



THE  
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A,  
**FREE CONVERSATION**  
ON  
**THE UNPARDONABLE SIN:**

WHEREIN  
**THE BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT,**  
THE  
**FINAL APOSTASY,**  
AND  
**THE SIN UNTO DEATH,**  
**ARE SHOWN TO HAVE BEEN ORIGINALLY DISTINCT.**

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BY **JAMES P. WILSON.**

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*Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit;*

**BE IT REMEMBERED**, That on the twenty-fifth day of October, in the fifty-fifth year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1830, **TOWAR, J. & D. M. HOGAN**, of the said district, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, to wit:

**A Free Conversation on the Unpardonable Sin : wherein the Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Final Apostasy, and the Sin unto Death, are shown to have been originally distinct. By James P. Wilson.**

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned." And also to the act entitled "An act supplementary to an act entitled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned," and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

**D. CALDWELL,**  
*Clerk of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.*

1834

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A CONVERSATION  
ON  
IRREMISSIBLE GUILT.

BETWEEN A PASTOR, A MISSIONARY, AND A  
HEARER.

*Pastor.* Divine revelation necessarily possesses the highest excellence; yet its authority rests, neither upon its accordance with reason, nor its utility; but upon the will of the rightful Sovereign. The rational subjects of his moral government are bound to no impossibilities, and indulged in no improprieties; neither may the heralds of the gospel demand their faith without evidence; nor they, proofs, of which the things are incapable. That repentance which characterizes a right disposition, is seen to follow discreet, temperate, and affectionate appeals

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to the understanding, rather than impassioned crimination; for conscience, itself incapable of compulsion, must be approached by the voice of reason. We are soon to realize the scenes to which we have been directing the attention of others; it is not enough that we have spoken the truth; our own conviction of it will be found essential to ourselves. Preparing for our exit, we may anticipate, with pleasing emotions, the future success of those, upon whom we have cast our mantle; who shall transmit to generations yet unborn, the evangelical message, and when the harvest is gathered in, each of us shall *stand in his lot*, and receive from the Judge, what ought to be awarded.

*Missionary.* If there be not full persuasion, there is guilt; even when our minds entirely acquiesce, and conscience coerces, our responsibility for the truth of what we teach, is tremendous. How appalling even the possibility of self-deception, when like the senseless sign, we merely point others to an entrance, whilst exposed ourselves to the storm; better never to have existed, than be unable to an-

swer the posing question, who hath required these things at your hands? When arduous labour, and protracted preparatory studies have removed all fear of man; the responsibilities of every sermon, will surpass his who disposes the movements of a field of battle. Justice to ourselves requires decisiveness only in essentials; and that existing diversities on minor points should not be concealed. Should duty and conscience require an expression of opinion, and also to support it; forbearance and fraternal affection should mark our progress, whilst we freely concede to others, the privilege we assume, of judging for ourselves.

*Hearer.* Could doubtful points be always treated as such, and the original scriptures, rather than theological systems, be made the foundation of doctrines, the truth would be better known, and our sensibilities often spared. Yesterday's sermon, was, I suppose, in all respects, orthodox with Protestants, but I hope, in some things, at variance from the sacred word; nevertheless the representations and the confidence of the speaker have pro-

duced a disquietude which prohibits concealment, and prompts to further inquiry.

*Missionary.* To have wounded unnecessarily the peace of a single individual is to me extremely painful. If I have misrepresented the language of the Saviour, on the sin against the Holy Ghost, my only excuse must be the humiliating claim of ignorance.

*Pastor.* Your sermon consisted chiefly of theological contributions on the sin against the Holy Ghost, the final apostasy, and the sin unto death; all of which you considered as the same unpardonable sin; having in these things, as well as the interpretation of your text,\* conformed to common views, your hearers must not complain. Whether the things you taught are founded on sacred revelation, is a matter between you and your God. Reason should be carefully exercised, both in discriminating, what has been given by inspiration, and in investigating its original meaning; the inquiry ever being, *what God has spoken*, and by no means *what he ought*

\* Matt. xii. 32.



*to have said.* This is presumptuous dictation, the other the humble pursuit of truth. You gave my people, what I wished them to hear, the common representation of your subject. From me conscience exacts, in this instance, a deviation from the beaten path; deference, nevertheless, to common sentiment has generally concealed the diversity, or prohibited boldness in what duty demands. Knowing that *as you believe you speak*, I was glad that the received opinion should be fully represented; and whether *it* be incorrect, or *that of the first ages*, which I have adopted, we have neither been knowingly *false for God, nor done evil that good might come.*

*Missionary.* Had I surmised a difference, the collision had been escaped. Yet it may prove an occasion of eliciting knowledge. That there is a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and that for this, there is no forgiveness, either in this world or the next, appear to me to have been equally, and expressly asserted by Christ himself. Do we both believe, there is *a sin against the Holy Ghost?*

*Pastor.* The Holy Ghost may be the ob-

ject of *blasphemy*, but the *sin against the Holy Ghost*, cannot be found in the scriptures. God is one, and supreme, and sin is against Him; were it committed against the persons distinctly, there would be three sovereigns. Since also, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, equally partake of the same authority and dignity, and have each the whole nature of the divinity, I know not why, upon the supposition that each was so distinctly a sovereign as to be an object of sin, the crimes should differ in magnitude. At the time Christ spoke your text, neither Spirit, nor Holy Spirit were commonly known as distinctive names of the third person. If in our translation the word Spirit had been adopted instead of the personal name Ghost in both verses,\* and the word *holy* not inserted by the translators in the former, readers would have understood by *Spirit* and *Holy Spirit*, the divinity; for *God is a Spirit*; and the sense would have guided them to Him, in whom *the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily*.

\* Mat. xii. 31, 32.

*Missionary.* The blasphemy was spoken against Him, whose power ejected the demon; and if Christ effected the miracle by the Holy Ghost, and maintaining the contrast between himself and the Holy Spirit, cautioned his enemies against referring the miracle to Beelzebub, lest they should commit the irremissible crime of *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, he seems to have intended the Third Person.

*Pastor.* That the human nature, though never separated from the divine in the person of Christ, might be aided by the Holy Ghost, or even by an angel I do not deny; but that he cast out devils, or performed any other miracles by the personal aid of the Holy Ghost, which is the thing you allege, I am not prepared to admit. Your interpretation also contrasts separate dignities in the second and third persons, but that could not have been the design of the passage; the more ancient exposition, which I follow, shows the difference between the human and divine natures in Christ; the very point in issue between him and his enemies on that occasion.

Neither did the Pharisees intend to speak against, or oppose the Holy Ghost; nor did the Saviour mean to charge them with that offence; but with maliciously resisting the displays, and proofs of his power as God. He gave them to understand, that the rejection of him as a man, and the imputation of evil to him, of which he was innocent, esteeming him an impostor, an enemy of Cæsar, or whatever they were accustomed to say against him as the Son of man, might not be found incompatible with their religious sincerity and salvation; but if whilst eye-witnesses of his divine power *in binding the strong man*, and ejecting a foul demon, they persisted against their own convictions, to affirm the true God, that is, the divine nature in Him, to be Beelzebub, the crime was not one of ignorance, but presumption and malice.

*Missionary.* I may have spoken of the Son of God, the divine person, when the context required the contrast of obloquy against the man Christ Jesus; and so may have led the hearer to conclude improperly,

that a blasphemy against the second was a less offence than against the third. But I freely acknowledge that sin is against God only, and that even when either of the persons is the immediate object of blasphemy.

*Pastor.* In the first system of Christian theology, which is a testimony the more impartial because of its antiquity, John of Damascus,\* has observed, "We acknowledge that the whole nature of the divinity is perfectly in each of its persons, the whole is in the Father, the whole is in the Son, and the whole is in the Holy Ghost. On this account also the Father is perfect God, the Son is perfect God, and the Holy Ghost is perfect God. For a like reason also, in the incarnation of one of the persons of the Holy Trinity (God the Word) we say, that the whole and perfect nature of the divinity, was conjoined with the whole human nature, and not part with part. Wherefore we are under no necessity to say, that all the persons of the Holy Divinity, that is the three, were

\* Johan. Damascen. *Orthod. fid. lib. ii. c. iv. p. 375.*

personally united with all persons of the human nature. For neither the Father, nor the Holy Ghost communicated at all, in any manner, to the incarnation of God the word; if you except will and good pleasure. But we assert that the whole essence of the Divinity was united to the whole human nature. For God the Word, omitted not any one of the things, which he had inserted in our nature, when he fashioned us in the beginning, but assumed all things, a body, a soul intelligent and endowed with reason, and their properties. For the soul, which is destitute of one of these, cannot sustain the name of man. Wherefore, He entire assumed me entire, and a whole was united to a whole, that he might bring salvation to the whole," soul and body.

*Missionary.* Although this undoubted truth, that each of the glorious persons is perfect God, and the essence undivided, does too clearly evince my mistake in setting an offence against the Second Person, in opposition unto a blasphemy against the Third, as I un-

derstand Holy Ghost in the text,\* yet it presents me this consolation, that the object against whom the irremissible blasphemy was uttered, was no less than God himself; and that I could not therefore have exaggerated the crime. My interpretation supposed the object of the blasphemy to be God the Holy Ghost, and your's substitutes God the Son, whose divinity it was the design of the miracle to establish, and the purpose of his enemies to blaspheme. We both understand by Spirit and Holy Spirit, not power, which is not a sense of the word Spirit, though it may have been sometimes figuratively so used, but the divinity; and whilst you think the Second Person is meant, I have thought the Third Person was intended. Have you any scriptural proofs, that the word Spirit, or holy Spirit,† ever occurs where the Son of God, or Second Person is designed?

*Pastor.* The question should rather turn upon the knowledge of the Pharisees, for before you charge them with designing blas-

\* Matt. xii. 32.

