

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE III.

REGENERATION.

BY THE REV. JOHN M. WILLIAMS, CHICAGO, ILL.

THERE are few important truths more generally accepted than the divine declaration, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The sceptic, the atheist, men of every shade of opinion, admit that Adam's race, individually and collectively, need radical transformation to meet even their lowest ideal of perfect society. This truth permeates the sacred volume. "It is," says Professor Phelps, "one of the constructive ideas of inspiration. It is pervasive, like the life-blood in the body. It is like caloric in the globe. If a tortuous exegesis shall evade it in one text, it is inevitable in the next. Wrench it from any text, where the theologians have found it, and its echo reverberates from one end of the Bible to the other.¹ It is also a basal doctrine in theological science. Its true nature is decisive of the controversy between the two great schools of theology, and determines the logical mode of presenting the claims of God and the truths of the gospel.

I propose, in this paper, to enquire, What is regeneration, or what change in the human soul is designated by the word?

There are but two theories worthy our attention.² One—the Calvinistic—is presented by E. H. McIntosh thus: "Let us see clearly what regeneration is. It is a new birth; the implanting of a new life; the implantation of a new nature;

¹ The New Birth, p. 22.

² Baptismal regeneration is virtually the Calvinistic theory, differing only as to the occasion, or conditions, on which the Holy Spirit effects the change.

the formation of a new man. The old nature remains in all its distinctness, and the new nature remains in all its distinctness. Regeneration is to the soul what the birth of Isaac was to the household of Abraham. Ishmael remained the same Ishmael, but Isaac was introduced."³

As to the author of this new nature, the writer is equally explicit: "Regeneration is God's own work from first to last. God is the operator, man is the privileged subject. Man's coöperation is not sought in a work which must ever bear the impress of one Almighty hand. God was alone in creation, alone in redemption, and he must be alone in the mysterious glorious work of regeneration."

This definition, which probably strikes no one as satisfactory, has the sanction of many great names. It is substantially the one given by President Dwight; though, clothed in his elegant diction, we hardly recognize it. "A change of heart," he says, "is a relish for spiritual objects communicated to it by the power of the Holy Ghost." Of the "metaphysical nature" of this relish, he acknowledges himself ignorant, but illustrates his views thus:—

When God created Adam, there was a period after he began to be, antecedent to that in which he exercised his first volition. Every man will acknowledge that, in this state, he was propense to the exercise of virtuous volitions rather than sinful ones. This state of mind has commonly been styled disposition, temper, inclination, heart, etc. In the Scriptures it usually bears the last of these names. I shall take the liberty to call it *disposition*. This disposition in Adam was the cause whence his virtuous volitions proceeded—the reason why they were virtuous, and not sinful. . . . In regeneration the same thing is done by the Spirit of God for the soul which was done for Adam, by the same Divine Agent, at his creation. The soul of Adam was created with a relish for spiritual objects. The soul of every man who becomes a Christian is renewed by the communication of the same relish. In Adam this disposition preceded virtuous volitions. In every child of Adam who becomes a subject of virtue, it produces the same effects The communication of this relish is as truly followed by virtuous willing and doing as the creative act would be which should immediately give existence to our volitions and conduct.⁴

His views of the continuance of the old nature after the implantation of the new correspond with those of McIntosh. "After regeneration," he says, "the native character of the

³ McIntosh on Regeneration, p. 13.

⁴ Dwight, Theology, Vol. II, p. 418.

man still remains ; his relish for sinful pursuits and enjoyments still continues ; and his relish for spiritual pursuits is never perfected on this side the grave : . . . the regenerate man is really virtuous and really sinful, his true, entire character being a mixture of both good and evil."⁵

President Dwight has given us, in this quotation, a clear and able statement of the Calvinistic theory of regeneration—one in which, I think, all representative Calvinistic writers substantially concur. "In regeneration," says Dr. Bellamy, "there is a new, divine, holy taste begotten in the heart, by the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit."⁶ "Regeneration," says Dr. Charles Hodge, "is the influence of the Spirit of God, producing such a relish for the Divine Character that the soul spontaneously and immediately embraces God as its portion." "That regeneration consists in the production of a holy habit, a principle, in the soul, disposing it to, and fitting it to, holy acts," he declares to be "the Calvinistic doctrine of regeneration."⁷ Professor Hyde⁸ says: "Regeneration is the act of God's Spirit by which he produces the beginning of a holy life in a depraved soul ; . . . implanting a disposition to holiness in those whom he calls, and justifies as his children. He produces it by an inward, creative operation. The change is not self-wrought, or man-wrought." This is substantially the view of Calvin, Edwards, the Westminster divines, etc.

