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REGENERATION

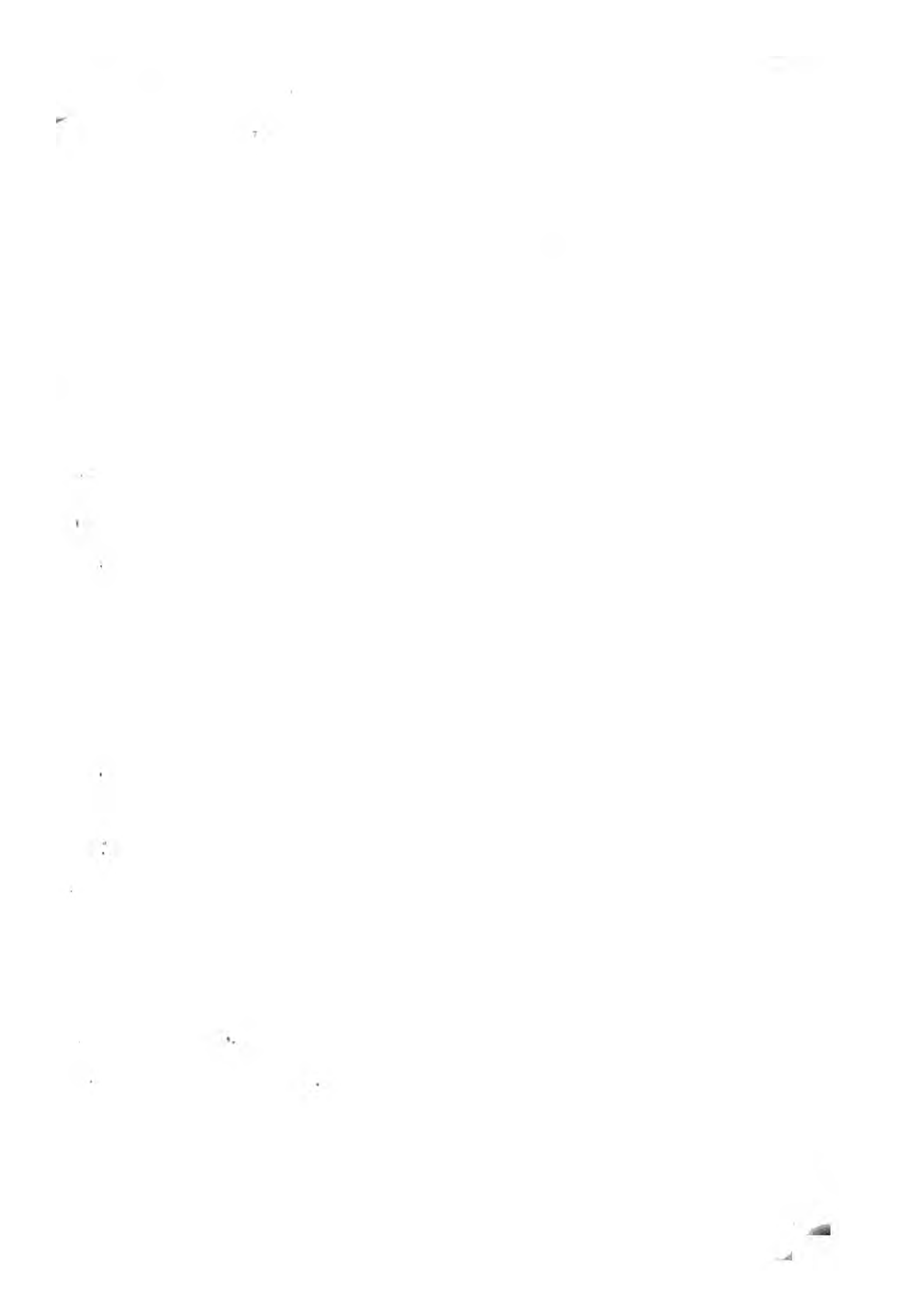
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REV. W. VINCENT.

46.

1633.







BAPTISMAL AND SPIRITUAL  
REGENERATION

CONSIDERED,

IN

THREE SERMONS,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM VINCENT, B.A.,

VICAR OF STEVENTON, BERKS.

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“The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”—1 PETER III. 20, 21.

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## PREFACE.

THE author of these sermons found, upon entering on his present parish, that the sacrament of baptism was generally considered, as a mere form of giving children a name, without any respect to the spiritual benefits connected with it in the word of God. Having commenced from the first, the practice of baptizing publicly, after the second lesson, on the last Sunday of each month, he also made a point for some time of always preaching on that day upon the subject of baptism. The following sermons, among many others, were preached on those occasions. He has reason to hope that they have not been without the designed effect of producing more correct and scriptural views of this sacrament. He hopes they will be found on a level with the understanding of the poorest of his brethren ; and he earnestly prays, that the blessing of that Holy Spirit, of whose work the sermons speak, may make them useful to all who read them.



To any who may doubt, whether the views of baptism, here set forth, are in accordance with the formularies of our dear Church, the writer without entering on controversy would suggest his own view (in which he believes the great body of the thoughtful and enlightened members of the Church will agree), that the Church of England regards baptism, as in every case the door of admission into the visible Church on earth ; but that, while she pronounces on the actual and spiritual regeneration of all baptized persons, whether adults or children, she does this in the spirit of faith, hope, and charity, and regards them all as spiritually regenerate, unless, and until their lives prove the contrary.

The reader will see at once that the sermons are only suited for plain persons, not for critics and divines. He commends them, with all their faults and imperfections, to the blessing of the Great Head of the Church, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, Christ Jesus.

*Steventon, May 18, 1846.*

## SERMON I.

ST. JOHN III. 5.

*“ Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

THESE words occur in that interesting conversation, which took place by night between our blessed Saviour and the Jewish ruler Nicodemus.