B

† Vide note A. Appendix.

phemy against the Third Person, you ought to prove they had the idea of him; for Paul afterwards spoke of Jews, of no mean character, who did not know *if there be a Holy Ghost*. Many parts of their Scriptures now present to us proofs of the Trinity, which did not so to them. Moses tells us “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,”\* and Job that by “his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens,”† yet bishop Heber, when marshaling his old testament proofs of the Third Person, has correctly observed, that the “opinion” that these relate to the Third Person, “may well be questioned.”‡ When Isaiah says that Israel “rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit,”§ he is speaking expressly of “the Angel of his presence,” who was the Second Person, “the Rock” which followed Israel, who was Christ.

The words of your text were uttered, before the light of the gospel had made

\* Gen. i. 2.

† Job xxvi. 13.

‡ Heber's Bampton Lect. 199.

§ Isaiah lxiii. 10.



the idea of the Paraclete known to any. John the Baptist, was still alive; the Saviour had then recently separated his disciples, and given his sermon on the mount, in which not a word was spoken of the Holy Ghost; nor does he mention his name before we arrive at the twelfth chapter of Matthew, and there in each of the three places which precede your text,\* the word *Spirit* relates to his own divine nature. It is not probable that his enemies mistook his meaning, or at all thought of the Holy Ghost, or Third Person, but merely of his claim of the prophetic character, or at most of his divinity.

In answer to your question take these proofs. Jesus Christ was of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead.† He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.‡ As the

\* Matt. xii. 18. 28. 31.

† Rom. i. 3, 4.

‡ 1 Peter iii. 18.

last Adam, he is a quickening Spirit.\* Through the Eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot unto God.† The Word was with God and was God—and was made flesh.‡ By his ubiquity he was in heaven, whilst in the human nature on earth.§ He is the Spirit who addressed the seven churches in Asia.||

*Missionary.* May not the *Spirit of holiness*¶ designate the condition in which Christ was the exalted and powerful Son of God?

*Pastor.* By no means, *holiness* is the common Hebrew abstract for the concrete, and means simply *holy*. If *flesh* denotes his human nature, Spirit means his divine, for the antithesis requires it.\*\* The term *holy* distinguishes the divine spiritual nature from his human soul, holiness being the inseparable adjunct of the divine, but not of the human nature, although he was never guilty. He was de-

\* 1 Cor. xv. 45.

§ Vide John iii. 13.

† Heb. ix. 14.

¶ Rev. i. 18, 19. ii. 1.

‡ John i. 1—14.

¶ Rom. i. 3.

\*\* *κατα σαρκα—κατα πνευμα*; with respect to the flesh, with respect to the Spirit.

clared\* to be, with respect to his holy, spiritual nature, the Son of God, or a divine person, by his power, by his resurrection from the dead. *The most holy*, was such before he was *anointed*,† a holy Spirit before he was made flesh.

*Missionary.* You also know that the passage cited from Peter,‡ to prove that the word *spirit* is used to express the divinity of Christ, has been taken to signify his state of exaltation or present condition in heaven.

*Pastor.* I know that every proof of his divinity has been assailed. How *put to death in the flesh*§ can be understood, otherwise than of the death of his human body, is hard to tell; yet if *quicken'd by the Spirit* means his heavenly happiness, and not his resurrection from the dead, the first part of the

\* Vide Acts xvii. 31, when *ορισθεντος* is declared. The Syriac has *cognitus*, *known*. Chrysostom *δευχθεντος*, *αποφανθεντος* designated, manifested.

† Dan. ix. 14.

‡ 1 Peter iii. 18.

§ — *θανταθως μιν σαρκι.*

antithesis must express his condition on earth. His soul did not die, the spirit is, therefore, that which is here intended and described as the agent in his resurrection: consequently, the text must express both his death and his resurrection; and the latter by his divine power according to his promise; neither his soul nor his divine spirit admitting of being quickened.

*Missionary.* In the words, *who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God\**, the word spirit has been by some understood to mean the Holy Ghost.

*Pastor.* The sense in which I have taken it is most natural, accords with the text, *justified in the Spirit*,† and is the plain import of the terms which may be rendered, *For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling those who have become unclean, sanctifieth unto the purification of the flesh, how much rather shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered*

\* Heb. ix. 14.

† 1 Tim. iii. 16.

*himself without spot unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* The human nature only could suffer, his body only could die ; but by the connexion of his humanity with his divinity in the same person, it was the offering of a divine person. Thus by his *eternal*, not his human spirit, he offered himself a spotless victim, and purposed to do this great work, which bears the character of a covenant, ratified by the blood of a sacrifice. If the Holy Ghost, or Third Person, be meant by *Eternal Spirit* in the passage, then the purpose, the instrumentality, and the spotlessness were his ; for He is the offerer, and the dignity of the divine nature of the Son is removed from the sacrifice.

*Missionary.* The most modern interpretation of the words *through the Eternal Spirit*, in this passage is said to be, *in endless or immortal life*, or which is nearly the same thing, *in his eternal state or condition*, that is his heavenly one, Christ presented his offering, &c.

*Pastor.* This is an arbitrary construction,

which pays no respect to the meaning of the word *spirit*, πνευμα, but forces it into the doctrinal views of the interpreters. We blame the Jews for imposing upon their Scriptures, their own erroneous interpretation; by chaining down the words, by points, to particular significations: we censure Taylor of Norwich, for arranging the epistles of the New Testament, to a key framed to the views of the ancient Israelites, and thereby substituting a mechanical interpretation of evangelical doctrines, which will recommend itself to every mind as infidel as his own. In like manner some modern critics, who are pioneers for the Socinians, choose to understand by *Spirit*, *power*, when predicated of the Third Person; and the *immortal life or state*, when intended of the divine nature of the Second Person; the former of these is approximated by an occasional tropical sense of the word, but the latter is merely matter of conjecture. All the ancient versions of this passage have, *by the Spirit*; the Greek, Syriac, and Arabic, *by the Eternal Spirit*; the Vulgate, *the Holy Spirit*; the Ethiopic, *If the blood of bulls*

*and goats, and the ashes of an heifer cleanse from sin and sanctify them* (for whom they are offered), *how much rather shall the blood of Christ, who offered himself by the spirit to God, without spot, cleanse you from the works of sin, that you may worship the living God.* But Rosenmuller translates it, *who in his more exalted eternal condition offered himself to God, &c.* When or where the word πνευμα, *spirit*, truly signified *state or condition*, he neither has shown, nor can he do it. It is something, nevertheless, that these German critics still understand *spirit* in the passage to relate to Christ, and as it was his spirit, or divinity, that offered the sacrifice of his humanity to God, the sacrifice was infinitely more valuable than those of bulls and goats.

*Missionary.* The word, which Luke has adopted in the same history of facts, instead of *Spirit*, is *finger*.\* Thus the idea that the Saviour expressed in the common Syriac, may be understood either by Spirit or finger, the latter certainly figuratively, as in Exodus,†

\* Luke xi. 20. compare Matt. xii. 28.

† Exod. viii. 19.

for the power of God, the former may be literally for the divinity, who is a Spirit. But an excellent sermonizer has observed upon this subject, "If any ask why this calumny of the Pharisees should not be rather styled a blasphemy against our Saviour, than the Holy Ghost, the reason is, that all miracles and extraordinary works, whether performed by the prophets, or by our Saviour, or his apostles, are in the Scriptures constantly attributed to the Holy Spirit, as the effects of his power and operation; and therefore to say that our Saviour's miracles were done by the devil, was an immediate affront to the Holy Ghost that wrought them."\*

*Pastor.* God is a Spirit; all the works of God are therefore, works of the Spirit. The Third Person is also called the Spirit and Holy Spirit, and in our translation, Holy Ghost is always used, however improperly for the Third Person. Although every miracle is an effect of the divine Spirit, we have no right to conclude it flows always from the

\* Archbishop Sharp.



immediate agency of the Third Person. Some would have excluded the Holy Ghost ; thus Jerome accused Lactantius of denying " the substance of the Holy Spirit, and of saying that it was either to be referred to the Father or to the Son, and that the sanctification of every person was described by this name :"\* but that elegant incautious writer is sufficiently exculpated by his other works. The doctrines of the Trinity, and personality of the Holy Ghost have an abundance of proofs without supposing him the immediate agent of every miracle performed by the divine Spirit ; and especially in a passage, where the Saviour is undeniably asserting his own divinity, in opposition to those who did blaspheme it, and attribute his miracles to Beelzebub. This is to join his enemies, who had no opposition to the Holy Ghost, but to his divinity ; and to adopt a forced construction at total variance with his argument, and thus both to deny his miracle, and destroy his proofs. He intended much more, than such

\* Jerome's Works, 1 Vol. 485.

an appeal as Moses, and other prophets had made to miracles, to prove their inspiration ; they sought another power, he exercised his own, the inheritance was his ; and he expressly made a discrimination between his character as a man, and his claim of the *fulfulness of the divinity resting bodily upon him.*

*Missionary.* There are other high authorities with the Archbishop, who seems to have expressed the opinion, which is now generally received.

*Pastor.* Those prominent supports of the opinion are discordant among themselves. Calvin\* and Burnett† seem to agree, but really differ. The former understood the *Third Person* in your text, the latter supposed the *power* of the Eternal Spirit. Calvin was mistaken, for the Holy Spirit is there contrasted with the Son of man, the human with the divine nature ; Burnet erred, because the antithesis requires a nature or character, and not a power to be set against the

\* Harmon. p. 154.

