions, however, as "wife of thy youth"—"guide of my youth"—"reproach of my youth," &c. are very common; and in all these, the same word נעורים is employed. It depends, therefore, on the context, what particular portion of early life is included by it. In the passage to which we have referred, we have said it seems clearly to mark the earliest period. Rosenmuller renders it, *pueritia*, and explains the sense thus, *Itaque novis quotidie opus foret diluviis et plagis generalibus ad eos perdendos, quum perpetua sit eorum et innata malignitas.*

† See Bretschneider and Schleusner.

accessory idea of *frailty*, and often with that of moral depravity, and hence for that depravity itself. The question is, which of the various senses of the word best suits this passage? Does it here mean *man* considered merely as an animal —flesh and blood—or man considered as morally corrupt? We have no hesitation in affirming it means the latter. 1. Because in all doctrinal passages of this kind, this is the common meaning of the word in the New Testament. 2. And principally, because this sense alone suits the context. The declaration, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*, is not introduced in answer to the question of Nicodemus, in the 4th verse, *How can a man be born when he is old*, &c. as though it stated that *flesh and blood* cannot inherit the kingdom of God. That question is answered in the 5th verse, in which Christ says, "Verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and in which he tells Nicodemus that it is not a natural birth that he means, but a spiritual. And then the ground of the necessity of this great *moral change* is given in this 6th verse. And what is it? Not that man is *flesh and blood;* but that all born of the flesh are *carnal*, that is, *corrupt*. And since this is the case, the Saviour argues, as all born of the flesh are flesh, or carnal, and all born of the Spirit are spirit, or spiritual; therefore, *Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again*. Surely

if moral depravity is the ground of the necessity of the new birth, this 6th verse, which states that ground, must express that idea. Besides, in the third place, the opposition between the words *flesh* and *spirit* requires this sense. Those born of the Spirit are *spiritual*, not in a sense opposite to *flesh and blood*, but in a *moral* sense. If the word Spirit here expresses moral character, so must the word *flesh*. Whoever therefore is from the stock of fallen Adam, is a fallen sinner. The plant is of the nature of the seed. Like begets like. Whatever be the moral character of men in their unrenewed state, such is here declared to be the character of their offspring.

And the Bible tells me, that, *All men are by nature the children of wrath.* The word translated *nature* means *by birth*. *We who are Jews by* NATURE, *and not sinners of the Gentiles.* So the Gentiles are spoken of as Gentiles *by nature*, that is, they were *born* Gentiles. In the same sense essentially is the word used in the following passage. "For if God spared not the *natural* branches," &c. Our English word *physical* is derived from the Greek word here translated *nature*. Sometimes the word means the nature of a thing—its natural constitution, or innate disposition.* The examples of this sense of the word, are very numerous in the New Testament

* Schleusner defines it, *ortus, origo, generatio, natvitas.* Bretschneider defines it, *natura rei alicujus*, quam habet ex natvitate—indoles naturalis.

and elsewhere.* Paul clearly refers the fact that all are *children of wrath* to what he calls *nature.*† Let any man read the context, and he will have no doubt as to the import of this passage. If Paul had been speaking of a man who was born a prince; if he had been speaking of men who were born Jews or Gentiles; he would have used this language, and did use it. But he is speaking of the moral, depraved character of men—men *once dead in trespasses and sins*—men who *in time past walked according to the course of this world*—men who once *fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind;* and he says of such men, they were by *nature* children of wrath even as others. Men are here declared to be children of wrath from their birth, as really as they are elsewhere declared, to be Jews by birth, or Gentiles by birth. Could the doctrine of Native Depravity be more forcibly expressed, than by such a declaration in such a connection as this?

We have dwelt longer on the scriptural argument than will interest many of our readers, and

* *Vid.* The Lexicons.

† *τεκνα φυσει δργης.* The precise form of the dative here may be matter of doubt. It may express the *ground or reason*, and then the passage would mean, *on account of* our native character or disposition, we are children of wrath. *Vid.* Romans, 11: 20. They were broken off *on account* of unbelief. See too, Romans 5: 17. But it may express *the respect* in which we are children of wrath. Then it would read, *As to* our native character or disposition, we are children of wrath. Or it may express the *cause;* and then our being deserving of wrath, would be a reference to *φυσις* as the source or cause. It matters little which method is preferred, though either of the former seems better suited to the context than the last. All, however, express the idea, that the fact of our being the children of wrath is to be referred, not to our circumstances, but to our selfish and sinful nature.

have omitted all those passages of doubtful import, which have generally been relied on in proof of the doctrine, because they do not appear to refer to the subject. Nearly every text in the Bible that speaks of the moral character of infants, seems, at first view, to stand in the way of those who deny the doctrine; and all their ingenuity is exerted to explain away its obvious meaning. No doubt it will be said that some of the preceding passages are to be received in a figurative and not in a literal sense. And this is true. So is a vast proportion of the passages which describe the sinful character of adults highly figurative, as will at once be remembered by every attentive reader of the Bible. But though they are figurative, have they not a meaning? What is the *spirit* of these divine instructions? Do they not convey a vivid and strong description of Native Depravity? How could this truth have been exhibited in a light better fitted to arrest the attention, and make a deep impression on the mind? Could this doctrine have been set forth more fully or more impressively than by saying that all have sinned—that men are born in sin—that a clean thing cannot come out of an unclean—that he that is born of a woman cannot be righteous—that they go astray as soon as they be born—that that which is born of the flesh is flesh—that by nature all are children of wrath—and that by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men

to condemnation? If this is not a declaration of Native Depravity, it is not in the power of language to express the thought. Can any man who regards the decisions of the Bible, and submits to it as the only and sufficient rule of faith, with these passages before him, still adhere to the doctrine that infants are innocent? If the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments do not teach the doctrine of Native Depravity, I am at a loss to know what doctrine they do teach.*

One thing is painfully observable in the view which is presented of these and similar passages, by those who deny the doctrine in question. It is that their exposition of them symbolizes with the exposition which has always been given by writers of the Pelagian, Arminian and Unitarian Schools. Turnbull, Taylor, Whitby, Priestly, Belsham and Ware, have no controversy with the theology of New-Haven, or the Biblical Professor at Andover, so far as it respects the instructions of God's Holy Word, in

* Dr. Stuart remarks, "The decisions of the Bible relative to the point in question, do seem to me after long and painful examination, to be plainly and explicitly against the doctrine. Such are John 3: 6. 1 Cor. 2: 14, 15. Romans 3: 9—24. 5: 6—10. Eph. 2: 1, 3, 5. Rom. 5: 12—19. Gen. 6: 5. 8: 21. Job. 15: 14—16. Prov. 22: 15, and others of a similar tenor; all of which prove that the natural, unregenerate state of man, is a state of alienation from God, and one which needs the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God; *and no more.*" I presume the great body of Calvinists in this and other countries will think this is sufficiently positive. Here the question is at once decided *ex cathedra*, and by the old and sometimes very respectable argument, *Ipse Dixit.* I confess I see no force in such reasoning.

relation to the doctrine of Native Depravity. We have deeply regretted this, and trembled for the ark of God, exposed as it is to this unhallowed temerity. But it is well, perhaps, that some gentlemen are throwing off the mask, and avowing their Pelagian and Arminian sentiments.

There are several texts which are supposed to teach the opposite doctrine, and distinctly to affirm the *innocence of infants.* But is it so? I affirm confidently there is not one in all the Bible. There are several passages referred to by several late authors,* which it becomes us to examine. It is said that the Scriptures affirm, *Where there is no law, there is no transgression.* And the inference is, that since infants are not under law, they are not sinners. But infants *are* under law. It is acknowledged by our opposers that they have a *conscience;* and what is conscience, but a rule of action? There is no spot in the universe where there is a soul and a conscience, where "there is no law."