Nicodemus had come to Christ, professing a conviction of his being “a teacher come from God,” and seeking further instruction, as to the things which he taught. Our blessed Lord met these professions by unfolding to him one of the great mysteries of the Gospel, the necessity of the new birth, of being born again, or from above. This is declared in the third verse, “ 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.’ ” Nicodemus, like all natural men, was both ignorant of this mighty change himself, and utterly

unable to comprehend its nature and necessity. His answer to our Lord declares this most significantly. "Nicodemus saith unto him, 'How can a man be born, when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?'"<sup>(a)</sup> He knew little or nothing of the holiness of God, of his own corruption and sinfulness, or of that mighty power, whereby the Lord createth men anew for his service and kingdom. He cannot therefore at all comprehend what our Saviour told him, as to the necessity of regeneration. Brethren, let not us despise or look down upon him. We are all by nature, like this Jewish ruler, ignorant of spiritual things, and ready to cry out with him, "How can these things be."

The Twenty-eighth Homily of our Church, the Homily for Whitsunday, thus remarks on this conversation. "Where the Holy Ghost worketh, there nothing is impossible: as may appear by the inward regeneration and sanctification of mankind. When Christ said to Nicodemus, 'Unless a man be born anew of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,' he was greatly amazed in his mind, and began to reason with Christ, demanding how a man

(a) 1 John iii. 4.

might be born which was old. 'Can he enter,' saith he, 'into his mother's womb again, and so be born anew?' Behold a lively pattern of a fleshly and carnal man! He had little or no intelligence of the Holy Ghost: and therefore he goeth bluntly to work, and asketh how this thing were possible to be true: whereas otherwise if he had known the great power of the Holy Ghost in this behalf, that it is he which inwardly worketh the regeneration or new birth of mankind, he would never have marvelled at Christ's words, but would rather take occasion thereby to praise and glorify God."

Observe how in this passage our Church classes all natural men with Nicodemus, as ignorant of spiritual things, and of God's mighty work of regeneration: and in truth we none of us know anything further on this subject, than as God himself teaches us. Mark, therefore, what the Lord here teaches Nicodemus. It was in answer to his astonished inquiry, as to how man could be born again, that Christ told him further in the words of our text, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This then is Christ's explanation of regeneration. To be regenerated or born anew

means *to be born of water and of the Spirit*: not to be born of the Spirit alone, as many explain away the words; nor to be born of water only, as many others assert: but to be born of water and of the Spirit.

Let me beseech all to mark the exact words, and to ponder well their meaning. Jesus, the only true God, Jesus, who cannot lie, assures us that except any one, young, old, or middle-aged, wise or ignorant, rich or poor, whether he be called Jew, Turk, Heathen, or Christian, "*Except he be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*"

Lord, humble us to receive and attend to thy words!

As it will not be possible to consider all the subjects that these words open to us in one discourse, I propose by God's help, to consider on this occasion the subject of spiritual regeneration; what it is to be born of the Spirit; and in the following discourse to consider the connexion between baptismal and spiritual regeneration; between being born of water, and being born of the Spirit.

Let us now consider shortly these three things: 1, our need of spiritual regeneration; 2, in what this consists; 3, what are its effects.



1. Consider our need of spiritual regeneration. This arises from the corruption of our nature. We are “born in sin and children of wrath.”(b) “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.”(c) “That which is born of the flesh is flesh:”(d) carnal, selfish, earthly, sensual, averse from God, is the heart and mind of every one who is born into the world. How strikingly does St. Paul declare this truth to the Romans, “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit: for to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”(e)

This is a plain passage. By *the flesh* is to be understood, not the body, but the corruption of our nature: and to be *in the flesh*, or to be *carnally minded*, is to be under the dominion of our corrupt nature; concerning which God declares here, “To be carnally minded is death.” “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” This

(b) Catechism.

(d) John iii. 5.

(c) Jeremiah xvii. 9.

(e) Rom. viii. 5—8.

is what our Church calls "original sin," even "the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil; so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit, and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." (f) How necessary must regeneration be to those who are thus corrupt, ungodly, and evil. Man is earthly, inclined to sin, and averse to God; and before he can enter heaven, he must become heavenly-minded, a hater of sin, and a lover of God, and of divine things. Regeneration then is absolutely necessary for him, that he may not die eternally. And this especially when we consider further, that fallen men have no power to get the better of their corruptions, and to attain that new and heavenly life, which prepares them for the kingdom of heaven. To repent of sin, to believe the humbling doctrines of the Gospel, and to lift up the heart in prayer to the eternal and all-holy God, is what no man will do, without God's special grace disposing, and inclining, and enabling him. "No man can come to me," Christ

(f) Article ix.

declares, "except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." (*g*) And St. Paul assures us, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (*h*) So our Church reminds us, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will and working with us, when we have that good will." (*i*) Here again we see man's absolute need of spiritual regeneration. He is corrupt, fallen, and evil, and he can by no means turn to God for mercy. All his own powers cannot work faith in the Gospel promises in his heart: and, though the door of salvation and eternal life has been thrown open to him by the life, and death, and resurrection of Jesus, yet he has no disposition, and because no disposition, he has no power to enter in. He needs divine help and teaching to enable him to draw near to God, to walk with him, and please him. In short he wants a new

(*g*) John vi. 44.    (*h*) 1 Cor. ii. 14.    (*i*) Article x.



nature, a new principle of life, which the Spirit of God alone can give. He wants spiritual regeneration.

2. Let us proceed to consider what regeneration is, and in what it consists. The word occurs only twice in the Scriptures: once in Matthew xix. 28; where Christ promises his apostles that they shall reign over the twelve tribes of Israel, or the Jewish nation, "in the regeneration," that is to say, in the renewed earth, restored as it shall be to its original beauty and glory in the millennial kingdom of Jesus: and once again in St. Paul's Epistle to Titus, iii. 5, where it is spoken of as the instrument, whereby God our Saviour washes and saves his people's souls. It is called there, "The washing of regeneration," on account of its connexion with the water of baptism; which connexion we shall consider in the next discourse. The exact meaning of the word "regeneration," is the being born again; and this meaning will apply to both of these passages. For the earth will be as it were born again in that day, when the Lord shall create "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness:"(k) by which is probably meant its restoration to that state of

(k) 2 Peter iii. 13.

perfect blessedness, in which it existed, before our first parents' sin drew upon it the curse of God: and sinners are, as it were, born again, when God quickens and sanctifies their souls "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." (*l*)

This latter is the general meaning of the word "regeneration." It is the soul being born again. In the day that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they died; (*m*) not bodily, but spiritually. Their soul became dead to God. They had received into it the accursed venom of sin, a principle of enmity to God, and most hateful to God. They no longer rejoiced in communion with him, or sought his presence and favour, as before they had done; but they fled from him, and hid themselves from the sound of his voice. (*n*) The spirit of Satan, God's great enemy, took possession of their souls, instead of the Spirit of God. (*o*) They turned away from God to seek their happiness in the world; they began to walk in their own ways instead of God's ways; and so they became, in the impressive language of Scripture, "Dead in trespasses and sins." (*p*) This is now the natural state of

(*l*) Titus iii. 5. (*m*) Genesis ii. 17. (*n*) Genesis iii. 8.

