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SAVED BY GRACE ALONE

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CALLING
AND REGENERATION

ABRAHAM KUYPER

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in Calling & Regeneration
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REGENERATION

Old and New Terminology

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh."—John 3:6.

BEFORE we examine the work of the Holy Spirit in this important matter, we must first define the use of words.

The word "regeneration" is used in a limited sense, and in a more extended sense.

It is used in the limited sense when it denotes exclusively God's act of quickening, which is the first divine act whereby God translates us from death into life, from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. In this sense regeneration is the starting-point. God comes to one born in iniquity and dead in trespasses and sins, and plants the principle of a new spiritual life in his soul. Hence he is born again.

But this is not the interpretation of the Confession of Faith, for article 24 reads: "We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin." Here the word "regeneration," used in its wider sense, denotes the entire change by grace effected in our persons, ending in our dying to sin in death and out being born for heaven. While formerly this was the usual sense of the word, we are accustomed now to the limited sense, which we therefore adopt in this discussion.

Respecting the difference between the two—formerly the work of grace was generally represented as the soul consciously observed it; while now the work itself is described apart from the consciousness.

Of course, a child knows nothing of the genesis of his own existence, nor of the first period of his life, from his own observation. If he were to tell his history from his own recollections, he would begin with the time that he sat in his high chair, and proceed until as a man he went out into the world. But, being informed by others of his antecedents, he goes back of his recollections and speaks of his parents, family, time, and place of birth, how he grew up, etc. Hence there is quite a difference between the two accounts.

The same difference we observe in the subject before us. Formerly it was customary, after the manner of Romish scholastics, to describe one's experience from one's own recollections. Being personally ignorant of the implanting of the new life, and remembering only the great spiritual disturbance, which led one to faith and repentance, it was natural to date the beginning of the work of grace not from regeneration, but from the conviction of sin and faith, thence proceeding to sanctification, and so on.

But this subjective representation, more or less incomplete, can not satisfy us now. It was to be expected that the supporters of "free will" would abuse it, by inferring that the origin and first activities of the work of salvation spring from man himself. A sinner, hearing the Word, is deeply impressed; persuaded by its threats and promises, he repents, arises, and accepts the Savior. Hence there is nothing more than a mere moral persuasion, obscuring the glorious origin of the new life. To resist this repulsive deforming of the truth, Maccovius, already in the days of the Synod of Dort, abandoned this more or less critical method to make regeneration the starting-point. He followed this order: "Knowledge of sin, redemption in Christ, regeneration, and only then faith." And this was consistent with the development of the Reformed doctrine. For as soon as the subjective method was abandoned, it became necessary in answer to the

question, "What has God wrought in the soul?" to return to the first implanting of life. And then it became evident that God did not begin by leading the sinner to repentance, for repentance must be preceded by conviction of sin; nor by bringing him under the hearing of the word, for this requires an opened ear. Hence the first conscious and comparatively cooperative act of man is always preceded by the original act of God, planting in him the first principle of a new life, under which act man is wholly passive and unconscious.

This led to the distinction of the first and second grace. The former denoted God's work in the sinner, creating a new life without his knowledge; while the latter denoted the work wrought in regenerate man with his full knowledge and consent.

The first grace was naturally called regeneration. And yet there was no perfect unanimity in this respect. Some Scottish theologians put it in this way: "God began the work of grace with the implanting of the faith-faculty (*fides potentialis*), followed by the new grace of the faith-exercise (*fides actualis*), and of the faith-power (*fides habitualis*). Yet it is only an apparent difference. Whether I call the first activity of grace, the implanting of the "faith-faculty," or the "new principle of life," in both instances it means that the work of grace does not begin with faith or with repentance or contrition, but that these are preceded by God's act of giving power to the powerless, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead.

For a correct idea of the entire work of grace in its different phases let us notice the following successive stages or milestones:

1. The implanting of the new life-principle, commonly called regeneration in the limited sense, or the implanting of the faith-faculty. This divine act is wrought in man at different ages; when, no one can tell. We know from the instance of John the Baptist that it can be wrought even in the mother's womb. And the salvation of deceased infants constrains us, with Voetius and all profound

theologians, to believe that this original act may occur very early in life.

2. The keeping of the implanted principle of life, while the sinner still continues in sin, so far as his consciousness is concerned. Persons who received the life-principle early in life are no more dead, but live. Dying before actual conversion, they are not lost, but saved. In early life they often manifest holy inclinations, sometimes truly marvelous. However, they have no conscious faith, nor knowledge of the treasure possessed. The new life is present, but dormant; kept not by the recipient, but by the Giver—like seed-grain in the ground in winter; like the spark glowing under the ashes, but not kindling the wood; like a subterranean stream coming at last to the surface.

3. The call by the Word and the Spirit, internal and external. Even this is a divine act, commonly performed through the service of the Church. It addresses itself not to the deaf but to the hearing, not to the dead but to the living, altho still slumbering. It proceeds from the Word and the Spirit, because not only the faith-faculty, but faith itself—i.e., the power and exercise of the faculty—are gifts of grace. The faith-faculty can not exercise faith of itself. It avails us no more than the faculty of breathing when air and the power to breathe are withheld. Hence the preaching of the Word and the inward working of the Holy Spirit are divine, correspondent operations. Under the preaching of the Word the Spirit energizes the faith-faculty, and thus the call becomes effectual, for the sleeper arises.

4. This call of God produces conviction of sin and justification, two acts of the same exercise of faith. In this, God's work may be represented again either subjectively or objectively. Subjectively, it seems to the saint that conviction of sin and heart-brokenness came first, and that then he obtained the sense of being justified by faith. Objectively, this is not so. The realization of his lost condition was already a bold act of faith. And by every subsequent act of faith he becomes more deeply convinced of his misery and receives more abundantly from the fulness which is in Christ, his Surety.

Concerning the question, whether conviction of sin must not precede faith, there need be no difference. Both representations amount to the same thing. When a man can say for the first time in his life "I believe," he is at the same moment completely lost and completely saved, being justified in his Lord.

5. This exercise of faith results in conversion; at this stage in the way of grace the child of God becomes clearly conscious of the implanted life. When a man says and feels "I believe," and does not recall it, but God confirms it, faith is at once followed by conversion. The implanting of the new life precedes the first act of faith, but conversion follows it. Conversion does not become a fact so long as the sinner only sees his lost condition, but when he acts upon this principle; for then the old man begins to die and the new man begins to rise, and these are the two parts of all real conversion.

In principle man is converted but once, via., the moment of yielding himself to Immanuel. After that he converts himself daily, i.e., as often as he discovers conflict between his will and that of the Holy Spirit. And even this is not man's work, but the work of God in him. "Turn Thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned." There is this difference, however, that in regeneration and faith's first exercise he was passive, while in conversion grace enabled him to be active. One is converted and one converts himself; the one is incomplete without the other.

6. Hence conversion merges itself in sanctification. This is also a divine act, and not human; not a growing toward Christ, but an absorbing of His life through the roots of faith. In children of twelve or thirteen deceased soon after conversion, sanctification does not appear. Yet they partake of it just as much as adults. Sanctification has a twofold meaning: first, sanctification which as Christ's finished work is given and imputed to all the elect; and second, sanctification which from Christ is gradually wrought in the converted and manifested according to times and circumstances. These are not two sanctifications, but one; just as we speak sometimes of the rain that

accumulates in the clouds above and then comes down in drops on the thirsty fields below.

7. Sanctification is finished and closed in the complete redemption at the time of death. In the severing of body and soul divine grace completes the dying to sin. Hence in death a work of grace is performed which imparts to the work of regeneration its fullest unfolding. If until then, considering ourselves out of Christ, we are still lost in ourselves and lying in the midst of death, the article of death ends all this. Then faith is turned into sight, sin's excitement is disarmed, and we are forever beyond its reach.

Lastly, our glorification in the last day, when the inward bliss will be manifest in outward glory, and by an act of omnipotent grace the soul will be reunited with its glorified body, and be placed in such heavenly glory as becomes the state of perfect felicity.

This shows how the operations of grace are riveted together as the links of a chain. The work of grace must begin with quickening the dead. Once implanted, the still slumbering life must be awakened by the call. Thus awakened, man finds himself in a new life, i.e., he knows himself justified. Being justified, he lets the new life result in conversion. Conversion flows into sanctification. Sanctification receives its keystone through the severing of sin in death. And in the last day, glorification completes the work of divine grace in our entire person.

Hence it follows that that which succeeds is contained in that which precedes. A regenerate deceased infant died to sin in death just as surely as the man with hoary head and fourscore years. There can be no first without including the second and last. Hence the entire work of grace might be represented as one birth for heaven, one continued regeneration to be completed in the last day.

Wherefore there may be persons ignorant of these stages, which are as indispensable as milestones to the surveyor; but they may never

be made to oppress the souls of the simple. He who breathes deeply unconscious of his lungs is often the healthiest.

Touching the question whether the Scripture gives reference to this arrangement over the old, we refer to the word of Jesus: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he can not see the kingdom of God"; from which we infer that Jesus dates every operation of grace from regeneration. First life, and then the activity of life.

Its Course

"No man can come unto Me, except the Father draw him."—
John 6:44.

FROM the preceding it is evident that preparatory grace is different in different persons; and that distinction must be made between the many regenerated in the first days of life, and the few born again at a more advanced age.

Of course, we refer only to the elect. In the non-elect saving grace does not operate; hence preparatory grace is altogether out of the question. The former are born, with few exceptions, in the Church. They do not enter the covenant of grace later on in life, but they belong to it from the first moment of their existence. They spring from the seed of the Church, and in turn contain in themselves the seed of the future Church. And for this reason, the first germ of the new life is imparted to the seed of the Church (which is, alas! always mixed with much chaff) oftenest either before or soon after birth.

The Reformed Church was so firmly settled in this doctrine that she dared establish it as the prevailing rule, believing that the seed of the Church (not the chaff of course) received the germ of life even before

Baptism; wherefore it is actually sanctified in Christ already; and receives in Baptism the seal not upon something that is yet to come, but upon that which is already present. Hence the liturgical question to the parents: "Do you acknowledge that, altho your children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to condemnation itself, yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of His Church ought to be baptized?"

In subsequent periods, less stedfast in the faith, men have shunned this doctrine, not knowing what to make of the words "are sanctified." This they interpreted to mean that as children of members of the covenant they were counted as belonging to the covenant, and as such were entitled to baptism. But the earnest and sound common sense of our people has always felt that this mere "counting in" did not do justice to the full and rich meaning of the liturgy.

And if you should inquire into the meaning of these words of the office of Baptism, "are sanctified," not of the weaker epigones, but of the energetic generation of heroes who have victoriously fought the Lord's battles against Arminius and his followers, then you would discover that those godly and learned theologians, such as Gysbrecht Voetius for instance, never for a moment hesitated to break with these half-way explanations, but spoke out plainly, saying: "They are entitled to Baptism not because they are counted as members of the covenant, but because as a rule they actually already possess the first grace; and for this reason, and this reason alone, it reads: 'That our children are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of His body ought to be baptized.' "

By this confession the Reformed Church proved to be in accord with God's Word and not less with the actual facts. With few exceptions, persons who afterward prove to belong to the regenerate do not begin life with riotous outbreaks of sin. It is rather the rule that children of Christian parents manifest from early childhood a desire

and taste for holy things, warm zeal for the name of God, and inward emotions that can not be attributed to an evil nature.

Moreover, this glorious confession gave the right direction to the education of children in our Reformed families, largely retained to the present time. Our people did not see in their children off-shoots of the wild vine, to be grafted perhaps later on, with whom little could be done until converted after the manner of Methodism;* but they lived in the quiet expectation and holy confidence that the child to be trained was already grafted, and therefore worthy to be nursed with tenderest care. We admit that, latterly, since the Reformed character of our churches has been impaired by the National Church as a church for the masses, this gold has been sadly dimmed; but its original, vital thought was beautiful and animating. It made God's work of regeneration precede man's work; to Baptism it gave its rich development; and it made the work of education, not dependent on chance, cooperate with God.