It is said that passages of the following import, militate against the doctrine. *To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. If ye were blind, ye should have no sin. The servant that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.*—If there is any force in this objection, it is, that infants do not know enough to sin. They cannot recognise any rule of action, and therefore it is impossible for

* Professors Stuart and Fitch, and Christian Spectator.

them to violate any rule of action. In reply to this objection we are ready to grant, that if the soul of an infant has no conscience, no moral sense, he has no accountability, and we might add, that he has no soul. But if infants have a conscience and a moral sense, which we think is necessarily implied in the existence of a soul, then they may know enough to sin.* Their moral perceptions are faint and limited, and it is this which makes their sin so small compared with the sin of riper years and more matured knowledge; but it is this which makes it real, however small. Besides, we may not overlook nor depreciate the *matter of fact* in every adult, not only in Christian, but heathen lands, all over the world, that sin does exist to a great and awful extent, where men are not conscious, at the time of committing it, that it is sin. Adults may be, and in fact are, sinners, and great sinners, without being conscious of it, at the time they commit sin. Who does not believe, that when he comes to stand before the bar of God, and when the strong and steady light of eternity shines upon his heart and life, that he will see his sins in a number and enormity in which he never saw them before? Who can take a retro-

* In commenting on Romans 4: 15, Professor Stuart says, "Admitting the truth of the Apostle's representation, it follows that those who have no knowledge of law, that is, *no moral sense of any moral precept*, cannot be transgressors." He also says, "Plainly, men may be moral, and free agents, *before they can read the Scriptures*." The inference is, that children may be sinners *before they can read the Scriptures!* It is not without some semblance of reason, that the Christian Spectator intimates, that Professor Stuart has gone even beyond the New-Haven School in his notions of Native Depravity.

spect of his past life without now seeing that he has sinned in a thousand instances, in which, at the time he committed the wickedness, he had no impression at all that he was doing wrong? Paul sinned when he persecuted the church of God; and yet he was not conscious of it at the time, even with the Bible in his hand, and at the feet of Gamaliel; but, *verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* But he was fully and deeply convinced of this sin, after he became a pious man; his conscience condemned him for it, and he never adverts to it without shame. In his unregenerate state he had also many emotions of mind, and vehement passions, of the wickedness of which, he was not conscious at the time. And hence he says, *I had not known these desires to be sin, unless the law had said, thou shalt not covet.* It is true that sin cannot exist where there is no law; but it is not true that sin may not and does not exist where there is no *knowledge* of the law; except in those cases where the sin is created by the mere enactment of law itself, and is *malum prohibitum*, and not *malum in se.* The Pagan world are now living in the indulgence of iniquity, of no small portion of which they are utterly unconscious, but which, when the light of the Gospel is lifted upon them, will fill them with self-abasement. *There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.* Hence it is that sinners under conviction see a thousand things in themselves

to be exceedingly sinful, which they never saw to be so before, and which they were prevented from seeing by their own stupidity and blindness. Hence, the Scriptures represent it as a part of the office work of the Holy Spirit, to *convince* men of sin; not of what was *not* sinful before, but of what *was* sinful, though the stupid and guilty offender was not at the time conscious of sinning. And hence the people of God in every age, have felt the need of supplicating this divine influence, and often praying, *Make me to know my transgression and my sin.* There is no more difficulty, therefore, in relation to this subject in the case of infants, than in that of adults. *Thou sayest I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and* KNOWEST NOT *that thou art poor and miserable, and blind and naked.* If adults or infants are not conscious of sinning, it is because they have a wrong state of heart or moral feeling. *Their understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.* Sin has a blinding influence on the intellectual faculties, and bribes, stupifies, and paralyzes the conscience. *Unto the pure, all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.* A sinful heart may prevent even an infant mind from attending to the difference between right and wrong. The light may shine upon the darkness, and the darkness may not comprehend it.

While, therefore, it is true that *the servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes;* it is also true, that *he that* KNEW NOT, *and did* COMMIT THINGS WORTHY OF STRIPES, *shall be beaten with few stripes.* Here then we have the plain and important import of the text on which this specious objection rests. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. You only have I known, of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for your iniquities. They that sin without law, shall also perish without law.* God holds every creature accountable, young and old, in proportion to the light he has abused. It is only of them *to whom much is given*, that *much will be required.*

But great emphasis is laid upon the following passage. *For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil.* A late writer* refers to this passage, no less than seven

* Professor Stuart. There are very many things in Professor Stuart's Commentary on the Romans, which are invaluable. And there are many errors, palpable errors, which I have no doubt will in due time be exposed and refuted. The *discussions* in this book are frank, fair and honorable, and in keeping with the author's high character. Very unlike the discussions of the New-Haven School, they are also kind and intelligible. But on the doctrine of Native Depravity, they are exceedingly unguarded, and frequently contradictory. They are enforced by bold assertion, and nothing else. In commenting on this 9th of Romans and 11th, he says, "It contains a very important declaration in respect to its bearing on some of the controverted questions about hereditary depravity, or original sin. The children were in the womb of Rebecca, and had arrived at the age of some five months. That they possessed *powers or faculties* of sinning, even in the womb, is *undoubtedly true.*" Will the Professor *prove* this?

times within the compass of a few pages, as decisive proof against our doctrine. It is indeed marvellous logic, to infer that children neither do good or evil *after* they are born, because they did neither good nor evil *before* they were born! Because we affirm that infants are capable of sinning, and do sin *as soon* as they are born, do we therefore say, that they are either capable of sinning, or do sin *before* they are born? Reasoning that is applicable to infants before birth, may not be applicable to them after birth. Who affirms that Jacob or Esau did good or evil before birth? Who says that any sin before birth? Who even ventures to affirm, that the fœtal existence has a soul? There is no occasion of triumph in this very plain text, which has nothing to do with the subject.

There is also a passage in the book of Jonah which is said to be inconsistent with the doctrine. *And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left; and also much cattle?* Here let it be distinctly remarked, that if this passage militates against the doctrine, it must be because the six-score thousand persons referred to were infants, and the city was spared on their account. But neither of these facts can be proved. For first, the passage does not affirm that the persons referred to were *infants*. It says there were more than six-score thousand *persons*, that could not discern

between their right hand and their left. It is reasonable to suppose that if infants had been especially in the writer's eye, he would have definitely described them; and to have done so, would have accorded with the usual precision of the Scriptures on this subject. 2. It is incredible, that there were so many infants in the city of Nineveh. There is no account of the extent and population of that city, which justifies the belief that it contained a hundred and twenty thousand infants, either a few days, or even a few months old. The population of ancient cities can be by no means determined by their extent, because, more usually, one-half, or three-fourths of them were laid out in squares and public gardens. The city was but three days' journey, or, say some sixty or eighty miles through the principal streets of it. 3. The book of Jonah shows that the city of Nineveh was spared on the ground of her *repentance;* which shows that she was not spared for the sake of *infants.* After Jonah had predicted the overthrow of the city, the people *believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.* And we are told that *God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not.* Here the reason why God spared the city is explicitly stated. It was their *visible repentance.* But the objector will ask, Does not God himself say to Jonah,

Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein there are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand? He does say so; but he also says, that the reason why Nineveh was spared, was her *repentance.* Nor does he any where say, that the reason why she was spared was, the multitude of her infants. Nor yet was this expostulation with Jonah without an emphatic import. There were special reasons why God should say this to *Jonah*, because he was *angry for the gourd. Thou hast had pity on the gourd for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?* This remark was *argumentum ad hominem* to *Jonah*, while it does not at all countervail the fact that the city was spared on account of their repentance. Besides, 4. It is contrary to the dealings of God's providence, to spare any people on account of infants. There is probably not a single example in the Bible to justify this interpretation, while there are many examples to the contrary. Infants did not stay the waters of the flood; nor arrest the flames of Sodom; nor avert the ruin of Egypt, or Canaan, or Babylon, or Jerusalem. There were more than six-score thousand infants in the old world,

and yet God did not spare. Nor can any example be found, of infants having averted or arrested the calamities coming upon a people. Nor, 5. Will it follow, even if infants are here described, that they cannot sin before they can distinguish between their right hand and their left. Many are conscious that they were sinners, before they could tell their right hand from their left. Children cannot usually do this until they are several years of age. And 6. This is a proverbial expression, denoting great ignorance in adults, and would be inapplicable to infants. But let us suppose the six-score thousand persons referred to were infants. If there be any force in the objection of our opponents, it is found in the consideration, that it would have been *unjust* not to have spared the city for their sakes. Why then did God threaten to destroy it? Was the *threatening* unjust? Besides, this objection comes with an ill grace from those who maintain that the suffering and death of infants are not penal.

There is likewise a declaration in Deuteronomy 1: 39, which seems at first view, to contravene the doctrine we are endeavoring to establish. It reads thus: *Moreover your little ones which ye said should be a prey, and your children which in that day had no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give the land, and they shall possess it.* Now we are bold to say, this declaration has nothing to

do with infants, except as they are included in the number of those who did not rebel against God and against Moses, and did not refuse to go up and possess the land, on the return of the twelve spies. In less than a year after the children of Israel left Mount Horeb, they had travelled through the great and terrible wilderness, and came very near the borders of Canaan. So near were they, that Moses sent twelve men to search out the land, and to bring back word again by what route they should go up, and what cities they should first attack. Ten of the twelve spies brought an evil report of the land, and discouraged the hearts of the people. Joshua and Caleb alone gave a true and favorable representation, and urged the people at once to go up and possess the land. But the people rebelled. *All* the people from *twenty years old and upward*, rebelled and would not go up. The consequence was, God told them that they should not go up, nor should one of that entire generation who were capable of bearing arms, when they came out of Egypt, except Caleb and Joshua, ever set their foot upon that fair inheritance. We have a definite account of this whole transaction in the 14th chapter of the book of Numbers, which when compared with the brief recapitulation in the first of Deuteronomy, gives the true sense of the contested passage. *Say unto them*, says God to Moses and Aaron, *your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of*

you, according to your whole number, FROM TWENTY YEARS OLD AND UPWARDS, *which have murmured against me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.* Their *children* did not participate in this rebellion.—*Quoad hoc*, they had no knowledge of good and evil. They were *minors;* and notwithstanding the rebellion of their fathers, they went in and possessed the land. This passage, therefore, obviously includes all those who were under twenty years of age, at the time of the general rebellion of that people, on the borders of the promised land.