(*o*) Ephesians ii. 2.

(*p*) Ephesians ii. 1.

all mankind: and regeneration then takes place, when the Holy Spirit enters into the soul of any of these fallen creatures in the way of mercy for Christ's sake. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." (*q*) He comes in the way of sovereign grace to the souls of God's people, secretly and invisibly, but manifesting his presence by new desires and godly fruits in due season. In this chapter, in which our text occurs, Jesus likens the Spirit, and his work, to the wind. "The wind bloweth, where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is *every one that is born of the Spirit.*" (*r*) By this a person becomes partaker of a new and spiritual nature, just as properly and really, as at his natural birth he became partaker of an earthly and carnal nature: as we read here, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." He is born of God, born again, born from above, born for eternity, born of that incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. How great is the dignity and blessedness of such persons! They are made "partakers of the divine nature." (*s*) Hear what St. Paul says to such; "Ye are the temple of

(*q*) John vi. 63.    (*r*) John iii. 7.    (*s*) 2 Peter i. 4.

the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”(t) And, again, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.”(u) And again, “What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?”(v) They are indeed living stones builded together in Christ, “for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”(w) “The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them.”(x) He is the Spirit of God the Father; and so they are said to have received that “Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father;”(y) and whereby they become the children and heirs of God: and he is also the Spirit of God the Son, even the Spirit of Christ; and so “Christ” is said to “live in them;”(z) their members are called “the members of Christ;”(a) yea, they are said to be “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”(b) I need not enlarge on this subject. I trust it has been abundantly shewn, that spiritual regeneration is not a relative, but an absolute change; that it is the prin-

(t) 2 Cor. vi. 15.    (w) Eph. ii. 22.    (z) Gal. ii. 20.  
 (u) 1 Cor. iii. 16.    (x) 1 Pet. iv. 14.    (a) 1 Cor. vi. 15.  
 (v) 1 Cor. vi. 19.    (y) Rom. viii. 15.    (b) Eph. v. 30.



principle of a new and divine life, which cannot be hid; that it is the actual work of the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son; creating the soul anew, yea dwelling in it, and giving it a new and divine nature.

I proceed therefore, 3 and lastly, to consider what are the effects of regeneration, where it has taken place. I shall be very brief on this most interesting subject. I will mention but three of the effects of this divine change. First, I would observe that by spiritual regeneration the faculties and powers of the soul are all brought under a new principle, and have a new bent and direction given to them. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:"(c) he is "created in Christ Jesus unto good works:"(d) he is clothed upon with "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."(e) It is not, properly speaking, a new faculty imparted to the soul, but the old faculties are brought under a new guidance and impulse. Whereas before they turned away from God, now they turn towards him. Whereas before they were carnal, selfish, earthly, and bent on self-will and self-indulgence; now they are turned towards spiritual things, they become concerned about God's

(c) 2 Cor. v. 17. (d) Eph. ii. 10. (e) Eph. iv. 24.

glory, and the welfare of others, especially the welfare of their souls; and above all they aim at holiness, purity, self-denial, and entire submission to the will of God: in our Lord's expressive words, they "hunger and thirst after righteousness." (*f*) Even so the Scriptures tell us, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (*g*) And again, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (*h*)

These are the chief effects of regeneration; this is the grand mark of those who are born of God. They love God and keep his commandments. They wish to live for his honour and glory. The spiritual and divine seed, whereby they were regenerated, remaineth in them; so that they walk in the Spirit, they overcome the world, and live above it: they do not commit sin, as other men do, carelessly, and habitually; but even when they fall into sin, yea, even into the most grievous sins, they do not sin like natural

(*f*) Matt. v. 6. (*g*) 1 John iii. 9, 10. (*h*) 1 John v. 4.

men. Shame, sorrow, and remorse, and increased watchfulness and zeal, commonly follow their sins; and they cry for mercy, and turn to their God again. Their great feeling is, "It is good for me to hold me fast by God." (*i*)

A second mark of spiritual regeneration is the clear perception it gives men of divine things, and especially of the truths of the Gospel. "The eyes of their understanding are enlightened." (*k*) They are "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created them." (*l*) "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," St. John says, "and ye know all things." (*m*) And again, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." (*n*) And again, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." (*o*) Hence it is written, "Who-soever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (*p*) He has that true living faith, "the faith of God's elect," which is of the operation of God, which is to his own soul "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not

(*i*) Ps. lxxiii. last ver. Prayer-book version. (*k*) Eph. i. 18.

(*l*) Col. iii. 10. (*m*) 1 John ii. 20. (*n*) 1 John v. 20.

(*o*) 1 John iv. 16.

(*p*) 1 John v. i.

seen.” (q) Yes, brethren, mark it well, all spiritual persons have a full, solid, and effectual persuasion of the truth of the Scriptures, and of “the record that God gave of his Son.” They no longer regard this as a doubtful or speculative matter; but they have an inward conviction of its truth and certainty. They “know, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” (r) They believe with unquestioning faith that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God;” (s) and that all God’s promises in him, concerning pardon, grace, and eternal life, “are yea and amen.” (t) They may at times doubt of their own special interest in these blessings; but as to the things themselves, they no more doubt of them, than they do of their own existence. “Flesh and blood hath not revealed these things to them, but their Father which is in heaven.” (u)

Thirdly, I will mention one more effect of spiritual regeneration. It softens and humbles the heart. The natural man is proud and selfish: but grace softens the heart, and makes it meek and gentle, lowly before God, and loving and affectionate towards men. Chris-

(q) Heb. xi. i. (r) 1 John iv. 14. (s) Matt. xvi. 16.