Hence we recognize among the rising generation in the Church four classes:

1. All elect persons regenerated before Baptism, in whom the implanted life remains hidden until they are converted at a later age.
2. Elect persons, not only regenerated in infancy, but in whom the implanted life was early manifested and ripened imperceptibly into conversion.
3. Elect persons born again, and converted in later life.
4. The non-elect, or the chaff.

Examining each of these four, with special reference to preparatory grace, we arrive at the following conclusions:

Regarding the elect of the first class, from the very nature of the case preparatory grace has scarcely room here, in its limited sense. In its

direct form, it is unthinkable with reference to an unborn or newborn child. In such it is only indirect—i.e., frequently it pleases God to give such child parents whose persons and natures practise a form of sin less outspoken in its war upon grace than other forms of sin. Not as tho such parents had anything from which the child could be grafted, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh; nothing clean from the unclean; it is always the wild vine waiting for the grafting of the Lord. Nay, the preparatory grace in this case appears from the fact that the child receives from its parents a form of life adapted to its heavenly calling.

The same applies to the elect of the second class. Altho we concede that the divine call works upon such during their tender years, yet, while it prepares for conversion, it does not prepare for regeneration, which it follows. The call is ineffectual unless the faculty of hearing be first implanted. Only he that has an ear can hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches and to his own soul. Hence, in this case, preparatory grace is scarcely perceptible. Surely there are many agencies that imperceptibly prepare for his conversion; but this is different from a preparing for regeneration, and we speak now only of the latter.

Properly speaking, preparatory grace in its limited sense is applied only to the third class of elect persons. It comprehends their whole life with all its turns and changes, relations and connections, heights and depths, events and adversities. Not as tho all these could produce the slightest germ of life or possibility of quickening. No; the germ of life can never spring from preparatory grace, any more than the preparation of ten cradles, of a dozen of clothes-baskets, and of closets full of expensive infant-garments can ever juggle a single infant into any of those cradles. The vital spark is produced only by an act of the mighty God, independent of all preparation. But, from its birth, God guards that wild vine and controls the growth of its wild shoots, so that in the hour of His pleasure, when He shall graft upon it the true vine, it may be all that it ought to be.

And this ends the discussion, for regarding the fourth class, by and by they will be separated from the wheat and blown away by the fan which is in His hand; hence preparatory grace is out of the question.

And from this it is evident that the proper work of the Holy Spirit regarding preparatory grace is scarcely perceptible.

Every feature of this work, so far presented, points directly not to the operation of the Holy Spirit, nor to that of the Son, but almost exclusively to that of the Father. For the circumstances of the child's birth—i.e., the hereditary character of his family and more especially of his parents, and the future course of his life until the moment of his conversion—belong to the realm of the divine Providence. The appointed place of our habitation, our generation and family, the formation of our immediate environment, the influences previously determined to affect us—all belong to the leadings of God's providence, ascribed by Scripture to the work of the Father. The Lord Jesus said: "No man can come unto Me, except the Father draw him." And altho this drawing of the Father has a higher aim and must be spiritually understood, yet it indicates generally that the determining of those things, which afterward regulates their direction and course, is attributed particularly to the First Person.

We notice a work of the Holy Spirit in this matter only as far as He animates all personal life, since He is the Spirit of Life; and as He cooperates with the Father in that special providence which refers to the elect. For, altho in our mind we can analyze the work of grace, yet we may never forget that the eternal reality does not fully correspond to this part of our analysis.

Hence, in the elect, the work of providence and that of grace often flow together, being one and the same. Our Church has tried to express this, in her confession of a general providence which includes all things and all persons, and a special providence which works only in the lives of God's elect. When thus the operations of Providence adopt a special character regarding the elect but not yet

regenerate persons, the Holy Spirit cooperates with the Father and the Son to carry out the counsels of God's will concerning them.

And this closes the discussion of preparatory grace, and we now proceed to discuss regeneration proper. We might speak of the grace that flows from regeneration and prepares the way for conversion, but this would improperly be called preparatory grace. All that which aims at the awakening of the life still slumbering in the regenerate soul is not preparatory grace, but belongs to the "call." And altho we would not absolutely condemn the use of the word in that sense, yet neither would we encourage it by our own example.

Let us recapitulate. Physical life is the result of the union of body and soul; the dissolution of this union is physical death, which will be abolished only when body and soul are reunited. The same applies to things spiritual. Spiritual life results from a union between the soul and the life-principle of the Holy Spirit. Hence sin which annihilates this union causes death. This death can not be overcome until it please the Lord to reunite the soul with the Spirit's life-principle.

Everything that precedes this reunion is preparatory grace. That which effects it is the first grace—i.e., working grace, saving grace, but no longer preparatory grace. When the Holy Spirit begins His work of effecting this union, preparatory grace ceases; hence it does not belong to the proper work of the Holy Spirit.

Regeneration the Work of God

"The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath even made both of them."—Prov. 20:12.

"THE hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath even made both of them." This testimony of the Holy Spirit contains the whole mystery of regeneration.

An unregenerate person is deaf and blind; not only as a stock or block, but worse. For neither stock nor block is corrupt or ruined, but an unregenerate person is wholly dead and a prey to the most fearful dissolution.

This rigid, uncompromising, and absolute confession must be our starting-point in this discussion, else we shall fail to understand the claims of regeneration. This is the reason why every heresy that has conceded in one way or other that man has a share, most generally a lion's share, in the work of redemption, has always begun by calling in question the nature of sin. "Undoubtedly," they said, "sin is very bad—a terrible and abominable evil; but there is surely some remnant of good in man. That noble, virtuous, and amiable being, man, can not be dead in trespasses and sin. That may be true of some scoundrel or knave behind the bars, or of robbers and unscrupulous murderers; but really, it can not be applied to our honorable ladies and gentlemen, to our lovely girls, roguish boys, and attractive children. These are not prone to hate God and their neighbors, but disposed, with all their heart, to love all men, and render unto God the reverence due unto Him."

Therefore away with all ambiguity in this matter! This method of smoothing over unpalatable truths, now so much in vogue among the affable people, we can not indorse. Our confession is, and ever shall be, that by nature man is dead in trespasses and sin, lying under the curse, ripe for the just judgment of God, and still ripening for an eternal condemnation. Surely his being, as man, is unimpaired; wherefore we protest against the presentation that the sinner is in this respect as a stock or block. No; as man he is unimpaired, his being is intact; but his nature is corrupt, and in that corrupt nature he is dead.

We compare him to the body of a person who has died of an ordinary disease. Such a body retains all the members of the human organism intact. There is the eye with its muscles, and the ear with its organs of hearing; in the post-mortem examination heart, spleen, liver, and kidneys appear to be perfectly normal. A dead body may sometimes appear so natural that one is tempted to say: "He is not dead, but sleeping." And yet, however perfect and natural, its nature is corrupt with the corruption of death. And the same is true of the sinner. His being remains intact and whole, containing all that which constitutes a man; but his nature is corrupt, yea, so corrupt that he is dead; not only apparently, but actually dead; dead in all the variations which can be played upon the term "dead."

Hence without regeneration the sinner is utterly unprofitable. What is the use of an ear except it hear, or of an eye except it see? Therefore the Holy Ghost testifies: "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made even both of them." And since in the world of spiritual things deaf ears and blind eyes do not avail anything, the Church of Christ confesses that every operation of saving grace must be preceded by a quickening of the sinner, by an opening of blind eyes, an unstopping of deaf ears—in short, by the implanting of the faculty of faith.

And as the man that sat in darkness can see as soon as his eyes are opened, so we, without moving a hair's breadth, are translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. "Translated" does not denote here an actual going, nor does "to be translated" denote an actual change of place, but simply life entering into the dead, so that he that was blind can now see.

This wonderful act of regeneration may be examined in two classes of persons: in the infant and in the adult.

It is the safest way to examine it in the infant: not because this work of grace is different in an infant from what it is in an adult, for it is the same in all persons thus favored; but to the conscious

observation of an adult the workings of regeneration are so mingled with those of conversion that it is difficult to distinguish the two.

But this difficulty does not exist in the case of an unconscious child, as, e.g., in John the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth. Such infant has no consciousness to create confusion. The matter appears in a pure and unmixed form. And thus we are enabled to distinguish between regeneration and conversion in an adult. It is evident that in the case of an infant which, like John, is still unborn, there can be nothing but mere passivity—i.e., the child underwent something, but himself did nothing; something was done to him, and in him, but not by him; and every idea of cooperation is absolutely excluded.

Hence, in regeneration, man is neither worker nor coworker; he is merely wrought upon; and the only Worker in this matter is God. And, for this very reason, because God is the sole Worker in regeneration, it must be thoroughly understood that His work does not begin only with regeneration.

No; while the sinner is still dead in trespasses and sins, before the work of God has begun in him, he is already chosen and ordained, justified and sanctified, adopted as God's child and glorified. This is what filled St. Paul with such ecstasy of joy when he said: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate; and whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:29, 30). And this is not the recital of what took place in the regenerate, but the glad summing up of the things which God accomplished for us before we existed. Hence our election, foreordination, justification, and glorification precede the new birth. It is true that, in the hour of love when regeneration was to be effected in us, the things accomplished outside of our consciousness were to be revealed to the consciousness of faith; but so far as God was concerned all things were ready and prepared. The dead sinner whom God regenerates is to the divine consciousness a beloved,

elect, justified, and adopted child already. God quickens only His dear children.

Of course, God justifies the ungodly and not the righteous; He calls sinners to repentance and not just persons; but it should be remembered that this is spoken from the point of view of our own consciousness of sin. The still unregenerate does not feel himself God's child, nor that he is justified; does not believe his own election, yea, often gainsays it; yet he can not alter the things divinely wrought in his behalf, viz., that before the supreme bar of justice God declared him just and free, long before he was so declared before the bar of his own conscience. Long before he believed, he was justified before God's tribunal, by and by to be justified by faith before his own consciousness.

But, however wonderful and unfathomable the mystery of election may be—and none of us shall ever be able to answer the question why one was chosen to be a vessel of honor, and another was left as a vessel of wrath—in the matter of regeneration we do not face that mystery at all. That God regenerates one and not another is according to a fixed and unalterable rule. He comes with regeneration to all the elect; and the non-elect He passes by. Hence this act of God is irresistible. No man has the power to say, "I will not be born again," or to prevent God's work or to put obstacles in His way, or to make it so difficult that it can not be performed.

God effects this gracious work in His own way, i.e., He so royally perseveres that all creatures together could not rob Him of one of His elect. If all men and devils should conspire to pluck a brutal man, belonging to the elect, from His saving power, all their efforts would be mere vanity. As we brush away a spider's web, so would God laugh at all their commotion. The powerful steam borer pierces the iron plate not more noiselessly and with less effort than silently and majestically God penetrates the heart of whomsoever He will, and changes the nature of His chosen. Isaiah's word concerning the starry heavens—"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath

created these things, that bringeth out their hosts by number; He calleth them all by name, by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth"—may be applied to the firmament in which God's elect shine as stars: "Because of the greatness of His might, and that He is strong in power, not one faileth." All that are ordained to eternal life are quickened at the divinely appointed hour.

And this implies that the work of regeneration is not a moral work; that is, it is not accomplished by means of advice or exhortation. Even taken in its wider sense, including conversion, as, e.g., the canons of Dort use it now and then, regeneration is not a moral working in the soul.

It is not simply a case of misunderstanding, the sinner's will being still uncorrupt, so that it requires only instruction and advice to induce it to choose rightly. No; such advice and admonition are wholly out of the question regarding the unborn son of Zacharias; and the thousands of infants of believing parents, of whom at Dort it was correctly confessed that they may be supposed to have died in the Lord, i.e., being born again; and regarding those regenerated before Baptism but converted later in life.

