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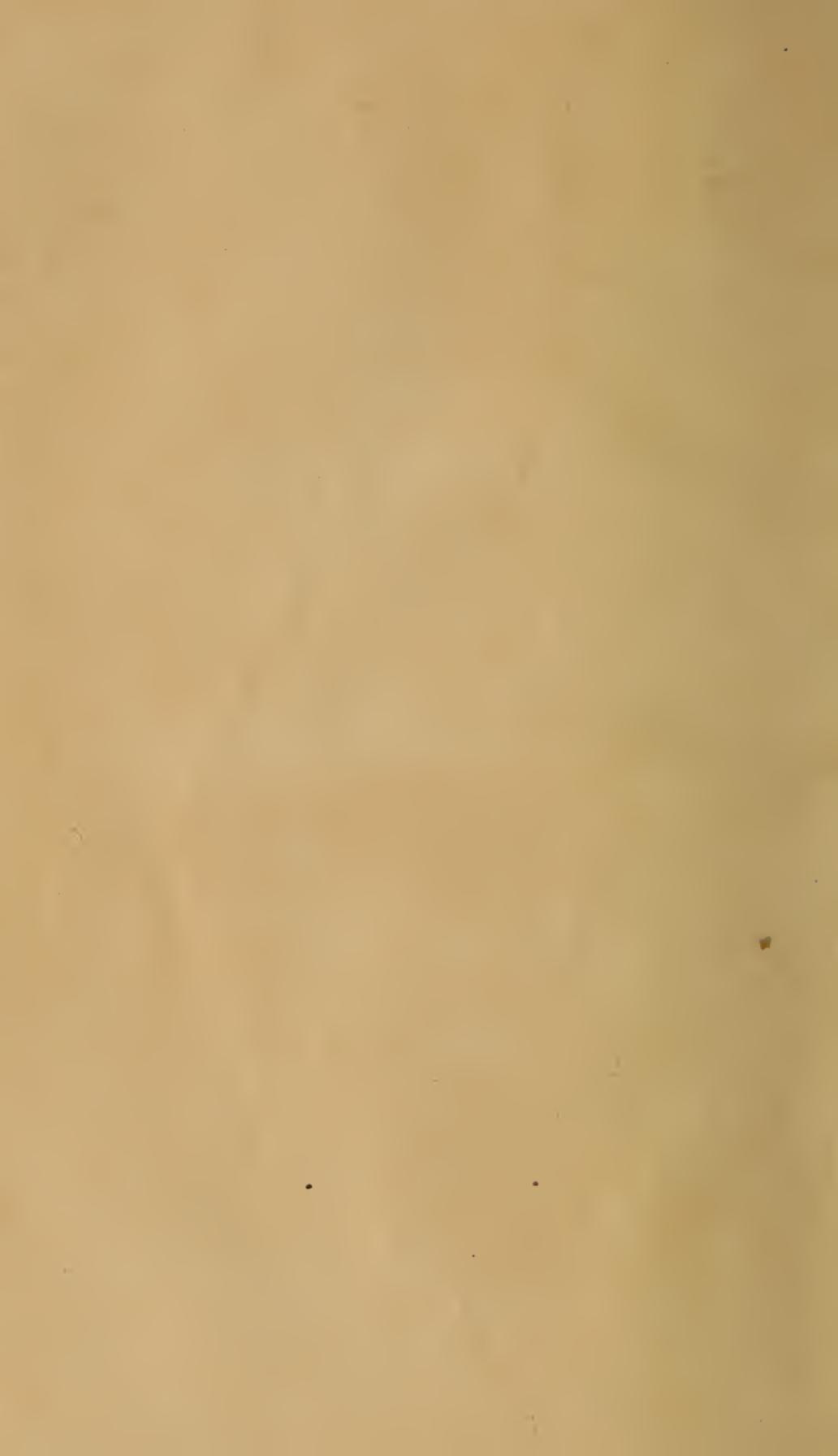
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.







THE NEW BIRTH.

A

DISCOURSE

BY THE

REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER,

LATE

VICAR OF MADELEY, SALOP,

IN

ENGLAND.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: Old things are passed away, behold! all things are become new.

ST. PAUL.

WASHINGTON CITY:

A. & G. WAY, PRINTERS.

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A DISCOURSE, &c.

JOHN III. 3.

Jesus answered, and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

THE corruption of the christian world, and the almost general lukewarmness of those who have some respect for religion, render it impossible to preach openly and constantly the deep truths of christianity without giving general offence.

How naturally, having made some efforts towards salvation, do we repose ourselves as if we were at the end of our career! Perhaps we even think ourselves sure of the prize before we have begun the race! And if any one should venture to shew us the folly and danger of such conduct, we regard him as a melancholy person, who considers only the dark side of things, and who takes a sorrowful pleasure to make us view them in the same light with himself.

This is one of the reasons why those who are commissioned to shew us the way of salvation, are afraid to dwell upon what Jesus Christ has said concerning the difficulties of the way, and the small number of those who walk therein. Indeed, if we ourselves are in the broad way that leadeth to de-

struction, it is not surprising that we should speak but seldom of the unfrequented path that leads to life; and that we should but feebly and sparingly press those truths by which at length worldlings must be either convinced or confounded. But it is certain, that if we are more sincere, a thousand difficulties will rise up to deter us, and shake the resolutions which we have formed to resist the torrent of prejudice and ungodliness.

We fear being accused of want of charity, if we declare as strongly as the scriptures does, that *if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his*. We are afraid of being charged with preaching a new doctrine, if we declare boldly with *St. James*, that *he who is the friend of the world is the enemy of God*. Or with *St. Paul*, that *she who liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth*. And we find by sorrowful experience, that we must submit to be counted visionaries, and enthusiasts, or cease to declare with the same apostle, that the true christian is a man who *glories only in the cross of Christ; who being justified by faith, has really peace with God; that he feels the peace of God in his soul, as a seal of the pardon of his sins. That he rejoices in hope of the glory of God, and that he glories in tribulation, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the holy ghost given unto him*. For it is certain that the world is always the same, and that the doctrine of Christ, as well as his cross, is still to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness: that it still excites the indignation of those who falsely call themselves children of God, and is ridiculed by those whom the foolish wisdom of this world fills with presumption. Nevertheless as among those who reject the council of God in giving it the names of enthusiasm, and dangerous revery; there are some who are distinguished by their good desires, and by some sparks of zeal for

the religion of our fathers: and as among those who fight against God, many do it in ignorance, believing that they do him service; let us strive to explain in this discourse, one of those essential truths of christianity, upon which these half christians meditate so rarely, and decry so often, viz. The doctrine of our regeneration, or new birth in Jesus Christ.

And to sustain the attention by the order of the matter, as well as by the importance of the subject, let us examine,

First, upon what occasion our Lord Jesus Christ declared, that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God?*

Secondly, what are we to understand by these expressions, *to be born again; to be regenerated?*

Thirdly, what are the reasons upon which the absolute necessity of our regeneration is founded; and how easy, and yet dangerous, it is to take the reformation of our manners for the regeneration of our souls.

Lastly, how we may come to a true renovation, without which no man can see the kingdom of God.

Reader, if you love the truth, and if you have respect to the eternal son of God, whose words we are now to consider, lift up to him a mind disengaged from prejudice, and beseech him to apply to your heart and mine, the profound truths of our text! He taught them himself during the days of his flesh, and he still gives the knowledge of them by the unction of his spirit. Yes, divine redeemer! Let thy grace teach us, and thy word shall be in this hour also a light unto our feet! Deign to shew us the path which conducts to thee, and give us the will and the power to run therein and follow thee in the regeneration, until we enter in by thee into thy kingdom; for thou art alone the path, the door, the truth, and the life!