(t) 2 Cor. i. 20.

(u) Matt. xvi. 17.



tian tenderness of heart and conscience, and Christian lowliness and poorness of spirit, are the marks of divine grace most frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. This is that "*charity*" (*v*) so much extolled by St. Paul to the Corinthians; and so often mentioned by St. John under the name of "*love*." (*w*) It is this which makes men, like the Lamb of God, to go about doing good, to bless those who curse them, and when they are reviled to revile not again. It is from this effect of regeneration that God's people are compared to a little child, (*x*) or a dove, (*y*) or a turtle-dove, (*z*) or a lamb. (*a*) They are gentle and forgiving, slow to wrath, and swift to acts of liberality and kindness. By this beautiful disposition of soul the Holy Spirit makes them to resemble Jesus; that they may be blameless and harmless, and blessings to others in this life; and that they may be fitted to dwell by and by in that better country, where nothing fierce or proud or contentious, can ever enter. Such characters are often little valued in this world; but God owns them and dwells in them. "For thus saith the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and

(*v*) 1 Cor. xiii. (*w*) 1 John iv. 7—13. (*x*) Matt. xviii. 2—4.

(*y*) Cant. v. 2. (*z*) Ps: lxxiv. 19. (*a*) Luke x. 3.

holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”(b) Here I conclude. We have heard something of regeneration and its fruits. In my next discourse we will consider the connexion between regeneration and baptism. May God help us to apply this subject to ourselves! May God keep before our minds the solemn declaration of our text, that “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he “cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” “Verily, verily,” Jesus says, It is so.

(b) Isaiah lvii. 15.

## SERMON II.

ST. JOHN III. 5.

*“ Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

IN my last discourse upon these words, I set before you Christ's solemn declaration to Nicodemus, in the third verse of this chapter, that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

We saw too, that when Nicodemus marvelled at these words, our Lord explained further what he meant by being born again, in this fifth verse, declaring it to be, the being “born of water and of the Spirit.” We likewise considered then, more particularly, the subject of being “born of the Spirit ;” marking, first, our need of spiritual regeneration ; secondly, what it is ; and thirdly, some of its tokens and effects. We are now to consider the connexion between the water of baptism, and spiritual regeneration ; between being born of water, and of the Spirit. May

He who spoke these words, direct us, by His Spirit, into the truth.

We will, 1, consider the record of God's word on this subject. And, 2, the inferences and deductions which flow from these declarations.

1. Let us mark several passages of Scripture, in which the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is joined with the waters of baptism. Hear first the words of Jesus, in commissioning his apostles to minister his word and sacraments to all people. "Go ye," he said, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth *and is baptized*, shall be saved." (a) Here we have belief, the work of the Spirit, the fruit of spiritual regeneration, joined with baptism : and salvation is assigned to them, not separately, but united. "He that *believeth and is baptized*, shall be saved."

In accordance with this commission, and these directions, the apostles exercised their ministry. On the day of Pentecost, Simon Peter preached the cross and resurrection of Christ to the Jews for the first time : and when they were pricked in their hearts, and inquired of "Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what

(a) Mark xvi. 15, 16.

shall we do?’ Then Peter said unto them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.’ And with many other words did he testify, and exhort, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this untoward generation.’ Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (b)

I suppose this short but interesting history to be a statement of what took place in every town or village, where God called in a people to believe the word of the Gospel. When any were awakened, and inquired what they should do to be saved, the apostles told them of the water and the Spirit, without which none could “enter into the kingdom of God.” They called them to repentance and faith, the work of the Spirit; and they required them to be baptized in the name of the blessed Trinity; or, as it is

(b) Acts ii. 37—42.



expressed here shortly, "in the name of the Lord Jesus," for the remission of sins. Take another instance of this in Philip's preaching Christ to the Samaritans. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto these things, which Philip spake; hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." "But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (c) Here again we have the *water* and the *Spirit*; the work of the Spirit, in the Samaritans giving heed to the word of life; and this accompanied by their baptism with water. The close of the same chapter gives us another instance of this. The same Philip is sent to meet the Ethiopian Eunuch, the treasurer of Queen Candace. He runs along side of his chariot, and finds him reading part of Isaiah liii.: and when he was taken up into the chariot, he "opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the Eunuch said, 'See, here is

(c) Acts viii. 5, 6, and 12.

water ; what doth hinder me to be baptized? (d) And Philip said, 'If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him."(e) Here again we have the water and the Spirit, brethren ; the Eunuch's faith, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," the work of the Spirit ; and then immediately he is baptized with water.

The same testimony is given us in the preaching of the Gospel to Cornelius, and the first Gentiles. (Acts x.) "While Peter spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." And what does Peter say upon this? Does he say, as many professing Christians would have said in our days, "Oh, if men have the Spirit, it does not matter if they are baptized?" No, brethren, Peter had respect to every

(d) Surely no unprejudiced mind can resist the conviction, that the necessity of baptism formed a part of Philip's elementary instruction in "preaching Jesus" to this Eunuch.

(e) Acts viii. 35—38.

part of the word of the Lord; and so, when he saw the work of the Spirit in these Gentiles, he said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." (*f*)

We will take one more instance, the jailor at Philippi. (Acts xvi.) When he cried out to Paul and Silas in the terrors of his soul, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." But they did not stop there: for they knew that, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And so the sacred history proceeds thus: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straightway." (*g*)

Here, again, brethren, the witness of Scripture is complete. We have the work of the Spirit in the jailor's believing, followed by his baptism with water, and all his house. Still we find the apostles acting in every case upon the belief of

(*f*) Acts x. 44—48.