For this reason it is so necessary to examine regeneration (in its limited sense) in an infant, and not in an adult, in whom it necessarily includes conversion.

The following reasoning can not be disputed:

1. All men, infants included, are born dead in trespasses and sins.
2. Of these infants many die before they come to self-consciousness.
3. Of these gathered flowers the Church confesses that many are saved.
4. Being dead in sin, they can not be saved without being born again.

5. Hence regeneration does actually take place in persons that are not self-conscious.

These statements being indisputable, it is evident, therefore, that the nature and character of regeneration can be determined most correctly by examining it in these still unconscious persons.

Such an unborn infant is totally ignorant of human language; it has no ideas, has never heard the Gospel preached, can not receive instruction, warning, or exhortation. Hence moral influence is out of the question; and this convinces us that regeneration is not a moral, but a metaphysical act of God, just as much as the creation of the soul of an unborn child, which is effected independently of the mother. God regenerates a man wholly without his foreknowledge.

What it is that constitutes the act of regeneration can not be told. Jesus Himself tells us so, for He says: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou nearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." And, therefore, it is befitting to investigate this mystery with the utmost discretion. Even in the natural kingdom the mystery of life and its origin is almost entirely beyond our knowledge. The most learned physician is entirely ignorant concerning the manner in which a human life comes into existence. Once existing, he can explain its development, but of the inception that precedes all else he knows absolutely nothing. In this respect he is just as ignorant as the most innocent peasant boy. The mystery can not be penetrated, simply because it lies beyond our observation; it is perceptible only that life exists.

And this applies in stronger sense to the mystery of our second birth. Post-mortem examination can detect the embryo and its locality, but spiritually even this is impossible. Subsequent manifestations are instructive to a certain extent, but even then much is uncertain and unsettled. By what infallible standard can it be determined how much of the old nature enters into the expressions of the new life? Is

there no hypocrisy? Are there no conditions unexplained? Are there no obstacles to spiritual development? Hence experience in this respect can not avail; tho pure and simple, it can reveal only the development of that which is, and not the origin of life unborn.

The only source of truth on this subject is the Word of God; and in that Word the mystery remains not only unrevealed, but veiled. And for good reasons. If we were to effect regeneration, if we could add to or take from it, if we could advance or hinder it, then Scripture would surely have sufficiently instructed us concerning it. But since God has reserved this work altogether to Himself, man need not solve this mystery any more than that of his first creation, or that of the creation of his soul.

The Work of Regeneration

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."—2 Cor. 5:17.

IN our former article we contended that regeneration is a real act of God in which man is absolutely passive and unable, according to the ancient confession of the Church. Let us now reverently examine this matter more closely; not to penetrate into things too high for us, but to cut off error and to clear the consciousness.

Regeneration is not sacramentally effected by holy Baptism, relieving the sinner's inability, offering him another opportunity to choose for or against God, as the Ethicals maintain.

Nor is it a mere rectifying of the understanding; nor a simple change of disposition and inclination, making the unwilling willing to

conform to the holy will of God.

Neither is it a change of ego; nor, as many maintain, a leaving the ego undisturbed, the personality unchanged, simply putting the evil ego in the light and reflection of the righteousness of Christ.

The last two errors must be refuted and rejected as positively as the first two.

In regeneration a man does not receive another ego; i.e., our being as man is not changed nor modified, but before and after regeneration it is the same ego, the same person, the same human being. Altho sin has terribly corrupted man, his being remained intact. Nothing is lacking. All its constituent parts, that distinguish it from all other beings, are present in the sinner. Not his being, but his nature became totally corrupt.

Nature and being are not the same. Applied to a steam-engine, being is the engine itself, with its cylinders, pipes, wheels, and screws; but its nature is the action manifest as soon as steam enters the cylinder. Applied to man, being is that which makes him man, and nature that which manifests the character of his being and working.

If sin had ruined man's being, he would be no more man, and regeneration would be impossible. But since his being, his ego, his person remained intact and the deep corruption affected only his nature, regeneration, i.e., restoration of his nature, is possible; and this restoration is effected by the new birth. Let this be firmly maintained. In regeneration we do not receive a new being, ego, or person, but our nature is reborn.

The best and most satisfactory illustration of the manner of regeneration is furnished by the curious art of grafting. The successful grafting of a budding shoot of the cultivated grape upon the wild vine results in a good tree growing upon the wild trunk. This applies to all fruit-trees and flowering plants. The cultivated can be grafted upon the wild. Left to itself, the wild will never yield anything

good. The wild pear and the wild rose remain stunted and chary of fruit and blossom. But let the gardener graft a finely flavored pear upon the wild pear, or a beautiful double tea-rose upon the wild rose, and the former will yield luscious fruit and the latter magnificent flowers.

This miracle of grafting has always been a wonder to thinking men. And it is a wonder. The trunk to be grafted is absolutely wild; with its wild roots it sucks the saps and forces them into its wild cells. But that little graft has the wonderful power of converting the sap and vital forces into something good, causing that wild trunk to bear noble fruit and rich flowers. It is true the wild trunk vigorously resists the reformation of its nature by its wild shoots below the graft, and if successful its wild nature will forcibly assert itself and prevent the sap from passing through the bud. But by keeping down those wild shoots the sap can be forced to the bud with excellent results. Forcing down the wild trunk, the graft will gradually reach almost to the roots, and we nearly forget that the tree was ever wild.

This clearly represents regeneration so far as this divine mystery can be represented objectively. For in regeneration something is planted in man which by nature he lacks. The fall did not merely remove him from the sphere of divine righteousness, into which regeneration brings him back, but regeneration effects a radical modification in man as man, creating a difference between him and the unregenerate so great that finally it leads to direct opposites.

To say that between the regenerate and the unregenerate there is no difference is equivalent to a denial of the work of the Holy Spirit. Generally, however, no difference is noticed at first, no more than in the grafted tree. Twins lie in the same cradle, one regenerated, the other not, but we can not see the slightest difference between the two. The former may even have a worse temper than the latter. They are exactly alike. Both spring from the same wild trunk. Dissecting knife nor microscope could detect the least difference; for that which

God has wrought in the favored child is wholly spiritual and invisible, discernible to God alone.

This fact must be confessed definitely and emphatically, in opposition to those who say that the seed of regeneration is material. This error occupies the same ground as the Manichean heresy in the matter of sin. The latter makes sin a microbe, and this makes the seed of regeneration a sort of perceptible germ of life and holiness. And this falsifies the truth against which, among others, Dr. Böhl has earnestly protested.

The seed of regeneration is intangible, invisible, purely spiritual. It does not create two men in one being, but before and after regeneration there is but one being, one ego, one personality. Not an old and a new man, but one man—viz., the old man before regeneration, and the new man after it—who is created after God in perfect righteousness and holiness. For that which is born of God can not sin. His seed remaineth in him. "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

Yet the nature of the ego or personality is truly changed, and in such a way that, putting on the new nature in principle, he still continues to work through the old nature. The grafted tree is not two trees, but one. Before the grafting it was a wild rose, after it a cultivated one. Still the new nature must draw its saps through the old nature; apart from the graft, the trunk remains wild.

Hence before as well as after regeneration we lie in the midst of death, as soon as we consider ourselves outside of the divine seed. Wherefore, trying to avoid one false position, we must be careful not to run into another; trying to escape the Siamese twinship of the old and the new man, and maintaining the unity of the ego before and after regeneration, we should not begin to teach that regeneration leaves our person unchanged, that it does not affect the sinner himself, but merely translates him into the sphere of an extraneous righteousness. No: the Scripture speaks of a new creature, another

birth, a being changed and renewed. And this can not be reconciled with the notion that the sinner should remain unchanged.

Regarding the question, what it is in the bud that has the potency to regenerate the wild trunk, the best-informed botanist can not discover the fiber or liquid that might have this power. He only knows that every bud has its own nature, and possesses the potency to produce another branch or tree of the same nature by its own formative power.

And this applies to the work of regeneration. In the center of our being, ego, personality rules our nature, disposition, form of being, and existence, imparting its impress, form, character, and spiritual quality to what we are and work and speak. That all-controlling center is by nature sinful and wicked. Under its fairest forms it is but unrighteous. Hence, willingly or unwillingly, we press upon our being, working, and speaking the stamp of unrighteousness. According to age and development this nature of the ego chisels out of the marble of our being an evil and sinful man, corresponding to the image contained in our nature from which it proceeds. In regeneration God performs in this controlling center of our being a wonderful act, converting this nature, this formative force into something entirely different. Consequently our being, working, and speaking are henceforth controlled by another commandment, law of life, and government; and this new formative force chisels another man in us, new and holy, a child of God, created in righteousness.

But this change is not completed at once. The tree grafted in March may remain inactive during that entire month, because there is as yet no working in its nature. But this is sure: as soon as there is any action it will be according to the new, ingrafted nature.

And so it is here. The new, ingrafted life may lie dormant for a season, like a grain of wheat in the earth; but when it begins to work it will be according to the nature of the new life. Hence regeneration implants the life-germ of the new man, whom it contains in all his

completeness, and from which it will proceed as surely as the wheat contained in the seed proceeds from it.

In order to assist us in our representation of this mystery, the greatest theologian of the Reformed churches has presented the divine plan in regeneration in the following stages:

(1) In His own mind God conceives the new man; whom (2) He modifies according to a particular person, thus creating the new man; (3) He brings the germ of this new man into the center of our being; (4) in which center He effects the union between our ego and this germinating life; (5) in that vital germ God supports the formative power, which at His appointed time He will cause to come forth, by which our ego will manifest itself as a new man.

Regeneration and Faith

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."—1 Peter 1:23.

THERE is a possible objection to what has been said above concerning regeneration. It is evident that God's Word, and therefore our symbols of faith, offers a modified representation of these things which, superficially considered, seems to condemn our representation. This representation, which does not consider children, but adults, may thus be stated: Among a circle of unconverted persons God causes the Word to be preached by His ambassadors of the cross. By this preaching the call reaches them. If there are elect persons among them, for whom it is now the time of love, God accompanies the outward call with the inward.

Consequently they turn from their ways of sin to the way of life. And so they are begotten of God.

Thus St. Peter presents the matter, saying: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." And also St. Paul when he declares, "That faith is by the hearing, and the hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). It fully harmonizes with what St. Paul writes concerning holy Baptism, which he calls the washing of "regeneration," for in those days Jew and Gentile were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, immediately after their conversion, by the preaching of the apostles.

For this reason our fathers confessed in their Confession (article 24): "We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the word of God, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man." And likewise teaches the Heidelberg Catechism (see question 65): "Such faith proceedeth from the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments." And also the canons of Dort, Third and Fourth Heads of doctrine, section 17: "As the almighty operation of God, whereby He prolongs and supports this our natural life, does not exclude, but requires the use of means by which God of His infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert His influence; so also the before-mentioned supernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated, in no wise excludes or subverts the use of the Gospel, which the most wise God hath ordained to be the seed of regeneration and food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to His glory and the abasement of all pride, and in the mean time, however, neglected not to keep them by the sacred precepts of the Gospel in the exercise of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline; so even to this day, be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the Church, by separating what He of His good pleasure hath most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred

by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent usually is this blessing of God working in us, and the more directly is His work advanced."

And now, in order to eradicate every suspicion that we contend against this representation, we declare openly and definitely that we give it our most hearty assent.

We only beg it be considered that in this presentation both Scripture and the symbols of faith always point to the mysterious background, to a wonderful work of God hiding back of it, to an inscrutable mystery without which all this comes to naught.