PART THE FIRST.

To whom, and how our Saviour preached Regeneration.

THE evangelist teaches us, that *Nicodemus*, a Jew, as remarkable for his attachment to his religion, as for his knowledge his reputation, and his rank, having heard of the miracles of Jesus, concluded that he was a prophet sent of God, and came to see him by night; probably to put to him questions concerning the kingdom of God, which all the pious Jews then attentively waited for. Our Lord knowing that the ideas which *Nicodemus* had of his kingdom, were not less gross than those of the rest of the nation, took this occasion to undeceive and instruct him. He declares to him, that the kingdom of heaven is of a nature so spiritual, that a man far from having power to enter, cannot be in a state even to see it, without a real conversion. *I say to you*, adds he, *that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

As if he had said, do not deceive yourself, *Nicodemus*; my kingdom is not of this world; thou hast formed false ideas of it; few of mankind can see it, and thou canst not enter into it thyself. Thy temperance and moral virtues, thy zeal for the religion of your fathers, and the exactness with which thou fulfillest thy exterior duties, have not yet prepared thee for the presence of God. If thou art not delivered out of the estate in which thou art at present, know that thy soul will always remain encompassed with darkness as thick as that which envelopes an infant who has not yet seen the light. Thou rejoicest in a life animal and earthly: but thou hast lost in *Adam* a life spiritual and divine. Thou hast lost the life of God out of thy soul, and thou canst not recover it but by being born again. Without a

spiritual birth, it will be as impossible for thee to see God and rejoice in the brightness of his face, as for an infant not yet born to discover the sun, and rejoice in his light.

This doctrine, altogether strange as it must appear to the natural man, could not be wholly unknown to a Jewish doctor. God had promised to the Israelites, by the mouth of his prophets, that *he would put a new spirit within them; that he would take away the heart of stone out of their flesh, and give them an heart of flesh; that he would circumcise, or change entirely their hearts, that they might love him with all their soul, and with all their strength.* David had demanded of God, with torrents of tears, that *he would create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him.* And Ezekiel had cried to all the people, *put away from you all your iniquities, make you new hearts and new spirits, for why will you die, O house of Israel?* We may believe that after these promises, these prayers, these declarations, these menaces, expressed so clearly in the old testament, a sincere Jew must have some idea of that spiritual change which distinguishes the faithful from the children of this world. But as in the present day, among the people of God, there are some who conscientiously fulfil many moral duties, and walk with sincerity in the exterior ordinances of religion, without at the same time knowing by experience what the new birth is, so it was in the times of our Saviour. *Nicodemus*, notwithstanding all his virtue, his religion, his zeal, his sincerity, and his love for instruction, was not yet regenerated: and consequently he augmented the number of those righteous persons, who think they have no need of deep repentance, or spiritual renovation.

Being therefore struck with astonishment at hearing the words of Christ, and being yet so blind as to understand them in a gross and literal sense,

how can a man be born again, cried he, when he is old; can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, to be born? That which is born of the flesh is flesh, replied Jesus. In vain would you be born a second time of flesh and blood, which cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. You could not thereby be in a state to enter into that kingdom, for you can only carry out of your mother's womb a nature corrupt, sensual, and earthly. It is of a spiritual birth I speak; for only that which is born of the spirit is spirit. And as the kingdom of God is purely spiritual I repeat to thee again, verily, verily, if a man be not born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into it. If the pure waters of grace, of which those of baptism are emblematic, do not render white as snow those sins which are red as scarlet; and if the powerful operation of the spirit of God does not renew all the faculties of his soul, causing him to be born again of incorruptible seed, by which he recovers the image of his creator, and becomes thus a partaker of the divine nature, he shall have no part in the inheritance of the saints in light: the entrance of that kingdom shall be shut against him for ever.

And as if it was not sufficient to have twice declared regeneration absolutely necessary to salvation, and to have supported his second solemn declaration by the word (not to say the oath) verily, repeated also twice, the son of God seeing surprize painted upon the face of *Nicodemus*; and discovering by those eyes which sound the hearts and the reigns, that he could not receive his doctrine, because he could not comprehend by what operation of the spirit a soul can be regenerated: the son of God, I say, prays him, as with tenderness, not to be astonished if he should say to all those who were present as well as to him, *Ye must be born again.* And fearing lest that which is mysterious in the renewing of the

soul, should cause him to reject what he had said as absurd and impossible, with a patience and wisdom truly admirable, he strives to make him see the possibility of feeling the effects of the grace which regenerates, and at the same time the impossibility of describing exactly its operations.

How great brevity and force are united in the reasonings of our saviour! *The wind, says he, bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but thou canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the spirit.* As if he had said, thou dost not doubt but the wind is something real. Meantime you can neither paint it, nor describe it to a man who could neither feel nor hear it; much less could you say whence it arises or whither it goeth. In like manner a sinner who is regenerated, into whose soul God has breathed the breath of spiritual life, knows that the clouds of his understanding are dissipated: that God has called him out of darkness into his marvellous light, and that the sun of righteousness has risen upon him. He discovers with transports of holy joy, the happy revolution it has made within him. He sees that he is passed from death unto life, and he feels that he is a child of God because he has the spirit of adoption which cries in his heart *Abba...father!* Because the consolations of the Lord as a spiritual zephyr, if I may so express myself, refresh his soul: and because he is made partaker of a power which was before unknown to him, and of a felicity which eye hath not seen, which ear hath not heard, and which has never elevated the heart of the man who is not regenerated. But although he feels these changes in himself, it is impossible for him to paint them, or describe how the spirit of God has wrought them. No, he cannot make a man whose eyes the Lord has not opened, see this kingdom of God which is established in his soul. He cannot make him taste these

waters springing up into life eternal; this happiness unutterable, which inundates the heart of a believer. It is the pearl of great price, the concealed treasure, and the new name which none knoweth but he who receiveth it. It is the word of life, the hidden manna, which each must see, which each must touch with his own hands, which each must taste with his own mouth. It is the mystery of the faith preserved in a pure conscience. It is the seed incorruptible, without which no man can be born of God, nor see the kingdom of heaven.

An answer so positive might have satisfied *Nicodemus*, but his incredulity forced him still to cry out, *how can these things be?* How true it is that the natural man, though he should be just, sincere, temperate, and in some sort religious, cannot comprehend the things of the spirit of God! How true it is that they are foolishness to him, and that he regards them always as things impossible, unless God reveals them to him as he does not to the world. Be not then surprized at their behaviour, to whom we often announce the profound truths of christianity. The virtuous *Nicodemus* himself cried out, *how can these things be?* The half-christians may also cry out, this is carrying things too far; this is yielding to enthusiasm; this is to lose ourselves in the clouds. The best way to stop the mouths of these unbelievers is to answer them as our Lord answered *Nicodemus*: *Art thou, said he, a teacher in Israel and knowest not these things? That which we know we declare, and that which we have seen we testify; but, blinded by your false wisdom, you receive not our testimony.* If I have spoken to you of things material and terrestrial, of the properties of the wind which you feel, and which you hear blowing every day upon the earth, and ye believe not, being neither able to understand or render a reason for it; how could you believe and comprehend my discourse, if I