The theory is plain: Adam was created with a holy disposition, or nature, from which holy exercises spontaneously and necessarily flowed. In the fall, this holy nature was displaced, and a wicked one, from which only wicked exercises could proceed, was substituted, and has been transmitted to all his posterity "by ordinary generation." Regeneration is the partial re-instatement of this holy relish, by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit ; but, on account of the coöccu-

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 802.

⁷ Article on Regeneration, *Princeton Review*, 1830.

⁸ New Catechism, Ques. 36.

pancy of the soul by a wicked nature, the effluent products are a mixture of holiness and sin.

The theory is plain. Still it seems to me, a principle of such transcendent importance as this relish, whether sinful or holy, deserves a distincter and severer definition. It is not, I understand, the seat of moral character simply—the fountain and source of all holy and wicked conduct, but moral character itself, sin and holiness in their essence. “From this corruption of our nature,” asserts the Westminster Confession, “proceed all actual transgressions.” It also asserts that “this corruption of our nature, with all the motions thereof, is truly and properly sin.”

I regret that the advocates of this view have not more clearly defined a principle, occupying so prominent a place in their system. What is its metaphysical nature? Is it an entity? a quality? or a mere exercise or state? To what department of the mind does it belong? Not to the intellect, certainly. It cannot be a cognition or thought. Nor is it an exercise of the will. “Adam was created,” affirmed Dr. Hodge, “with a holy disposition which existed *prior* to his first holy act;” and this, he asserts, “is the fixed belief among Calvinists.” We must therefore relegate it to the sensibility, and here is just where the uniform language of Calvinistic writers compels us to locate it. They represent it as “taste,” “relish,” “holy desire,” “pleasure in, and appetite for, spiritual things,” evidently classifying it with the propensities, desires, feelings, or appetites of our nature.

We readily concede, as Dr. Hodge has so ably shown, there is nothing abhorrent to reason in the theory that Adam was created with such relishes. Men are now born with propensities, tastes, and natural appetites. Nor is there anything unreasonable in the theory that these relishes were lost in the fall, and that a disrelish for holy pursuits took their place. And certainly there is nothing incongruous with things, in the idea that this relish is restored in regeneration. It doubtless is, sooner or later, and grows with Christian growth.

1. We can easily conceive of such relishes and disrelishes,

but the problem is to get the *moral element* into them. The difficulty is like that the materialist finds in getting the not more mysterious principle of life into inert protoplasm. How can a being be good or ill deserving, praise or blame worthy, where he has no voluntary agency? President Edwards keenly felt this difficulty. "The grand objection," he says, "against this doctrine is this, that it is utterly inconsistent with the nature of virtue, that it should be concreated with any person; because, if so, it must be an act of absolute power, without our knowledge or concurrence, and that virtue, in its very nature, implieth a choice, or consent, of a moral agent, without which, it cannot be virtue or holiness; that a necessary holiness is no holiness."⁸ We do not wonder he was stumbled with this difficulty, for it is simply fatal to his theory. Whatever else may be true, it cannot be that a moral being merits reward or deserves punishment for that with which he was created. From an idea so monstrously absurd, every human instinct revolts. Nothing could consign a man to ignominy more abysmal than that of starving or punishing a child for an enfeebled constitution inherited from an enfeebled mother, for nothing could be more unjust and cruel; and none would more loudly execrate the deed than the men who hold that that very child, for the corrupt nature inherited from Adam, "is bound over to the wrath of God and the curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries,—spiritual, temporal, and eternal."