(*g*) Acts xvi. 30—33.



that mysterious truth, declared in our text, that "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

I need not add anything to these testimonies of Scripture, as to the connexion established by Christ and his apostles, between being born of water and born of the Spirit. I proceed,

2. To note some inferences from this record of Scripture.

First, I would observe, that if it were necessary in the days of the apostles, for God's children to be born of water and of the Spirit, in order to enter into his kingdom, it is equally necessary now also. God is ever the same, and his word is ever the same. He is a God of fixed and unalterable principles. Circumstances vary; but principles established by God abide ever the same. Our circumstances here in England are much varied from those of the first members of the visible Church of Christ; but the principle of an outward sign of God's grace and love being given to those who are admitted into Christ's Church, remains unchanged. (*h*) In the early Church, a few individual Jews, or Heathens, were baptized, with their families, as God

(*h*) This may be applied further to infant dedication to God, as the principle of both the Old and New Testament.

brought them to faith, and the knowledge of Jesus. In our own land, at present, the larger portion of our population is baptized. The members of the Church, from the earliest ages, have dedicated their children to God, in the holy sacrament of baptism, down to our day. Acting in faith on God's declaration, that the Gospel promises are to them and their children, to believers and their seed after them ; (i) looking to the condescending love of Jesus, who of old, "took up little children in his arms, and blessed them ;" (k) and guided by the principle and practice of the Lord's people, under the older dispensation, (l) Christian parents have, in all ages, enjoyed the privilege and comfort of consecrating their children to Christ, in the waters of baptism, from their infancy. They bring their children to the washing of regeneration, in the name of the blessed Trinity, with the fervent prayer and hope, that God will accompany the outward washing with the inward grace, and renewing power of the Holy Ghost. This is well ; for it is all they can do for their sinful, helpless infants. It is well ; for it is their duty and privilege to do this. It is well, not only because God has,

(i) Genesis xvii. 7 ; Jer. xxxii. 39 ; Acts ii. 39.

(k) Mark x. 16.

(l) Gen. xvii. 10—14.

as I have shewn you, connected the water and the Spirit in many passages of Scripture ; but especially, because he has declared in our text, that “ Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

The second thing to which I would call your attention is, that if any wilfully refuse Christian baptism, and live and die without being born of water, it is a very strong evidence that those persons have never been born of the Spirit. God may make exceptions here ; but certainly man must not make them. Christian baptism is a sacrament ordained by Christ himself. (*m*) He it is who has joined together the water and the Spirit : and as we are sure that every one that is born of the Holy Spirit, the incorruptible seed of God, shall be saved ; (*n*) so Jesus assures us in the text, that none can enter into the kingdom of God, except they “ be born of *water and of the Spirit.*” The conclusion is obvious, that it is God’s rule, in the dispensations of his grace, that those who are born of the Spirit, shall be born of water also. There is nothing strange in this conclusion to the believer’s mind. He knows that the Spirit is the Lord’s, and the water is the Lord’s. He knows that baptism, and “ all

(*m*) Matt. xxviii. 19.

(*n*) 1 Peter i. 3—5.

other things, are for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." (o) God, who gives his people the Spirit, takes care that they have the water also. With Christ, and for Christ's sake, he freely gives them all things: (p) and we know how easily he, who orders all things, can provide, that they, who have the substance of baptism, the Spirit, shall also have the outward and visible part of it, the water, according to the appointment of Christ Jesus.

Thirdly, I would observe, that though God does not contradict his written word, yet there is a diversity in the operations of his grace, in respect to the baptismal blessings and privileges of his children. Sometimes *the Spirit is given first, and the water afterwards*; as to the first Christians, who were brought to faith in Christ first, and then baptized; and as now, when a Heathen, or Jew, or one bred up a Quaker, or a Baptist, or an Unitarian, are converted to God, by his word and Spirit, and submit themselves then to Christ's ordinance of baptism. Sometimes, again, *the water is given first, and the Spirit afterwards*; as is the case with numbers baptized in their infancy. They received the water then, and

(o) 2 Tim. ii. 10. (p) Rom. viii. 32; 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.



were outwardly joined to the Lord's Church. They grew up in the Lord's house, among the members of his body : but for a time there was no life in them : they were lifeless, sapless branches of the vine of God : they had a name to live, while they were "dead in trespasses and sins ;" until at length, in the Lord's time, his word and his Spirit came and quickened them ; and their heart was opened by his Almighty power, to feel that they were sinners, and they drew near to receive the Saviour, "that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith," (*r*) that they might know and love and serve him. Sometimes, also, *the Spirit and the water are both given together*, as is the case with such elect infants as die in their infancy. They are brought to Christian baptism by their parents ; and while the Lord's minister pours on them the water, the Lord himself pours forth his Spirit, and they become new creatures, live out their few months, or weeks, or days, and go away to glory.

The same takes place in many doubtless, who live and grow up from children in the love and fear of God. Their parents gave them to the Lord at the baptismal font ; and the spiritual seed, which they then received, "liveth and abideth "

(*r*) Eph. iii. 17.

in them ; yea, it worketh effectually in them, and they do not grow up like other children, lying, pilfering, mischievous, cruel, and envious ; but from their youth they fear the Lord, and they love to pray, and read the Scriptures ; and they fear sinning ; and when they do sin, they go and confess it to God, and their parents, with the sighing and shame of a contrite heart. Christian parents, have you any such children as these ? Happy are you ! they will be your crown, and joy, and comfort, if the Lord spare them, even to your grey and hoary hairs. Bless and thank God, who, by giving them his Spirit, has made them to differ (*s*) from others, and sealed them for himself. May He raise up many such among us, “to the praise of the glory of his grace,” (*t*) and that Christ may be “glorified in them !” (*u*).

Fourthly, and lastly, I would notice that most difficult point,—how it is that so many, who are brought to the waters of baptism, seem never to receive the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify them. I cannot explain this. God is a Sovereign God. “He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.” (*v*) He gives the Spirit to whom he

(*s*) 1 Cor. iv. 7.    (*t*) Eph. i. 6.    (*u*) John xvii. 10.

(*v*) Rom. ix. 18.

will give the Spirit. He has connected the water of baptism with the Spirit, but not necessarily or universally. He ordains means, but he does not bind himself to means, without respect to the way in which we use them. And, surely, the way in which too many bring their children to baptism, might account for the awful fact, that the spiritual part of this sacrament, the "death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness," (*w*) seem so often wanting in those who have received the outward part of it, the water. Many, we fear, come to the baptismal font, knowing and caring nothing about the duty of baptism, its privileges, objects, or obligations. Too often, instead of the joyful sight of believing parents, pleading at the font their own covenant interest in Christ, on behalf of their children, we see nothing there, but indifference, carelessness, and unconcern. The spiritual benefits of baptism are unthought of, and unsought for; and the appointment of Jesus, so far as in man lieth, is perverted and made void.