should speak to you of spiritual and heavenly things? Of the secret operations of regenerating grace, the particularities of that second birth, without which no man can see the Lord? It is thus that Jesus Christ confounds the ignorance and incredulity of this teacher in Israel, who knew not yet that which he should teach to others. Thus he gives him to understand, and us with him, that religion does not consist in speculative dissertations upon the doctrines which it proposes, but in an experimental knowledge of its mysteries, in an unshaken faith in the promises of God; in the joyful anticipation of that good which this faith procures for us, and in the living and powerful sentiments which lead instantly to the practice of all the duties of a new life. Reader do you desire to profit by these instructions of the son of God? If you believe that he who cannot lie or deceive, has declared, that you must be born again in order to enter his kingdom, do not lose a moment in vain speculations. Fall upon your knees before him who can soften your heart, and cause the scales to fall from your eyes. Demand of him that he may enable you to see and feel the absolute necessity of regeneration, and that you may receive the grace to seek it with tears of sincere repentance. This is that which *Nicodemus* did. Notwithstanding the repugnance which at first he felt to receive the doctrine of regeneration, being convinced by the words of our Saviour, he at length devoted himself. He believed and became a new creature; for the Gospel teaches us, that he who dared not to come to Jesus but by night, and had spoken to him only to make objections, confessed him openly, (and by consequence his doctrine) even when all his disciples had abandoned him. O let us be strengthened, that we may be as ready to imitate his faith, as the wordlings are to object with him, *how can these things be?*

PART THE SECOND.

What we are to understand by these expressions, "To be born again: to be regenerated."

ALTHOUGH our Saviour refused to answer an unprofitable question of the Jewish doctor, upon the *manner* of a soul being regenerated, it is nevertheless not impossible to explain what is the state of a soul that is born again, and in what regeneration doth consist. In general we may say it is that great change by which a man passes from a state of nature to a state of grace. He was an animal man; in being born again he becomes a spiritual man. His natural birth had made him like fallen *Adam*, to the old man, against whom God had pronounced the sentence of death, seeing it is the wages of sin. But his spiritual birth makes him like to Jesus Christ, to the new man, which is created according to God in righteousness and true holiness. He was before born a child of wrath, proud, sensual and unbelieving; full of the love of the world and of self-love; a lover of money and of earthly glory and pleasure, rather than a lover of God. But by regeneration, he is become a child, and an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. The humility, the purity, the love of Jesus, is shed abroad in his heart by the holy spirit which is given to him, making him bear the image of the *second Adam*. He is in Christ a new creature; old things are passed away, all things are become new. All the powers and faculties of his soul are renovated. His understanding heretofore covered with darkness, is illuminated by the experimental knowledge which he has of God, and of his son Jesus Christ. His conscience asleep and insensible, awakes and speaks with a fidelity irreproachable. His hard heart is softened and broken. His will, stubborn and perverse, is softened, yields,

and becomes conformable to the will of God. His passions unruly, earthly and sensual, yield to the conduct of grace, and turn of themselves to objects invisible and heavenly; and the members of his body, servants more or less to iniquity, are now employed in the service of righteousness unto holiness. Hence his soul, his body, his spirit, run with equal rapidity in the straight path of obedience; and all that is within him cries out, God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ my Saviour, by which I am crucified to the world, and the world unto me. I know no man after the flesh. I live not, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I live, is by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Such is the prodigious change which a living faith, produces in the soul of a repentant sinner. Such is the change which the Apostle calls *a new creation, a resurrection from the dead, a passing from death unto life, the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth; and by which he is raised with Christ, and walks in newness of life.*

But to be more particular. We may reasonably suppose that when our Lord said to *Nicodemus*, a man cannot see the kingdom of God without being born again, he meant to compare the spiritual birth of a child of God, with the natural birth of a child of Adam; thus to have just ideas of the first, it is needful to consider the second, and to rise from that which is visible and material, to that which is invisible and celestial.

An infant which is not yet born, feels neither the air nor the fluids by which it exists. It understands not: the organs of sense are not in a condition to act. It discovers nothing; its eyes being closed to the light and all sorts of objects. It is true that when it approaches the birth, a principle of life is manifested, and some feeble movements begin to

distinguish it from a mass of matter; but the objects which surround it are not the less unknown. Although it is in the world, it has no more idea of that which passes therein than if the world did not exist; not only because the senses are not yet unfolded, but because of the thick veil which surrounds, and hinders its discovering the objects that are so near it. So it is with the man who is not regenerated. In God he lives and moves and has his being. But he is not sensible of his presence, nor of that divine breathing which nourishes the spiritual life of those who are born again. The things of God, which present themselves continually to the mind of the children of God, make no impression upon him. God calls, but he understands not his voice. Christ offers himself to him as the bread that cometh down from heaven, but he cannot taste that the Lord is good. God would manifest himself to him, as he does not unto the world, but the eyes of his understanding are covered with so thick a cloud that he cannot discover him. He is a stranger and foreigner, as *St. Paul* declares; he is alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that is in him: an ignorance that makes him insensible of its existence. He may have some beginnings of spiritual life and motion before he is regenerated. He may feel good desires, and make efforts to turn to God; but his spiritual senses, are not yet unfolded, and the veil of obscurity still covering his soul, he cannot see the sun of righteousness, nor the day of life eternal: he is not yet born of God.

Let us yet continue the parallel. The birth of an infant is commonly accompanied with sorrows inexpressible. This blessing costs sighs, tears, and even piercing cries. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, says God to Eve, after she had sinned; and this sentence is also, more or less executed in a spiritual sense upon all sinners who enter into life by re-

generation. If *Lydia* felt the sorrows of repentance but for a moment before the Lord opened her heart; if three thousand persons were pricked to the heart during the preaching of *St. Peter*, and were immediately after regenerated, receiving remission of sins and the gift of the holy ghost: the scripture teaches us that *David*, *Hezekiah*, *Manassah* and *St. Paul*, did not pass so soon nor so easily from death unto life. But however the circumstances may differ; it is certain that the change which accompanies the new birth is such that none can be insensible of it who have experienced it. A child is no sooner born than he exists in a manner altogether different. He breathes; he feels the air that surrounds him: and by an alternate motion receives it in and sends it forth continually. All his corporeal senses are affected by, and employed upon, their proper objects. His eyes are opened to the light, and thence he perceives an infinite variety of new things. His ears are struck with a thousand different sounds; and the faculty which he has of touching, tasting, and feeling, discovers to him every moment something of those material things that are under the sun. Regeneration causes an equal revolution in the soul of a sinner. He is no sooner born of God than he becomes sensible of the presence of the Supreme Being. He can say by experience with *David*, *thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me.* He renders back without ceasing to God, by prayer and praise, the breath of spiritual life which he receives by faith; and acquiring every moment new strength, his spiritual senses are unfolded, exercised, and become capable of discerning spiritual objects.

The eyes of his understanding are opened. He sees in every place him that is invisible. God who commanded the light to shine into the darkness, shines into his heart, and enlightens him with the

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. God lifts upon him the light of his countenance. With *Abraham* he sees the day of the Lord, the day which is to him the beginning of eternal life; and seeing it he rejoices with joy unspeakable. His ears are opened as well as his eyes. God does not now call in vain. He understands, he knows the voice of his shepherd. He comes to him. He tastes the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. In a word, his spiritual senses are all in action; the veil is taken away: the things of God are no longer mystery or foolishness. He knows, he comprehends them. He feels the peace which passes all understanding, the joy of the holy ghost, and the love of God shed abroad in his heart. He knows that he is born of God. He knows that he dwells in God, and God in him.