It will interest us to enquire how a difficulty so formidable is surmounted by the advocates of this theory. President Edwards does not, I think, attempt to remove it, but adopts the system in spite of it. Deeming it the less absurd of two absurdities, he accepts it, as he would nauseous medicine, rather than do worse. He rejects the theory of the self-determining power of the will, as involving the absurdity of an event without a cause, or of an event self-caused. The will, in his view, is moved from without. Motives produce and determine the character of choices, as the blow produces

⁸ Edwards' Works, Vol. ii. p. 382.

the vibrations of the bell. A holy choice, therefore, can proceed only from a holy motive, and a sinful choice only from a sinful motive. Adam must have been holy, before he could perform a holy act; and sinful, before it was possible for him to sin. "It is the general notion," he says, "not that principles derive their goodness from actions, but actions from principles whence they proceed, so that the act of choosing that which is good is no farther virtuous than that it proceeds from a good principle, or virtuous state of mind. If the choice be first, before the good disposition of mind, what signifies that choice? There can be, according to our natural notions, no virtue in a choice which proceeds from no virtuous principle."⁹

But neither Calvin nor Dr. Hodge seems to see any difficulty here. "I deny," says the former, "that sin is the less criminal because it is necessary."¹⁰ "The desire for holiness," says the latter, "is holy, no matter how it rises in the mind. The common judgment of mankind is, that moral character belongs to the desire of moral objects. Its morality lies in its nature, independently of its origin. We think that a vast majority of men agree with President Edwards, in thinking such a disposition being natural, or from a kind of instinct implanted in the mind at its creation, is no objection to its being of a virtuous character. Does the maternal instinct cease to be amiable because it is natural? Does the disposition to kindness and gentleness lose its character by being innate? Are not the intuitive love of justice, abhorrence of cruelty, admiration for that which is noble, which God has implanted in our nature, objects of approbation? If our feelings and the general sense of mankind answer these questions in the affirmative, they as certainly will decide that the innate disposition to love God, existing in the mind of Adam at the moment of his creation, does not lose its moral character by

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 381. This is true of subordinate, but not of *ultimate*, choices. The latter are *per se* holy or sinful, and not to the slightest extent modified by the motives or state of mind, behind them.

¹⁰ *Institutes*, Vol. i. p. 381.

being innate. This common feeling and judgment of mankind, therefore, carry moral distinctions back of acts of choice, and must do so, unless we deny that virtue ever can commence, for there can be no virtue in a choice which proceeds from no virtuous principle."¹¹

This reasoning, which probably satisfies no one, assumes, as is readily seen, the non-self-determining power of the will—a dogma upon which hinges not only the Calvinistic theory of regeneration, but, as President Edwards admits, the whole Calvinistic system. His language is: "I stand ready to confess to the fore-mentioned divines, if they can maintain their peculiar notions of freedom, consisting in the self-determining power of the will as necessary to moral agency; and can thoroughly establish it, in opposition to the arguments lying against it,—then they have an impregnable fortress, to which they may resort, and remain invulnerable in all their controversies with the reformed divines, concerning original sin, the sovereignty of grace, election, redemption, efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, the nature of saving faith, and other principles of like kind."¹²

We shall certainly be slow in accepting a definition of regeneration which, according to its own advocates, involves the necessitarian theory of the will, makes holiness a thing to be created rather than commanded, and locates blame and praise worthiness where there is, and can be, no voluntary agency.

2. This definition is not only based upon an erroneous view of the nature of sin and holiness, but it degrades and utterly misinterprets the nature of man. It ignores his conscience and reason—his higher, awful spiritual being, and their imperious claims. It takes no account of the dread ideas of right, obligation, accountability, and the authority of the divine law. It conceives of man, not as a moral being, under fealty to his higher nature, but as a mere animal, to be con-

¹¹Article, Regeneration, *Princeton Review*, 1830.