It is to name the child,—it is to satisfy the custom of the land in which they dwell, that too many parents and sponsors bring their children to baptism: it is that their children may bear

(*w*) Church Catechism.

the name of Christians in life, or that, in case of death, their bodies may be buried with the solemnities of a Christian funeral. Dearly beloved, these things ought not to be so. It was for far other purposes that Christ instituted the holy Sacrament of Baptism: it was because, as the text teaches us, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" it was to set before us the necessity of inward regeneration, to remind us that, "if Christ wash us not, we have no part in him;" (x) it was to seal and sign this regeneration to believers and their children, to join them to his Church by an outward token and badge of their profession, as called out from the ways of an evil world, to be Christ's soldiers and servants; for these reasons it was that Christ charged his disciples, "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" (y) and for these reasons, the true members of the Church (z) have dedicated their children to the Lord, in baptism, from the time of Christ's death, up to this present day.

Thus far I have set forth the objects of water baptism, and its privileges. Let me now, in

(x) John xiii. 8; Acts xxii. 16. (y) Matt. xxviii. 19.

(z) There may be exceptions to this rule.



conclusion, apply these truths more personally to those whom they especially concern. First, I would speak to all Christian parents. My dear brethren, I have not brought forward these subjects with the mere view of reproaching you for the past, or to recall errors, which cannot be now amended ; but they may, by God's mercy, lead you to godly shame and sorrow for the past, and act as a warning for the future. I would fain stir up your minds to a due sense of the importance and blessedness of Christian baptism ; that your faith in Christ's love in the institution of it may be awakened ; and that your consecration of your children to Christ at the baptismal font may be more solemn and serious, and accompanied by a more understanding, hopeful, believing, and thankful spirit. What a mercy it is for believers, to know that Jesus regards their offspring with peculiar favour ; and that, even if but one parent be a believer, and the other carnal and worldly, God still encourages that one to consecrate his children to him, as holy to the Lord ; " For the unbelieving husband," as St. Paul says, " is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband ; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." (a) Only remember, brethren, that

(a) 1 Cor. vii. 14.

though a joyful, it is also a solemn and difficult act to dedicate a child to Jesus ; it should be pre-eminently an act of faith, the act of a heart which knows God's promises in Christ, of which baptism is the seal, and firmly trusts in him to fulfil them. And do not think, when the child is baptized, that the matter is over, and so let it go out of your mind. Oh, no. Keep ever before you the baptism of your children ; remind them often of it ; bring them up as members of Christ's body. Look for the inward and spiritual grace of baptism in them ; and if you see no signs of it, pray constantly and fervently for them, that they may be born of the Spirit ; that their baptism may be saving and complete.

Secondly, I would say nearly the same things to all godfathers and godmothers. The Church looks to you as engaged to act the part of spiritual parents to the children, in case their parents should die, or prove neglectful of their duties to them. It was a kind and Christian act, to take on you this charge of looking after your neighbour's children. Oh, see that you fulfil it ; lest the guilt of the blood of the souls of these little ones rest on you, as well as on their fathers and mothers.

Dear brethren, we ought to love one another,

“not in word only, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth ; and shall assure our hearts before him.”(b) Your duties are very simple. Remind them that they are sinners ; tell them of Christ ; warn them against sin ; seek, if possible, to procure them a religious education ; and lastly, pray for them. See that you fulfil these duties. Do not fear being laughed at. If your warnings are rejected, you have delivered your own souls : and God will bless you in your work and labour of love ; for he will see it.

Lastly, our subject addresses itself to all baptized persons. It bids you thank God for your baptism, while it also calls on you to see that your baptism is perfect and effectual. Have you received the inward and spiritual grace of baptism ? This is, as the Catechism reminds us, “A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness.” Are you dead with Christ ; dying unto sin daily, and mortifying the flesh, the old man, with its affections and lusts ? And are you risen with Christ, (c) unto newness of life ? Are you “renewed in the spirit of your mind,”(d) in your affections, and principles ? Are you bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, as those

(b) 1 John iii. 18, 19.      (c) Col. ii. 12.

(d) Ephesians iv. 23.

who are born of God? Are you living for God? Are you living for the soul? Are you living for eternity? It is this inward and spiritual grace which makes our baptism saving and perfect. When St. Peter speaks of Noah and his house being saved by the waters of the flood, he says, "The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us; not," he adds, "the putting away of the filth of the flesh;" (*i. e.*, not the mere work of the water :) "but the answer of a good conscience towards God;" (*e*) (*i. e.*, the work of the Spirit in the renewed heart and life.) Have you each this answer of a good conscience towards God? Can you call him to witness, that you are neglecting no known duty; nor living in any known sin? Are you living by faith in Christ, and seeking to please, serve, and glorify him? Brethren, I pray you, "judge your own selves;" (*f*) that, if destitute of the Spirit of God, you may awake to your danger, ere it be too late; or, if you have reason to hope that you are new creatures, you may thank God, and walk more closely with him. May the Lord help us all to attend to our baptismal engagements, and pour out his Spirit upon us abundantly, for Jesu's sake. Amen.

(*e*) 1 Peter iii. 21.    (*f*) 1 Cor. xi. 31.

## SERMON III.

ST. JOHN III. 8.

*“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”*

THESE are our blessed Saviour's words. Having told Nicodemus that, “except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” he then drops the subject of the water, to set forth more distinctly what it is to be born of the Spirit. In this verse, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is compared to the wind. There is much mystery about the wind. We know not how it springs up, or whither it goeth, when it ceaseth to blow; but yet we see the effects of the wind, while it is blowing. We hear its roaring sound; we see its power moving the dust, and making the leaves rustle, and the surface of the water ripple and foam. So it is, Christ says, with “every one that is born of the Spirit.” The Spirit quick-



eneth whom he will, even as “the wind bloweth where it listeth,” not waiting our wishes, or obeying our command: but, as with the wind, “thou hearest the sound thereof,” that is, perceivest its effects, though thou “canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth;” so is it with the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost. Thou perceivest its effects and fruits, though there is such a mystery about it, that no one can tell exactly, when it begins to work and influence the soul, or when it ceases to strive with us, and draw us towards the things of God.