This is your state, reader, if you are a believer: if you have that faith which is *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*. But if you have never experienced that inward change, judge yourself that you be not judged of the Lord. Be deeply sensible and confess, that because you are not born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. Consider the reasons which prove the absolute necessity of regeneration. They will infallibly convince you if you suffer the grace of God to make you feel all their force and importance.

PART THE THIRD.

Why no man can see the kingdom of God without being born again.

It is certain from the testimony of sacred scripture, that before the fall of *Adam*, our nature participated of a holiness and goodness, of which we have not any remains in coming into the world. In this

state of spiritual life, man loved God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his mind. He served him with all his strength. He gave him thanks for all things. He rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable, and he had a constant communion with him by the holy spirit, of which he was the temple. But by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and death passed upon all men because all have sinned. Thus we are born children of wrath, not only destined to bodily death, and exposed to death eternal, but already spiritually dead in original sin. Conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, we are alienated from the life of God, having only carnal and earthly affections, in which *St. Paul* declares consists the death of our souls. And as God is not the God of the dead but the living, it is clear, that before we can call Jesus Lord by the holy ghost, or father by the spirit of adoption; before we can experience that which *St. Paul* calls the life of God, we must feel inwardly the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and receive from him a new heart and a right spirit; spiritual and heavenly affections. This is the sacred oil with which God anoints true christians. The want of this oil, of this vivifying grace, it is which causes the foolish virgins to be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, as well as the adulterers.

But again. As the decrees of God are unchangeable, the heavens shall be shaken, and the truth of God fail, before a child of *Adam* shall see the face of God without sanctification, and the renewing of the holy ghost. You must be transformed *by the renewing of your mind*, in order to prove his holy, and acceptable, and perfect will. It ordains that you shall *put off the old man, and put on the new man, created after him in righteousness, and true holiness*: and he declares solemnly by the mouth of his son, that none shall see his kingdom without being born

again. Do not imagine that because God is good he will cease to be true, and that he forgets to be holy and just because he is patient. No, his mercy does not make him the father of lies, and you should remember, that though heaven and earth pass away, his word shall not pass away.

But do you still demand, why nothing that is impure and that defileth shall enter the kingdom of God; and why there are none before his throne but the spirits of the just made perfect, and saints whose robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb? The reason is clear. Sin, that leprosy of the devil, must not offend *HIM*, whose eyes are too pure to see evil. Defilement and iniquity cannot dwell with the king of saints. There is no refuge, no dwelling place in the heavenly Jerusalem for vipers, dogs, or swine: the proud, the passionate, lying and revengeful persons; the envious, the covetous, the sensual, cannot enter there; and if they could, they would find God only a consuming fire. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? says *David*. He who hath clean hands, and a pure heart. Blessed are the pure in heart, says Jesus, for they shall see God. Miserable are those whose hearts are not purified, for they shall never see him *There is no communion between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial*. To see the face of God in righteousness, we must be cleansed from our natural corruption and become partakers of the nature of Christ, and of the image of God.

From hence it appears that regeneration is the first degree of salvation. Grace is the only way to glory, and holiness the one foundation of true happiness. If we do not learn to know, in this world, Jesus Christ, who saves his people from their sins, we shall hear him say one day, *depart from me, I know ye not, ye workers of iniquity*. God will receive into his kingdom only those whom Christ shall

sanctify in soul, body, and spirit. As on the one side, sin is the seed of death, hell begins in those who are not regenerated. On the other, holiness is life eternal, and heaven is already opened in the believing soul. He who believeth in me, saith Jesus, hath eternal life; he has the earnest, the seal, and the foretaste of it. And as hell cannot be for those who are saved from their sins by Jesus, neither can paradise be for those who are not partakers of the divine nature. We may add that it is as preposterous to flatter ourselves with the hope of glory without having passed through regeneration, as to hope to see noon day, without the intervention of the morning, or the summer of the year without the spring.

Moreover, to rejoice in the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore, it is needful to have senses and a taste that correspond thereto. The swine trample pearls under their feet. Dogs prize an ingot of gold no more than a flint. The elevated discourse of a philosopher is insupportable to a stupid mechanic; and an ignorant peasant introduced into a circle of men of learning and taste, is disgusted, sighs after his village, and declares no hour ever appeared to him so long. It would be the same to a man who is not regenerated, if we could suppose that God would so far forget his truth as to open to him the gate of Heaven. If his heart were not created anew; if from a natural he were not changed to a spiritual man, however blameless he had been in his life, he would be as incapable of those transports of love which make the happiness of the glorified saints, as a horse is to admire the lustre of a diamond, or a swine to contemplate with delight the beautiful water of a pearl.

He is ignorant of the language of the heavenly Canaan. He cannot expatiate on the love of Jesus with the heavenly inhabitants. It would be insup-

portable for him now to meditate one hour on the perfections of God. What then shall he do among the *Cherubim* and *Seraphim*, and the spirits of just men made perfect, who draw from thence their transporting delights? He loves the pleasures and comforts of an animal life; but are these the same with the exercises of the spiritual life? Are they not rather insupportable to him? And although he will not acknowledge it, does he not hate God in his heart? Yes, he hates him, if his actions are to be credited rather than his words. He cannot employ himself one hour in prayer to Jesus without secretly wishing that the burthensome toil was concluded. His conversations, his readings, his amusements, as void of edification as of usefulness, rarely fatigue him; but one hour of meditation or prayer is insupportable. If he be not born again, not only he cannot be in a state to rejoice in the pleasures of Paradise, any more than a deaf man to receive with transport the most exquisite music, or a blind man to admire the works of the most eminent painters; but the most ravishing delights of angels would cause in him an insupportable distaste. Yes, he would banish himself from the presence of God, rather than pass an eternity in prostrating himself before the throne, and crying day and night, *holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, who is, and who was, and who is to come!*

It is very easy for such an one to say with the crowd of worldlings, "I hope that God will be merciful, and open to me the gate of heaven." But it is not so easy to have just ideas of the heaven to which he flatters himself he shall go. It were to be wished that they would consider those words of our Lord, *the kingdom of God is within you.* They prove clearly that Paradise consists more in the heavenly dispositions of the hearts of the faithful, than in the glorious pomp of a local heaven. We see, in the

book of *Job*, that *Satan*, intermingling himself with the saints, presented himself with them before the throne. But was he the more happy? No, the kingdom of darkness, and consequently his own hell was within him. On the contrary, we may easily conceive a saint in a local hell; an *Abednego* in the burning fiery furnace, or a *St. John* in the cauldron of boiling oil, yet happy by virtue of the kingdom of God within them, even righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We conclude that the gate of heaven must be opened upon earth by regeneration, and by the love of God, or that it will remain shut forever; and that a local paradise would be only a sorrowful prison to a man who was not regenerated; because, carrying nothing thither but depraved and earthly appetites and passions, and finding nothing here but spiritual and celestial objects, disgust and dissatisfaction must be the consequence; and, like *Satan*, his own mind would be his hell. Sinners cannot now comprehend this. But when their day of grace shall be past, and they given over to a reprobate mind, they shall terribly feel the necessity of a spiritual birth in order to be delivered from hell, and to see the kingdom of heaven; but, alas! it will be then too late.