¹² Edwards' Works, Vol. ii. p. 473.

trolled by instinct, appetency, and feeling. It makes the implantation of a taste the new birth, and subjection to its control, man's highest estate. Before this implantation, the subject is in bondage to a relish for carnal things; after it, he is in bondage to a relish for spiritual things. The change consists in a transfer of the soul's allegiance from one appetite to another; or in the subordination of the will to a new and stronger form of self-gratification. It makes holiness not the enthronement of conscience and the law of God, but of the sensibility, or, what the apostle terms, "the flesh;" and commits the soul to the leadership of a blind impulse. Is not this the direct antithesis of the regeneration which introduces the subject into the kingdom of God?

3. This theory equally degrades the work of the Holy Spirit. It makes regeneration, not the victory of truth, and of the cross of Christ, but of physical omnipotence. According to it, the Divine Spirit converts the enemies of God into friends by a mechanical process. He secures the services and Te Deums of intelligent beings by machinery. It is *force*, not moral influences, which he employs in governing moral beings. It also makes the *work* of the Holy Spirit pitifully imperfect. According to it, a stunted implantation, waging a feeble and doubtful warfare upon the depravity of the heart, never securing an act or feeling untarnished by sin, and in no case gaining the complete mastery in this life, is the new birth, and makes the subject of it "a new creature." It is difficult not to feel that such a communication is unworthy both the author and the name of regeneration.

4. This theory is misleading in that it gives an erroneous idea of the nature and turpitude of sin. It makes it, not a wilful and criminal transgression of the divine law, but an inherited disease, for which the sinner is neither responsible nor guilty. According to it, he is a born and constitutional enemy of God, and, without fault of his own, is in possession of a wicked nature, "every motion of which is truly and properly sin." In other words, he is innocently and help-

lessly a sinner, and so, in spite of all human endeavor, he must remain, until regenerated by the sovereign power of God; and even after that, he is doomed to a burden of moral corruption, until death shall relieve him. With such views how can he have just conceptions of the enormity of sin, or of the justice of its punishment? Must he not regard himself as more unfortunate than criminal—more sinned against than sinning?

5. This theory is misleading in another respect. It encourages men to expect God to do for them the very thing he is working in them to will and do—the thing, which, in the nature of the case, no being save themselves can do. Multitudes, under this delusion, are praying and waiting, while the months and years are passing, for some undefined and miraculous intervention, and are gradually giving up in indifference or despair, and dying without hope.

Scarcely less deplorable are the habits of self-introspection, and the inward discouraging struggles, consequent upon putting the moral element into the sensibilities. This fruitless warfare against involuntary states and exercises, in themselves as destitute of moral character as physical diseases, is diverting and absorbing the activities of multitudes who otherwise would be co-workers with God, and is thus converting Christians into invalids, and churches into hospitals.

6. Again, if the implantation of a relish, or anything God can do, is *per se* regeneration, we have the right to ask—the question is unavoidable—*Why are not all regenerated?* Even to say, “It hath pleased God, for the glory of his sovereign power, to pass by some and ordain them to dishonor and wrath,” fails to silence, for the assertion is in terrible dissonance with the divine character, and with all divine teaching. If the Sacred Scriptures mean anything, it is that God “hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth”—that he is infinitely anxious “all should be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth.” To charge him with the loss of a soul, or with doing less to save it than infinite love and wisdom permit, is cruel in its injustice. We have the right

to ask, Why are not all regenerated? and the theory which utterly fails to afford an answer is itself an utter failure.

7. This theory cannot but impair the power of the pulpit. The great commission is, we admit, a sufficient justification of preaching the gospel to every creature, but the thoughtful preacher must often ask, what relation there is between the preached word and the regeneration of men. Apparently there is none. To human view, error is just as efficacious as truth, the Koran as the Bible, and neither has any more tendency to secure the change than to secure the thunder storm, or any other display of divine power. "Regeneration," says Dr. Hodge, "is a change in the production of which man in no way coöperates, any more than did the blind man in the recovery of his sight."¹⁸ "Man by the fall," the Westminster Confession assures us, "hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation." But faithful preaching, it will be said, stimulates the sinner to read the word, attend upon the means of grace, pray, and put himself in the way of regeneration; but the ambassador of Christ is met by the dreadful fact that "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit"—that the ploughing of the wicked is sin—that anything, everything, the sinner can do, prior to regeneration, coming as it does from an unrenewed heart, is necessarily sin. What, then, can he say? Evidently he must exhort the enquirer to do what he knows to be a sin against God, or he must be silent.