A number of passages of the following import, strange as it may seem, are referred to, as asserting the doctrine of native innocence. *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.* On any other ground than that children are innocent, it is asked, "how could they be made the objects of such a comparison as they here are?"* To this I reply, either the children referred to, were innocent, and had no moral character; or they had a moral character, and it was holy; or, they had a moral character, and it was unholy and sinful. Was it the last? This will not be affirmed by

* *Vid.* Stuart's Excursus.

the objector. If this is the meaning, then the import of the passage is, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, who *go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Was it that they had a moral character, which was holy? This, the opposers of Native Depravity will not affirm—nay, this they even deny. Was it then that they were merely innocent, and had no moral character? Is it so, then, that all our Lord meant to say, was, Except ye be converted, *and become like these little children, who are destitute of original righteousness*, and *have no moral character*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven? Is this all that is necessary to prepare men to enter into the kingdom of heaven?—that they should have *no moral character?* And how does this accord with the concession that these very children *need to be born again?* If these children needed to be born again, we might ask in our turn, "how could they be made the objects of such a comparison as they here are?" The real facts in relation to these texts have been overlooked. These little children were not *infants.* The original Greek word here translated little children, as every Greek scholar knows, is not the word generally used in the New Testament to denote infants; but the word that is generally used to denote a child that is capable of instruction, in distinction from a child that is

carried and nursed by its mother.* It is observable too, that it is a child that Jesus *called*, and *set in the midst* of the disciples. It was a child that could stand or walk. The children here referred to, therefore, possessed a moral character; and if they possessed a moral character, were, it is conceded, sinful and depraved; so that they could not have been traits of *moral* character which were the objects of this comparison, but traits of *natural* character. When it is asked, therefore, how they could "be made the objects of such a comparison?" we answer, for the same reason that lambs and doves could be. Little children, as well as lambs and doves, possess many *natural* properties, which beautifully represent the unaspiring, docile, simple, guileless spirit, which the early disciples needed to possess in greater measure, and which is so necessary a prerequisite to the kingdom of heaven.

But I have wearied my readers too long with

*The Greek word for infants is Βρέφος, which Bretschneider says, means *qui aliter a matre.* It means sometimes, *fœtus*, or *embryo—infans recens natus, quatenus a matre adhuc alitur.* Schleusner says it is, qui adhuc in *matris utero*, as in Luke 1: 41, and also *infans recens natus*, as in Luke 2: 12. This is the general, though not the uniform meaning. The original word translated children, is παιδιον. Bretschneider says it signifies *puerulus, puella*—a little boy—a little girl—*homo utriusque sexus nondum adultus*—and this is indicated from its being the diminutive of παις—*puer—puella*—totam hominis ætatam, a nativitate usque ad annos viriles. Schleusner, however, gives us a secondary meaning—infans adhuc lactens. Such, too, is the colloquial use of the word παιδιον in modern Greek. I once enquired of the Rev. Mr. Temple, who had spent some time in the Greek Islands, the precise meaning of the word, and he told me it meant a child that runs about and goes to school. And the etymology of the word shows it to be so.

this critical examination of texts. I do not know of any other text on which any considerable emphasis can be laid in this discussion that is opposed to the doctrine we have advocated. The Bible cannot contradict itself. If there be any other passage, therefore, I am well satisfied, that it either has nothing to do with the subject, or presents rather a popular and qualified view of the moral character of children, relatively and comparatively considered, than a didactic denial of Native Depravity.

Again: With the Bible in my hand, I deduce also a strong argument in favor of Native Depravity, from *the rights of circumcision and baptism.*

Circumcision and baptism are both represented in the Bible as appendages of the covenant of *grace.* They distinctly recognise the subjects of them as standing in need of *mercy*, and therefore *sinners.* Of all the truths they express, none are more significant than the lost condition of infants, and the divinely instituted method of their recovery by the blood of the great atonement, and the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit.

Who can discover any propriety in the sanguinary rite of circumcision, performed on a child eight days old, unless he admits that the infant is a subject of the divine government, a fallen sinner, and in perishing need of salvation by grace? This certainly is the view the Scriptures

give of this painful ordinance. It was a seal of God's gracious covenant with Abraham and his seed; a significant representation of that great work wrought on the heart by the immediate power of God, and which the Scriptures denominate *circumcision without hands*, and a visible pledge for the transmission of the privileges and blessings of the great salvation, from generation to generation, down to the close of time. It was a *seal of the* RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH—not only of the faith of the parent for his own soul, but of his hope in God for his children, that *righteousness might be imputed to them also.* The promise involved a pledge on God's part, that on condition of faith and fidelity on the part of Abraham in respect to his children, they should become subjects of grace, and heirs of the blessings of the covenant. And in contemplating this merciful arrangement, who has not admired the infinite grace and wisdom of God in this covenant, which he established so early with his children. But what an unmeaning ceremony, if young children have no moral character; if they are no more the subjects of the divine government than "young animals;" if their hearts do not need to *be circumcised to love the Lord their God;* if they have never sinned, and need no interest in the covenant of grace!

Of still more significant import, if possible, is the rite of infant baptism. With our brethren who deny the validity of infant baptism, we know

this remark has no weight; but with those who admit it as the ordinance of God, it is entitled to serious consideration. What propriety is there in the ordinance of baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the God of our redemption, if the subject of it is *innocent*, and bears no relation as a sinner to the method of redeeming mercy? Christian parents, in offering their children to God in baptism, present them to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the God of their *redemption*. They do not bring them to the baptismal font as *innocent* creatures, as those who have no *moral character;* but as those who need to be *washed and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* The Scriptures unequivocally represent Christian baptism as implying the moral pollution of the subject. The impressive emblem of water implies this. The frequent comparison between *baptizing with water* and *baptizing with the Holy Ghost* implies this. The fact that baptism, as well as circumcision, is a seal of the righteousness of faith, implies this. And several plain and positive declarations affirm it. Annanias said to Saul, *Arise, and be baptized, and* WASH AWAY THY SINS. Peter also expresses the same thought, when he says, The like figure whereunto *baptism* doth also now save us, not the *putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.* Now if infants are not sin-

ners, why were they circumcised under the Old, and why are they baptized under the New dispensation? Why wash them, if they are not filthy? Do you say, it is because they *will be sinners*? That is not certain, if the doctrine of Native Depravity be not true. They may not live long enough to be sinners. And if they die before they sin, they do not need to be baptized. I would abandon the doctrine of infant baptism, if I did not hold the doctrine of Native Depravity. And it is well known that this doctrine is loosely taught; has already become a subject of trivial moment; and is gradually falling into disuetude, in the churches where the doctrine of Native Depravity has been for several years exploded.* How can a minister baptize a child, if he disbelieves this doctrine? If he disbelieves or doubts

* The Congregationalists (says the Christian Secretary) have constituted a new church in New-Haven, which they denominate "A Missionary Church." They have published a constitution of twelve articles, and fifteen articles of faith; of the latter, one article reads as follows: Art. xii. "That the Sacraments of the Christian church, are Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and that candidates for admission to the church, ought to have liberty of conscience, as to the mode and subjects of Baptism."

A writer who styles himself an *Edwardean*, and the author of letters on the present state and probable results of Theological Speculations in Connecticut, has the following paragraph: "Another practical effect of the new system is to bring into disrepute the ordinances of the gospel. It is credibly reported, and I give it to you as a report, that Dr. Taylor has said, If a man who had been baptized, became dissatisfied with the manner and views with which it had been done, and should request to be re-baptized, he would again baptize him, and if he wished to be circumcised, he would circumcise him. And by one, at least, of Dr. Taylor's devoted associates, this doctrine, as it respects baptism, has been reduced to practice. Thus the ordinance of baptism is virtually nullified, or reduced to the level of common means, in direct contravention of its divine institution."

the necessity of the child's regeneration, how can he *pray* at the baptismal altar for the influences of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the child? For myself, if I adopted these views of Native Depravity, I should be at a loss to know how to pray, at the baptismal service, unless I should be satisfied solemnly to implore grace for the child in due time, and as soon as he might need it! If I mistake not, it would be difficult for the advocates of native innocence to utter such a prayer as is befitting their sentiments. It would run somewhat in the following form: *O Lord God! the mighty Creator and gracious Redeemer! who keepest covenant and mercy toward them that fear thee from generation to generation. We praise and bless thee that thou hast given this child existence in a Christian land, and under the smile of Christian ordinances. We thank thee that thou hast formed it a godly child, "in thine own image," and "destitute of a moral character." We bless thee, that, though belonging to an apostate race, yet the sin of our first father has not injured it; for "his sinning harmed no one but himself." This child, now free from sin, and without any moral depravity of nature, and possessing spotless innocence, we come to consecrate to thee. We bring it to this baptismal fountain, not that it may be washed and sanctified, because it is clean. We bring it to the atoning Saviour, not that it may be pardoned, because it is not as*

yet under the curse of thy holy law. But should it please thee in thy righteous providence to continue it in this guilty world long enough to become morally polluted, our prayer is that it may then, and in due time be cleansed from all its impurity!—Who ever heard of such a prayer? Would it not be an anomaly in the worship of God's house? Is it not a burlesque upon the very name of prayer? Does it not outrage every reverential, and Christian feeling? Would our opponents *dare* offer it? And yet it is in perfect keeping with their doctrine.