† Burnet on 39 Art. p. 182-3.

man, and blasphemy cannot be committed against a nonentity. A general opinion, adopted without examination, or without fortitude to oppose the torrent, and at variance with the wisest of the primitive christian writers, and resisted by such men as Tillotson and Baxter, and some of our own age, ought not to possess influence sufficient to stifle investigation. Opinions are no justification of error, each is to examine at his own peril, and to account for himself. If Christ did on this occasion cast out a demon by the Third Person, then the circumstances of this miracle, are similar to the prophetic and apostolic miracles, if Holy Spirit is to be taken for the Third Person in reference to those, and it could only prove his prophetic character or veracity. But this was not the chief design. Daniel had spoken of his reign, as "a kingdom which the God of heaven would set up."\* Accordingly the Saviour argued, "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come unto you." To

\* Dan. ii. 44.

amount to a proof, that the Messiah had arrived, the dispossession must have had circumstances, which were peculiar, because every ejection of a demon claimed no such importance.\* When Moses and the other prophets performed, in testimony of their mission, various miracles, we never hear them discriminate between the slander or reproach of which they might be the subjects, and the danger of blaspheming the Holy Ghost, whose power is supposed to have wrought their miracles. Yet it would have been the same crime, and the warning equally proper in their circumstances, as in those of the Saviour, if the power of the Third Person was that which was to be exhibited. But if he performed miracles by the power of the divine Spirit, to which his humanity was united, and expressly to prove his divinity as God-man mediator, the discrimination between the crime of obloquy uttered against him as a man, and blasphemy against his divine nature, under the brightest displays

\* Vide Note B. Appendix.

of his power, was proper both in relief of his character, and as a solemn warning of their danger.

*Hearer.* In civil society many pay little respect either to the laws of the community or to the rights of others, who are not chargeable with treason. In like manner the contempt of the divine laws, and rejection of sacred obligations are distinguishable from that open and malicious attack upon deity himself, which is denominated blasphemy. The latter must be a crime of incalculable malignity. That each of the persons may be its immediate object is undeniable; but whether in such case the sin is not against the one sovereign, you are better able to decide. I thought that as God is one his government is one. But if there were three kinds of blasphemies, distinguished by their objects, I see not how a sin against the Third Person should be greater than against the Second. And if not, the Saviour could not have intended the Third Person, for that would have been error, but the divine nature in contrast with his human. This argument, if

there were no other satisfies me fully. The circumstance, which more than all others, yesterday produced disquietude, was the division of the sin against the Holy Ghost into so many species, as to involve us all; and because such offenders are never to be forgiven, the sermon seemed to lay the axe at the root of hope.

*Missionary.* Those who confine the caution given by the Saviour to the precise circumstances which attended the speaking of the words, think the sin against the Holy Spirit to be impossible since his death. Others admit an approximation, and suppose that the atheist's scoff, and the ridicule of the libertine involve the danger threatened. But those who think the Third Person intended in the passage, or the power which is referred to him, admit different kinds and degrees in the sin. Accordingly I yesterday considered *wilful apostasy*, and *the sin unto death*, as described respectively by Paul and John,\* to belong to the same subject; the first ex-

\* Heb. vi. 4—6. and 1 John v. 16.

cluding a return, and the other prohibiting even entreaty by prayer ; I also mentioned different ways of resisting the Spirit, as belonging to the same irremissible sin.

*Pastor.* You went no further than others, and I have no doubt, with equal knowledge, and purity of intention as they. But the sin against the Holy Ghost must be sought in Theology, not in the sacred word. The name is never mentioned in the Acts, Epistles, or Apocalypse. It constituted no part of the original gospel. That the Saviour intended, by Holy Spirit, the Godhead dwelling in his body, though not confined to it, is plain from the design and manner of performing the miracle, from the arguments he adapted to the occasion, from the warning against the blasphemy, from that which his enemies had said and particularly by contrasting the spirit with his human nature. As long as he lived the danger continued, and since his death, to speak against the eternal Spirit in similar language and with equal malignity, must, if it be not the same offence, nearly approximate it. The *apostasy* men-

tioned in the epistle to the Hebrews, was from a profession only, and might or might not be final, but bears no relation to the former. The *sin unto death* was not apostasy, but any offence that visibly evidenced a profession to have been false. The blasphemers of Christ's divinity never apostatized, for they had made no profession of him. The three things being wholly distinct, we may avoid embarrassment by conversing on them in succession.

*Missionary.* A conversation must be for my advantage not your's ; any cause would suffer between us from my disparity ; but a concession that the three passages treat of different things, if a severance should obtain, is as yet impossible to me, because a sin irremissible, an apostasy which is final, and a sin unto death, however different in words, appear to me to have a close affinity, and I think are generally considered to be the same crime.

*Pastor.* Your interpretation is too generally received to be displaced. Nevertheless there are preachers who dare not teach it,



and of this number I am one. The influence of Calvin's opinion, given in his usual peremptory manner, was decisive at a period when the essential doctrines of the gospel seemed to hang in jeopardy. "What is here spoken," *he observes*,\* "of blasphemy is not to be simply referred to the essence of the Spirit, but to the grace bestowed upon us. For they who are destitute of the light of the Spirit, how much soever they may detract from his glory, shall nevertheless not be treated as guilty of this crime." To say nothing of the absurdity of blaspheming influences, or power, or an abstract term, the reformer wholly mistook the view of the Saviour in the reproof, which he was giving; and absolutely excluded the Pharisees from the possibility of being guilty of the blasphemy against which the Saviour was cautioning them, by making spiritual light a prerequisite of such guilt. He had in his view the apostasy described in the sixth chapter of the Hebrews, but to make the blasphemy

\* Calvin. Harmon. Mat. xii. 31.

of which the Saviour spoke an apostasy, was purely gratuitous. Although, on the other hand, the sins of the finally impenitent are by the force of the terms irremissible in event, for which they may blame themselves, yet it by no means follows, that they have all blasphemed the divine being, or even the Third Person, by calling him Beelzebub. With respect to *the sin unto death*, not one of a thousand, who discover by their atrocious crimes, that they are destitute of spiritual life, has committed in words, such blasphemy. How things so different can illustrate each other, and how they can be so amalgamated as to become the same offence, are not discernible. But because the Saviour pronounced all sins pardonable, except the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, there can be neither an *apostasy*, nor a *sin unto death* irremissible, unless it can be identified with that blasphemy, and from hence have sprung the efforts to make them one. But no sin is too great, either for the mercy of God, or the blood of Christ, and any sin persisted in, becomes irremissible.

*Missionary.* If I have too implicitly followed others, in assuming that the Saviour warned the Pharisees of the danger of speaking against the Third Person, when he spoke of the one God, who is a Spirit; yet the crime is the same. Also because his ordinary and extraordinary gifts are from the same source, the former may be the occasion of the same blasphemy in every age. And if all sin, whatever its immediate object may be, is a violation of the same authoritative rule of the one God, this crime must be much more frequent than my yesterday's representation alleged.

*Pastor.* But if the *sin against the Holy Ghost*, is a phrase nowhere found in the Scriptures; and if *the blasphemy of the Spirit*, or *speaking against the Holy Spirit*, is used but on one occasion, and on that by the Saviour, with no other view than to establish the divinity to be in Him, which his enemies called Beelzebub; what authority have we for erecting a new species of crime comprehending all others, which may be according to our speculations irremissible? That the

guilt of those Pharisees may be approximated, or even surpassed in our day, I shall not venture with Tillotson, Lampe, Voget, and Baxter to deny; for although miracles have ceased, our advantages for knowing the truth have been greatly multiplied. Nevertheless experience has shown, and I utter it without any reflection upon your sermon, that this constructive offence, originating from misapprehension rather than conscience, or the written word, denominated *the sin against the Holy Ghost* has been exhibited under so many and variable imaginary descriptions, that it has become the terror of timid Christians, the thunder of the pulpit, and the murmur of desponding melancholy; sometimes it is heard to conflict with the offers of mercy, the calls to repentance, and the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ; and although natural evil is the just result of moral, the unpardonable sin has been strangely called in to aid even the doctrine of an unscriptural reprobation, founded on sovereignty rather than justice.

*Missionary.* Augustine observed of this

sin, "that in all the holy scriptures possibly no question can be found greater, none more difficult."\* The western church made it consist of six kinds, and affirmed "that Christ did not mean that there is any sin so great which God will not forgive."† But Calvin alleged that "to call the sin irremissible, because rarely forgiven, is a mere cavil against the express exclusion pronounced by Christ."‡

*Pastor.* At an early period pardon of sin began to be considered the concomitant of baptism, in which the party was held to be regenerated, not only by the water, but by the Spirit. But because the christian baptism admitted no repetition, though the party should lapse, and wish restoration by it; the apostasy described in the epistle to the Hebrews was resorted to, in support of the exclusive doctrine. Origen, and others, thought

\* August Oper. Tom. v. 271.

† Rhemists on Matt. xii.

‡ Calvin in loc.

that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which the Saviour had pronounced the only unpardonable sin, must be the apostasy of those, who had received by baptism the gift of the Spirit. Athanasius, on the other hand, alleged, that those Pharisees had not received John's baptism; that the christian baptism had not been then introduced, and that the Saviour could not have accused them of blaspheming the Holy Ghost, of whom they had not partaken, nor have threatened future lapses after a baptism not then instituted; but that Christ pronounced a present accusation of the Pharisees, and showed them, that whilst other sins were transgressions of the law, blasphemy was impiety offered to the Lawgiver himself.\* That the followers of Novatus should attempt to support their error by resorting to such a misinterpretation of Scripture is less wonderful: but there is certainly no propriety in our adopting *the sin against the Holy*

\* Athanas. Oper. Vol. I. 390.

*Ghost*, either as an argument, against Socinianism, of the distinct personality of the Third Person ; or for the purpose of opposing the doctrine of a purgatory, which seems to have been the object of the reformers, for it can never be proved from the Scriptures.