A still more formidable difficulty grows out of the apparent insincerity of offering pardon to those for whom there is no certainty it has been provided, or to those whom there is no certainty the Holy Spirit will ever regenerate. The preacher may take refuge under the great command. Still he must know he is encouraging hopes which, in many cases, can never be realized, and is dealing not quite fairly with impenitent men. The shrewd Calvin saw the difficulty, and endeavors to escape it by denying that the gospel implies such offers. He even denounces, as "*fanatics*," those who pretend

¹⁸ Theology, Vol. ii. p. 689.

that grace is offered promiscuously and freely to all.”¹⁴ An untrammelled pulpit needs a different definition of regeneration.

8. This theory assumes that this holy relish is communicated to the sinner, while in sin, and in defiant rebellion against God, and is the cause, rather than the result, of obedient choices. This seems intensely improbable. To our poor thought, the natural and politic order would be submission *first*, the gift and the blessing afterward. This is certainly the order presented in the parable of the prodigal son. The father's embrace and welcome, the best robe and the fatted calf, did not precede but followed repentance, and submission to the father's authority. Let us suppose the order reversed—that the drunkard in his sinful career becomes the subject of this divine communication,—what guarantee have we that he will not resist his better impulse, and continue his course of self-indulgence? nay, that he will not accept the experience as evidence of the divine approval, and of his own good estate, and become more hopelessly confirmed in his life of sin? I can see, if this theory be true, no incompatibility between a holy heart and a life of awful wickedness, nor any necessary connection, if man is free, between sin and a transgression of the divine law.

That regeneration is, in an important sense, the work of the Holy Spirit, is readily conceded. The point at issue relates not to the fact, but to the *mode*, of divine working. The Calvinistic idea, as we have seen, encounters insuperable difficulties. It finds support neither in human consciousness, nor in the word of God. The idea that right choices are necessarily conditioned upon holy relishes is repugnant to anyone's sense of freedom and manliness, and there is not in the sacred records so much as an intimation that any such mechanical operation as the theory contemplates, is needed, or in any case experienced. On the contrary, they everywhere assume that the sinner is already in possession of all the attributes requisite to immediate and perfect obedience, and is without excuse.

¹⁴ Institutes, Vol. i. p. 138.

More than this, they distinctly announce the *mode* of divine operation. "The sword of the Spirit *is the word of God*;" "Of his own will begot he us *by the word of truth*. Being born not of corruptible things, but of incorruptible, *through the word of God*;" and similar passages, settle the philosophy of regeneration, and make the fact incontestable. that it is by a *moral*, and not by a physical, influence the Spirit of God regenerates men.

Nor has the Calvinistic theory the slightest warrant in human experience. What soul ever found peace by waiting for a "disposition to holiness"? What Christian minister ever encouraged an enquirer to expect, or hope for, any such experience prior to submission to God? We hesitate not to say, that the author of the "New Catechism," all through his ministerial life, preached against his own theory—that he a thousand times assured the prodigal that his salvation depended upon his arising, and going, *as he is*, to his Father; and a thousand times warned him of the folly and peril of expecting "an inward creative operation," to precede such a surrender. No Calvinistic minister takes his creed into his enquiry-room. Atheism would not more directly antagonize his work.

Nor can any two things be more incompatible than this view of regeneration, and the strivings of the Holy Spirit with unrenewed men. Unless these mysterious influences have been misinterpreted by the whole Christian church, they are of the nature of yearning entreaty, "deep and strong beseechings," "voices from another clime," more mournful than a requiem, urging them to leave the ways of sin, and yield to God's control. What mean these solemn influences, following the sinner from childhood to age, disturbing his waking and sleeping hours? On whom rests the responsibility of his impenitence? In default of whose agency is he unsaved? Is divine or human action the one thing needful to restore him to the favor of God?