I remark, again: When I look into the Bible, I also learn, that *if infants are not sinners, they cannot be saved through the atonement of Jesus Christ.* The sentiment has often been imputed to the advocates of Native Depravity, that they *do not believe in the salvation of infants.* But nothing is *more false or unjust*, than this imputation. That the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, rescues all infants from perdition, I do not deny, but fondly hope; that it rescues untold millions, I have not a doubt. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings* hast thou *perfected praise. Children are the heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward.* But while we say this, we also say, that God is not bound in *justice* to save them, and that whether he saves the whole, or a part, he saves them as a matter of mere mercy, through the blood of his Son.

There are two ways, and only two, in which the creatures of God, either in this or any other world, can be saved. One is by their personal innocence and rectitude; so that they do not deserve the divine displeasure, and therefore cannot be condemned justly; the other is by being pardoned and rescued from a perdition they deserve, freely by the grace of God, that is in Christ Jesus. These two methods of salvation are not only entirely distinct, but directly opposite. Grace cannot save, where justice cannot condemn; and on the other hand, justice cannot condemn, where grace is not necessary to save. Now the simple question is, do the Scriptures rest the salvation of infants upon their own native innocence, or upon the mere mercy of God through Jesus Christ? If upon their own native innocence, then all who die in infancy have no part in the great redemption; never illustrate the wisdom, and riches, and glory of redeeming mercy; never have washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; can never lift up their voices, in the present world, with the song, *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our* SINS *in his own blood;* nor stand with those in the world to come, who say, *Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, from every kindred, and nation, and tongue, under heaven.* But if they are saved by Christ and through Christ, then are they sinners: for, if *one died for all,*

then were all DEAD—*the Son of Man came to seek and to save that* WHICH WAS LOST; *Christ hath once suffered, the just for the* UNJUST. If they are saved by Christ and through Christ, then are they rescued from a *deserved* destruction, and in *perfected praises* ascribe the glory to God and the *Lamb*. Whatever else Christ may do for them, he does not *cleanse* them; he does not *pardon* them; he does not redeem them by the blood of *his atonement*, if they are not *sinners*. They are under no obligations to him for redeeming them from the curse of the law, if they are not sinners; for if they owe any thing to *atoning blood*, they are wanting when weighed in the even scales of justice! It is an imposition to say, as a late writer has said, that "Christ is the Saviour of infants," unless they are saved by him from *perdition*, and a perdition that is deserved. And that this is not the meaning of the representation, is evident from the fact, that it "seems doubtful" to him whether "infants are sinners in such a sense as to be worthy of the second death."*

But it is asked, how can an infant be saved, if it cannot repent and believe the gospel? I answer, just as easily as a pious Pagan can be saved, who knows nothing of Christ. God *may* renew and sanctify the heart of an unenlightened Pagan; and through the blood of his Son, wash away his sins, and fit him for heaven. I have

* Professor Stuart.

seen a multitude of infants die; and it has been a delightful thought to my mind, that the Father of spirits has not bound himself by the laws of moral suasion, but has *immediate* access to the infantile mind; is able to give it a new heart and a new spirit; and does, to the glory of his own grace, shed abroad in an infant's bosom, that holy love, that sweet spirit of heaven, which is the germ of every grace, and which will bear its fruits under a serene and purer sky.

But again:—I learn from the Bible, that if infants are not sinners, they *do not need regeneration.* If they are innocent, why should they sustain any such radical *transformation* of character, as the Scriptures affirm to be indispensably necessary in every human being? Our blessed Lord told Nicodemus, that *that which is born of the flesh is flesh.* Whatever truth this declaration may convey beside this, this is evidently conveyed by it, that every child of Adam must be *born again.* It is not enough that he should be *once* born in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. He must be born *again.* Old or young, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Not an individual of the human family, of any age, can be received into the kingdom of heaven without this renovation of moral character.

The reason why adults must be born again, is, that their moral disposition is supremely selfish and sinful, and must be changed, or they

are lost. We enquire then, *What is there in the character of an infant*, that renders it necessary for him to be born again? You say he has no character. How then can his character be *changed?* Regeneration is a *change* of character from sin to holiness. How can an infant be the subject of this change, who has never had a character that is sinful? Regeneration is described as *passing from death unto life;* if infants are not in a state of spiritual death, how can they pass from death unto life? If you are even in doubt whether an infant has a moral character, how do you know that he needs to be regenerated? Besides, if infants are innocent, and have no moral character, then those who die in infancy are either annihilated, or lost, or created holy subsequently to their original creation. Will our opponents tell us which? If, dying in infancy, they ever become holy, then must it be, not by a spiritual renovation of character, but literally by a *new creation. Regenerated* they cannot be. If we mistake not, a mind unperverted by system would say, the reason why an infant must be born again will be found in the reason why an adult must be born again. It has a sinful heart. Its moral dispositions are unholy. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh:* anti-spiritual and sinful, and partakes of that *carnal mind which is enmity against God.* At his first birth, man is sinful and depraved; and it is only by his second, or spiritual birth, that he becomes holy.

Again: The Bible informs us that SUFFERING AND NATURAL DEATH IN THEIR EFFECTS UPON THE RACE OF ADAM, ARE THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN. Of the sufferings and death of the human race, the Scriptures say—*We are consumed by thine anger*—We pass away *in thy wrath*—They bear their iniquity and *die.* WORTHY *of death*—GUILTY *of death*—*The sting of death is* SIN—*The last* ENEMY *that shall be destroyed is* DEATH—*By one man, sin entered into the world, and* DEATH BY SIN, *and so* DEATH *hath passed upon all men,* FOR *that all* HAVE SINNED. Each and all of these passages prove, that, as it respects the whole human race, natural death is *penal*, and strongly expressive of the divine displeasure against sin, and against men as sinners. And with these declarations accord the plain decisions of conscience. Men are so constituted, that they trace suffering to crime. *Vengeance suffereth not to live.* The passage from the epistle to the Romans is so significant, that I will repeat it. *By one man sin entered into the world, and* DEATH BY SIN, *and so* DEATH *hath passed upon all men,* FOR *that all* HAVE SINNED. The word *death* here means either temporal death, spiritual death, eternal death, or all misery. If it means spiritual death, the point is proved that all men are born dead in trespasses and sins. If it means eternal death, then it is also proved; for none are condemned to eternal death, but those who are sinners. If it means temporal death, then

does temporal death prove their sinfulness: for the text asserts, that, *death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* If it means all suffering, this includes all the three; and therefore proves that sin in the human race is co-extensive with suffering. Let the import of this text be considered. *By one man sin entered into the world, and* DEATH BY SIN, *and so death hath passed upon all men, for that* ALL HAVE SINNED. Death is here declared to be a proof of sin. How a proof of sin? If there be any meaning in this declaration, infants suffer and die, either for their own sin, or for Adam's sin, or for neither. If they do not suffer and die either for their own sin, or for Adam's sin, then so far as this text is concerned, there is no evidence that they suffer and die for the sin of any one. And what is the inference, but that the declaration, *death by sin,* is not true? *It is not true,* that *death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* Death does *not* pass upon all men, because all have sinned. *Excluding infants and their death,* then, what is the amount of the Apostle's assertion? Not that death is by sin, as a matter of course. Not that death proves the existence of sin in any one. But it is simply this—*Death by sin,* if you live long enough to become a sinner; but if not, then you shall die without it! This is all this great Apostle could mean, if the reasoning of our opposers is true. Besides, if death is not by sin in infants, when is it a proof of sin?

At what age are we warranted to conclude that death is by sin? We see no way of avoiding difficulties otherwise never to be removed, unless we come to the conclusion, that wherever death passes upon men, there is the evidence that the subject has sinned.