To all these considerations permit me to add another which arises from the nature of the thing, and of itself claims our attention. Good sense cannot but dictate to us, that drunkards, gluttons, and impure persons, in a word, all the servants of *Belial*, will in the great day, follow the master which they now serve. And is it not also clear, that the unjust, the extortioners, the covetous, and all those who defend the interest of the kingdom of darkness, under the standard of *Mammon*, shall be excluded the kingdom of heaven as well as their infernal leader? And can we doubt that the worldlings, whose minds are more occupied with the pleasures and comforts of

this life, than with the love and glory of God, will have their portion with *Satan* who is the God of this world? Besides, does not reason convince us, that a depraved soul, loaded with the weight of its own sensuality, will precipitate itself into the abyss, as a stone pressed by its own weight falls towards the centre? And is it not as easy to conceive that the heaviest and dullest of the feathered animals, should soar like an eagle towards the sun, as to imagine that a soul that never had its conversation in heaven; that a soul who had never received by regeneration the wings of a firm faith, a lively hope and a burning love, should be able to follow Jesus, and ascend to heaven with the triumphant army of the sons of God? We may then conclude, that our saviour's words are founded on eternal reason and justice, and that if a man be not born again he *cannot* see the kingdom of God.

PART THE FOURTH.

DIVIDED INTO TWO SECTIONS.

SECTION I.

How dangerous it is to take the regularity of our manners for the regeneration of souls.

PERHAPS some one will say, "I am convinced that perjured persons, debauchees, murderers, and those who act unjustly, shall never see the kingdom of heaven without being born again. But I thank God I am not of this number. From my youth I have lived in the practice of temperance and justice: and I flatter myself I am also no stranger to religion. I constantly attend the church; I read the word of God; I pray and communicate regularly. Are not these indubitable marks of my regeneration? And was I not born again of water, and of the holy spirit, in my baptism?"

Before I answer this question, permit me to ask some which are not less important. Have you peace with God? Have you the remission of your sins? Has God revealed his son in you? When you examine yourself, do you feel that Christ is in you the hope of glory? Have you received the spirit of adoption, witnessing with your spirit that you are a child of God? Have you ever beheld the light of God's countenance, and felt the powers of the world to come? Do you taste the heaven which faithful souls enjoy even in this life, *the love of God shed abroad in their heart by the holy ghost which is given unto them?* Is your soul athirst for the living God? Does it pant after him as the thirsty hart after the brooks of water? Do you count all things as dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus? Are you no longer conformed to this evil world, but do you live as a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth? Do you press with joy towards the heavenly Jerusalem, in which are already your treasure and your heart? Does your soul ascend to God, even as the flame towards heaven? Do you celebrate in all your conversation the praises of him who has called out of darkness into his marvellous light? And do you find within you the humility, the patience, the disinterestedness, the renunciation of the world, the holy joy, the tender zeal, the constant sweetness, the desire to be with Christ, the modest gravity, the unfeigned love, which characterizes true believers.

If these questions do not surprise you, if the spirit of God have enabled you to sound the depths which they contain; if your most lively concern be, that you experience those heavenly dispositions in a low degree; and that your most vehement desire is, that you may grow in grace every moment, until you feel all the power of the resurrection of Jesus: you are a child of God, you are born again! Whether as *Samuel* you have walked in the way of the Lord

from your infancy, or like *St. Paul*, beheld the light of the sun of righteousness in the midst of your career, it imports not: all is yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

But if, far from finding in your heart, and in your conversation, these marks of a new and spiritual birth, your conscience rises against you, and you are forced to confess, that you feel within you rather the natural than the spiritual man, being more occupied with earth than with heaven; with yourself and the world, than with the love of Jesus, and the glory to which he calls you; we should only lay a stumbling block in your way, if we did not cry to you in the words of our divine master, ye must be born again, or you cannot see the kingdom of God. We mean not by this that you must reform your life even as scandalous sinners. No, you live, it may be, according to the strict rules of justice and temperance. You give alms, you fulfil the exterior duties of religion. We may believe even that, with *Nicodemus*, you do all this in the integrity of your heart, and as unto God. But the Lord declares that although you have the form of godliness you have hitherto denied its power. He declares that your righteousness, which does not exceed that of the *Pharisees*, will never introduce you into the kingdom of God. Yes, were you a second *Cornelius*, a devout man, fearing God with all your house, giving much alms to the people, seeking God with fasting and continual prayer; if God hath not accepted you in the beloved; if by faith in the name of Jesus you have not received remission of your sins; if the holy spirit have not descended upon you; if God who knoweth the heart beareth not witness to you as to him, purifying your heart by faith; your baptism has not saved you. And although you may not be far from the kingdom, you are not yet possess of it, you are not yet regenerated. You have the fear of

the Lord but not his love. You are not yet a child of God. You still want the spirit of adoption in order to be a christian; for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creation, an entire change of our soul, as well as of our life. In a word, a new heart, a right spirit: the kingdom of God within us.

If these things be so, (and they cannot be denied without trampling under foot the truth as it is in Jesus) suffer the word of God to penetrate into your soul. This day hear the voice of God, and harden not your heart. The things which you read regard your eternal peace. Ah! beware lest your unbelief hide them from your eyes forever. Are you one of those saints of the world, who make a fair shew in the flesh; and who, far from suffering persecution for the cross of Christ, are honored of men, because you still conform to the present world? who content with your moral duties, and exterior piety, do not come to Jesus with the repentance and importunity of the *Publican*? Suffer this foolishness of preaching to pull off your mask. Renounce your own wisdom: tear off the vain robe of your own righteousness; and smiting your breast come to Christ with the *Publicans* and *Harlots*, and groan for regeneration, without which you cannot see the kingdom of heaven. *Nicodemus* has set you the example. He at length received the kingdom as a little child, and was more than conqueror through the blood of the lamb. Tread in his blessed footsteps. And if you also are a master in Israel, follow his simplicity, and triumph like him over all your prejudices, your doubts, and the fear of those who say they are the Israel of God and are not; and having followed him in the regeneration, you shall soon follow him to glory.

But if you are an open sinner, if you live in the practice of injustice, intemperance, impurity, or

falsehood; thirsting after gold or pleasure; despising the name of God and his word; we need not attempt to prove that you are not regenerate. Your sins have a voice, they cry as Jesus did to such gross offenders, *you are of your father the devil, for his works you do.* You know it is so; your own heart condemns you. Wonder not then that we denounce your utter perdition, in the name of God, if you are not born again. Strive to open your eyes, and behold the corruption of your heart, that depraved source of your ungodly manners. Behold the destroying angel behind you, the eternal abyss opening under your feet, and the Lord Jesus ready to take vengeance on you as his enemies. O that the idea of these awful events may awaken, before their reality overwhelms you! O may the fear of the Lord be in you the beginning of wisdom! This moment turn to your gracious God; to-morrow may be too late. This is the day of salvation for you. If you neglect it, the coming night may be the commencement of night eternal to your soul. And will you trifle with a danger like this? Will you do nothing to escape the sword of divine justice? If your danger move you not, consider your interest. This would be sufficient to produce an entire change in you, if you would consider it seriously. In this world God offers you the pardon of your sins, and a happiness which can only be surpassed by that of glorified saints; and after this life a kingdom: a kingdom in the heavens. And will you carelessly renounce this, because you cannot obtain it without pain? Rather than be born again do you resolve to lose a crown of eternal glory? To lose your God, your Saviour, your all? Yea, to destroy yourself? Be not deceived. If the kingdom of heaven be shut against you, the kingdom of darkness, the second death becomes your portion. If the kingdom of God be not established within you; if the foundation

of it be not laid in your soul in this life, by the righteousness of Christ; the peace of God, and the joy of the holy ghost, the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched, shall terribly revenge your contempt for the blood of the covenant, in which your sins might be washed away, if you had implored the sacred sprinkling. Be not offended at our freedom. God knows that if we spread before you the treasures of his wrath, which he reserves for the day of wrath, it is that you may fly to those of his mercy. These are still open. His great and precious promises are still for you. By these you may be made partakers of the divine nature in this life, and after death of the inheritance among the saints in light.