*Missionary.* Novatus's denial of forgiveness to those who fall after baptism, laid him under the necessity of accounting it the same offence, which Christ called a blasphemy of the Spirit ; for the Saviour pronounced all others pardonable. Also you have shown that Calvin's irremissible apostasy imposed the same necessity on him. He did not hold that influences accompanying salvation were given to all who receive the sign of baptism, yet he held no man in danger of this blasphemy, but the subject of the enlightening and sanctifying influences, in at least some degree, of the Holy Spirit. " We do not account them to blaspheme the Spirit of God, who resist with determinate malice, his grace and power. This sacrilege is not committed except, whilst the Spirit is dwelling in us, we, with knowledge of this, endea-

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your to extinguish it.\* But Jerom had shown against Novatus that an unbaptized person could commit this sin, and his argument equally concludes against Calvin's hypothesis, namely that the blasphemèr must be the subject of spiritual influences. "Who-soever† shall impute the works of the Saviour to Beelzebub, the prince of demons, and say, that the Son of God has an unclean spirit, the blasphemy shall never be remitted to him:" yet the works of Christ, he denominates "the works of God;" and considers the blasphemy to be *against the word and works of the Holy Spirit*. And if by denying Christ, the party really blasphemes the divine Spirit, he challenges Novatus to show how any, though never baptized, could avoid blaspheming the Spirit whilst speaking against the Son. Some of Calvin's successors, in his divinity chair at Geneva, perceived the inconsistency of his holding the influences of the Spirit to be improvable by

\* Calvin. Harmon. p. 154.

† Hieron. Opera. 1 Vol. 485.



the subject of them, with his avowed belief of man's total depravity, and entire dependence on God for every good. Had he sufficiently regarded the distinction between the two characters of *Sovereign Proprietor*, who bestows or withholds his own, as he pleases; and that of *Moral Governor*, who has given his guaranty to maintain the honour of his justice and truth, he would have prevented much discord among Protestants; but his doctrines every where expose his darkness on that cardinal point in Theology.

*Pastor.* For us to copy the errors of Calvin, is to be guilty of doing that which we blame in him, whilst detailing the crudities and retractations of Augustine. Had he on this subject followed Athanasius, a man second to no ancient uninspired writer, either in accuracy of discrimination, or profundity of knowledge, he would have approached the truth, and been supported also by Cyprian of the third century, by Hilary, Isadore, Ambrose, and others, who all considered the unpardonable blasphemy to consist in the malicious opposition of the divinity of Christ.

“The blasphemy,” says *Athanasius*, “of one person is a blasphemy against the universal fulness of Deity. What therefore was that which was spoken by the Lord to the Jews; that every sin and blasphemy should be forgiven unto men, but whosoever shall speak a word against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven unto him, in this world nor in the world to come. Let us attend strictly, and not err. There is an ineffable union, I mean of Deity with humanity, which the sacred Scriptures loudly announce to us; for the *Word was made flesh*, and Christ himself calls *the divinity of the Word the holy Spirit,\** and on the other hand, his humanity he calls *the Son of man*; as also in another place, he says of his flesh, *now is the Son of man glorified*. The Jews, therefore, offensively uttered a double blasphemy against Christ, some assailing his humanity, spoke against the son of man, whom they accounted a prophet, not God; to these he granted par-

\* — του λογου θεωηηα αυτος Χριστος πνευμα αγιον ονομαζει, τηδε ανθρωποηηα αυτου, υιον ανθρωπου.

don, for it was, when he commenced preaching, and whilst the world could not believe him to be God, who appeared as a man. Hence is that which Christ said, that *he who speaks a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him*. For I will venture to say, that not even the blessed disciples had a perfect conception of his divinity, until the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost; for after his resurrection, some worshipped whilst others doubted; but were not for this condemned. But others of the Jews blasphemed the holy Spirit or deity of Christ, saying he *cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of demons*; of these must be understood what he says, *it shall not be forgiven in the present world, nor in the future.*" Again it should be noticed, that Christ did not say, that to such blaspheming, and repenting it should not be forgiven; but only *to him that blasphemes*, and consequently to him that remains in the blasphemy, for there is no sin which may not be forgiven when there is repentance from the heart."\*

\* Athanas. opera. vol. I. p. 392.

*Missionary.* The limited promulgation of gospel truth at the period of the miracle, the scanty knowledge, and peculiar views which the Pharisees had of the Messiah, and all the circumstances of the case, particularly the reasoning of Christ with his enemies, fortify that interpretation, which makes the divine nature of Christ the Spirit which was blasphemed. Nevertheless, we certainly know that the *Holy Ghost descended upon him as a dove* at his baptism; that he was *anointed with the Holy Ghost, with the oil of gladness above his fellows*; and that the *Spirit of the Lord God was upon him, because he had anointed him to preach good tidings, &c.* Also it is at least very much of course, to refer his miracles to the same Spirit who was sent to the prophets and apostles for the same purpose.

*Pastor.* This is the old argument of Arius, and Eusebius, that Christ was thus anointed, or commissioned as the reward of his virtue,\* and they inferred, that on the same account,

\* — δια τουτο εχρισθη εις θεος.

he was made a Son and God.\* But it was answered, *all things were made by him*; and *his throne is said* by David in the same psalm *to have been from eternity*: that he was anointed, not that he should become God, for that he always was; nor a Son, for he is not an effect; but it was written in conformity to our views; for being already a divine person, he vouchsafed to be anointed, or commissioned as a Mediator, Saviour and King, and he who bestowed the Spirit, received it by covenant, as a reward to be bestowed on others. Thus he *sanctified himself, that they might be sanctified*, that we might be partakers of the same Spirit, and temples of the Holy Ghost. So far from inferiority, he said the *Spirit shall take of mine, and I will send him, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost*. Also he said to the Father, *the glory, which thou gavest me, I have given to them, that they may be one as we are one*. God is one Being, one Spirit; the Second Person could not be inferior to the Third, to need his

\* — *μικτος δια τουτα ελεχθη και υιος, και θεος.*

aid, for he said, “ *I send him and he shall glorify me, and whatsoever he shall hear, he will speak.*” Thus whatever miracle either of the persons did it was God’s act.

*Missionary.* You seem to have established that the reason of the Saviour’s mentioning the Spirit in contrast with the son of man, was to show the efficient cause of the miracle, and defend his own divinity, which his enemies blasphemed as Beelzebub. Nor is it to be supposed that he intended to evince to those, who denied his character, that he had already, as King in Zion, obtained the reward of the Holy Ghost, to be bestowed as gifts to men. The ancient commentators give the true meaning, and I must, with Stackhouse say, “ I know not how a great many learned men have made a shift to mistake” the sense of this Scripture, and confess my fault, in not having more deeply searched into the matter for myself.

*Pastor.* Christ had said *all other sins and blasphemies shall* (may) *be forgiven*, except this; which you have now confessed to be not against the Holy Ghost, but his own

divinity; how will you dispose of the two others, the *final apostasy* and *the sin unto death*, from which you excluded pardon, and on that account thought yourself obliged to identify them with the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which you have now abandoned? But because I understand his words differently, I waive the advantage. That eminent writer, whose arguments were made the instruments to restore the church from the plague of Arianism, who was sent and preserved as a blessing to the world till Julian went to his own place, has said many other things, some of which are not wholly unexceptionable, on the same subject. The Saviour, he observes, called the Jews to repentance though guilty of removing the duty to parents; of refusing to hearken to the prophets; and of making the temple a place of merchandize; but when they said he cast out demons by Beelzebul, this was a higher crime, a blasphemy of such a nature that they could not escape. Christ said, *I am in the Father, and the Father in me.* Although *the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; yet was he*

*in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God.* Some actions were those of a man, as hungering, thirsting, labouring and dying; others were the works of God, as changing water to wine, healing all diseases, and raising the dead. Yet these were not effected dividedly, but by the God-man. When the believer, therefore, saw the latter, he was astonished, and worshipped God in human appearance. And again, when he saw things proper to the man, he was still more astonished at such things. If any beholding the *human actions* denied the divinity, upon repentance they found pardon, because of our weakness. But when any saw *the works of God*, and denied the incarnation, their crime was the greatest. Such was the guilt of the Pharisees, who imputed the works of the divinity to the devil and his demons. They blasphemed *his Spirit*, saying that he who did such things was not God, but Beelzebul. He therefore passed an eternal sentence\* against

\* Vide post p. 58.



them who dared such intolerable wickedness, which was equivalent to attributing creation and providence to the devil. Thus did they imitate their fathers; *These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt.* When he said, *if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come to you,* he does not represent himself inferior to the Spirit, *as if the Spirit operated by him*; but that he might show that being *the Word of God*, he himself wrought by the divine Spirit within him, the miracles; and might teach them, that as far as they attributed to Beelzebub, these works of the Spirit, so much did they blaspheme the divine Spirit, who did the works. The Egyptians saw *the finger of God* in the miracles of Moses, and acknowledged it, but the Pharisees see the Lord in a human body and ask why do you, *seeing you are a man make yourself God?*\* With correct judgment, Hilary of Poitiers has also observed, when Christ is charged with exerting the power of

\* Athanasii opera. vol. I. p. 774.

Beelzebub, God is blasphemed in Christ— for what is so much beyond the reach of pardon as to deny that God is in Christ, and to take away the being of the Eternal Spirit abiding in him; seeing by the Spirit of God, he accomplishes every work and is himself the kingdom of the heavens; and by him God is reconciling the world to himself? Wherefore, whatsoever reproach falls upon Christ, the whole of this also falls on God; because God is in Christ, and Christ is in God.”\* “The sin against the Spirit is to deny to God his mighty power, and to take from Christ his eternal being, by whom, because he, being God, has come into man, man shall again be restored to God.”†

*Missionary.* The reason assigned by Mark for the caution against blasphemy, that his enemies had said, “*he had an unclean spirit,*” and this the name Beelzebub implies,‡ may warrant the word *holy* in the antithesis, since the word *spirit* is first used without the

\* Hilari. Oper. 569.

† Idem, p. 539.