And now, what are the facts? No small portion of the human race die in the cradle. Multitudes upon multitudes are ushered into the world, to weep, and sigh, and moan out a miserable existence here, and then pass to eternity. Suffering and death in some of their most merciless and frightful forms, are inflicted on infants. God did not spare infants, when, in the expression of his exhausted forbearance and displeasure against the sins of the antediluvian world, he deluged it by a flood. He did not spare infants, when he burnt up Sodom and Gomorrah; though in answer to the prayer of Abraham, he engaged not to destroy the innocent with the guilty. He did not spare the infants of Egypt, when he swept the land by the ten plagues. He did not spare the children of Achan, nor of Canaan, nor of Babylon. When he commanded Moses to destroy the Midianites, and Saul to destroy the Amalekites, he expressly directed them to cut off children with their parents. Of the children of Edom, he says, *Happy is he that taketh thy little ones, and dasheth them against the stones.* When the destroying angel was commanded to go through Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of

the men that sighed for her abominations, this was his solemn commission, *Go through the city and smite. Let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly old and* YOUNG, *both maids and* LITTLE CHILDREN. *But come not near any man upon whom is the mark.* Why did he not put the mark upon infants?

If then infants die at every stage of their existence after birth, are they not sinners? *Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?* If the doctrine of Native Depravity be not true, the answer to this question must be, all the infants in the old world that were destroyed by the flood, perished, being innocent. All the infants that were destroyed by fire in Sodom, and by plague and famine in Jerusalem, perished, being innocent. Thousands and millions of infants in every age of the world perished, being innocent.

But it is said, that "multitudes of infants perish before birth."* And what has this to do with the doctrine of *Native* Depravity? In the present discussion, we are speaking only of those who are *born.* And in describing the character of infants, the Bible speaks only of those who are *born*, and not of the *untimely birth of a woman that never sees the light of the sun.* The doctrine of *Native* Depravity respects *natives!*

It has also been objected, that it cannot be shown that the sufferings of infants are other

* Stuart's Excursus.

than *disciplinary.** Disciplinary? How disciplinary, if infants are not sinners? Does God chastise for nothing? What discipline do they need, if they are not sinners? And what benefit can discipline be to them, if they are not capable of possessing a moral character? How can they understand it? How can they profit by it? If the suffering and death of infants be *disciplinary*, it proves that they are moral beings, and subjects of law and moral government, and therefore have a moral character, which is the point to be established. It must first be conceded that infants are sinners, before it can be proved that their sufferings are disciplinary. And is it no proof that they are sinners, that they require such discipline? Will a righteous God send the flood, the fire, the pestilence and the sword, and drown, burn, and smite them with fury, and for the salutary purposes of *chastisement and discipline*, if they are innocent?

It has also been said that infants suffer and die through the operation of *general laws*, and that God cannot rescue them in accordance with the laws of his universal providence.† Is it so? Is God so ignorant and impotent as this? Let me turn the attention of this objector to the following passage, in the second epistle of Peter. *For if God spared not the* ANGELS THAT SINNED, *but cast them down to hell, and delivered them in chains of darkness, to be reserved unto*

* Dr. Stuart. † *Vid.* Christian Spectator, Review of Harvey and Taylor.

judgment; and spared not the old world, but DELIVERED NOAH, *the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those who should after live ungodly; and* DELIVERED JUST LOT, *vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: the Lord* KNOWETH HOW *to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.* Does this look as though God could not make any discrimination between the innocent and the guilty, without disturbing the general laws of his providence? If he could discriminate in heaven between the angels that fell, and the unfallen; if he could overthrow Sodom, and *deliver Lot*, though by the mission of an angel; if he could destroy the old world, and *deliver Noah*, though by an ark; if his providence could contrive to save all these; then it will follow, that the Lord *knoweth how* to rescue the innocent. He is at no loss to do it, and yet preserve the integrity of his government. Peter's conclusion from these facts is this:—The Lord *knoweth how* to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. A much more rational conclusion we think, than the reasoning involved in the objection. Besides, the death of infants is itself a general law. There are more that die in infancy, than in any

other period of equal extent. The bills of mortality and annual reports of interments in the city of New-York, for the years 1830, 1831, and 1832, furnish the following facts. In the year, 1830, the total number of deaths commencing on the first of January, and ending on the thirty-first of December, was five thousand five hundred and thirty-seven; and of this number, fifteen hundred and forty-seven were of the age of one year and under. In the year 1831, the total number of deaths was six thousand three hundred and sixty-three; and of this number, seventeen hundred and fifty-seven were of the age of one year and under. In 1832, the total number of deaths was ten thousand three hundred and fifty-nine; and of this number, nineteen hundred and twenty-two were of the age of one year and under. Of the twenty-two thousand two hundred and fifty-nine who died during these three years, of all ages, five thousand two hundred and twenty-six were young infants, of the age of one year and under—more than one-fourth part of the whole—nearly three times as many as died between one and two years of age—nearly five times as many as died between ten and twenty —and during all but the last year, nearly three times as many as died between two and five, and eight times as many as died between five and ten, and ten and twenty years of age. There is no general law of God's providence, concerning

the death of mankind, so prominent as this, in all ages and all countries.

But the objector enquires, What can we say of the multiplied and aggravated sufferings of the brute creation?* The Scriptures no where affirm that the sufferings and death of the brute creation are penal, except in the sense in which the ground is cursed for man's sake. But they hold a different language in relation to the sufferings and death of human beings. We meet this objection therefore in the first place on the principles of the Bible, and refer the objector, as we have done already, to what the Scriptures say on this subject. But more than this. If this enquiry means any thing, this must be the meaning. Since animals suffer and die without being sinners, therefore infants may suffer and die without being sinners. If then this remark is true, it amounts to nothing more nor less than this—that suffering and death is *no proof of sin.* So reasons the infidel, and with the same force and conclusiveness. You cannot reason from the sufferings of the brute creation, without giving your argument too broad a sweep. For if animals and infants and adults may suffer and die without being sinners, and death may reign over such a multitude without being a proof of sin; what evidence have we, from their sufferings and death, that men are sinners at all? In view,

* Dr. Stuart.

therefore, of all the suffering and pain, sorrow and death which come upon millions and millions of the human race who die in infancy, we call upon our opponents, if this is no proof of sin, to vindicate the divine government in these affecting dispensations. If all these sufferings come upon the human race, and are yet no proof of sin, then have the advocates of this scheme adopted the principle, *that God may inflict suffering and death to any extent upon human beings, and it can never be made a proof of sin in a single instance.* We have then a principle in the divine government, which admits that God may hereafter inflict sufferings and death to any possible extent, in the eternal world, and still it can never be made a proof of sin in a single instance.

A late writer remarks, "I cannot help the feeling, that there is an extravagance in the assertion so often made, and so strenuously defended in relation to sufferings in the present world. It has often been asserted that the fact that all the human race are sufferers, proves that all without exception are sinners in such a sense as to have incurred the full penalty of the divine law."* What does this author mean? and what will he say next? Does he mean that infants are sinners in such a sense that temporal death pays the debt? If so, then are they saved on the ground of justice. Or, does he

* Stuarts Excursus, p. 550.

mean that men may be sinners in any sense without incurring the full penalty of the divine law? It is surprising to see the feelings of opposition to the idea, that the sufferings of infants are penal. Men are quiet, if you concede that infants may endure all this, being perfectly innocent. If they are innocent, you may hang them, and burn them, and drown them; but if they are guilty—ah! this is a different matter. You cannot endure it if they are guilty! There seems to be something in the moral elements of some men, something which "sets itself spontaneously in array" against the representation that infants should suffer thus because they are *guilty*. No, it must not be named; it cannot be endured if it is the fruit of *sin*. But why is this? Is it that they would exculpate man, and inculpate the divine being? Apply this principle to human governments. Apply it to parental governments. What would you think of a prince, who should burn and destroy his subjects after this sort, if they were not guilty? What would you think of a father, who should thus conduct himself towards his children? I know that men have naturally a controversy with God, and that they need to be "made over again," before they can cheerfully assert and vindicate his primitive righteousness. But, on the other hand, there are multitudes whose views of justice are such, that "all the elements of their moral nature set them-

selves spontaneously" against the representation that infants thus suffer being innocent. I have yet to learn that there is an instance of suffering in human beings, or in any accountable creature in the universe, without his own consent, unless it be *by sin*. But if infants are sinners, then the subject is perfectly plain. Sin in an infant is as *really* ill-deserving, as it is in an adult. God is just when he speaks, and clear when he judges. If infants, though they sin so little, must suffer so much, then indeed is sin in the eye of God an evil and bitter thing. How affecting the lesson to all in all worlds! *If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* Next to the agonies of Calvary, I know of nothing in the history of this lower creation, fitted to hold an "arrested universe" in awe of God and fear of sin, more than the sufferings and death of infants. Nor can I repress the remark, that not to see this, is lamentable proof of great moral blindness.