The canons of Dort describe this mysterious, inscrutable, and wonderful background most elaborately and most beautifully in article 12, Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine: "And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture and denominated a new creation; a resurrection from the dead, a making alive, which God works in us without our aid. But this is in no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the Gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation that, after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted or to continue unconverted; but it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scripture inspired by the Author of this work declares; so that all in whose hearts God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe. Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence becomes itself active. Wherefore, also, man is himself rightly said to believe and repent, by virtue of that grace received." And also in article 11: "But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the Gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds

by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, He pervades the inmost recesses of the man; He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised; infuses new qualities into the will, which, tho heretofore dead, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree it may bring forth the fruits of good actions." The Heidelberg Catechism points to this, in question 8: "Except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God." And also the Confession, article 22: "We believe that to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits."

This mysterious background, which our fathers at Dort called "His pervading the inmost recesses of man by the efficacy of the regenerating Spirit," is evidently the same as what we call "the divine operation which penetrates the center of our being to implant the germ of the new life."

And what is this mysterious working? According to the universal testimony based upon Scripture, it is an operation of the Holy Spirit in man's innermost being.

Hence the question, whether this regenerating act precedes, accompanies, or follows the hearing of the Word. And this question should be well understood, for it involves the solution of this seeming disagreement.

We answer: The Holy Spirit may perform this work in the sinner's heart before, during, or after the preaching of the Word. The inward call may be associated with the outward call, or it may follow it. But that which precedes the inward call, viz., the opening of the deaf ear, so that it may be heard, is not dependent upon the preaching of the Word; and therefore may precede the preaching.

Correct discrimination in this respect is of greatest importance.

If I designate the whole conscious work of grace from conversion until death, "regeneration," without any regard to its mysterious background, then I may and must say with the Confession (article 24): "That this faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word, and the operation of the Holy Spirit, doth regenerate him and make him a new man."

But if I distinguish in this work of grace, according to the claims of the sacraments, between the origin of the new life, for which God gave us the sacrament of holy Baptism, and its support, for which God gave the sacrament of the holy Supper, then regeneration ceases immediately after man is born again, and that which follows is called "sanctification."

And discriminating again between that which the Holy Spirit wrought in us consciously and unconsciously, then regeneration designates that which was wrought in us unconsciously, while conversion is the term we apply to the awakening of this implanted life in our consciousness.

Hence God's work of grace runs through these three successive stages:

1st. Regeneration in its first stage, when the Lord plants the new life in the dead heart.

2d. Regeneration in its second stage, when the new-born man comes to conversion.

3d. Regeneration in its third stage, when conversion merges into sanctification.

In each of these three God performs a wonderful and mysterious work in man's inward being. From God proceed quickening, conversion, and sanctification, and in each God is the Worker: only

with this difference, that in the quickening He works alone, finding and leaving man inactive; that in conversion He finds us inactive, but makes us active; that in sanctification He works in us in such a manner that we work ourselves through Him.

Describing it still more closely, we say that in the first stage of regeneration, that of quickening, God works without means; in the second stage, that of conversion, He employs means, viz., the preaching of the Word; and in the third stage, that of sanctification, He uses means in addition to ourselves, whom He uses as means.

Condensing the foregoing, there is one great act of God which re-creates the corrupt sinner into a new man, viz., the comprehensive act of regeneration, which contains three parts—quickenings, conversion, and sanctification.

For the ministry of the Word it is preferable to consider only the last two, conversion and sanctification, since this is the appointed means to effect them. The first, regeneration, is preferably a subject of private meditation, since in it man is passive and God only active; and also because in it the majesty of the divine operation is most apparent.

Hence there is no conflict or opposition. Referring, according to the Confession, article 17, only to conversion and sanctification, the unstopping of the deaf ear as preceding the hearing of the Word is not denied. And penetrating into the work which antedates conversion, "in which God works in us without our aid" (article 12 of the canons of Dort), it is not denied, but confessed, that conversion and sanctification follow the unstopping of the deaf ear, and that, in the proper sense, regeneration is completed only at the death of the sinner.

Do not suppose that we make these two to conflict. In writing a biography of Napoleon it would be sufficient simply to mention his birth, but one might also mention, more in particular, the things that

took place before his birth. Just so in this respect: I may refer either to the two parts of regeneration, conversion and sanctification, or I may include also that which precedes conversion, and speak also of the quickening. This implies no antagonism, but a mere difference of exactness. It is more exhaustive, with reference to regeneration, to speak of three stages—quickenings, conversion, and sanctification; altho it is customary and more practical to speak only of the last two.

Our purpose, however, calls for greater completeness. The aim of this work is not to preach the Word, but to uncover the foundations of the truth, so as to stop the building of crooked walls upon the foundation-stone, after the manner of Ethicals, Rationalists, and Supernaturalists.

Exhaustiveness in treatment requires to ask not only, "How and what does the quickened sinner hear?" but also, "Who has given him hearing ears?"

And this is all the more to be insisted upon because our children must not be ignored in this respect. At Dort, in 1618, our children were taken into account, and we may not deny ourselves this pleasant obligation.

And herein lies a real danger. For to speak of the little ones without considering the first stage of regeneration—i.e., the quickening—causes confusion and perplexity from which there is no escape.

Salvation depends upon faith, and faith upon the hearing of the Word; hence our deceased infants must be lost, for they can not hear the Word. To escape this fearful thought it is often said that the children are saved by virtue of the parents' faith—a misunderstanding which greatly confused our entire conception of Baptism, and made our baptismal form very perplexing. But as soon as we distinguish quickening, as a stage of regeneration, from conversion and sanctification, the light enters. For since quickening is an unaided act of God in us, independent of the Word, and

frequently separated from the second stage, conversion, by an interval of many days, there is nothing to prevent God from performing His work even in the babe, and the apparent conflict dissolves into beautiful harmony. Moreover, as soon as I regard my still unconverted children as not yet regenerate, their training must run in the direction of a questionable Methodism.* What is the use of the call so long as I suppose and know: "This ear can not yet hear"?

Touching the question concerning "faith," we are fully prepared to apply the same distinction to this matter. You have only to discriminate between the organ or the faculty of faith, the power to exercise faith, and the working of faith. The first of these three, viz., the faculty of faith, is implanted in the first stage of regeneration—i.e., in quickening; the power of faith is imparted in the second stage of regeneration—i.e., in conversion; and the working of faith is wrought in the third stage—i.e., in sanctification. Hence if faith is wrought only by the hearing of the Word, the preaching of the Word does not create the faculty of faith.

Look only at what our fathers confessed at Dort: "He who works in man both to will and to do produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also" (Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, article 14).

Or to express it still more strongly: when the Word is preached, I know it; and when I hear it and believe it, I know whence this working of faith comes. But the implanting of the faith-faculty is an entirely different thing; for of this the Lord Jesus says: "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth"; and as the wind, so is also the regeneration of man.

Implanting in Christ

"Having become one plant with Him."—Rom. 6:5.

HAVING discussed regeneration as God's act wrought in a lost, wicked, and guilty sinner, we now examine the more sacred and delicate question: How does this divine act affect our relation to Christ?

We consider this point more important than the first, since every view of regeneration that does not do full justice to the "mystical union with Christ" is anti-Scriptural, eradicates brotherly love, and begets spiritual pride.

The holy apostle declares: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God."* The idea that a saint can have life outside of the mystical union with Immanuel is but a fiction of the imagination. The regenerate can live no life but such as consists in union with Christ. Let this be firmly and strongly maintained.

The Scriptural expressions, "one plant with Him" and "branches of the Vine," which must be taken in their fullest significance, are metaphors entirely different from those which we use. We are confined to metaphors which express our meaning by analogy; but they can not be fully applied nor express the being of the thing; hence the so-called third term of the comparison. But the figures used by the Holy Spirit express a real conformity, a unity of thought divinely expressed in the spiritual and visible world. Hence Jesus could say: "I am the true Vine," that is, "every other vine is but a figure. The true, the real Vine am I, and I alone."

Being exceedingly sober and choice in His metaphorical speech, the Lord Jesus does not say that a branch is grafted into the vine, simply because this is not done in nature, i.e., in the creation of God. In John 15, Jesus does not even touch upon the question of how one becomes a branch. That is the work of the Father. My Father is the

Husbandman. In John 15:3 he speaks only of a person who not abiding in Him withers and will be burned.

Even Rom. 6:5 does not speak of coming to Jesus, and Rom. 11:17–25 only partly. The former calls it to become one plant with Him, but does not tell "how"; and "grafting" is not even mentioned. And the latter, speaking of broken olive-branches, and of wild olive-branches grafted upon a good olive, and lastly of broken branches restored to the original olive, makes no reference whatever to the implanting of individuals in Christ, as we will soon prove.

And yet the figure is only partly applicable. Indeed, in Rom. 11, St. Paul, with his characteristic boldness of speech and style, for comparison's sake reverses God's work in nature; for while in reality the cultivated bud is grafted on the wild trunk, he makes in this instance the wild bud to be grafted upon the good trunk. A bold stroke indeed and very profitable to us, for by it he makes us see clearly and distinctly the general implanting in Christ. But that is all.

For, notice it well, the figure is not to be pressed too far. It is a mistake to make it refer to the regeneration of the individual sinner. For a person once implanted in Christ can not be severed from Him: "No man can pluck them out of My hand"; "Whom He has justified, them He also glorified."

And yet, reference is made here to branches which are broken off and which were grafted in again. If this referred to particular individuals, then the Jews, who during the life of St. Paul denied the Lord, must have been regenerate persons who fell away and returned again before they died.

If this had been St. Paul's meaning, subsequent events would have belied his words, and he would have revoked the whole tenor of his other teachings. But he plainly means that the tribes of Israel, who were in the Covenant of Grace, had lost their position therein by their own fault; yet that even outside of the Covenant they should be

preserved throughout the coming ages, and that in the course of history the way would be opened even for them to be reintroduced into the Covenant of Grace. And this shows that Rom. 11:17–25 does not teach the regeneration of individual persons, and that the good olive does not signify Christ, for he that is implanted in Christ can never be severed from Him, and he that is severed from Him never belonged to Him. Do we not believe in the perseverance of saints?

It may be objected that in John 15 reference is made to branches that are cast forth from the vine; to which we answer: first, that this does not remove the difficulty that the apostate Jews of St. Paul's time were never grafted in again; and second, that with Calvin we hold that Jesus, speaking of the branches cast forth, had reference to persons who, like Judas, seemed to be implanted; otherwise His own word, "No man can pluck them out of My hand," can not stand for a moment.

We arrive, therefore, at this conclusion, that neither John 15 nor Rom. 11 has any reference to personal regeneration in its limited sense; while Rom. 6, which speaks of becoming one plant, does not introduce the idea of ingrafting, nor make the slightest allusion to the manner in which this "becoming one plant" had been accomplished.

It is unnecessary to say that not a few exegetes judge the translation, "One plant with Him," incorrect, omitting the words italicized. We do not express here an opinion regarding this rendering; but it shows clearly that Rom. 6 has nothing to say concerning the manner in which our union with Christ is effected.

In fact, Scripture never applies the figure of grafting to regeneration. Rom. 9 treats of the restoration of a people and nation to the covenant of grace; Rom. 6 speaks only of a most intimate union; and John 15 never alludes to a wild branch which became good by being planted in Christ. These figures set forth the union with Christ, but teach nothing concerning the manner in which this union is effected.

Scripture is utterly silent concerning it; and since there is no other source of information, mere human inventions are utterly useless. Even Christian experience does not throw any light upon it, for it can not teach anything which Scripture has not taught already; and again, we can easily perceive the union with Christ where it exists, but we can not see it where it does not exist, or where it is just forming.