‡ Vide note C. in appendix.

adjunct : but this reason will not extend to the same expression in Luke xii. 10, if, as Augustine supposes, it was spoken on a different occasion : also all you have said must, upon such an arrangement of the harmony, leave me an independent proof.

*Pastor.* The scheme of harmony, which you adopt\* has, I presume, no interruption of Luke from chap. xi. 37, unto chap. xiii 9. But it is probable that the great variety of instruction contained in the twelfth chapter was given on different occasions, and received by Luke from the apostles at intervals, and by him placed together. The tenth verse which you seem inclined to understand as an independent proof, is precisely the portion of the history which Luke had omitted according to Matthew's record ; who was present at the time, and who has omitted nothing except the introduction, which Mark has supplied ; *And they came into a house, and the crowd came together again, so that they were not able even to eat bread ; and they,*

\* Vide note D. in appendix.

*who were with him, went out to restrain it,\* for they said it (the crowd) is distracted.* If we should suppose the passage which you have cited from Luke, to have been spoken after the things he has recorded in the preceding chapter, still they were not only spoken before the descent, or even the Saviour's promise of the Holy Ghost, and without any overt act, or blasphemous word designed by his enemies against the Third Person; but they immediately follow the words, "he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God; and whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him." The opposition and obloquy of his enemies to himself was the topic; the blasphemy was against the same person; and the sense requires, that his divine nature, and not the Third Person; or rather the one divine Spirit, or Being, should be understood by the words *holy Spirit*, at the place.† Nor, were there other

\* αυτον. scil. οχλον. Mark iii. 20, 21.

† Luke xii. 10.

terms, by which he might better express his divinity; for as all sin is committed against God, who is a spirit, and the holy Spirit; for he is the one Eternal Spirit, and source of all moral excellence, the blasphemy, although uttered more immediately against the Son of God, has, considered as the violation of law, for its object the divinity, and not a particular person.

*Missionary.* I think the apostle has given the facts in their order, and that the Evangelist only supplies what he had omitted in his own account; and the more especially, because he has introduced the caution against blasphemy, after words, which show that he understood them to have been spoken in reference to the Second Person. I know not, that the same thing is at all mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, unless the *final apostasy* and the *sin unto death* be irremissible.

*Pastor.* On the day of Pentecost the proofs of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were abundant, yet the subjects of them were accused of intemperance; but Peter in a long

discourse vindicated the gifts of the Spirit against the ridicule of the scoffers ; had he understood the blasphemy of the Spirit, which his master had denounced to have been unpardonable, and to have been the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, he would certainly have repeated the caution on that occasion ; but neither did he nor any other preacher, from any thing that appears, ever mention it in those days.

*Missionary.* A writer on miracles observes, that in " Matt. xii. 28. *If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom is come unto you ; the Spirit of God does not mean the Holy Ghost, or the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, but the power of God ; as appears by the parallel passage in Luke xi. 20. where instead of the Spirit of God, we read the finger of God. By this power the man Christ was enabled to cast out devils ; for he speaks of himself here in his human, not in his divine nature, according to the notion which the Pharisees had of him ; as is plain from his styling himself the Son of man, in the sequel of his discourse to them.*"

*Pastor.* When the Scriptures represent God effecting miracles by the man Christ, the language is suited to the views of the ancient Pharisees. Had he spoken in thunders, the persons he addressed would no more have been able to bear it, than their fathers were at Sinai. But there is no necessity to suppose, that when he used the personal pronoun *I*, he did not include his whole person in both natures; and still less, that the human nature should adopt the divine, as its instrument, to perform the miracle; for Peter spoke of the “wonders and signs, which God did by him.” The object of Christ was to demonstrate his own divinity, by the exertion of his own power as God. This is evident from his inference, *that the kingdom of God had come to them*; which being to come with the Messiah, who was David’s Lord, and, according to many prophecies, the Jehovah, supports the antithesis of a slander of the Son of man, that is his human nature, with the blasphemy of his divine nature, *the Spirit*, and together most clearly establish, that his purpose was the claim of divinity.

*Missionary.* Having persisted in the discussion of the text of yesterday, perhaps indiscreetly, but to elicit information, I shall not further gainsay: being satisfied, that the Saviour meant by holy Spirit, his own divinity. Your proofs have abounded. The previous views of the Pharisees, the occasion and circumstances of his warning, and of his reasoning with them, support this sense; the terms fairly admit it, and must have been so understood by them: the antithesis of his human nature demands such interpretation; the object against whom sin is committed, warrants it. The most respectable ancient orthodox writers entertained and defended the opinion; and some of the most impartial theologians of modern times adopt the same.

But although the Holy Ghost was not immediately intended by the Saviour, yet as he is one with the Father, and the Son, every sin is against him: but not under that alarming aspect, which is so often a cause of extreme solicitude to those, who are weak in the faith, or of melancholy temperaments, or misguided by such crude discourses as that



of yesterday. Also, although the blasphemy of Christ's divinity, since his ascension, cannot be perpetrated in precisely the same manner as before; yet there may be a rejection of the only Saviour, under the accumulated evidence of his proper deity; and such unbelief, persisted in till death, will be not only without remedy, but vastly aggravated by the noon-tide blaze of gospel light.

*Hearer.* Whilst incompetent to detail your conversation on this embarrassed subject, yet is it highly consolatory to gather from it, that mercy is not clean gone for ever: and my conviction of this truth I may retain, when the steps of the progress to its development may have escaped. To solve the sobbing doubts of others by the ideas I have gained, would give me vast pleasure, but to remove the darkness, which has generally prevailed on this subject from the age of Augustine, is a hopeless labour. There is a part of the verse which you seem to have omitted, I mean those terrible words; "*It shall not be forgiven—neither in this world, nor in the world to come.*"

*Missionary.* Some understand by *this world*, the Jewish dispensation, and by the *world to come* the Messiah's reign, or gospel dispensation. No sacrifice having been provided for presumptuous sins by the law of Moses, the offender was to die.\* So, under the Gospel, presumptuous offences would find no more indulgence. The Saviour may therefore have intended to show the Pharisees, that such blasphemy had no sacrifice ; but was a sin of the deepest die under both dispensations. The *world to come*, does sometimes mean the Gospel dispensation, but not always, the Greek words are sometimes different.† Although the interpretation accords with my ideas of the *sin unto death*, yet upon the view we have adopted of the blasphemy mentioned by the Saviour, the same meaning of these words may be correct, for the passage was designed to record the diversity in the guilt of obloquy uttered against him as a man, and the blasphemy of account-

\* Num. xv. 30.

† Heb. vi. 5. Ephes. i. 21.

ing his divine nature, that is God himself, Beelzebub, the prince of devils.

*Pastor.* The Saviour adopted the phrase *neither in this world nor in the world to come*, because it was common language with those whom he addressed.\* It was the doctrine also of the Jews, that repentance removed a part of guilt, the day of expiation or affliction a part, and that of death removed the residue, from those who were Israelites. It was proper to show them that such expectation was vain, and that death itself would not remove an unretracted blasphemy, for which justice had received no expiation in life. The Saviour intended to oppose their unauthorized opinion that every Israelite should be freed from remaining guilt at death; but he certainly would offer nothing, either to limit

\* *הנה וצולם הרה וצולם הנא*—*This world and the world to come*; (Vide Lightfoot's works vol. ii. 190.) like *ages of ages, forever and ever*, is repetition introduced by the Jews to express a future state, when it had been excluded from the single word. The phrase means no more than Mark has given, "hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."

the divine sovereignty in bestowing his gifts ; or to intimate, that any soul would be saved by mere mercy, without a perfect satisfaction of the claims of justice. But the chief design was to vindicate his own divinity, from an imputation, which merited the thunders of heaven, to expose the magnitude of the offence, and to show that the Israelites themselves would be held finally responsible.

*Missionary.* In one of your quotations from Athanasius, he describes the Saviour, as *pronouncing their sin irremissible* ; some have understood the words as a sentence judicially pronounced.\*

*Pastor.* The language is not judicial, but merely comminative. The work of judgment had been assigned to his future coming. Language of reproof and warning was not only compatible with their salvation, but if obeyed, might become a mean of obtaining it. If the destruction of his enemies was not the design of speaking the words, although extorted by the most daring impiety, and

\* Vide ante, p. 46.

reproachful blasphemy, much less have they been left on record to appal the timid, to enhance the gloom of the dark and disconsolate, or to exclude from the offers of mercy those, for whom the Friend of sinners came and expended his life. So far from a sentence passed, the design was to correct the mistake of the Pharisees in time, and show them, that they were guilty of a blasphemy, for which no sacrifice was provided by the laws of Moses, and that no favours to a people in external covenant ensured relief.

*Missionary.* I supposed, with the most, that the Saviour expressly pronounced this sin irremissible.

*Pastor.* If it exceeds the merits of Christ, they are not infinite ; if its magnitude transcends Sovereign mercy, the latter is limited ; thus whilst every sin deserves condemnation, no sin, viewed absolutely, can be irremissible. Accordingly, who among us is accustomed to make exceptions in the offers of mercy ? If there be such a misanthrope, let him take care lest his own name be found wanting in the book of life. We know that

while death is the just retribution for sin, the terms of covenant mercy must be tendered to all.

*Missionary.* The Saviour used two forms of expression, *the blasphemy of the Spirit* and *the blasphemy against the holy Spirit*,\* the first might be committed without malice, the other expresses design, and implies malignity.

*Pastor.* He wished to show them, that with respect to the discrimination in their law between sins of ignorance, and of presumption; obloquy of his humanity might be classed with the former, but blasphemy of his divinity was of the latter kind, and excluded from sacrifice; if thus cut off from any hope of pardon here, they would find in the next world, after a death in impenitency, their fond conceit a mere delusion, and that Israelites were treated only as others.