And now we remark, in the last place, that *all the previous considerations are confirmed by universal observation and experience.* What does the experience of every man teach him in relation to his own sinfulness? Can he recollect the time when he was not a sinner? It is true that no man can remember what passed within his mind in infancy and childhood. Nor can any man remember half the iniquity of much later

periods. No man can remember his sinful thoughts for a single year, month, or day. And probably no man knows the full extent of his sinfulness at any one period. *Who can understand his errors?* God says of the sons of men, *They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness.* But forgetful as they are, and prone especially to forget their iniquity, there is nothing they remember so easily. And what is a remarkable fact, the most aged persons in the decline of life, have often declared, that they could remember farther back in their childhood, or infancy, than they ever could before, and that their sins at that early period, affected them far more than ever. I have no doubt that when we stand before God in judgment, we shall look back upon the moments of infantile depravity, and recollect them all; and with amazement and shame, mark the fatal influence they exerted on our moral character through every future period of our earthly existence. Nor will aged persons, who retain their faculties, laugh at this on a dying bed.

The evidence from observation corroborates this evidence from experience. Though we do not observe the earliest emotions of wickedness in the mind of an infant, yet we discover decisive indications of moral depravity at a very early period. What observing and pious parent has not, as he has looked upon a lovely child, or

pressed it to his bosom, many a time sighed, because he had so often witnessed in it all the elements of moral depravity? Where do you discover evidence of impatience, obstinacy, pride, self-will, if not in a child? Where do you discover that *supreme selfishness*, which is the essence and substance of all sin, if not in a little child? If supreme selfishness is sin, I am sure the doctrine of Native Depravity is true. Who that has had any thing to do in the early training of children, has not observed how easily their corrupt affections are excited; how imitative they are of all that is wrong; how backward and slow to all that is good; how artful in all their little practices of iniquity, and subterfuges for sin; and how true it is, that they are "wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge?" We have never beheld children in that sinless state which is contended for; but on the other hand, at the first development of moral character, in a state of moral pollution. And this is found true under all circumstances, under every species and degree of moral training, and every variety of example. Bad example will not account for it; for it takes place as extensively under the influence of the best example. Instruction the most assiduous, means of resistance the most powerful, will not eradicate or overcome it; for it is found every where in defiance of them all. Now we put the question to every ingenuous

man, would these things be so, if the human mind were originally uncorrupted and pure?

For the sake of illustrating the preceding observations, take a single example. Let us suppose a child born holy. Would the preceding remarks have any relevancy to the moral history of such a child? To make myself better understood, take the character of the only holy child that ever existed, and contrast it with that of all other children. I refer to the infantile and youthful character of Jesus of Nazareth, *according to the flesh.* He possessed a human, as well as a divine nature. And the excellence of his human nature, did not at all depend upon its personal union with the divine nature. He had a human body and a human soul; and was born, and lived in a state of infancy, just as other children. Nor may it be denied, that he was capable of possessing a moral character at his birth, and that he began to be holy as soon as he began to exist. And yet he had the same wants; he was bound by the same rule of action; and was in every respect placed essentially in the same external condition with all other children. Nor is there any reason to believe that his condition was less ensnaring, or his natural appetites less impetuous than those of other children. He was *tempted in* ALL POINTS *as we are, though yet without sin.* And yet, in his infancy, as well as in his manhood, he was *holy, harmless, undefiled,*

and separate from sinners. No untoward passion ever crossed his breast; no unholy thought ever passed through his mind; no angry or sinful expression ever escaped his lips; and no deed of wickedness ever polluted his hands. Bad example did not corrupt him; a corrupting world did not lead him astray; hunger and thirst and disappointment did not provoke and irritate his infantile mind. And now let the advocates of native innocence inform us, if all infants came into the world as innocent and sinless as *the holy child Jesus*, why do they not exhibit some such early indications of sinlessness as he exhibited? Let them say, if this were the case, why they do not in their veriest infancy and childhood exhibit altogether a different character from that which they so uniformly express. And let them also instruct us, if the child Jesus was "born with passions and appetites which will *certainly* lead men to sin, and *always* lead them to sin in all their actions of a moral nature," why he was not, upon their own principles, by *nature* a child of wrath even as others?

Against this argument from observation, I know it is said that children and infants exhibit great simplicity and artlessness, and great sweetness of disposition. Dr. Stuart says, "All men pronounce infants to be innocent, until theory bids them contradict this." So they do pronounce them innocent of overt crime. Of the

acts for which men are hung, they pronounce them innocent. But *no man* has a right to pronounce infants innocent in the sight of God. What if infants do express great simplicity and sweetness of spirit; this does not prove that they are innocent in the sight of God. They do not express more loveliness of natural character, than many an adult who has not the fear of God before his eyes, and who neglects and contemns every thing that is holy; not more than many an amiable Pharisee; not more than the lovely young Ruler in the gospel, who loved himself and the world more than Christ, and was in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. Besides, there is good reason for an infant's exhibiting all this sweetness. He has nothing to disturb, but every thing to soothe and gratify his selfish disposition. Every thing is obsequious to his wishes, be they reasonable, or unreasonable. I have never thought it much evidence of piety that I am unruffled and amiable, when every thing goes well with me. And I very much doubt whether the opponents of Native Depravity, testy as they are, when assailed, would not be as placid and sweet as an infant at the breast, so long as no favorite desire or purpose should remain ungratified. But how easily are our unholy affections excited, when we are thwarted and resisted in our designs; when things go ill with us; and when there are

motives and provocations to excite them. Just so is it with children and infants. Excite them, and how soon does a sinful heart discover itself. Every mother knows that the peace and comfort of her family depend upon indulging and caressing her infant;—a tremendous fact in its bearing on the doctrine of Native Depravity!—And I put it to the conscience and common sense of my readers, whether, if God had not been mercifully pleased to clothe infancy with weakness—with great helplessness and impotence; and instead of this, had given infants existence in all the vigor of manhood, and with no more intelligence, no more experience than an infant now possesses; we should not have evidence of Native Depravity in the youngest child, that could not be misunderstood, and expressions of wickedness that would attract universal observation? We honestly confess, we know not how to reconcile what our own experience and observation teach us, with the idea that infants are sinless. The iniquity of the human mind shows itself by sensible indications, as soon as it can do so; and there is no reason to doubt, could we trace it to its earliest infantile emotions, we should discover it at the very commencement of its existence.

Nor are there any peculiar difficulties in the preceding exhibition of this truth, in distinction from those that are connected with the hypothe-

sis, that the human race become sinners at any period subsequent to their birth. There are none as it regards the character of God. No doubt we shall be charged with the inference that if the doctrine we advocate be true, then *God is the author of sin.* That sin is the object of the divine purpose; that its existence is indispensable to that method of redeeming mercy, by which God himself is to be infinitely and forever glorified, and his holy universe made happy in him; that his providence extends itself to its first introduction into our world; and that God governs the conduct of men, and worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, we know. But this does not prove that God is the author of sin; nor that the first sinful emotion of an infant's mind, is not as really *his own*, as any subsequent emotion. That God is the author of sin, we have never taught or defended. It has been our aim to present the government of the Most High in this respect, as he has presented it in his word; and to enforce the thought, that his purposes and agency are exerted in some form or other to all the actions of men. We have been in the habit of saying, in the language of our own standards, "God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving, and governing all his creatures and all their actions." "The Almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of

God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise, and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them in a manifold dispensation to his own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be the author or approver of sin.* But whether our opponents adopt the theory that God has given men passions and appetites that "will certainly and infallibly lead them to sin, in all circumstances of their being"—or the theory that he has given them "a *nature*" which infallibly leads them to sin; in either case do they attribute the unfailing cause of human wickedness, to the Divine Being. Nor do men make themselves sinners upon their theory, more certainly than they do upon the theory defended in this discussion. There is not a single principle in this discussion but is intended to recognize the fact, that infants make themselves sinners, as really, as adults. Nor is there any difficulty upon the principles we have adopted, as it regards the future state of infants; while upon the opposite theory, there are difficulties that have not yet been removed. If the theory advocated at

* *Vid.* Assembly's Catechism—and Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church.

New-Haven and Andover* be true, then infants are not prepared for heaven, because, though they are not sinners, they are not positively holy. Neither can they perish, because they are not sinners. If this theory be true, then there are but three ways in which infants can possibly be disposed of. Either there is a world especially prepared for them; or they enjoy a new probation beyond the grave; and if there be such a probation for *them*, then why not for others; or, they are annihilated. The Pelagians held to the first of these dogmas. They taught "a three-fold state after death:—damnation for sinners; the kingdom of heaven for baptized Christians, who live a holy life, and for baptized children; and *eternal life* for unbaptized children, and for unbaptized adults who live a holy life." They held that "when children die without baptism, they are excluded from the kingdom of heaven, but not from eternal blessedness!"† But if the principles we have advocated be true, infants may be saved just as other sinners are saved; through the expiation of the Son of God, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit. Nor upon our principles is there any difficulty as it respects physical depravity; while upon the opposite hypothesis, physical depravity is affirmed with a witness; for it declares

* I say at Andover; though I have no reason to believe that the error extends beyond the author who has published it to the world, in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.