And yet this union with Christ must be strongly emphasized. The theologians who represent divine truth most purely lay most stress upon this matter. And altho Calvin may have been the most rigid among the reformers, yet not one of them has presented this union mystica, this spiritual union with Christ, so incessantly, so tenderly, and with such holy fire as he. And as Calvin, so did all the Reformed theologians, from Beza to Comrie, and from Zanchius to Kohlbrugge. "Without Christ nothing, by this mystical union with Christ all," was their motto. And even now a preacher's value is to be strictly measured by the degree of prominence accorded to the mystical union with Immanuel, in his presentation of the truth. The strong utterance of Kohlbrugge, "One may be born again, one may be a child of God, one may be a sincere believer, yet without this mystical union with Christ he is nothing in himself, nothing but a lost and wicked sinner," was always the glorious confession of our churches. In fact, it is what our form for the administration of the Lord's Supper so well expresses: "Considering that we seek our life outside of ourselves in Jesus Christ, we acknowledge that we lie in the midst of death."

But it is wrong on this ground to teach—as some of our younger ministers are reported to teach—and derogatory to the work of the Holy Spirit, that regeneration accomplishes nothing in us, and that the whole work is performed completely outside of us, as some have said, "That we need not even be converted, for even that has been done for us vicariously by the Lord Jesus Christ." To say that there is no difference between a regenerate person and an unregenerate is to contradict Scripture and to deny the work of the Holy Spirit.

Wherefore we strongly oppose this notion. There is indeed a difference. The former has entered into the union with Christ, and the latter has not. And upon this union everything depends; it makes a difference in men as between heaven and hell.

Nor may it be said, on the contrary, "That a regenerate person, even without the union with Christ, is other or better than an unbeliever"; for this puts asunder what God has joined together. Outside of Christ there is in man born of a woman nothing but darkness, corruption, and death.

Hence we firmly maintain the indissoluble oneness of these two: "There is no regeneration without establishing the mystical union with Christ"; and again: "There is no mystical union with Immanuel but in the regenerate." These two may never be separated; and on the long way between the first act of regeneration and completed sanctification, the unio mystica may not for a moment be lost sight of.

The Ethical theologians will probably assent to all that we have said on this subject; and yet, according to our deepest conviction, they have wholly bastardized and misapprehended this precious article of faith. Assuredly they strongly emphasize the union with Christ; they even tell us that they do this more than we, maintaining that it is immaterial whether a man is sound in the Scripture or not so long as he is united with Christ. In that case there is no more need of any formula, confession, articles of faith, or even faith in the Scripture. A prominent Ethical professor at the University of Utrecht has openly declared: "Altho I should lose the entire Scripture, yea, tho the truth of not one of the Gospel narratives could be verified, I would not be in the least affected, for I would still possess union with Christ; and having that, what more can a man desire?" And this has such a pious ring, and taken in the abstract is so true, that many a conscience must agree with it, not having the faintest suspicion of the apostasy from the faith of the fathers contained in it.

If one should ask us whether we do not believe that the soul united with Jesus possesses all that can be desired, we would almost refuse an answer, for he knows better. No, indeed, favored soul, having that you need no more; depart in peace, thrice blessed of God.

But because the mystical union with the Son of God is so weighty and precious an article of faith, we desire that every man should treat it most seriously, and examine whether the union which he says he possesses is actually the same mystical union with the Lord Jesus Christ which the Scripture promises to the children of God, and which they have enjoyed throughout the ages.

Not a Divine-Human Nature

"I in them, and they in Me."—John 17:23.

THE union of believers with the Mediator, of all matters of faith the most tender, is invisible, imperceptible to the senses, and unfathomable; it escapes all inward vision; it refuses to be dissected or to be made objective by any representation; in the fullest sense of the word it is mystical—*unio mystica*, as Calvin, after the example of the early Church, called it.

And yet, however mysterious, no man is at liberty to interpret it according to his own notions; in fact, there is need of great vigilance lest under the pious appearance of this mystic love injurious contraband be smuggled into the divine sanctuary. We have therefore raised our voice against the false representations of former mystical sects, and of the Ethical theorists of the present time.

Let us first explain the Ethical teaching on this point.

Their belief starts from the antithesis existing between God and man. God is the Creator, man is a creature. God is infinite, man finite. God dwells in the eternal, and man lives in the temporal. God is holy, and man is unholy; etc. So long as these contrasts exist, so they teach, there can be no unity, no reconciliation, no harmony. And as the pantheistic philosophy used to talk about three stages through which life must run its course—first, that of proposition (thesis), then that of contrast (antithesis), and lastly that of reconciliation, combination (synthesis)—so the Ethicals teach that between God and man there exist these three: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

In the first place, there is God. This is the thesis, the proposition. Opposed to this thesis in God, the antithesis, contrast, appears in man. And this thesis and antithesis find their reconciliation, synthesis, in the Mediator, who is at once finite and infinite, burdened with our guilt and holy, temporal, and eternal.

It is only recently that we quoted the following sentence from Professor Gunning's little book, "The Mediator between God and Man" (page 28): "Jesus Christ is the Mediator equally between the Jews and the Gentiles; and also between all things that need reconciliation and mediation; as between God and man, spirit and body, heaven and earth, time and eternity."

This representation contains the fundamental error of the Ethical theology. It interferes with the boundaries which God has set. It effaces them. It causes all contrasts finally to disappear. And by this very thing, without intending it, it becomes the instrument of spreading the pantheism of the philosophic school. Not understanding this system, one may be deeply in love with it. This pantheistic ferment is deeply seated in our sinful hearts. The waters of pantheism are sweet, their religious flavor is peculiarly pleasant. There is spiritual intoxication in this cup, and once inebriated the soul has lost its desire for the sober clearness of the divine Word. To escape from the witchery of these pantheistic charms, one needs to

be aroused by bitter experience. And once awakened, the soul is alarmed at the fearful danger to which this siren had exposed it.

No; the contrast between God and man must not cease; the contrast between heaven and earth may not be placed upon the same line with that of Jew and Gentile; the contrast between the infinite and finite must not be effaced by the Mediator; time and eternity must not be made identical. There must be brought about a reconciliation for the sinner. That is all, and no more. "To bring about reconciliation" is the work assigned to the Mediator, and that alone. And this reconciliation is not between time and eternity, the finite and the infinite, but exclusively between a sinful creature and a holy Creator. It is a reconciliation that could not have occurred if man had not fallen, necessitated only by his fall; a reconciliation not essential to the being of Christ, but His *per accidens*, i.e., by something independent of His being.

And since the essence of true godliness is based not in the removal of the divinely appointed boundaries and contrasts, but in a deep reverence for the same; and on this ground the creature as distinguished from the Creator may not feel himself one with, but absolutely distinct from Him, it is clear that this error of the Ethicals affects the essence of godliness.

The early Church discovered this same principle in Origen, and subsequently in Eutychus; and our fathers of the last century found it in the *Hernhutters* and sharply opposed it. And only because we lack knowledge and penetration have these Ethical doctrines been able to spread so rapidly here, in Germany, in Switzerland, and even in Scotland, their pantheistic tendencies undetected.

And how does this evil affect their Christology? It affects it to such extent that it is entirely different from that of the Reformed churches. Tho they tell us, "We disagree in our views on the Scriptures, but agree in our confession of Christ," yet this is absolutely untrue. Their Christ is not the Christ of the Reformed

churches. Christ, as the Reformed Church according to the Scripture and the orthodox Church of all ages confesses Him, is the Son of God, eternal Partaker of the divine nature, who in time, in addition to the divine nature, adopted the human nature, uniting these two natures in the unity of one person. He unites them in such a way, however, that these natures continue each by itself, do not blend, and do not communicate the attributes of the one to the other. Hence two natures are united most intimately in the unity of one person, but continuing to the end, and even now in heaven, to be two natures each with its own peculiar properties. "He is one not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God" (Confession of Athanasius, article 35). And again; "He is one not by mixture of substance, but by unity of person" (article 36).

In like manner do we confess in article 19 of our Confession: "We believe that by this conception the person of the Son is inseparably united and connected with the human nature; so that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person; yet each nature retains its own distinct properties. As then the divine nature has always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life, filling heaven and earth; so also hath the human nature not lost its properties, but remained a creature, having beginning of days, being a finite nature, and retaining all the properties of a real body. And tho He hath by His Resurrection given immortality to the same, nevertheless He hath not changed the reality of His human nature; forasmuch as our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of His body. But these two natures were so closely united in one person that they were not separated even by His death."

This clear confession, which the orthodox Church has always defended against the Eutychians and Monothelites, and which our Reformed churches in particular have maintained in opposition to the Lutherans and Mystics, is opposed by the Ethical view all along the line. The late Prof. Chantepie de la Saussaye said distinctly in his Inaugural that it was impossible to maintain the old representation

on this point, which was also upheld by our Confession, and that his confession of the Mediator was another. Hence the Ethical wing deviates from the old paths not only in the matter of the Scripture, but also in the confession of the person of the Redeemer. It teaches what the Reformed churches have always denied, and denies what the Reformed churches have always maintained in opposition to churches less correct in their views.

Under the influence which Schleiermacher's training among the Moravian brethren, and his pantheistic development and Lutheran dogmatics, have exerted upon the Ethicals, a Christ is preached by them who is not the Christ to whom the orthodox Church of all ages has bowed the knee; and whose confession has always been preserved incorrupt by the Reformed, and especially by our national, theologians. For their conclusions are as follows:

1st. That the Incarnation of the Son of God would have taken place even if Adam had not sinned.

2d. That He is Mediator not only between the sinner and the holy God, but also between the finite and the infinite.

3d. That the two natures mix together, and communicate their attributes to each other in such a measure that from Him, who is both God and man, there proceeds that which is divine-human.

4th. That this divine-human nature is communicated to believers also.

This error is immediately recognized by the use of the word divine-human. Not that we condemn its use in every instance. On the contrary, when it refers not to the natures, but to the person, its use is legitimate, for in the one person the two natures are inseparably united. Still it is better in our days to be chary of the word. Divine-human has in the present time a pantheistic meaning, denoting that the contrast existing between God and man did not exist in Jesus,

but that in Him the antithesis of the divine and the human was not found.

And this is wholly anti-Scriptural, and results in its final consequences in a pure theosophy. For the actual result is a blending of the two natures: a divine nature in God, a human nature in man, and a divine-human nature in the Mediator. So that if man had not fallen, the Mediator would nevertheless have appeared in a divine-human nature.

This is a truly abhorrent doctrine. It puts in the place of the Savior from our sins another and entirely different person; the contrasts between the Creator and the creature disappear, the divine-human nature of the Christ is actually placed above the divine nature itself. For the Mediator in the divine-human nature possesses something that is lacking in the divine nature, viz., its reconciliation with the human.

This shows how much further the Ethicals have departed from the pure confession of the Lord Jesus Christ than is generally believed. According to them there is in the Person of the Mediator a kind of new nature, a kind of third nature, a kind of higher nature, which is called "human-divine." And the union with Christ is found (not subjectively, but objectively) in the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ pours into us that new, third, higher kind, viz., the divine-human nature. Hence the regenerate are the persons who have received this new, third, higher kind of nature. This has no connection with sin, but would have appeared even in the absence of sin. The reconciliation of sinners is something additional, and does not touch the root of the matter.

The real and principal thing is, that the Mediator between the "finite and the infinite" (to use the very words of Professor Gunning) imparts unto us, who have the lower, human nature, this new, third, higher, divine-human nature.

Not that the human nature is to be removed and the divine-human nature take its place. No, indeed; but, according to the Ethical theologians, the human nature is originally intended and destined to be thus ennobled, refined, and exalted. As the slip of a plant, under the influence of the sun, develops and produces by and by choice flowers, so does the human nature develop and unfold itself under the influence of the Sun of Righteousness into this higher nature.

That this must be accomplished by means of regeneration is on account of sin. If there had been no fall in Paradise, and no sin after the fall, there would have been no regeneration, and our nature's lower degree would have passed over spontaneously into that higher, divine-human nature. And this is, in the circles of the Ethicals, the basis of that much-lauded unio mystica with the Christ.