\* του πνευματος βλασφημια, Mat. xii. 31. and καλα του πνευματος του αγιου. ver. 32. The first antithesis is between violations of law and attacks upon God himself. The second is between the slander uttered against him as a man, and blasphemy spoken against him as God.

*Missionary.* A living commentator has laid much stress upon the words of Mark, — “because they said he had an unclean spirit.” Here, *he observes*, the matter is made clear beyond a doubt, the unpardonable sin, as some term it, is neither less nor more than ascribing the miracles of Christ, wrought by the power of God, to the spirit of the devil.” And infers, “that no man who believes the divine mission of Jesus Christ ever can commit this sin.”

*Pastor.* Mark affirms, that the words were spoken on Christ’s own account, but your own interpretation made the Third Person their object, and that commentator had told you your mistake. In another respect, his credulity has disparaged his good sense; for he supposes the Saviour to have meant, that those presumptuous sins, which under the laws of the Theocracy were to be punished by temporal death, or in due time by the hand of God, were under the gospel to be punished by divine judgments. But the matter of fact, that under the old dispensation, after the Jews lost the power of enforc-

ing their own laws, divine judgments supplied the defect in temporal inflictions cannot be satisfactorily established. Anathemas, and suitable fears existed we know, and of these we have intimations in the New Testament. But there is no necessity for such a construction of the Saviour's language.

*Missionary.* Howsoever dangerous presumptuous sin may be, I suppose it was not the intention of Christ to assert, that punishment should always follow it in this world; nor when his words are explained by the language and views of those to whom they were addressed, can it be admitted, that he intended to pronounce the blasphemy irremissible. The perversion of the text began with those who excluded from mercy the lapsed after baptism; but they ought to have yielded to the cases of the Corinthians,\* and the Galatians.† I should have acquitted myself, yesterday, better; spoken more profitably; and escaped the animadversion to which I am

\* 2 Cor. ii. 10.

† Gal. iv. 19.



justly subjected, had I considered the miracles of Christ as the commencement of the dispensation of the Spirit under the gospel, denominated the *world to come*; and explained the text as a caution designed to show his enemies the danger of trifling with, and despising the miracles and the teaching of the Holy Ghost, when his apostles should occupy his place as the heralds of glad tidings.

*Pastor.* With your present views of the text, you could have done no such thing. How acquit yourself? Self must be forgotten where nothing is to be known but Christ, and he crucified. The doctrines of the Gospel, spoken in truth, and simplicity, are able to recommend themselves; and the less that is seen of the speaker the better. It is our duty to give the sacred word in its original meaning; if we heap straw and stubble, the fire will consume it. The indulgence of pious feelings in practical conclusions will not compensate the evils of indolent preparations, and fanciful interpretations. The people have a right to the very sense of what

God has spoken; upon it their immortal happiness depends; if we substitute the vagaries of our imaginations, He sees, that we are not only not delivering his message, but are falsely ascribing to him what he has not commanded. This you would have perpetrated, had you, with your present views, preached according to the interpretation you have last suggested. In your text, and its context, the *blasphemy* against the holy Spirit, by whom you acknowledge was meant the *divinity of Christ*, is contrasted with *obloquy* directed against him *as a man*: the two offences are distinguished by their respective objects, *the divinity and the humanity*; and differ in degree of criminality, as the *divine* is more excellent than the *human* nature. But you have regretted, that you did not erect from the passage a constructive crime, a blasphemy, in your sense of it, never mentioned in the word of God: also that you did not represent the Saviour as speaking what he did not intend, to his enemies of future things, to accrue after he was gone.

*Missionary.* The subject of the irremis-

sible blasphemy has often alarmed the fears of mere professors, and excited the attention of the careless ; and should the representation of the crime and its consequences, given yesterday, prove founded in mistake, still we may hope, that the erroneous views may have been the means of good, and contributed indirectly to the promotion of that, which is the object of all our labours.

*Pastor.* This argument may be adduced in support of evil itself ; for all of it will be productive of good : but the rule is clear, that it shall never be attempted, that good may come. To awaken the secure in sin, is one object of ministerial effort, and by no means of subordinate importance ; but there is no defect of means of excitement ; and no necessity to adopt unauthorized causes of terror. A portion only of real believers possess the hope of assurance ; because it is proper that their condition should be dependent, and they humble ; the best fail in their efforts from their own choice, and cannot do what they would, because they will not do what they can : every duty is stained with

imperfection, through defect of heart : every Christian is liable to the assaults of temptation, because he loves it ; and to the loss of comforts, because it is for his good. But although the believer, who trembles at the threatenings denounced against the enemies of God, has no just cause of terror ; he is not the less liable to it. When therefore the pointed denunciation, which Christ uttered against the blasphemers of his divinity, rendered more awful by the adventitious circumstances of modern interpretation, and enlarged to a catalogue of offences, every one designated as the sin against the Holy Ghost ; heightened by the fires of overheated imaginations, and thundered with the eloquence of pulpit orators, trained to the work as a substitute for better furniture, has pierced the unsuspecting victim with a wound literally mortal : it has been often seen, that no appeals to reason, or scripture, no course of familiar conversation on christian experience, no offers of mercy, no charms of dying love, no consolations of the saints, could gain the attention or soothe the

fears. The same tale of woe is carried from minister to minister, and at length from hospital to hospital, misrepresentation has produced delusion, and this become the food of melancholy mixed with temptation, till the child of sorrow, worn out in seeking a rest which it cannot find, is at last kindly hushed to sleep in the arms of death. Whether these fears are there realized, another day must show.

*Missionary.* Where the doctrines and duties, the subject matter of a discourse, accord with the analogy of faith, a mistake in the sense of the text is of small moment. That the traduction of the Second Person, not of the Third, was the crime described in the text, I have conceded : but I am not prepared to admit, that there is no sin against the Third Person, which excludes hope, and from which to restore the offender, it is *absolutely impossible*.

*Pastor.* Obligation ceases with power ; faith and obedience are no longer duties than they are possible. The reprobate are condemned only for sin, they are moral agents,

and work out their own destruction; Satan himself would be exculpated, if he chose not the evil he accomplishes. But the irremissible sin against the Holy Ghost, of which you are so tenacious, and for which you ought now to find another name, requires impossibilities; supposes obedience a duty, whilst the hands are tied, takes away moral agency, whilst it holds the party responsible, reserves him under the duress of sovereignty, till the period arrives, when sentence of law must pass, for not doing, what there was no power to effect. But there is no proof, that there is a creature in heaven, earth, or hell reduced to circumstances so unjust.

*Missionary.* You certainly hold that man's nature is sinful, and that unless the Holy Spirit change it, he *neither will, nor can* repent, believe, and be saved. Now the condition of an unregenerate man appears to me in all points as inconsistent with a state of trial, and a righteous judgment, as his can be, who has committed the unpardonable sin, if such there be.

*Pastor.* If the unregenerate man's impo.

tency were such as you describe it, there would be no difference in the cases, except in the purposes of God. But if Christ had our nature without sin, sin is not a constituent of it. All others since the lapse of Adam have a bent of disposition to evil, but can, if they will, repent and believe. This you deny to those, who have sinned, in your view, irremissibly. But the regenerate and unregenerate are equally moral agents, though under, whilst destitute of the perception of, divine agency in providence and grace. If not, regenerating influence would be necessary to human responsibility, and the vindication of justice in man's condemnation; which is to make grace, debt; and holiness, a talent, instead of the improvement. The unregenerate man is called by the gospel; an atonement waits for him, mercy presses, obligations lie upon him, if lost he may blame himself, the sin lies at his own door; for he is neither so the subject of constraint, nor of restraint, as to be exculpated. But none of these things may be affirmed of him, who is under sentence unpardonable.

*Missionary.* I have always acknowledged, that the unrevealed purposes of God are not rules to us of conduct, but his preceptive will. If the Scriptures have pronounced a defined offence final, and never to be forgiven, they reveal a purpose of God, which is otherwise secret; for except he has said it, no one has a right to limit his grace. The effect must be to terminate his state of trial, for it of course ceases as soon as the party has perfect certainty, that his crime is irremissible. This is not discerned by and consequently not the state of every unregenerate person. But when you remark, that we have no perception of immediate divine agency, either in providence or grace, I hesitate; for I had thought we can perceive Him in both. How, for example, could Stephen otherwise blame his enemies for *resisting the Holy Ghost*? Or Paul the Hebrews, for *doing despite unto the Spirit of grace*? Or the Thessalonians for *quenching the Spirit*? Or the Corinthians, for *receiving the grace of God in vain*?

*Pastor.* The Holy Ghost may be resisted



in his objective strivings. Stephen added, "as your fathers did, so do ye."\* Their fathers had refused Moses, persecuted and slain the prophets; and their children had rejected Christ, and slain him. Nothing is either expressed, or implied in the passage, relative to the internal sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, but only that they opposed God, and his government, when by his inspired messengers he tendered to them blessings the most important. Such resistance of the Spirit every unrenewed man offers, when he neglects or despises the word and ordinances, and refuses the message of mercy. Having *done despite unto*,† or reproached *the Spirit of grace*, like the former original word, occurs but once in the New Testament. It means to treat with contempt, not the Person, in this instance, but either his operations, or the subjects of his grace; no sensible perception of his

\* Acts, vii. 51. ἀντιπρὶς.

† Heb. x. 29. ἐνυβρίσας.

agency is here supposed. Those who were warned against *quenching† the Spirit*, had received the extraordinary gifts, as well as common influences; of the latter they knew nothing, but by their fruits; but of the former, they were not ignorant, that they possessed and could exercise them, for they followed the apostles, and no others, wherever they came. Persecution at Thessalonica kept Paul at a distance, and restrained them from the exercise of the powers given to the first professors for the advantage of others. *Quenching the Spirit* admits also a sense, which renders it a proper admonition for those who have not the gifts. Where professors yield to the frowns or seductions of the world, their convictions will be weakened, their evidence, and their hopes will go to decay, with their zeal. The passage cited from the letter to the Corinthians† has no bearing upon the subject, *grace* being there

• 1 Thess. v. 19. *σβεννυτε.*

† 2 Cor. vi. 1.

put for the Gospel, as it sometimes is elsewhere; "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men.