† Murdock's Mosheim, vol. 1, p. 440.

that there is something in the physical and intellectual constitution of all Adam's posterity, for which they are not to blame, and which ensures their destruction. We hope the advocates of the Pelagian doctrine will remove these difficulties, and especially that they will vindicate the divine character in the existence of such a race of creatures as man. This they have never done. I ask them, do they find no difficulties in doing this? They have *affirmed* the subject is plain. But is it so *to themselves?* And if it is, for one I shall be grateful to them to make it fully appear to my own mind, and to other minds which are at present not a little embarrassed by their vain philosophy.

The leading arguments in favor of the doctrine of Native Depravity are now before my readers. If infants are capable of sinning; if they belong to the posterity of our apostate primogenitor, and fell through his fall; if they compose a part of the race who are all guilty before God; if they go astray from the womb; if they bear the external symbols of a covenant of mercy; if they can be saved through the blood of the great atonement; if they are capable of being renewed by the Spirit of God after the image of him that created them; if they suffer and die; and if experience and observation confirm these truths; then are they sinners. The reverse of this conclusion, in my humble

judgment, is every way revolting to common sense and Christian feeling. It throws infants out of the economy of redemption. It throws them beyond the reach of the divine influence. It throws them out of the circle of the divine government. It puts them beyond the reach of prayer: and though perfectly innocent, consigns them to pain, suffering and death, in the present world, and beyond the grave makes them,—*what?* and consigns them,—*whither?*

But I may not close this discussion without the following

REMARKS.

1. *We regard the doctrine in question as one of solemn moment.* It was with the denial of this doctrine, that the errors of the once evangelical churches in New-England began. Let the history of Unitarianism in Boston and Cambridge, and the history of this controversy, as it has been developed in the Christian Spectator, published at New-Haven, be our comment on this remark. Let the history of the Christian church in all ages speak, and it will speak the same language. Wherever the doctrine of Native Depravity has been denied, or called in question, there all the discriminating doctrines of the gospel are, or soon will be, loosely taught, and a kind of religion prevail, very diverse from the religion of our fathers, and as we judge, from the religion of the Bible. We know this suggestion is indignantly

repelled. But facts are stubborn things. I have taken not a little pains to ascertain the state of vital piety, and the character of the revivals of religion, in those churches and institutions where this error prevails, and the result is a thorough conviction, that the error is fraught with mischievous consequences to the souls of men. This single doctrine of Native Depravity, will be found to lie near the basis of all the differences between Pelagians and Arminians, on the one hand, and consistent and thorough-going Calvinists on the other. A living German author of high reputation, and decidedly evangelical sentiments, speaking of the importance of the questions under discussion, between *Augustine*, the defender of the doctrine of Native Depravity, and *Pelagius*, his opponent, says, "Pelagius, and especially Cælestius, endeavored to diminish the impression of the importance of these questions, as if all existing differences could be resolved into merely speculative varieties of sentiment, which had nothing to do with faith. They were led to this, however, by the relation in which they stood to the prevailing party in the church; since it was at first their *chief concern, to be allowed to propagate freely their own peculiar sentiments in connection with those to which they were opposed.* Quite different was the declaration of the violent and reckless Julian, bishop of Eclanum, who had been excommunicated

from the Catholic church, and had therefore no longer any occasion to seek for a peaceable adjustment of differences. He speaks very emphatically against those of his party, who, for reasons of worldly policy, submitted to the reigning power, and then comforted themselves by saying, that this controversy did not concern the essentials of faith, but turned upon obscure questions, which had little to do with the vital points of Christianity.—Nor, on the other side, did Augustine concede to Cælestius, that this controversy was so unimportant in its bearings on Christian theology. Believing that the doctrine of a Redeemer and a redemption, in which the essence of Christianity consists, pre-supposes a recognition of the need of redemption; he held that the doctrine of redemption is therefore closely connected with that of the depravity of human nature, and consequently with the doctrine respecting the first sin, and its consequences; and that the former fundamental doctrine loses all its significance, unless the latter doctrines are pre-supposed. In the contrast between Adam and Christ, therefore, consists the very essence of Christianity." The same writer then remarks, "If we confine ourselves to the points which were stated by the two parties themselves, and of which they had formed distinct conceptions, it must appear that this controversy arose from the *different modes of consider-*

ing human nature in its present state; or rather, *from the different views entertained respecting the relation of the present moral condition of mankind to the sin of Adam.* In every thing else which came into discussion—the different views entertained as to man's need of assistance, as to the nature of redemption, as to the work which Christ performed, and the influence of Christianity, as to the object and efficacy of baptism, in short every point debated between the two parties, was intimately connected with this fundamental difference. Augustine always came back at last to this, that man is in a state of corruption; and this, on the other hand, was always the point to which the disavowal of the Pelagians especially referred."* Such were the views of intelligent men on both sides of the question, as to the importance of the doctrine of Native Depravity as early as the third century. And though there have been, and still are, some diversities in their representations of the doctrine among different classes of Calvinistic divines, such are their views of its importance still. All classes of Calvinists have considered this doctrine as a primary and fundamental doctrine of the gospel. Owen and Ridgely, Charnock and Howe, Edwards and

* *Vid.* An article in the Biblical Repository for January, 1833, entitled, Augustine and Pelagius compared, by *Augustus Neander*, Professor of Theology in the University of Berlin—Translated by *Leonard Woods, Jun.*

Davies, Witherspoon and Fuller, Bellamy and Hopkins, Dwight and Emmons, have built their systems upon this foundation, and have deemed it as important to maintain this doctrine, as to maintain the gospel.

I have observed that error on this subject is often imbibed with little reflection, and little inquiry and investigation, except on one side of the question. Many of my readers will recollect the time when young men preparing for the ministry, and young converts were *extremely cautious* in receiving new opinions; and when they would read much, and pray much, and converse with experienced and intelligent men, and men whose character had been long established, before they *committed* themselves against any important doctrine that had been long received in the church of God. But how is it now? How do young converts and young ministers adopt error with as little reflection, as though it were of no practical moment; and because it is soothing to the pride of human reason, and the self-righteousness of the natural heart, defend it with a pertinacity worthy of a better cause! Thus it is, that one truth after another is plucked from its orbit, and we are left to grope our way backward to ages of Pelagian darkness.

If we have magnified the subject, or magnified the differences, or misinterpreted the bear-

ings and connections of this error, none will be more gratified or thankful for the correction than we ourselves. But to me it appears, that this, and kindred doctrines, ought to draw a dividing line between ministers and churches. Nor is the church safe without this division. Much as I mourn over the fact in one view, in another I rejoice in it. Though I have seen enough of a divisive spirit to bewail divisions; though I have peculiar reasons to lament it; though I have many a time said with the prophet, *Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife;* and though I love old attachments, and old friends; I may not consult considerations of this sort, at the expense of material and fundamental truth. I sigh for union and peace in God's long disjointed and contending heritage, but not with the loss of this cardinal doctrine of his word. It would be criminally deceitful to profess to unite with men and measures, whose views and influence obviously tend to obscure the truth, and retard the advancement of the Redeemer's cause. The unwearied assiduity with which this error is diffused calls for wakeful effort. And, if I mistake not, the *spirit* with which it is disseminated, is indicative, vainly indicative of triumph. I regret to say, that it is a bold and vaunting spirit, and has treated the doctrine of Native Depravity and other kindred doctrines

as though they were some latent part of mystical Babylon, which must *certainly* and *soon* come down. Let ministers and churches look about them. Let them read and investigate. And let him that readeth understand.* Let the ministers of our own beloved, but bleeding church especially, stand firm and erect in their defence of the truth of God, and their attachment to our invaluable standards; let Presbyteries be firm and faithful; let all watch and pray for more of the spirit of their divine Master; and unless he designs to bring upon us days of deep darkness, these moral pollutions, which already begin to corrupt our revivals, and lead away youthful professors, will soon disappear.