The communication of a "holy relish" is evidently not the vital, primary thing constituting regeneration. It is absurd

to suppose it, or anything communicated or done by another, can render the recipient meritorious. Such a communication, like a thousand other things, may serve as a motive to holy choices, yet it is questionable whether it would not, just as frequently, conduce to carnal security, or self-righteousness, and prove a bane rather than a blessing. No relish, appetency, desire, or impulse, communicated to the drunkard, constitutes *reform*, even, much less that change which makes a man a new creature. Regeneration is not a thing to be created or communicated. It belongs to another zone, and occupies an infinitely higher plane.

What, then, is regeneration? It is the change which makes a bad man a good man, an ill-deserving man meritorious, and worthy the approbation and complacency of God and other moral things. "To regenerate a man," says President Finney, "is to make him holy."

In what this change consists, a simple illustration will make plain: A drunkard goes to a temperance meeting, and returns a reformed man. He has experienced a marked, possibly a radical, change. In precisely what does it consist? Was it primarily of the intellect? Was it an accession of knowledge, an enlargement of thought, a change of opinion? No, there might have been a wondrous change in all these respects, without the semblance of reformation, or there might have been a wondrous reformation without the semblance of intellectual change. Was it primarily of his emotive nature? No, there might have been a total revolution of feeling, and no reformation of life, or there might have been a radical reformation of life, with no new or different feelings. Something has been reached in that drunkard's soul, deeper than thought or emotion. Was it a change in outward conduct? Not necessarily. He might have reeled to the meeting drunk, and reeled home again in the same condition, but a radically reformed man; or he might have returned sober, and remained sober the rest of life, without the slightest transformation of character. Thousands in our prisons, deprived of intoxicating drink, are as truly drunkards at

heart, as when habitually under its influence. In what then did his reformation consist? In the *purpose*, no one can doubt, there formed, to touch, taste, handle, the poison no more forever. That decision, if radical, was the pivotal point, that was the natal supreme moment, the new birth, the redemption, the emancipation, of a soul, and so he ever after regards it. It towers up from that moment, the highest mountain summit of his memory, around which his thought will linger forever. Compared with this, all other changes are fitful and uneventful. Then the *will* is the residence of the moral element, and a change of moral character is a change of the will.

Indeed, if there be one immovable landmark in the moral world—one truth which no one, outside lunatic asylums, *practically* questions, it is that moral character resides exclusively in the ultimate intention of the will. On this point there is no practical difference of view. We instinctively assume that conduct is right or wrong, according to the intention it involves and reflects, and it is not possible to do otherwise.¹⁵

Then, if moral character resides exclusively in the ultimate choice, and regeneration is a change of moral character, it is but a truism to say, it is a change in that choice. Regeneration is the abandonment of self-pleasing, and the acceptance of the interests of God's kingdom, as the end of pursuit. It is coming into harmony with reason and the divine law, by choosing what reason dictates, and devoting life to the end for which God lives, and toward which the universe trends.

And who regenerates a man? In other words, who changes his purpose? himself or another? Is it conceivable that the choice of another makes a man meritorious? Is it possible that conscience, God, or any moral being can approve, and deem good-deserving, one man for what another does? Honesty is manifestly the purpose of the subject to be honest, and nothing else. Holiness is one's own purpose

¹⁵ See article by the writer upon "Virtue from a Scientific Standpoint," *New Eng^dlander*, May, 1884.

to obey God, and cannot be that of another. Then who regenerates? We reverently ascribe the work to the Holy Spirit, because his mysterious influences secure its accomplishment, but the change is the sinner's own act, and, in the nature of things, cannot be that of another.

How, it is asked, can a holy choice proceed from an unholy heart? or a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? All difficulty on this point vanishes the moment we consider that the heart is the *free-will*—that a holy heart is the will in proper adjustment to the rational end of life; and an unholy heart is a will out of such adjustment. Only wrong choices, it is admitted, can proceed from a wicked heart, but the sinner is competent, at any moment, to make to himself a new heart, or come into harmony with the right end of life. By doing this he purifies the fountain-head, and makes all the streams pure.