*Missionary.* This, and some other passages of sacred writ, are supposed to prove, that an influence of the Spirit reaches the heart of every man, denominated common grace; and if this *talent* be improved, more will be given, and eventually eternal life.

*Pastor.* A particular providence, or a concurrence of the Divine Spirit in every thing is the common belief. Natural and moral good, and natural evil are from Him as the efficient; moral evil lying in privation, or defect, can have no such cause. Sovereignty knows no restraint, but gives or withholds, at his own pleasure, which is always the wisest and best. Moral agents are subjects of government, in this assumed character of rectoral Potentate, the honour of justice will be strictly maintained. Grace is favour, proceeds from the Sovereign Proprietor as such, and is of two kinds; when it signifies talents or means, it renders us accountable; when it is put for an influence on

the heart to improve the talents, which is the ordinary meaning of grace, it prepares us for the account. The former talents are chiefly external ; the latter, grace, is wholly internal ; the former obviously distinguishable from our efforts, the latter seen only in and by them, hence the former is denominated objective, declarative, or exhibitory, the latter subjective and secret grace. Thus the scheme of salvation, a Redeemer, a revelation of the divine law, and gospel, with their warnings, and promises are external, objective or declarative grace ; are talents or advantages creating obligations on us for a right improvement, and tendering us high rewards, as well as promoting the divine glory. That these and the like, with the other blessings of Providence, and the unseen hand which prevents excess of vice, and restrains the wrath of man, should be called *common grace*, although the expression be unscriptural, is not objectionable. But the internal, subjective influence of the divine Spirit upon the hearts of men, whereby their salvation is sought and found, is that which is usually denomi-

nated grace, and improperly distinguished into common and special. It proceeds from Sovereignty, and man is consequently, in the immediate reception, passive;\* it exists before it is known, and is perceived only in its fruits. Our reason shows us, that without the objective grace, or discernible advantages, no improvement could be justly required; but it is from revelation that we learn the importance of those unperceived influences, which weaken, or remove the bias to evil in our dispositions; yet this propensity is so our own, as not to affect our liberty; for moral agency requires, that our minds should be free from constraint, and restraint, in the exercise of the faculties, for which we are to account. This is internal or subjective *grace*, and ought to be distinguished by the name, as it is really favour. To say, that this is common to all, is to assert what is not the fact, never has been proved, and never can be.

*Missionary.* The name grace supposes it

\* Vide note E. in appendix.

to be unnecessary to the vindication of the justice of God, in the condemnation of those, upon whom it had not been bestowed. But when I see the many excellent things, which are done by irreligious men, I seem reduced to the necessity either of believing them under the influence, which is called common grace; or of admitting, that man has not totally fallen from moral rectitude; and that he does good, in the higher sense of the term, prior to spiritual regeneration.

*Pastor.* There are different degrees in sin, and men have gone to different distances from the fold of the Shepherd. Also the same action may be good under one aspect, and evil under another. Material good is no conclusive evidence of moral rectitude, in him, who does it. Although the worst often possess good traits of character among men; not only they, but the best, are defective in the presence of Him, whose purity is perfect. It is necessary to responsibility, that the party should have a moral sense. Yet conscientiousness will not justify in the sight of God, but always, when violated, conscience

argues guilt ; for he who consents to do, what he believes to be sin, is not innocent. Virtue promotes man's truest interest and honour ; these often produce the excellence of which you speak in the irreligious. A love of virtue, and even of God himself, if founded in advantage merely, though productive of zeal for the cause of truth, and exhibiting the ornaments of charity, sobriety, justice, veracity, and other fruits, may be *toto cælo* distant from real holiness, or spiritual sanctification. This semblance of moral rectitude in the unrenewed, can neither prove a common grace, nor disprove a total defect of moral purity in the heart or disposition.

*Missionary.* Having been accustomed to hear pathetic cautions against *grieving the Holy Spirit*, with threatenings, that *the Spirit will not always strive with man*, directed to those who never made a profession of religion ; I have thought it a part of my duty to address the same language to similar characters.

*Pastor.* We can rarely exceed in pathetic cautions both to saints and sinners, so long

as we are ascertained of our own sincerity, and of the strict agreement of our expressions with the true meaning of the divine word. The first of those texts\* was directed to the subjects of grace, and can prove no more, than that the saints may walk untemporarily, and involve themselves in necessary chastisements. It ought not therefore to be directed to any, but those who are "sealed unto the day of redemption," which are the residue of the words. But as no man has the sensible perception of the Spirit's influence, the language can only be spoken in a judgment of charity, and hypothetically. It is not certain that the words "my Spirit shall not always strive with men,"† were spoken of the Third Person, or had any reference to sanctifying influence. "*They vexed his holy Spirit,*"‡ were spoken of the angel of the divine presence, which is Jesus Christ. Yet in Stephen's reproof, "ye do always resist

\* Eph. iv. 30.

† Gen. vi. 3.

‡ Isa. lxiii. 10.



the Holy Ghost, (Spirit) as did your fathers, so do ye,"\* the Eternal Spirit is plainly intended. We can, and do resist objective strivings, not the immediate divine power of God ; for of this we have neither consciousness, nor perception ; and if we had, it might destroy the liberty essential to moral agency. In grace, as in providence, the omnipotent hand is unseen, but the fruits are known.

*Missionary.* If it be improper to caution unrenewed men against *grieving the Spirit*, and *resisting his strivings*, as if they were the subjects of blessings, which they have not ; and if we ought neither to utter the erroneous encouragements nor comminations, which the unwarrantable distinction between common and special grace have introduced : yet certainly on the one hand, grace must be allowed to be efficacious, and men passive, at least in the reception ; and on the other, men are to be excited to work out their own salvation.

*Pastor.* When apostles and evangelists

\* Acts vii. 51.

planted and watered, the increase was from the Lord; who accomplishes his promise, *to give the new heart and right spirit*; and thus the gospel comes in *power*, where it is sent in word. It is objectively able to make wise unto salvation, but often has little or no instrumentality. Men are figuratively dead, till life is communicated: passive under the unperceived impression, which inspires vitality, that is activity to holiness in a spiritual resurrection from death in sin. Both interest and truth, by mere suasion can produce a profession, reformation, fear and trembling; but the moral character of the heart or disposition, a new bent of soul, is a creation work. For this *fellowship of the gospel*,\* this communion, or co-partaking of the Spirit, the unrenewed have ever been required to pray, and the saints to give thanks. But however passive men may be in this unperceived work of the Spirit's regenerating influence, we are not warranted in making such representations of the efficacy of divine

\* Phil. i. 5.

grace as to render man a machine, turn grace into a demand of justice, and thus indemnify the creature in his opposition to his Maker, until overwhelmed with mercy. Although man has lost his inclination to moral good, he has not been dismantled of his faculties; or deprived of the constituents of his nature; his understanding, will, and affections are as suitable for the service of God, as the prosecution of sin. A liberty of indifference is not necessary to a moral agent; but free from constraint, and restraint he must be, that he may use his power as he pleases, and be accountable for his conduct. Neither at the bar of God, nor in the view of man, is that figurative inability denominated moral, and which consists in a mere aversion of heart, or alienation of inclination from God, and holiness, any ground of defence; on the contrary, the stronger the bias, or propensity to evil, the more culpable is the party. The law is just and good, and requires no more than is proper; and because man has broken it, and persists in lifting his impotent arm against

the Almighty, until arrested by the energy of unperceived influence, Sovereignty may confer, or withhold the favour, without disparaging the claims of justice, mercy, or truth. Men are not merely to be excited to *work out*,\* or complete a salvation already commenced ; but with strict propriety they are required to *cleanse their hearts* and *turn* : and that preacher who magnifies the sinner's moral inability, or aversion of heart into a natural or excusable impotency, betrays the cause of his God, apologizes for the guilty, takes the side of the enemy, arraigns divine justice, and stains his skirts with the blood of those, whom he was sent to conduct in safety to the throne of mercy.

*Missionary.* The final apostasy, in the epistle to the Hebrews, still appears to me to favour the idea of irremissibility, as well as to be directed against the Third Person. " For *it is* impossible for those, who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the

\* Phil. ii. 12. *κατεργαζομεθα.*

heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.”\* “For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”† Here apostasy is fairly delineated, and the impossibility shown of restoring such, after a wilful rejection of the known truth, there being no more sacrifice, or further mean of restoration.

*Pastor.* The Greek predicates the impossibility, of the teachers; the translation, of the apostates. The latter has, *it is impossible for those, who were once enlightened*; the former is, *for to restore to repentance*

\* Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.

† Heb. x. 26, 27.

*those, who were once enlightened, &c. is impossible.\** If it were impossible to the apostates themselves, they would be thereby exculpated. To change their hearts is certainly not impossible with God. But to renew them to repentance, is impossible to those who have expended their arguments, and have no other motives to present, than those which have proved ineffectual; for their return to Atheism, Paganism or Judaism evinced their profession to have been false. The Scriptures do often represent a moral impossibility, in language suitable to that, which is physical; thus the impossibility, which excludes the *rich man*, or the man *accustomed to do evil*, or any other *natural man*, is nothing more than their inveterate preference of evil.

*Missionary.* That no apostasy from a regenerate state is intended in the Scriptures quoted, I have supposed with the reformers; but it did not occur to me, that the moral

\* Αδυνατου γαρ τους, &c. παλιν ανακαινιζουσιν, &c. not ανακαινιζουσαι, &c.

powers remaining, apostates were still in the condition of the other unregenerate, and that for the recovery of such, the offers of mercy in the sacrifice of Christ were still to be tendered without reservation. Yet I wish you to show, that they were unregenerate, because they are described as *once enlightened*, and made *partakers of the Holy Ghost*; also the expression *renew them again to repentance*, seems to imply that they had once repented.