SECTION II.

The difference between the reformation of a pharisee, and the regeneration of a christian, more particularly considered.

To the preceding exhortation permit me to add an advice which is of the last importance. Many sinners acknowledge the necessity of regeneration without being profited thereby, because they confound it with reformation of life. Reader beware of this error. Remember, it is not sufficient to die to sin, if we be not raised into newness of life. It is a little thing to say, "by the grace of God I am not what I was," if we cannot add, "by the same grace I am what I never have been." It is a little thing to be able to say, "I am no swearer, drunkard, unclean person; I do not walk after the flesh: unless we feel at the same time that we walk in the straight path of faith, hope, and divine love.

You are no longer unjust, well; but like *Zaccheus* do you give the half of your goods to feed the poor, and if you have wronged any man do you restore

fourfold? You are no longer sensual and voluptuous; but are your affections spiritual and divine? You are no longer enslaved to passion and anger; but does the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your soul in the sweetness and patience of the lamb of God? You are no longer filled with that pride which made you hate your superiors, despise your inferiors, and shun your equals; but in its place, do you feel in your heart the poverty of spirit, and the humility of Jesus? Do you never indulge what one calls "a polite pride?" Do you never pique yourself upon your *gentility*, or upon any worldly distinction? You are perhaps an eminent person, and you feel it is unworthy an honest man to lie or calumniate; but do you always firmly take part with the truth? Do you comfort, reprove, or exhort your brethren with the sweetness and zeal of a christian? You no longer mock at the word of God; but do you meditate upon it day and night? and is it as sweet to your soul as honey to your palate?

You are convinced it is a great sin to take the name of God in vain; but do you rejoice with reverence every time you pronounce, or think of that sacred name? You detest impiety, you cry out against that deluge of iniquity which threatens to destroy us; but are you not either transported with bitter zeal, or lukewarm and filled with vain confidence? You lament over many that you see at church, and at the holy table; but when you are there, do you rejoice as in the presence of the Lord? Does all that is within you cry out by happy experience, *how dreadful is this place? It is the dwelling of the mighty God!* Do you inwardly feed upon the bread of angels? Do you drink of the waters that spring up into everlasting life? Do you taste that the good?

You enter regularly into your closet, and you blame those who neglect to pray to their father who

seeth in secret; but do you there seek your God with tears until he manifests himself to you as he does not unto the world? Are you sick of love (to use the expression of *Solomon*) feeling that your beloved is yours, and that you are his; that his left hand is under your head, and that his right hand embraces you? In a word, do you find there the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the holy ghost?

You feel that the life of a christian ought to be a constant preparation for death, and as it is contrary to good sense to take those diversions in which we would not that death should find us, you therefore leave plays, useless visits, balls, finery, romances, cards, &c. to those whom the God of this world blinds, lest they should see eternity ready to swallow them up: but do you redeem the time, that you may walk in all those good works which the Lord has prepared for you? Does the love of Christ constrain you, so that your duty becomes your delight? Do you love to visit the Lord Jesus in prison, and in the abode of the widow and orphan? Do you seek the poor that are despised? Are you merciful to the utmost of your power, both to the bodies and to the souls of men? And do you find more pleasure in administering to the afflicted, and weeping with those that weep, than the children of this world experience in all their vain delights?

Your life is not irregular, thanks be to God! You do not live any longer in presumptuous sins. But do you feel the sprinkling of the blood of Christ? Do you know that you have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of your sins? In a word, are you crucified with Christ, living no longer to yourself, but to God? Is Christ your life? Do you feel that your life is hid with Christ in God?

Reader, bethink you these questions: the difference between the reformation of a pharisee, and the re-

generation of a child of God. Some degrees of preventing grace, and of reason and reflection, suffice for the first, but nothing less can effect the second, than a baptism of the holy ghost, and a real participation of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Beware, if indeed you would fly from the wrath to come, and see the kingdom of God, beware that you rest not in the former state. If you do, the *Publicans* and *Harlots* shall go into the kingdom of heaven before you, or rather you shall never enter therein. Christ himself has solemnly declared it, Matt. v. 20. xxi. 31. Accuse us not of severity, in thus following eternal wisdom, and in not daring to make void any words written in the book of life. To flatter you in this respect would be to lose our own souls, and that without remedy.

We are not ignorant that the voice of worldlings, like the sound of many waters, lifts itself up on all sides and drowns that of the Saviour. In vain we declare that those who falsely call him Lord, shall not enter into his kingdom. In vain we cry to sinners to strive to enter in at the straight gate of regeneration, because many will seek to enter by that of reformation, and shall not be able. Sinners, always incredulous and obstinate, and ever carried away by the multitude, refuse to hear the voice of their shepherd. Wolves in sheeps clothing betray them. Death seizes them before they are born again, and chains of darkness keep them bound to the judgment of the great day. Fools! to be blinded by that which should open their eyes, viz. the multitude that are content to live without regeneration. As if Christ had not expressly said, many are called but few chosen; that his flock is a little flock; and that few walk in the narrow path that leads to life.

Renounce, reader renounce the presumptuous folly of worldlings, and if the charm be not yet bro-

ken, suffer the grace of God to break it this moment ! Say not you are rich and need nothing. Depend not on your good works, your sincerity, your religious duties, your own righteousness. Acknowledge, on the contrary, that as you are not born again, you are yet in your sins ; poor and miserable, and blind, and naked. Feel the necessity to *buy gold tried in the fire that you may be rich ; and white clothing, that the shame of your nakedness may not appear ; and to anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see.* Cry out, like the penitent *publican*, with a broken and contrite heart, or as *Saul* praying day and night for the spirit of God, Lord be merciful to me a sinner ! Lord who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? Lord what shall I do to be born again ? If these be the desires of thy soul, attend to the conclusion of this discourse. There you shall see, that however dangerous your case may be, it is not desperate ; and you shall be convinced, that there is balm in Gilead. You shall confess that faith in the blood of Christ can not only heal the wounds of a dying soul, but raise to life one that is spiritually dead.

THE CONCLUSION.

By what means a soul may be born again.

GOD takes the title of, SLOW TO ANGER ; ABUNDANT IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH. He swears by himself, that he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and live ; and the effects answer to those tender declarations. His mercy has found a way to raise fallen man, (if he will yield) and to place him again among his children, without wounding his justice. This way is astonishing, unthought of, incomprehensible. It surpasses infinitely the conjectures of angels, and the

desires of men. And it is so infallible, that all who have a due sense of their miserable fall in *Adam*; all those who feel that they can no more regenerate themselves than they can create a new heavens and a new earth, may come to God, and receive regeneration freely and by grace, and a right to the kingdom of heaven.

Reader, you have heard of this remedy a thousand times. But on the one hand, knowing neither your indigence nor your malady; and on the other, having your understanding darkened by your unbelief, you have neither, perhaps, considered nor apprehended as a christian the things which belong to your peace. May you receive them *now* as the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth!