The invisible church is, according to their view, that circle of men into whom this higher and nobler tincture of life has been instilled, and others not so favored still stand without. Hence their lack of appreciation of the visible churches; for does not the divine-human tincture of life determine this circle of itself? Hence their preference for the "unconscious"; conscious confession and expression of thought is immaterial; the principal thing is to be endowed with this new, higher, more refined, divine-human nature. This explains their generally lofty bearing toward men not sharing their opinions. They belong to a sort of spiritual aristocracy; they are of nobler descent, acquainted with more refined forms, living a higher life, from which with pitying eyes they look down upon those who do not dream their dreams of the higher life-tincture.

Let it suffice here only to say that the Reformed churches can not indorse this representation of the unio mystica, but must positively reject it.

The Mystical Union with Immanuel

"Christ in you the hope of glory."—Col. 1:27.

THE union of believers with Christ their Head is not effected by instilling a divine-human life-tincture into the soul. There is no divine-human life. There is a most holy Person, who unites in Himself the divine and the human life; but both natures continue unmixed, unblended, each retaining its own properties. And since there is no divine-human life in Jesus, He can not instil it into us.

We do heartily acknowledge that there is a certain conformity and similarity between the divine nature and the human, for man was created after the image of God; wherefore St. Peter could say, "That we become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4); but, according to all sound expositors, this means only that unto the sinner are imparted the attributes of goodness and holiness, which he originally possessed in his own nature in common with the divine nature, but which he lost by sin.

Compared with the nature of material things, and with that of animals and of devils, there is indeed a feature of conformity and similarity between the divine and human natures. But this may not be understood as obliterating the boundary between the divine nature and the human. And, therefore, let this glorious word of St. Peter no longer be abused in order to justify a philosophic system which has nothing in common with the soberness and simplicity of Holy Scripture.

What St. Peter calls "to become partaker of the divine nature" is called in another place, to become the children of God. But altho Christ is the Son of God, and we are called the children of God, this does not make the Sonship of Christ and our sonship to stand on the same plane and to be of the same nature. We are but the adopted children, altho we have another descent, while He is the actual and eternal Son. While He is essentially the eternal Son, partaker of the

divine nature, which in the unity of His Person He unites with the human nature, we are merely restored to the likeness of the divine nature which we had lost by sin.

Hence as "to be adopted as a child," and "to be the Son forever" are contrasts, so are also the following: "to have the divine nature in Himself," and "to be only partakers of the divine nature."

The friend who shares a bereaved mother's mourning is not bereaved himself, but through love and pity he has become partaker of that mourning. In like manner, accepting these great and precious promises, believers become partakers of the divine nature, altho in themselves wholly devoid of that nature. Partaker does not denote what one possesses in himself, as his own, but a partial communication of what does not belong to him, but to another.

Hence this glorious, apostolic word should no longer be used in pantheistic sense. As it is unlawful to say that we are the essential children of God, but must humbly confess, through Christ, to be His adopted children, so it is not lawful to say that by faith we become in ourselves bearers of the divine nature; but we must be satisfied with the confession that through the fellowship of love, God makes us partakers of the vital emotions of the divine nature, so far as our human capacities are able to experience them.

This brings us back to the unio mystica with Christ, which, altho a great and impenetrable mystery, ought to be sufficiently defined to keep us from falling into error. We mention, therefore, its vital points and thus embody our confession concerning it:

1st. The first point is, that the Lord Jesus does not require us to be purified and sanctified in order to be united to His Person.

Jesus is a Savior not of the righteous, but of sinners. And for this reason He has adopted the human nature: not as the Baptist teaches, by receiving from heaven a newly created body, like the Paradise body of Adam, but by becoming partaker, as the little children, of our

flesh and blood. And the same is true of His union with believers. He does not wait until they are pure and holy, then to be spiritually betrothed unto them; but He betroths Himself unto them that they may become pure and holy. He is the rich Bridegroom, and the soul the poverty-stricken bride. In the shining robes of His righteousness He comes and, finding her black, unsightly, and in her native defilement, He says not, "Get thyself clean, wise, and rich, and as a rich bride I will betroth thee unto Me"; but, "I take thee just as thou art. I say unto thee, in thy blood, Live. Tho thou art poor, betrothing thee, I will make thee partaker of Myself and of My treasure. But a treasure of thine own thou shalt never possess."

This point should be firmly established. The Lord Jesus unites unto Himself not the righteous, but sinners. He marries not the pure and the spotless, but the polluted and the unclean.

When the holy apostle Paul speaks of a bride whom he will present without spot or wrinkle, he has reference to something entirely different: not to His betrothal with the individual, but to the marriage of the Lord Jesus with His Church as a whole. So long as the Church continues in the earth, separated from Him, she is His bride, until in the fulness of time, the separation ended, He will introduce her to the rich and full communion of the united life in glory.

2d. The second point to which we call attention is the time when this union begins.

To say that this unio mystica is the result of faith alone is only partly correct. For Scripture teaches very distinctly that we were already in the Lord Jesus when He died on Calvary, and when He arose from the dead; that we ascended with Him unto heaven; and that for eighteen centuries we have been seated with Him at the right hand of God. Hence we must carefully distinguish between the five stages in which the union with Immanuel unfolds itself:

The first of these five stages lies in the decree of God. From the very moment that the Father gave us to the Son, we were really His own, and a relation was established between Him and us, not weak and feeble, but so deep and extensive that all subsequent relations with Immanuel spring from this fundamental root-relation alone.

The second stage is in the Incarnation, when, adopting our flesh, entering into our nature, He made that preexisting, essential relation actual; when the bond of union passed from the divine will, i.e., from the decree, into actual existence. Christ in the flesh carries all believers in the loins of His grace, as Adam carried all the children of men in the loins of his flesh. Hence, not figuratively nor metaphorically, but in the proper sense, Scripture teaches that when Jesus died and arose we died and arose with Him and in Him.

The third stage begins when we ourselves appear not in our birth, but in our regeneration; when the Lord God begins to work supernaturally in our souls; when in love's hour Eternal Love conceives in us the child of God. Until then the mystic union was hid in the decree and in the Mediator; but in and by regeneration the person appears with whom the Lord Jesus will establish it. However, not regeneration first and then something new, viz., union with Christ, but in the very moment of completed regeneration that union becomes an internally accomplished fact.

This third stage must be carefully distinguished from the fourth, which begins not with the quickening, but with the first conscious exercise of faith. For, altho in regeneration the faculty of faith was implanted, it may for a long time remain inactive; and only when the Holy Spirit causes it to act, producing genuine faith and conversion in us, is the union with Christ established subjectively.

This union is not the subsequent fruit of a higher degree of holiness, but coincides with the first exercise of faith. Faith which does not live in Christ is no faith, but its counterfeit. Genuine faith is wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, and all that He imparts to us He draws from

Christ. Hence there may be an apparent or pretended faith without the union with Christ, but not a real faith. Wherefore it is an assured fact that the first sigh of the soul, in its first exercise of faith, is the result of the wonderful union of the soul with its Surety.

We do not deny, however, that there is a gradual increase of the conscious realization, of the lively feeling, and of the free enjoyment of this union. A child possesses its mother from the first moment of its existence; but the sensible enjoyment of its mother's love gradually awakens and increases with the years, until he fully knows what a treasure God has given him in his mother. And thus the consciousness and enjoyment of what we have in our Savior becomes gradually clearer and deeper, until there comes a moment when we fully realize how rich God has made us in Jesus. And by this many are led to think that their union with Christ dates from that moment. This is only apparently so. Altho then they became fully conscious of their treasure in Christ, the union itself existed (even subjectively) from the moment of their first cry of faith.

This leads to the fifth and last stage, viz., death. Rejoicing in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory, altho not seeing Him, much more remains to be desired. Hence our union with Him does not attain its fullest unfolding until every lack be supplied and we see Him as He is; and in that blissful vision we shall be like Him, for then He will give us all that He has. Therefore faith makes us partakers first of Himself and then of all His gifts, as the Heidelberg Catechism clearly teaches.

3d. The third point to which we call attention is the nature of this union with Immanuel.

It has a nature peculiar to itself; it may be compared to other unions, but it can never be fully explained by them. Wonderful is the bond between body and soul; more wonderful still the sacramental bond of holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper; equally wonderful the vital union between mother and child in her blood, like that of the vine

and its growing branches; wonderful the bond of wedlock; and much more wonderful the union with the Holy Spirit, established by His indwelling. But the union with Immanuel is distinct from all these.

It is a union invisible and intangible; the ear fails to perceive it, and it eludes all investigation; yet it is very real union and communion, by which the life of the Lord Jesus directly affects and controls us. As the unborn babe lives on the mother-blood, which has its heart-beat outside of him, so we also live on the Christ-life, which has its heart-beat not in our soul, but outside of us, in heaven above, in Christ Jesus.

4th. In the fourth place, altho the union with Christ coincides with our covenant-relation to Him as the Head, yet it is not identical with it. Our relations of fellowship to Christ are many. There is a fellowship of feeling and inclination, of love and attachment; we are disciples of the Prophet; we are His blood-bought possession; the subjects of the King; and members of the Covenant of Grace of which He is the Head. But instead of absorbing the "unio mystica," they are all based upon it. Without this real bond all the others are only imaginary. Hence, while we know, feel, and confess that it is glorious to be safely hid in our Covenant-Head, it is sweeter, more precious and delightful to live in the mystical fellowship of Love.

CALLING AND REPENTANCE

The Calling of the Regenerate

"Whom He did predestinate, them He also called."—Rom. 8:30.

IN order to hear, the sinner, deaf by nature, must receive hearing ears. "He that hath ears let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

But by nature the sinner does not belong to these favored ones. This is a daily experience. Of two clerks in the same office, one obeys the call and the other rejects it; not because he despises it, but because he does not hear God's call in it. Hence God's quickening act antedates the sinner's hearing, and thus he becomes able to hear the Word.

The quickening, the implanting of the faith-faculty, and the uniting of the soul to Christ, apparently three acts, are in reality but one act, together constituting (objectively) the so-called first grace. In the operation of this grace the sinner is perfectly passive and indifferent; the subject of an action which does not involve the slightest operation, yielding, or even non-resistance on his part.

In fact, the sinner, being dead in trespasses and sins, is under this first grace like a soulless, motionless body, with all the passive properties belonging to a corpse. This fact can not be stated with sufficient force and emphasis. It is an absolute passivity. And every effort or inclination to claim for the sinner the minutest cooperation in this first grace destroys the Gospel, severs the artery of the

Christian confession, and is not only heretical, but anti-Scriptural in the highest sense.

This is the point where the sign-post is erected, where the roads divide, where the men of the purified, that is, the Reformed Confession, part company with their opponents.

Having stated this fact forcibly and definitely, it is of the utmost importance to state with equal emphasis that, in all the subsequent operations of grace (so-called second grace), this absolute passivity is made to cease by the wonderful act of the first grace. Hence in all subsequent grace the sinner to some extent cooperates.

In the first grace the sinner is absolutely like a corpse. But the sinner's first passivity and his subsequent cooperation must not be confounded. There is a passivity, after the Scripture, which can not be exaggerated, which must be left intact; but there is also a passivity which is pretended, anti-Scriptural, and sinful. The difference between the two is not that the former is partially cooperating, and the latter without any cooperation whatever. Surely by such temporizing the churches and the souls in them are not inspired with energy and enthusiasm. No; the difference between the sound and the sickly passivity consists herein, that the former, which is absolute and unlimited, belongs to the first grace, to which it is indispensable; while the latter clings to the second grace, where it does not belong.

Let there be clear insight into this truth, which is after all very simple. The elect but unregenerate sinner can do nothing, and the work that is to be wrought in him must be wrought by another. This is the first grace. But after this is accomplished he is no longer passive, for something was brought into him which in the second work of grace will cooperate with God.