It is asked whether a better definition would not include in regeneration, not only the change of the sinner's purpose, but the divine influence which secures it, adoption, pardon, and the consequent change in the subject's views, feelings, and outward life. Such a definition is certainly admissible, and largely accepted. The objections to it are: (1) It tends to divert attention from the primal fact, that a change of the governing purpose is, *per se*, the change of moral character, and is, on the part of the sinner, the essential and supremely important thing. (2) It makes regeneration a gradual work, incomplete in this life and in the life to come.

This view of regeneration accords, it seems to me, with the divine word. It does no violence to man's nature, and relieves the doctrine of difficulties with which many minds have long wrestled. It makes the great change, not organic, supernatural, ghostly, or mysterious, but simple, rational, comprehensible; brings it within the ability of every man; and makes it infinitely obligatory. It is not a change of the nature of the soul, nor of any of its faculties, but simply of its uses. Adam employed precisely the powers in disobeying he had previously employed in obeying God. In returning to allegiance, he

needed no new faculty. His regeneration was but the tragedy of Eden reversed. As the ship which has been prostituted to piracy on the high seas returns, without any change of structure, to its legitimate uses; so in regeneration the soul returns to the sphere and work for which it was made.

The change is a stupendous one, reaching the principle of man's nature, lying back of his thoughts, feelings, and conduct. It is more radical, revolutionary, and abiding than any other, and is probably never permanently reversed. It lifts the soul into another life, and gives it its own place in the great constellation of being, where it will keep time and tune forever. It's a change the sinner never effects, except under the guidance and pressure of an influence from above, mysterious as the wind blowing where it listeth. It is so great as to abundantly justify the strong expressions of the sacred word to illustrate and describe it.

At the same time, it is so reasonable, so obligatory, in such accord with what we should expect from rational men, we are prepared to find it treated in the Bible as a very simple thing. We are not surprised to hear it used interchangeably with repentance, believing, reconciliation, and returning to God; or to find such passages as these: "Many more believed on him." "They that received his word were baptized." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." These, and scores of other texts, seem to me incongruous with the idea that the change is supernatural, mysterious, and very inexplicable. It certainly involves no miracle, no infraction of natural law. It is but yielding to the voice of reason, the pressure of the Holy Spirit, and to the great trend of things. The time is coming when it will appear as simple and natural a thing for the child to bow in submission to divine, as in submission to parental, authority.

This view of regeneration makes sin unnecessary and inexcusable, and every moment of impenitency a crime. It justifies God in being angry with the wicked, and relieves the universal offer of pardon of all seeming insincerity. It

availed themselves of it, as a weapon against the faith once delivered to the saints. Could "Edwards on the Will," that marvellous monument of analytical reasoning, be popularized and brought within the easy comprehension of the ordinary reader, we should greatly dread its influence. It is the cornerstone of a profoundly logical, self-consistent, far-reaching system of fatalism—one which has been accepted, defended, and elaborated by some of the profoundest thinkers of the world. Augustine, Calvin, Edwards, and scores of others, whose memories we cherish as holy things, have been its advocates. It rules freedom and free-agency out of the universe. It makes obligation and guilt, duty and accountability, words without meaning. It subjects all thought and motion to the stern law of cause and effect, and reduces creation, physical and moral, to a vast and complicated machine, controlled by a single will.

This is the theology of Calvinistic creeds, of Calvinistic theological lecture-rooms, of mouldy theological volumes, and of occasional doctrinal sermons, but not, thank God, of the great Calvinistic heart, and a vast majority of nominally Calvinistic pulpits. The Calvinistic heart, fired by the love of Christ, is stronger than Calvinistic logic. In spite of theories and creeds, ordination vows and heresy hunters, it draws the claims of God fresh from the divine oracles. The ability and duty of men everywhere to repent, and to do it now, the freedom, and boundlessness of the great salvation, are pressed from these pulpits upon men, with a power and unction, nowhere, in this world, excelled. Whatever we may think of their consistency, their work and the grandeur of their success call forth our admiration and devout thanksgivings.