Know then that the regeneration which we preach, is nothing else than the two great operations of the spirit of God upon a penitent soul. The first, called *justification*, or the remission of sins, is that gratuitous act of the divine mercy, by which God pardons the sinner, who believes in Jesus, all his past sins, and imputes his faith to him for righteousness. Because feeling that he has no righteousness, that he can do no work that is good in the sight of God, he submits to the righteousness of God. He receives with his heart, Jesus Christ as his Saviour, his gratuitous Saviour, his sole Saviour, and he knows that he has received him because God fills him with peace and joy in believing, and because he receives dominion over all his sins.

This dominion over sin, which the believer receives with the remission of his past sins, is the beginning or foundation of the second part of regeneration, called in the holy scripture, *sanctification*. For in the same moment that the sinner receives this faith, the faith which justifies; at the same moment that the spirit of God witnesses with his spirit that his

sins are pardoned, he receives the power to love much, as he feels that he has much forgiven. The love of God being thus shed abroad in his heart, causes an extraordinary revolution in all the powers of his soul, and makes him feel, though perhaps in a low degree, the effects of the new birth, described in the second part of this discourse.

We are far from concluding that the body of sin is destroyed by this circumcision of the heart, this first revelation of Christ in the soul of a sinner. No, the old man is only crucified with Christ; and although he cannot act as before, he lives still, and seeks occasion to disengage himself, and to exercise his tyranny with more rage than ever. *David* and *St. Peter* had painful experience of this; and hence we see that sanctification is not generally the work of a day, nor of a year. For although God can cut short his work in righteousness, as the penitent thief found it aforetime, and as many sinners called at the eleventh hour have found it ever since, it is nevertheless in general a progressive work, and of long duration. We therefore define sanctification to be that powerful work of the holy spirit upon the heart of a pardoned sinner, by which he receives power to go on from faith to faith; by which illuminated more and more to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and renewed day by day in the image of his Saviour, which he had lost in *Adam*, he feels himself internally changed from glory into glory, until he is filled with all the fullness of God: until he loves the Lord his God with all his heart and with all his soul, and with all his strength, and his neighbor as himself, even as Christ loved him. This is the highest point of the sanctification of a believer, and consequently his regeneration is complete.

Sanctification cannot therefore begin before justification; for seeing that the spirit of God sanctifies the heart of a sinner, that spirit must be received.

But he is not received but in the sinners being pardoned. For, according to scripture, the first operation of the spirit of adoption is to cry Abba, Father! in the heart of which he takes possession; to testify to the spirit of the believer that he is a child of God, and to give him the foretaste of his heavenly inheritance. Beside, reason convinces us, that God cannot communicate his nature, and the graces of his spirit, to a man whose sins he has not yet pardoned. A king is not bountiful to a rebellious subject before he restores him to his favor.

Thus our church* also declares in her thirteenth article, “that works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his spirit are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; yea, rather for that they are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin, however good they may appear to men.”

This being admitted, it is evident that for a sinner to know how he is to be regenerated, he is to consider how he may be justified and sanctified. Upon this the scripture is clear. *By grace ye are saved, says St. Paul, through faith, and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast, being created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.* As if the apostle had said, by the faith God has freely given you, you are saved from your sins; delivered from the punishment which they deserve, by justification, and from their dominion over you by sanctification. Hence you are regenerated and new creatures. Thus *St. Paul* declares that a living faith is the gate of salvation, and all the scripture declares it with him. He who believeth shall be saved, says Jesus Christ; he who believeth hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto

* *The church of England.*

life. And *St. John* shews us that this passing from death unto life, and regeneration is the same thing. He who believeth is born of God, says he, in his first epistle, and in his gospel he declares, that those who receive Christ, to them he gives power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name, who are born not of the will of man but of God.

Our church declares the same thing. In her homilies she teaches, that the only instrument necessary to salvation is faith, which is there defined, “ a sure and firm confidence, that, through the merits of Christ, our sins are forgiven, and we reconciled to God.”

Observe here, reader, with respect to faith, none can enjoy it but those who have felt their need of it. Jesus Christ never gives this sweet assurance, this testimony of his spirit, but to those whose hearts are really contrite. *Come to me*, says he, *all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* He invites no others, he comforts no others. Before the spirit of God convinces the world of righteousness, he convinces of sin, because they believe not in Jesus. None can come to the son for justifying faith, unless the father draw him by a sense of his sins, and by the fear of that punishment which he merits.

If these truths have dissipated your doubts. If you no longer halt between God and *Baal*. If you are convinced that you can never see the kingdom of God, without being born again, and that the sole means of obtaining this blessing, is by a faith of the operation of God, and which is the power of God unto salvation ; a faith by which Christ is revealed in us, and we obtain peace with God. A faith which is *the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.* Which points, like *John the Baptist*, to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the

world, and who freely and graciously gives this faith to those who earnestly seek it. Come then, dear reader, come to the throne of grace ; but come condemned by your conscience, burdened by the weight of your iniquities, and pierced with a sense of your unbelief, and hardness of heart. Implore the mercy of your judge until he shews himself your father in giving you the spirit of adoption ; your Jesus in saving you from your sins ; your Christ in giving you the unction of the holy spirit ; your Emanuel in revealing himself in you, and dwelling in your heart by faith.

He invites you himself. *Ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters ! You who have no money, who are poor in spirit, who tremble at my word, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Come to me! Hearken! And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David, and your soul shall live. In the great day of the feast, Jesus cried, saying, if any man thirst let him come to me and drink. He who believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. And this, says St. John, spake he of the spirit which they who believe on him should receive ; for the spirit was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*

But Jesus is glorified ; he is ascended to his father, and to our father, to his God, and to our God ! And from the throne of his glory he sends every day into contrite hearts, the comforter, whom the world cannot receive, because it desires not to know him. But you afflicted soul, shall receive him, if indeed you pant after him, and refuse to be comforted until he comes. The time cometh, yea is now come, that you shall worship the father in spirit and

in truth; and filled with the spirit of truth you also shall cry out, I know in whom I have believed! Lord now let thy servant go in peace for mine eyes have seen thy salvation! Yes, you shall be baptised with the holy ghost for the remission of sins, and justified freely by faith. *You shall have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in God your Saviour with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Ask, and it shall be given you: seek and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give his holy spirit to them that ask him?* Doubt not the fidelity of God! Consider the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all who are afar off, whom the Lord your God shall call. The God of truth has made this glorious promise. Pray that it may be sealed upon your heart! But pray with all prayer, and supplication at all times! watching thereunto with all perseverance. - And remember, that when your prayer is granted you shall be in Christ a new creature. The spirit of God shall bear witness to your spirit that you are a child of God, and that your faith is really that which justifies and regenerates