But especially, in looking at the words of the text, we should mark the universality of what Christ asserts here; so is *every one* that is born of “the Spirit.” Every human being, man, woman, or child, who is born of the Spirit, will manifest the fruits of his new birth, as surely as the effects of the wind are manifested, though there may be much mystery connected with it.

I would beseech every one to mark our Saviour’s argument here. In the third verse, he declares the necessity of being “born again:” in the fifth, he teaches what it is to be born again, even to be “born of water and the Spirit:” and here, lest all those born of water should conclude, without any scriptural evidence, that

they were born of the Spirit, he declares further, that, though the birth of the Spirit was a most mysterious subject, yet the fact of its having taken place in the soul, might be as certainly known, from its effects, as the fact of the wind blowing at any given time and place.

This conversation with Nicodemus was first recorded for the use of the Church, about sixty years after our Saviour's ascension into heaven : during which time, as many other false doctrines and heresies had crept into the Church, so, beyond doubt, had the opinion of universal regeneration in baptism ; an opinion most pleasing to carnal men, (*a*) as delivering them from the fear of many solemn declarations of the word of God : but which the holy Scriptures, as I conceive, declare to be false as plainly as any other doctrinal error. Our present text will bring the subject under two heads,

1. That there is a manifest distinction between all men in a carnal and unregenerate state, and those who are born of the Spirit of God.

(*a*) The Author would upon no account be thought to imply, that he considers all who hold the doctrine of universal regeneration in baptism, as carnal men. Many hold this opinion, in word at least, whose spiritual attainments and Christian character he estimates most highly.

2. The nature of those signs and evidences, by which this is manifested.

May God the Holy Spirit make his truth on these subjects plain and profitable to all our souls, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

1. Observe that there is a manifest distinction between those who are born of the Spirit, or, as it is commonly expressed, "born of God," and all others.

We read, two verses before our text, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit;" (*b*) upon which words, our Church has given us the following beautiful comment:—"As who should say, man of his own nature is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naught, sinful and disobedient to God, without any spark of goodness in him, without any virtuous or godly motions, only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds. As for the works of the Spirit, the fruits of faith, charitable and godly motions, if he have any at all in him, they proceed only of the Holy Ghost, who is the only worker of our sanctification, and maketh us new men in Christ Jesus." And then, after mentioning the effects of the Holy Spirit in various persons spoken of in the Scriptures,

(*b*) Verse 6.

the homily adds, "Such is the power of the Holy Ghost to regenerate men, and as it were to bring them forth anew, so that they shall be nothing like the men that they were before." (c)

But the real and manifest distinction which there is between those who are born of God, and all others, will best appear in considering the effects, which are declared to be wrought in the former, in *the enlightening of their understanding*, in *the sanctification of their affections*, and in *the holiness and obedience of their lives*. First, in *the enlightening of their understanding*.

Every one that is born of God attains to a right knowledge or belief concerning the leading truths of God's word. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," St. John says, "and ye know all things." (d) And again, "the anointing, which ye have received of him, abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." (e) And again, "We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him

(c) Homily for Whit-Sunday. (d) 1 John ii. 20.

(e) 1 John ii. 27.



that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.”(f) Therefore, “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.”(g) All which declarations illustrate Christ’s words to the Jews, “He that is of God heareth God’s words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God.”(h) Surely these passages abundantly declare, that in those who are born of God, there is an *enlightening of the understanding*, which enables them to know and believe Gospel truth in a way, which other men cannot attain unto: for as another apostle assures us, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”(i)

I pass on, secondly, to notice how those, who are born of God, are distinguished from other men *in the sanctification of our affections*. Every such an one has his affections so purified by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in him, that he loves what the natural man hates, and hates what the natural man loves. So the apostle tells us, “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”(k) And again, “God is love;

(f) 1 John v. 20. (g) 1 John v. 1. (h) John viii. 47.

(i) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

(k) 1 John iv. 7.



and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." (*l*) And again, "By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (*m*) We learn here how those, who are born of the Spirit, so overcome the enmity of the carnal mind, that they love God, and love the brethren, even the Lord's holy people.

And so again, the Holy Spirit enables them to overcome their natural tastes, and lustings for money, and ease, and the pleasures of the world: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (*n*) What a wonderful distinction is this, that, while all others love the world, and seek their portion in its riches, or its comforts, or its esteem, the regenerate man has power to overcome his natural appetites for the things that are seen and temporal, and to set his affections on things above; so that while "they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh," they "that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit." (*o*) They love what the others hate, and hate what the others love.

(*l*) 1 John iv. 16.

(*m*) 1 John iii. 14.

(*n*) 1 John v. 4.

(*o*) Romans viii. 5.

The third distinction between those who are born of God, and other men, is *the holiness and obedience of their lives*. This is perhaps the distinguishing mark of the regenerate beyond all others. As St. John testifies, “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.”(*p*) And again, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother.”(*q*) And again he writes, “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”(*r*) Surely, if we consider and lay to heart these testimonies of the word of God, we must perceive and confess that, “*He that doeth good is of God.*”(*s*) “He that keepeth his commandments *dwelleth in him* and *he in him.*”(*t*) But “If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.”(*u*)

Let us proceed, 2, to consider the nature

(*p*) 1 John ii. 29. (*q*) 1 John iii. 9, 10. (*r*) 1 John v. 18.