But it is not implied that the elect and regenerate sinner is now able to do anything without God; or that if God should cease working in him, conversion and sanctification would follow of themselves. Both

these representations are thoroughly untrue, un-Reformed, and unchristian, because they detract from the work of the Holy Spirit in the elect. No; all spiritual good is of grace to the end: grace not only in regeneration, but at every step of the way of life. From the beginning to the end and throughout eternity the Holy Spirit is the Worker, of regeneration and conversion, of justification and every part of sanctification, of glorification, and of all the bliss of the redeemed. Nothing may be subtracted from this.

But while the Holy Spirit is the only Worker in the first grace, in all subsequent operations of grace the regenerate always cooperates with Him. Hence it is not true, as some say, that the regenerate is just as passive as the unregenerate; this only detracts from the work of the Holy Spirit in the first grace. Neither is it true that henceforth the regenerate is the principal worker, only assisted by the Holy Spirit; for this is equally derogatory to the Spirit's work in the second grace.

Both these errors should be opposed and rejected. For altho, on the one hand, it is said that the regenerate, considered out of Christ, still lies in the midst of death; yet, tho he be considered a thousand times out of Christ, he remains in Him, for once in His hand no one can pluck him out of it. And altho, on the other hand, the regenerate is constantly admonished to be active and diligent, yet, tho the horse does the pulling, it is not the horse but the driver who drives the carriage.

Reserving this last point until we consider sanctification, we now consider the calling, for this sheds more light upon the confession of the Reformed churches concerning the second grace than any other part of the work of grace.

After the elect sinner is born again, i.e., quickened, endowed with the faculty of faith, and united with Jesus, the next work of grace in him is calling, of which Scripture speaks with such emphasis and so often. "But as He which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of

conversation"; "Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"; "The God of all grace who hath called us unto His eternal glory"; "Whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ;" "Who hath called you unto His Kingdom and Glory"; "I beseech you to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye were called;" and not to mention more: "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall."

In the Sacred Scripture calling has, like regeneration, a wider sense and a more limited.

In the former sense, it means to be called to the eternal glory; hence this includes all that precedes, i.e., calling to repentance, to faith, to sanctification, to the performance of duty, to glory, to the eternal kingdom, etc.

Of this, however, we do not speak now. It is now our intention to consider the calling in its limited sense, which signifies exclusively the calling whereby we are called from darkness into light, i.e., the call unto repentance.

This call unto repentance is by many placed upon the same level with the "drawing," of which, e.g., Jesus speaks: "No man can come unto Me except the Father draw him." This we find also in some of St. Paul's words: "Who hath delivered [Dutch translation, drawn] us from the power of darkness"; "That He might deliver [draw] us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father." However, this seems to me less correct. He that must be drawn seems to be unwilling. He that is called must be able to come. The first implies that the sinner is still passive, and therefore refers to the operation of the first grace; the second addresses the sinner himself, and counts him able to come, and hence belongs to the second grace.

This "calling" is a summons. It is not merely the calling of one to tell him something, but a call implying the command to come; or a

beseeking call, as when St. Paul prays: "As tho God did beseech you, be ye reconciled to God"; or as in the Proverbs: "My son, give Me thine heart."

God sends this call forth by the preachers of the Word: not by the independent preaching of irresponsible men, but by those whom He Himself sends forth; men especially endowed, hence whose calling is not their own, but His. They are the ministers of the Word, royal ambassadors, in the name of the King of Kings demanding our heart, life, and person; yet whose value and honor depend exclusively upon their divine mission and commission. As the value of an echo depends upon the correct returning of the word received, so does their value, honor, and significance depend solely upon the correctness wherewith they call, as an echo of the Word of God. He who calls correctly fills the highest conceivable office on earth; for he calls kings and emperors, standing above them. But he who calls incorrectly or not at all is like a sounding brass; as a minister of the Word he is worthless and without honor, True to the pure Word, he is all; without it, he is nothing. Such is the responsibility of the preacher.

This should be noticed lest Arminianism creep into the holy office. The preacher must be but instrument of the Holy Spirit; even the sermon must be the product of the Holy Ghost. To suppose that a preacher can have the least authority, honor, or official significance outside of the Word, is to make the office Arminian; not the Holy Spirit, but the dominie, is the worker; he works with all his might, and the Holy Spirit may be the minister's assistant. To avoid such mistake, our Reformed churches have always purged themselves of the leaven of clericalism.

And through this office the call goes forth from the pulpit, in the catechetical class, in the family, in writing, and by personal exhortation. However, not always to every sinner directly through the office. On a ship at sea God may use a godly commander to call sinners to repentance. In a hospital without spiritual supervision the

Lord may use a pious man or woman, both to nurse the sick and call their souls to repentance. In a village where the quasi-minister neglects his duty, the Lord God may be pleased to draw souls to life by printed sermons and books, by a newspaper even, or by individual exhortation.

And yet in all these the authority to call reposes in the divine embassy of the ministry of the Word. For the instruments of the call, whether they were persons or printed books, proceeded from the office. The persons were themselves called through the office, and they only transmitted the divine message; and the printed books offered on paper what otherwise is heard in the sanctuary.

This calling of the Holy Spirit proceeds in and through the preaching of the Word, and calls upon the regenerated sinner to arise from death, and to let Christ give him light. It is not a calling of persons still unregenerate, simply because such have no hearing ear.

It is true that the preaching of missionary or minister of the Word addresses itself also to others, but this is not at all in conflict with what we have just said. In the first place, because there is also an outward call to the unregenerate, in order to deprive them of an excuse, and to show that they have no hearing ears. And second, because the minister of the Word does not know whether a man is born again or not, wherefore he may make no difference.

As a rule, every baptized person should be reckoned as belonging to the regenerated (but not always converted); wherefore the preacher must call every baptized person to repentance, as tho he were born again. But let no one commit the mistake of applying this rule, which applies only to the Church as a whole, to every person in the Church. This would be either the climax of thoughtlessness or a complete misunderstanding of the reality of the grace of God.

The Coming of the Called

"That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth."—Rom. 9:2.

THE question is, whether the elect cooperate in the call.

We say, Yes; for the call is no call, in the fullest sense of the word, unless the called one can hear and hears so distinctly that it impresses him, causes him to rise and to obey God. For this reason our fathers, for the sake of clearness, used to distinguish between the ordinary call and the effectual call.

God's call does not go forth to the elect alone. The Lord Jesus said: "Many are called, few are chosen." And the issue shows that masses of men die unconverted, altho called by the outward, ordinary call.

Nor should this outward call be slighted or esteemed unimportant; for by it the judgment of many shall be made the heavier in the day of judgment: "If the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Therefore it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you"; "And the servant which knew the Lord's will and did not according to His will shall be beaten with many stripes." Moreover, the effect of this outward call reaches sometimes much deeper than is generally supposed, and brings one sometimes to the very point of real conversion.

The unregenerate are not so insensible to the truth as never to be touched by it. The decisive words of Heb. 6, concerning the apparently converted who have even tasted of the heavenly gift, prove the contrary. St. Peter speaks of sows which were washed and then returned to the wallowing in the mire. One can be persuaded to be almost a Christian. But for the selling of his goods the rich young ruler would have been won for Christ. Wherefore the effect of the ordinary call is by no means as weak and meager as is commonly

believed. In the parable of the sower the fourth class of hearers alone belong to the elect, for they alone bear fruit. Still there is among two of the remaining classes a considerable amount of growth. One of them even produces high stalks and ears; only there is no fruit.

And for this reason the men that company with the people of God should earnestly examine their own hearts, whether their following of the Word is the result of having the seed sown in "good ground." Oh, there is so much of illumination and of delight even; and yet only to be choked, because it does not contain the genuine germ of life.

All these unregenerate persons lack saving grace. They hear only with the carnal understanding. They receive the Word, but only in the field of their unsanctified imagination. They let it work upon their natural conscience. It plays merely upon the waves of their natural emotions. Thus they may be moved to tears, and they ardently love whatever so affects them. Yea, they often perform many good works which are truly praiseworthy; they may even give their goods to the poor, and their bodies to be burned. Their salvation is therefore considered to be a matter of fact. But the holy apostle completely destroys their hope, saying: "Tho you speak with the tongues of men and of angels, tho you understand all mystery, tho you give all your goods to feed the poor, and tho you give your body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth you nothing."

Hence to be God's child and not a sounding brass, deep insight into the divine mysteries, an excited imagination, a troubled conscience, and waves of feeling are not required, for all these may be experienced without any real covenant grace; but what is needed is true, deep love operating in the heart, illuminating and vitalizing all these things.

Adam's sin consisted in this, that he banished all the love of God from his heart. Now it is impossible to be neutral or indifferent toward God. When Adam ceased to love God, he began to hate Him. And it is this hatred of God which no wlies at the bottom of the heart

of every child of Adam. Hence conversion means this, that a man get rid of that hatred and receive love in its place. He who says from the heart, "I love the Lord," is all right. What more can he desire!

But as long as there is no love for God, there is nothing. For mere willingness to do something for God, even to bear great sacrifices, and to be very pious and benevolent, except it spring from the right motive, is in its deepest ground nothing but a despising of God. However beautiful the veneering, all these apparently good works are inwardly cankered, sin-eaten, and decayed. Love alone imparts the real flavor to the sacrifice. Wherefore the holy apostle declares so sternly and sharply: "Tho you give your body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth you nothing."

To perform good works in order to be saved, or to oblige God, or to make one's own piety lofty and conspicuous, is a growth from the old root and at the most but a semblance of love. To cherish true love for God is to be constrained by love to yield one's ego with all that it is and has, and to let God be God again. And the ordinary, the general, the outward call never has such effect; it is incapable of producing it.

Wherefore we leave the ordinary call and return to the call which is particular, wonderful, inward, and effectual; which addresses itself not to all, but exclusively to the elect.

This call, which is spoken of as "heavenly" (Heb. 3:1), as "holy" (2 Tim. 1:9), as "being without repentance" (Rom. 11:29), is "according to God's purpose" (Rom. 8:28), is "from above in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Phil. 3:14), and does not have its starting-point in the preaching. He that calls by it is God, not the minister. And this call goes forth by the means of two agencies, one coming to man from without and the other from within. Both these agencies are effectual, and the call has accomplished its purpose and the sinner has come to repentance as soon as their workings meet and unite in the center of his being.

Hence we deny that the regenerate, hearing the preached Word, will come of himself. We do not thus understand their cooperation. If the inward call is sufficient, how is it that the regenerate can sometimes hear the preaching without arising, unrepentant, refusing to let Christ give him light? But we confess that the call of the regenerate is twofold: from without by the preached Word, and from within by the exhortation and conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Hence the work of the Holy Spirit in the calling is twofold:

The first work is, as He comes with the Word: the Word which is inspired, prepared, committed to writing, and preserved by Himself, who is God the Holy Ghost. And He brings that Word to the sinners by preachers whom He Himself has endowed with talents, animation, and spiritual insight. And so wonderfully does He conduct that preaching through the channel of the office and of the historical development of the confession, that at last it comes to him in the form and character required to affect and win him.

We see in this a very mysterious leading of the Holy Spirit. Afterward a preacher will learn that, under his preaching in such a church and at such an hour, a regenerate person was converted. And yet he had not specially prepared himself for it. Frequently he did not even know that person; much less his spiritual condition. And yet, without knowing it, his thoughts were guided and his word was prepared in such a way by the Holy Ghost; perhaps he looked at the man in such a manner that his word, in connection with the Spirit's inward operation, became to him the real and concrete Word of God. We hear it often said: "That was directly preached at me." And so it was. It should be understood, however, that it was not the minister who preached at you, for he did not even think of you; but it was the Holy Spirit Himself. It was He who thought of you. It was He who had it all prepared for you. It was He Himself who wrought in you.

The ministers of the Word should therefore be exceedingly careful not in the least to boast of the conversions that occur under their

ministry. When after days of failure the fisherman draws his net full of fishes, is this cause for the net to boast itself? Did it not come up empty again and again; and then was it not nearly torn asunder by the multitude of fishes?