2. In view of the thoughts that have been suggested, we may dwell a moment upon *the intrinsic importance of every child.* A little child, is a frail, weak, abject creature. Perhaps it may only open its eyes upon the light of this world, and then close them in the sleep of death. But it is born for immortality. Its body may languish and die; but it has a spirit, immaterial and immortal, that survives the frail tabernacle in which it dwells; outlives all the changes and all the inferior creatures of this lower world; and when the earth shall have been dissolved and the elements melted away, shall but just have

*A very valuable pamphlet has lately appeared, styled, Letters on the present state and probable results of Theological Speculations in Connecticut, by an Edwardean, written with clearness, force, and a Christian spirit.

broken the bandages of its infancy, and entered upon its everlasting manhood. Stupid and ignorant as it may appear to the eye of men, in the eye of God it is invested with faculties which enable it to make perpetual advances in knowledge, and is tending toward a degree of light, sensibility and importance, of which we can form no conception. There is no thoughtlessness, no stupidity in an infant's mind, when once it is transferred to another state of existence, and attains the full growth of eternity. The blow that seems "to prostrate and imprison it in the grave," only gives it pinions, and crowns it with triumph. Its very moral depravity, too—its meanness and vileness may serve to discover in the strongest, clearest, steadiest light the ineffable goodness, and grace, and wisdom of God in that great redemption which he has revealed to fallen men. Were it not so, it would be a mystery to us that such a race of beings should ever have been brought into existence. But this, in its combined and contrasted splendors, is the back ground of the greatest, the brightest moral wonder the universe has ever beheld. In the redemption of fallen infants, God has so displayed abroad the glorious perfections of his nature, as to arrest, impress, and transfix the wondering universe. He has formed a race of beings distinguished by weakness, ignorance, and comparative insensibility, and from these is

raising up a great multitude which no man can number, to an equality in knowledge, sensibility and happiness, with the angels of light. He *took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.* This race of fallen infants is the object of his greatest love—his most distinguished and distinguishing mercy. He passed by angels, and stooped to children. He left the *wise and prudent,* and revealed his love to *babes.* Notwithstanding all their abjectness and pollution, he pitied them; and though by nature children of wrath, through them, shows forth even to *principalities and powers in heavenly places, his manifold wisdom.* God has manifested no such goodness to any portion of the universe, as he has to this race of abject, apostate infants. No where has his goodness assumed a form so peculiar, so alluring, so full of Deity, as it here assumes in the form of *grace* to the guilty. No where does it flow through such a medium—the blood of his only Son. For no object do so many events in heaven, and on earth, and in hell—so many moral revolutions—so many beings, high and low, holy and sinful—so many designs of unerring wisdom—so many expressions of omnipotent power—so many exhibitions of amiable and awful sovereignty—so many of terrible righteousness and wonderful mercy co-operate, and in their wide connections and everlasting results, maintain so universal

a subservency, as for the redemption of fallen infants. It were a higher privilege therefore, to be created an infant than an angel. The cradle is the threshold of that everlasting temple, where myriads will bow with more than a seraphic ardor, and higher than an angel's song. Let the mind extend itself to the ever-growing scenes of eternity, and follow the soul of the youngest infant, as it rises in moral beauty and ceaseless joy before the throne of God, and contemplate it in the light in which it will appear in the progress of eternal ages; and it will be amazed and confounded at the incomprehensible capacity, the infinite worth and importance of the meanest child of Adam.

3. What reason have we for *solicitude on account of our children?* They are *born in sin.* They partake of the same sinning, corrupt nature with their parents. From the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet, they are *full of wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, that have not been bound up, nor mollified with ointment.* Their *hearts are full of evil,* and in them *there dwelleth no good thing. They are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent.* It is as natural for them to sin, as it is for the sting of a serpent to be poisonous. They are under the wrath and curse of God, and there is no redemp-

tion for them but through the propitiation of his only Son. What spectacle is more affecting, than an immortal being entering upon its only probation, with such a character! Every time you look upon a little child, or a sleeping infant, you see,—what? An apostate sinner—man fallen—human nature in ruins! When you clasp your fond babes to your bosom, well may solicitude and compassion find a dwelling within your heart. With all those lineaments of intelligence, and of beauty and amiableness, they are *dead in sin.* That warm heart that trembles and beats at your side, "beats iniquity and death." Ah! how often have the interest and pride of many a gratified parent been turned to tenderness and tears, as she bore her endeared offspring in her arms, and recollected that it is the *child of wrath, even as others.* Our children, like ourselves, are earth-born, carnal, and under the wrath of God; and never let our parental, our Christian solicitude cease for them, till they are born again, born from above, spiritual, and *justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.*

4. *Let us appreciate the high importance of Christian education.* The parent or guardian, who, in all their course of intellectual and moral training, does not recognise the native depravity of children loses sight of the truth most important to his success. If we could adopt the

sentiment that children are by nature innocent, we might with greater safety throw off the responsibility of training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But if they are sinners, what immeasurable importance is attached to an early religious education! What higher inducement to humble, zealous, well-directed, persevering, prayerful efforts, can be presented to a Christian mind, than the view of an immortal creature commencing its everlasting career in sin, and destined, without the blessing of God upon the most wise and efficient direction, to grow up the slave of ignorance and passion; and with no other impulse than what he receives from his own corruptions, to pursue his steady and rapid course to the pit! What class of beings in the universe of God have greater need of an early, wise, well-regulated education, than the race of fallen infants? What a curse must their intelligence and immortality prove to them, unless they enjoy a seasonable and faithful moral culture! What other preservative is there for such a mind from vice the most precocious, and perdition the most unexampled and premature? Ah! how soon will it descend to every thing that is brutal and low, if it has not early access to the refined pleasures of intelligence and religion. How strong, how affecting the obligation on parents, to be unwearied and prayerful in their efforts to form

the tender minds of children and imbue them with principles of piety. Parents, guardians, teachers! to you the solemn charge is committed, *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* True religion would soon forsake the earth, if children are allowed to follow the natural impulse of their own minds, and live without God in the world. Mournful must be the prospect of successive generations, if there be not found in good men, and in the church of God collectively, the most seasonable, watchful, and patient effort to arrest the progress of wickedness in the youthful mind. It is not necessary for us to do any thing to ruin our children; they are ruined already—by nature children of wrath; but to avert the ruin, to stem the tide of corruption, to rescue this immortal creature from the precipice—this is the momentous effort.

5. *Let us be grateful for the privilege of consecrating our children to God in baptism.* The baptismal font meets the solicitude of a parent, and the exigencies of his child at the very point where they begin, and where, if unrelieved, they wring the heart with anguish. We consecrate our children to God, not because they are incapable of moral action—not because they are innocent—but because they are *sinners.* They need the *washing of regeneration*, and the *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.* Our cove-

nant God has said, *I will be a God to thee, and thy seed.* The Holy Spirit has said, *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.* And the Mediator of the new Covenant has said, *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.* In this ordinance of baptism, I see, if I may so speak, a gracious offset to the native depravity of our children. I have a sweet exposition of that cheering sentence, *Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound.* I see the ruin; and I behold the significant remedy. I listen with grateful emotion to the voice of the Son of God when he says, *And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood,* LIVE; *yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood,* LIVE. The church of the first-born were once ruined and polluted infants. Out of *the mouth of babes and sucklings, God has ordained strength.* Found in the waste, howling wilderness, myriads of renovated and sanctified infants have already been brought to their father's house. Sunk in the abyss of native pollution, once quivering on the verge of death and hell, they have been raised to the high elevations of the church on earth, and the loftier elevations of the church in heaven. But since God is the

sovereign of his own grace, and will bestow it in his own way, let us feel it our privilege to seek and expect his blessing for our children through the medium of his own ordinance. Let us bring our little ones to Christ, with the humble acknowledgment that they are in perishing need of his blessing. Let us bring them with faith in him, as one who is mighty to save. Let us bring them, gratefully acknowledging the encouragement he has given us so to do, and confiding in his love, his promise, his faithfulness, as our God, and our fathers' God. I may add

6. *Native Depravity is no excuse for sin.* Multitudes suppose it to be so; and say, they cannot help sinning, because they were born sinners. But all sin, whether in infants or adults, is without excuse. Who will say that sinful emotions in an infant's mind are not criminal? Who has not felt that he ought to be more deeply humbled before God, for having been a sinner from his birth? An enlightened conscience, never originated the excuse, that men are less guilty, because their guilt commenced with their existence. For one, I have no such refuge, no such cause for self-gratulation and self-complacency, that the time was when I was not a sinner. Nor is my native depravity my misfortune merely, but my fault. Sure I am that I stand condemned at the bar of conscience and at the bar of God, for

my native depravity. Just so long as there is an essential and immutable difference between right and wrong, there is no excuse for sin, whether begun earlier or later. The least sin is rebellion, and deserves God's wrath and curse. And it is a weighty and self-condemning truth we utter. We have *no cloak for our sin.* The feelings which become us are those of conscious ill-desert and shame. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? Enter not into judgment with thy servants, for in thy sight no flesh living shall be justified!* Let us often think of the import of that dreadful sentence, *The soul that sinneth shall die.—The wages of sin is death!* Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come. And do the feet of any of my readers still stand on slippery places? Go then, and say with David, when kneeling before the throne, and with a melting, bleeding heart, say, *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me!* Go, and mourn with Paul, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!*

THE END.