(*s*) 3 John 11. (*t*) 1 John iii. 24. (*u*) 1 John i. 6.

of those signs and evidences, whereby persons, who are born of the Spirit of God, are distinguished from all others. First observe, that *they are all such as relate to Christian character and Christian living.* They are such as declare and manifest a new nature, and that a Divine nature, new powers of the mind, new dispositions of the heart, and new ways and habits of life. But I would not be misunderstood here. The new creation in a sinner's soul, of which spiritual regeneration is the commencement, does not, I conceive, imply the actual imparting of new senses and faculties to the soul, so much as the renewing and transforming of those, which were there before. It puts new life into them, it raises them up from the ruins of the fall, and gives them a new aim and direction in their exercise. Whereas the soul was dead, now it lives : whereas the heart was cold, and careless about divine things, now it is full of warmth and interest : whereas the understanding was darkened, now it is enlightened : whereas the conscience was asleep, now it is awake, and sensitive ; whereas the eye was blind, now it sees spiritually : whereas the ear was deaf, now it hears anxiously and joyfully the word of the Lord : whereas the tongue was dumb, now its sound is heard in the ear of Jehovah continually, confessing sin, crying

for mercy, seeking all things at God's hands, and praising and thanking and blessing his holy name for everything. The whole man is quickened, renewed, transformed gradually, brought out of darkness into light, out of death into life. "Therefore," says St. Paul, speaking of this mighty moral miracle, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold all things are now become new." (v)

Secondly. Observe, that *these signs and evidences are such, as declare the being born of the Spirit, to be not only a relative, but a real change.*

In baptismal regeneration, if it be unattended with the birth of the Spirit, the change is *only relative, not real* : it is the change of condition, and covenant relationship to God ; not of nature, and of the principles of life ; and in such cases no signs and evidences follow, such as those which have been mentioned. But in spiritual regeneration, whether it take place at baptism, or whether the answer to the prayers then offered up be given at some later period, the change is not merely relative, but real. The spiritually regenerate person is "passed from death unto life." (w) From condemnation he has come to

(v) 2 Cor. v. 17.      (w) John v. 24; 1 John iii. 14.



salvation. From a rebel and enemy, a neglecter and despiser of God, he is become a friend, a servant, a loving obedient child. He has passed over that secret, invisible, but awfully real and distinct line, which divides the whole human race into two parts. Whereas the prince of this world, Satan, dwelled and reigned in him; now the Spirit of God, even the Holy Ghost, dwelleth and reigneth in him. Now he is become one of those blessed and holy persons, who have part in the first resurrection, and on whom "the second death hath no power." (*x*) "For if the Spirit of him, that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit, that dwelleth in you." (*y*) He is, in short, a new creature, prepared and designed to dwell in the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (*z*)

Thirdly, we should observe, that *the signs and tokens of spiritual regeneration are such as in every case cannot but shew themselves.* Indeed, in the case of infants, though they be, like John the Baptist, "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from their mother's womb," (*a*) this cannot in the

(*x*) Rev. xx. 6.

(*z*) 2 Pet. iii. 13.

(*y*) Rom. viii. 11.

(*a*) Luke i. 15.



nature of things be manifest: but I conceive that, as soon as the infant is grown old enough to exercise choice and judgment and conscience, we may expect that it will be seen, if the Holy Ghost, "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon" him. (b) Solomon tells us, "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure and whether it be right." (c) Much more will this be the case, as the person grows up. "He that is of God heareth God's words." (d) "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." (e). There may be exceptions to this rule, partial and temporary exceptions; as when the man is under strong temptations, or a backslider, or under circumstances which do not evidently call out the real principles and dispositions of the soul; just as, to use the figure of our text, the wind may sometimes lull, and either drop altogether, or blow so gently, that for the time its effects can scarcely be discerned. But these will be only exceptions; while in general, as we hear the sound and perceive the effects of the wind, even so is it with "*every one* that is born of the Spirit." He who cannot lie has said,

(b) 1 Pet. iv. 14.

(d) John viii. 47.

(c) Prov. xx. 11.

(e) Rom. viii. 5.

“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” (f) So that his test of false preachers will apply to the discerning of the spirits of all baptized persons. *The inward life of God will be evidenced by the outward life of godliness.* “By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*” (g)

And now, in conclusion, I would beseech you all to consider earnestly with yourselves, how this subject applies to each of you. My beloved, if you have been made partakers of spiritual regeneration, the fruits and effects of it are certainly manifest, in the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, in sanctified affections, and in holy Christian living. If you are new creatures, you are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works:” (h) and if you are not new creatures, you are not in Christ, except as the dead branches may be said to be in the vine, as wicked Ham was in the ark, and as the tares, the children of the wicked One, grew in the Gospel

(f) Matt. xii. 35. (g) Matt. vii. 16—18. (h) Eph. ii. 10.

field together with the wheat. And what will this profit you in that coming day, when the dead branches shall be cast into the fire and be burned ; when the Lord shall for ever separate the tares from the wheat, "*gathering out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and casting them into a furnace of fire, where is wailing and gnashing of teeth.*" (i) Put not, I pray you, this important subject aside ; and especially do not deceive your own souls with the idea of your being born of the Spirit, while no fruits of the Spirit appear in your life and conduct. There have been many delusions and wild fancies, connected with the work of the Spirit of God : Methodists, Ranters, Quakers, and other sectarians, have grievously confused and distorted this subject : but surely no fancy is more wild, no delusion more groundless, and no enthusiasm more unwarranted by God's word, than the fatal but common idea, that multitudes of careless, worldly, proud, dishonest, sensual, or covetous persons, are regenerate and born of God ; while their whole character, life, and conversation declare, that they are not of God, that they are not in Christ, and that the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever, does not live and abide in them. The whole general

(i) Matt. xiii. 41, 42.

tenor of God's word, as well as many particular passages, declare, if men will receive it, that such characters, though born of water, are not born of the Spirit; though in the Church, they are not the Church; and though they have received the seal and sign of spiritual regeneration, they are still dead in trespasses and sins, yea, like baptized Simon Magus, "are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity." (*k*)

One word more. Let all here who trust that they have received the substance of baptism, the Holy Spirit, bless and thank God for this special grace; and let them evidence it, by abhorring that which is evil, and cleaving to that which is good. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (*l*) Let us take heed that we "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." (*m*) Let us be as the loving and obedient children of our Father which is in heaven. And lastly, as St. Peter exhorts you, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (*n*)

(*k*) Acts viii. 23.

(*m*) Ephes. iv. 30.

(*l*) Gal. v. 25.

(*n*) 1 Pet. ii. 22, 23.