To say that this proves the efficiency of the preacher is against the Scripture. There may be two ministers, the one well grounded in doctrine, the other but lightly furnished; and yet the former has no conversions in his church, while the latter is being richly blessed. In this the Lord God is and remains the Sovereign Lord. He passes by the heavily armed champions in Saul's army, and David, with scarcely any weapons at all, slays the giant Goliath. All that a preacher has to do is to consider how, in obedience to his Lord, he may minister the Word, leaving results with the Lord. And when the Lord God gives him conversions, and Satan whispers, "What an excellent preacher you are, that it was given you to convert so many men!" then he is to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan," giving the glory to the Holy Spirit alone.

However, it is not the Holy Spirit's only care in such a way and focus of life to cause the Word to come to a regenerate person, but He adds also a second work, viz., that by which the preached Word effectively enters the very center of his heart and life.

By this second care He so illuminates his natural understanding and strengthens his natural ability and imagination that he receives the general tenor of the preached Word and thoroughly understands its contents.

But this is not all, for even pretended believers may have this. The seed of the Word attains this growth also in those who have received the seed into a rocky ground and among thorns. Hence to this is added the illumination of his understanding, which wonderful gift enables him not only to apprehend the general sense of the preached Word, but also to perceive and realize that this Word comes to him directly from God; that it affects and condemns his very being, thus

causing him to penetrate into its hidden essence and feel the sharp sting which effects conviction.

Lastly, the Holy Spirit plies this conviction—which otherwise would quickly vanish—so long and so severely, that finally the sting, like the keen edge of a lancet, pierces the thick skin and lays open the festering sore. This is in the called a very wonderful operation. The general understanding puts the matter before him; the illumination reveals to him what it contains; and the conviction puts the sharp two-edged sword directly upon his heart. Then, however, he is inclined to shrink from that sword; not to let it pierce through, but to let it glance harmlessly from the soul. But then the Holy Spirit, in full activity, continues to press that sword of conviction, driving it so forcibly into the soul that at last it cuts through and takes effect.

But this does not end the calling. For after the Holy Spirit has done all this, He begins to operate upon the will; not by forcibly bending it, as an iron rod in the strong hand of the blacksmith, but by making it, tho stiff and unyielding, pliant and tender from within. He could not do this in the unregenerate. But having laid in regeneration the foundation of all these subsequent operations in the soul, He proceeds to build upon it; or, to take another figure. He draws the sprouts from the germ planted in the ground. They do not start of themselves, but He draws them out of the germ. A grain of wheat deposited in a desk remains what it is; but warmed by the sun in the soil, the heat causes it to sprout. And so it is here. The vital germ can do nothing of itself; it remains what it is. But when the Holy Spirit causes the fostering rays of the Sun of Righteousness to play upon it, then it germinates, and thus He draws from it the blade and the ear and the corn in the ear.

Hence the yielding of the will is the result of a tenderness and emotion and affection which sprang from the implanted germ of life, by which the will, which was at first inflexible, became pliant; by which that which was inclined to the left was drawn to the right. And so, by this last act, conviction, with all that it contains, was brought

into the will; and this resulted in the yielding of self, giving glory to God.

And in this way love entered the soul—love tender, genuine, and mysterious, the ecstasy of which vibrates in our hearts during all our after-life.

And this finishes the exposition of the divine work of calling. It belongs to the elect alone. It is irresistible, and no man can hinder it. Without it no sinner ever passed from the bitterness of hatred to the sweetness of love. When the call and regeneration coincide, they seem to be one; and so they are to our consciousness; but actually they are distinct. They differ in this respect, that regeneration takes place independently of the will and understanding; that it is wrought in us without our aid or cooperation; while in calling, the will and understanding begin to act, so that we hear with both the outward and inward ear, and with the inclined will are willing to go out to the light.

Conversion of All That Come

"Turn Thou me and I shall be turned."—Jer. 31:18.

THE elect, born again and effectually called, converts himself. To remain unconverted is impossible; but he inclines his ear, he turns his face to the blessed God, he is converted in the fullest sense of the word.

In conversion the fact of cooperation on the part of the saved sinner assumes a clearly defined and perceptible character. In regeneration there was none; in the calling there was a beginning of it; in conversion proper it became a fact. When the Holy Spirit regenerates

a man, it is an "Effatha," i.e., He opens the ear. When He effectually calls him, He speaks into that opened ear, which cooperates by receiving the sound, that is, by harkening. But when the Holy Spirit actually converts the man, then the act of man coalesces with the act of the Holy Spirit, and it is said: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him"; and in another place: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"

It is a remarkable fact that the Sacred Scripture refers to conversion almost one hundred and forty times as being an act of man, and only six times as an act of the Holy Ghost. It is repeated again and again: "Repent and turn to the Lord your God"; "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord" (Jer. 3:22); "Sinners shall return unto Thee" (Psalm 51:13, Dutch Version); "Repent and do thy first works" (Rev. 2:5). But conversion as an act of the Holy Spirit is spoken of only in Psalm 19:8, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"; in Jer. 26:18, "Turn Thou me and I shall be turned"; in Acts 11:18, "That God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life"; Rom. 2:4, "That the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance"; in 2 Tim. 2:25, "If God peradventure will give them repentance"; in Heb. 6:6, "That it is impossible to renew such (as fall away) to repentance."

This fact should be carefully considered. When Scripture presents conversion as the Spirit's act but six times, and as man's act one hundred and forty times, in preaching the same proportion should be observed. And, therefore, the preachers who, when preaching on conversion, treat it almost invariably in its passive aspect and in the abstract; who apparently lack the courage and boldness to declare to their hearers that it is their duty to convert themselves unto God, seriously err. It has a very pious look, but it is against the Scripture. And yet it is perfectly natural that one should hesitate to say, "You must convert yourself," so long as regeneration and conversion are still confounded. For then the declaration, "You must convert yourself," ignores the sovereignty of God, and implies that a dead sinner is still able to do something of himself. And this is the reason why the preachers who will not surrender the sovereignty of God,

and who will not deduct anything from the deadness of the sinner, are afraid "to speak to deaf ears." Hence they pray for the conversion of the hearers, but dare not in the Name of the Lord demand it of them.

And nothing may be deducted either from the divine sovereignty or from the sinner's deadness. Every demand for conversion which has such tendency is Pelagianism, and must be rejected. But if the teaching of the Reformed Church in this respect be thoroughly understood, the whole difficulty disappears.

It should be noticed, however, that Scripture, speaking of conversion, does not always imply that it is saving conversion. The real work of salvation is always accompanied on its way by a phantom. Alongside of saving faith goes temporal faith; alongside of the effectual call, the ordinary call; and alongside of saving conversion, ordinary conversion.

Conversion in its saving sense occurs but once in a man's life, and this act can never be repeated. Once having passed from death unto life, he is alive and will never return unto death. Perdition is not a stream spanned by many bridges; nor does the saint, tossed between endless hopes and fears, cross the bridge leading to life, by and by to return by another to the shores of death. No; there is but one bridge, which can be crossed but once; and he that has crossed it is kept by the power of God from going back. Tho all powers should combine to draw him back, God is stronger than all, and no one shall pluck him out of His hand.

We state this as distinctly and forcibly as possible, for at this point souls are often led astray. It is heard repeatedly these days. "Your conversion is not a momentary act, but an act of life which repeats itself constantly; and wo to the man who fails for a single day to be converted anew." And this is altogether wrong. Language should not be so confounded. Tho the child grows for twenty years after he is born, and before he attains maturity, yet he is born but once, and

neither conception nor pregnancy before it, nor growth after it, is called "birth."

The fixed boundary should be respected also in this instance. It is true that conversion is preceded by something else, but that is called not "conversion," but "regeneration" and "calling"; and so there is something following "conversion," but that is called "sanctification." No doubt the word "conversion" may also be applied to the return of the converted but backslidden child of God, after the example of Scripture; but then it refers not to the saving act of conversion, but to the continuance of the work once begun, or to a return not from death, but from a temporary going astray.

In order to discriminate correctly in this matter, it is necessary to notice the four fold use of the word conversion in the Scripture.

1. "Conversion," in its widest scope, signifies a forsaking of wickedness and a disposition to morality. In this sense it is said of the Ninevites that God saw their works, that they turned from their evil works. This does not imply, however, that all these Ninevites belonged to the elect, and that every one of them was saved.

2. "Conversion," in its limited sense, signifies saving conversion, as in Isa. 55:7: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

3. And again, "conversion" signifies that, even after it has become a fact in our hearts, its principles must be applied to every relation of our life. A converted person may for a long time continue to indulge in bad habits and ungodly practises, but gradually his eyes are opened for the evil, and then he repents and forsakes the one after the other. So we read in Ezek. 18:30: "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions."

4. Lastly, "conversion" signifies the return of converted persons to their first love, after a season of coldness and weakness in the faith,

e.g.: "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do thy first works" (Rev. 2:5).

But in this connection we speak of saving conversion, of which we make the following remarks:

First—It is not the spontaneous act of the regenerate. Without the Holy Spirit conversion would not follow regeneration. Even tho called, he could not come of himself. Hence it is of primary importance to acknowledge the Holy Spirit, and to honor His work as the first cause of conversion as well as of regeneration and calling. As no one can pray as he ought unless the Holy Spirit prays in him with groans that can not be uttered, so no regenerate and called person can convert himself as he ought unless the Holy Spirit begin and continue the work in him. The redemptive work is not like the growing plant, increasing of itself. Nay, if the saint is a temple of God, the Holy Spirit dwells in him. And this indwelling indicates that everything accomplished by the saint is wrought in him in communion with, by the incitement and through the animation of the Holy Spirit. The implanted life is not an isolated germ left to root in the soul without the Holy Spirit and the Mediator, but it is carried, kept, bedewed, and fostered from moment to moment out of Christ by the Holy Spirit. As men can not speak without air and the operation of Providence vitalizing the organs of respiration and articulation, so it is impossible that the regenerated man can live and speak and act from the new life without being supported, incited, and animated by the Holy Spirit.

Hence when the Holy Spirit calls that man and he turns himself, then there is not the slightest part in this act of the will which is not supported, incited, and animated by the Holy Spirit.

Second—This saving conversion is also the conscious and voluntary choice and act of the person born again and called. While the air and impulse to speak must come from without, and my organs of speech must be supported by the providence of God, yet it is I who speak.

And in much stronger sense does the Holy Spirit in conversion work upon the wheels and springs of man's regenerated personality, so that all His operations must pass through man's ego.

Many of His operations do not affect the ego, as in Balaam's case. But not so in conversion. Then the Holy Spirit works only through us. Whatever He wills He brings into our will; He causes all His actions to be effected through the organism of our being.

Hence man must be commanded, "Convert thyself." The teacher bids the pupil speak, altho he knows that the child can not do so unaided by Providence. In the new life the ego depends upon the Holy Spirit who dwells and works in him. But in conversion he knows nothing of this indwelling, nor that he is born again; and it would be useless to speak to him about it. He must be told, "Convert thyself." If the Spirit's action accompanies that word, the man will convert himself; if not, he will continue unconverted. But tho he convert himself, he will not boast, I have done this myself, but bow down in thankfulness and glorify that divine work by which he was converted.

In these two we find the evidence of genuine conversion: first, the man bidden, converts himself, and then he gratefully gives glory to the Holy Spirit alone. Not that we fear a man's conversion will be hindered by some one's neglect. In all the work of God's grace His Almightyness sweeps away everything that resists, so that all opposition melts away like wax, and every mountain of pride flees from His presence. Neither slothfulness nor neglect can ever hinder an elect person from passing from death into life at the appointed time.

But there is a responsibility for the preacher, for the pastor, for parents and guardians. To be free from a man's blood, we must tell every man that conversion is his urgent duty; and to be without excuse before God, after his conversion, we must give thanks to God, who alone has accomplished it in and through His creature.

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