Take heed in the mean time, that impatience and unbelief mingle not with the sense of the number and greatness of your sins, and so plunge you into discouraging and excessive sorrow. Are you tempted to doubt of the mercy of God? Re-animate your hope by meditating on the invitations of the God of all grace, and the promises of the God of truth. Is your soul spiritually sick, yea dying? Consider that Jesus has said, *the whole have no need of a physican, but those who are sick.* It is spiritually dead? Harken to God manifest in the flesh, *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live, and he who liveth and believeth*

in me shall never die? You feel that you are lost. Jesus says expressly, *I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* Do you doubt if he will receive you? He says himself he will not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. *He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.* Do you feel that it is impossible such a corrupt soul as yours should be regenerated? Jesus says to you, *believe, and you shall see the glory of God: all things are possible to him that believeth.* Do you say you have no power? Remember, power belongeth unto God. I will put my laws, says he, in your mind, and write them in your heart. I will be to you a God, and you shall be to me a people. Do you doubt if God can with justice pardon sins as great as yours? *Come, says he, let us reason together; though your sins were as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though red as crimson, yet shall they be as wool.* Yes, says St. John, *if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Immortal spirit, who readest these promises, why tarriest thou? Why do you not cry out with transport, the Lord is faithful to pardon my sins! He has promised and he will do it. I will then confess them to him day and night with tears: I will not give rest to my eyes, till they have seen the salvation of God. Consider! It is because the almighty is *just* that he will cleanse you from all sin. Yes, his son, his only son, has satisfied divine justice for you. The stroke aimed at you has fallen upon his innocent head. The heavenly victim stretched upon the cross, has been devoured by the fire of that eternal vengeance which flamed against you. The odour of this all perfect sacrifice has reconciled that God who is a consuming fire to the sinner. The blood of the new covenant has flowed: it has made a propitiation for your sins. This blood,

far from crying for vengeance like that of *Abel*, merits, demands, obtains for you, repentance, faith, regeneration, and eternal life. The Pascal lamb, the lamb without spot or blemish, is sacrificed for you. God withholds the arm of the destroying angel, until this precious blood shall be sprinkled upon your soul; until you are born again. The holy Jesus who fears lest you should perish in your impenitence, hastes to offer you life eternal. Behold, says he, *I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him and he with me.* He says to you, by the mouth of his apostle, that *he who hath the son hath life, and he who hath not the son of God hath not life. but the wrath of God abideth on him.* He exhorts you by his servant *David*, to kiss the son lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled but a little. Oh! Reader gratefully accept those kind invitations; prostrate yourself at the feet of the son of God, open the door of your heart to him, and cry incessantly, come in, Lord Jesus, come in! Confess your poverty, your sins, your misery, until the kingdom of God is within you. Mourn till you are comforted: hunger and thirst after righteousness till you are satisfied; and travail in birth till Christ is formed within you: till being born of God you bear the image of the heavenly *Adam*, as you have borne the image of the earthly.

I conjure you by the majesty of that God before whom angels rejoice with trembling! By the terror of the Lord, who may speak to you in thunder, and this instant require your soul of you! By the tender mercies, the bowels of compassion of your heavenly father, which are moved in your favour, all ungrateful as you are! I conjure you by the incarnation of the eternal world, by whom you were created: by the humiliation, the pains, the temptations, the tears, the bloody sweat, the agony, the cries of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ! I conjure you

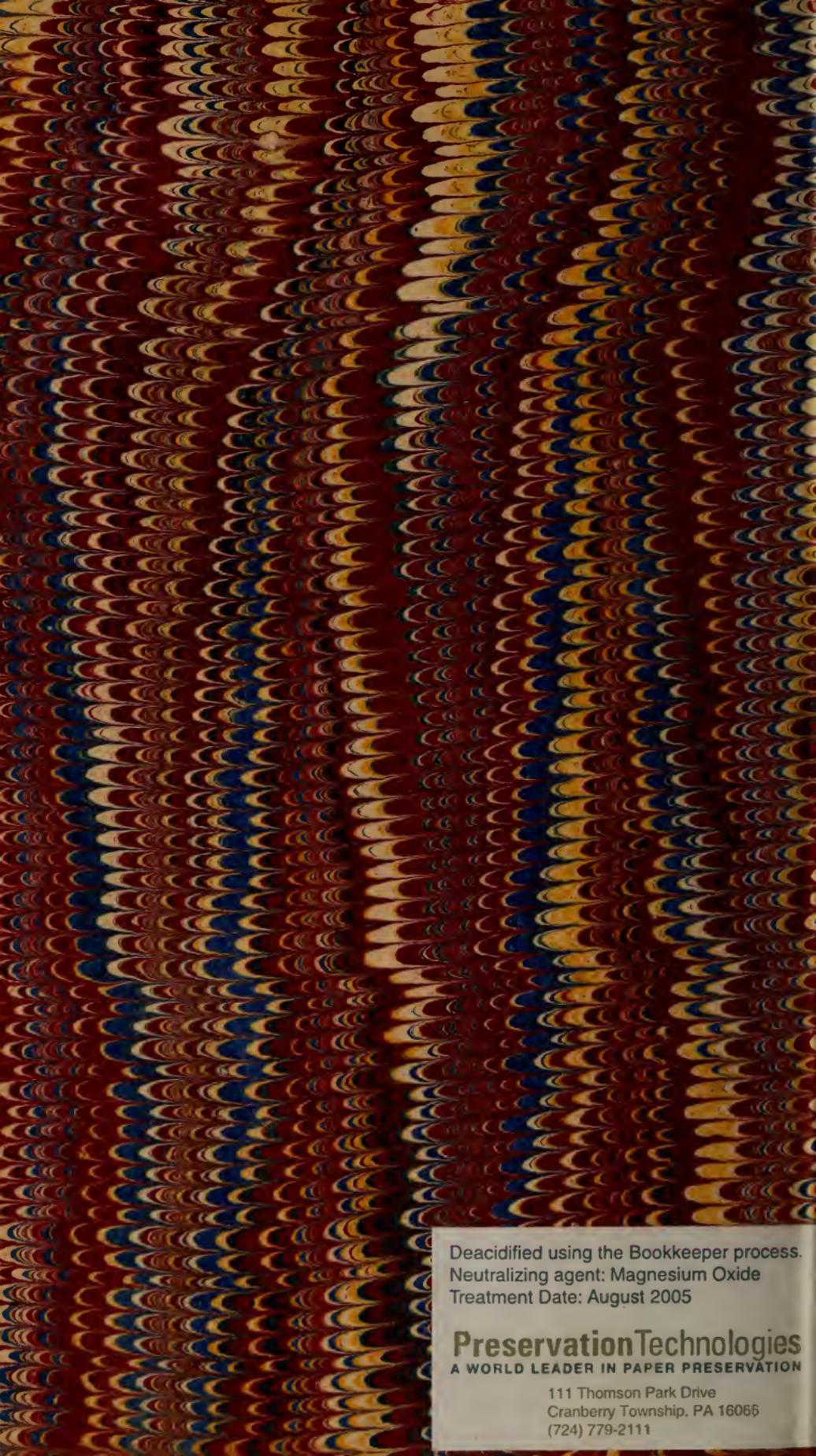
by the bonds, the insults, the scourgings, the robes of derision, the crown of thorns, the ponderous cross, the nails, the instruments of death which pierced his torn body! By the arrows of the Almighty, the poison of which drank up his spirit! By that mysterious stroke of wrath divine, and by those unknown terrors which forced him to cry out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! I conjure you by the interests of your immortal soul, and by the unseen accidents which may precipitate you into eternity! By the bed of death, upon which you will soon be stretched, and by the useless sighs which you will then pour out, if your peace be not made with God! I conjure you by the sword of divine justice, and by the sceptre of grace! By the sound of the last trumpet, and by the sudden appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, with ten thousand of his holy angels! By that august tribunal, at which you will appear with me, and which shall decide our lot forever! By the vain despair of hardened sinners, and by the unknown transport of regenerate souls! I conjure you from this instant work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Enter by the door into the sheepfold: sell all to purchase the pearl of great price: count all things dung and dross in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ! Let him not go till he blesses you with that faith which justifies, and that sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord! And soon transported from this vale of tears, into the mansion of the just made perfect, you shall cast your crown of immortal glory at the feet of him that sitteth upon the throne, and before the lamb who has redeemed us by his blood: to whom be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the power for ever and ever! Amen.

FINIS.

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