*Pastor.* The description terminates with, "But beloved we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak;" and leaves us no alternative; the language being conclusive, that the things, which had been described, were such as did not prove, that their possessors were subjects of a gracious change.\* To be induced to profess the gospel, and to taste, in theory, of this heavenly blessing, and be made partakers of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and to obtain a speculative knowledge of the important revelation of God which

\* Vide note F. in appendix.

is able to make us wise, and to be impressed with the doctrines of immortal life, are things, which may be all abandoned; and, in such event, to restore the apostates to the same profession, and bring them to a real change of disposition, is impossible to the heralds of the gospel. Their justification of the crucifixion of Christ by a deliberate rejection of evangelical truth, brings, so far as regards themselves, a reproach upon the Saviour. The term *repentance* is no obstacle to this construction, because it is used for an ungracious, as well as for a real change of mind. In the whole description no mention is made of holiness of heart, of faith, love, or any of those blessings, which are salvation begun in the soul; whence it is clear, that the apostasy was intended from a profession only.

*Missionary.* But still may it not be said, that as the writer declares himself *persuaded* of the truth of the profession of those whom he addresses, we are bound to consider him as describing an apostasy from a truly gracious state?



*Pastor.* God only knows the heart, except where he has given the discernment of the Spirit, which in this instance he had not done, since the writer claims only a persuasion. The expression of the persuasion being made at the place, and as a direct exception to his description of apostasy, is conclusive evidence, that he was writing of the opposite character; of one inferior to that, which he was *persuaded* they possessed, which he says was *better* than his description, consequently a character which *accompanied salvation*, whilst he described one that did not; that is, of a man who was unregenerate. An apostasy from a gracious state he could not have intended, if there be no such thing; and if there be, then we must abandon the promises, and the assurance of salvation. But to show to what attainments professors may arrive in speculative knowledge, interested zeal, spiritual gifts, and acquaintance with evangelical doctrines; and after all turn aside from their imaginary repentance; and also to affirm that after such an apostasy, the same doctrines and *first principles of the oracles of*

*God* will never restore them, was a salutary caution full of important truth, and properly directed to the fears of all classes of professing Christians. The representation also was suitably assigned as a reason for the teacher's not always going over the same things, which he had previously inculcated, with seeming success.

*Missionary.* If an apostasy from a mere profession be all that is here intended, it is but the common state of every impenitent christian, who has become remiss; yet neither the Scriptures, nor facts show, that such are beyond the reach of mercy.

*Pastor.* Your objection assumes, that here is irremissible guilt; but that there is not was shown; for the original\* predicates the impossibility expressly of an act, and consequently confines it to the agent, the christian teacher, to whom it is impossible *to renew* such apostate *to repentance*. Promises and threatenings are properly directed promiscuously, and there is no impropriety

\* — ἀνακαίρειται—(ιστῆ) ἀδυνατοῦ.

in alleging them to be, as regards apostates, without hope.

*Missionary.* Your interpretation of the tenth will accord with that of the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, for it terminates with the words ; “ But we are not of them, who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul ;” which are supposed to prove, that sanctified believers do not apostatize. Nevertheless although the doctrine of perseverance, or *conservation by the power of God unto salvation*, should be admitted to be secured by divine promises and covenant, to those, who are internally, and spiritually called, and sanctified ; there must certainly be a class of professors, who *sin wilfully after having received the knowledge of the truth, for whom there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins* ; and if so, this seems to be a final apostasy, and thus an unpardonable sin.

*Pastor.* If under the Mosaic dispensation a descendant of Jacob turned to Baal, or any other idolatry, he found *no sacrifice* that could remove sin ; if those Jewish christians,

to whom this epistle was written, turned from the *knowledge of the truth*, no other sacrifice but Christ's, which they left, remained for them. But no mention is made of an unpardonable sin; their apostasy is the ordinary sin of unbelief, they had made a profession without rational conviction, and their return to Judaism, idolatry, or infidelity was a natural consequence. But they are shown by this letter, that such abandonment after the hearing of the evidence, was a sure index, that the heralds of the gospel would never be able to convince them; and that persisting in the rejection of the only hope, they cannot be saved. If you prefer to call it a final, and irremissible apostasy, it is such only from a false profession, and final and unpardonable merely because the party chooses to persist in unbelief, and other sins, which are common to impenitents. If regeneration is the effect of suasion only; or the unsanctified improvement of a spiritual influence imagined common to all, then is there no reason to suppose, such lapsed persons can never be restored by the same means.

Those to whom the letter is addressed are said to have been *illuminated*, which some understand baptized,\* and thereby regenerated; but any effect that water could produce, might be renewed by a reapplication of the same element. If water, suasion, or other mean, or the Holy Spirit himself should regenerate a hardened sinner by changing his disposition and should bring him fully within the letter, and spirit of the divine promise, to keep him by his power unto salvation, and afterwards infinite wisdom, which saw the end from the beginning, should withdraw his support, and leave him to certain destruction, although adopted as a child, and justified by the righteousness of Christ, and pardoned of his guilt, it would be a thing incomprehensible, as well as irreconcilable to the course and character of the divine government.

*Missionary.* I shall not persevere by my own strength, any more than be justified in

\* Vide note G. in the appendix.

the sight of God by my own righteousness. I know that what ought to be done, will be, and that I shall have no right to complain. When I look back on past life, the mercies bestowed upon me, fill me with astonishment. When I look abroad upon the earth, or lift my countenance towards the heavens, the impression is irresistible, that all these belong to my Father, he guides the whole, and will rightly dispose of me. The change of which I am to be the subject, returns to my anticipations in every waking hour, and I have ceased to fear; I hope I am not deceived, but I cannot exclude the persuasion, that death will be gain to me. Should I be left, I know not how I could ever have other views of the kindest of Parents, and the best of benefactors: but for my temporal blessings and my future prospects I must be eternally a debtor. I view the stability of the promises, as the security of spiritual conservation; and therefore regard the doctrine *to the Lord*. When excellent men profess to entertain other views of it, I suppose that

they have reasons unknown to me, and will admit that it is also *to the Lord*, that they regard not the doctrine.

*Pastor.* You believe, that the final apostasy of a changed man is impossible, not absolutely, for he is prone to lapse, but by reason of the immutability of the divine purpose. In like manner you think the irremissibility of the sin against the Holy Spirit, or the impossibility of restoring to repentance apostates, is not from any natural necessity compelling them to remain impenitent, but *ex instituto Dei*, from the *revealed purpose of God*, never to extend salvation to such offenders. On the other hand, they who reject the doctrine of perseverance (conservation) interpret the supposed unpardonable final apostasy, as a penalty which God has seen proper to affix to a lapse into sin, after certain attainments in, or vouchsafements of grace; and it is considered as the displeasure of the Holy Ghost, which will leave them to die in sin. According to your interpretation, this passage in the sixth of the Hebrews is a flying fiery roll proceeding from mere Sovereignty,

not only bringing utter destruction to the apostatizing professor, but often rendering inconsolable the humble believer, who trembles at the word. But according to the construction of those, who extend the danger equally to the really sanctified, and to the self-deceived, or hypocritical apostate, it is a sentence of eternal misery, suspended by divine justice over the head of every man, to deter him from the abandonment of evangelical truth. You both adopt the same doctrine, but wholly differ, with regard to the foundation upon which you respectively suppose it to rest. But after all, if Christ spake of his own divine nature, then the Scriptures have said nothing of a blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, or Third Person. Also if the impossibility, mentioned in the sixth of the Hebrews, is merely that of the teacher, as the construction of the original passage really is, there is no unpardonable sin at the place. And as the Saviour, by your own interpretation pronounced all sins pardonable, except that of which he spake ; and neither of those of which we have conversed is that offence ;



it incontestably follows, that all you alleged in your sermon relative to the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and the final apostasy, as species of the unpardonable sin, was without countenance from the Scriptures, and fundamentally erroneous.

*Missionary.* Having received my Theological system didactically, not on conviction; and with a view rather to the salvation of others, than of myself; voracious whilst the means of knowledge were in my power, and disposed to defer the digestion till a more convenient season, I have not weighed several of the reasons mentioned in the sixth and tenth chapters of the Hebrews, which render such impenitency irreclaimable; I mean, the *treading under foot the Son of God; crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame; and there remaining no more sacrifice for sin; and particularly, the analogy exhibited between a return to idolatry from the Mosaic dispensation, and a return from Christianity to Judaism.* It was because I put more confidence in writers deemed orthodox, than in the

limited investigations I have as yet made for myself, that I yesterday rehearsed from Turretine the elder,\* “ that the impossibility of repentance was more evident from the diversity of the operations, of the respective persons, in the economy of salvation. The Father avenges the indignities offered to the divine majesty and laws; the Son occupies the place of Mediator and Surety, and satisfies for sins; and the Holy Ghost sustains the part of Sanctifier; accomplishing the work by leading us to Christ, and by him to the Father. Thus, he who has violated the Father’s laws, has his remedy in the sacrifice of the Son. For him who has through ignorance and unbelief rejected the only satisfaction for sin, still some hope remains through the Spirit; who can cure his ignorance, and correct his incredulity; but he who treats with contumely the Holy Ghost, and rejects his operation, nothing remains to him whence hope could spring, because there is no other divine person to come to his relief; the Spirit’s

\* Turrett. vol. I. p. 718.

office being the last in the work of salvation ; and there is no other remedy provided by, or to be expected from grace.”

*Pastor.* There is never too much preparation for the preaching office, and he who neglects any department of science as unnecessary, will be sure to feel the want of it. When to address men of all professions, and of every diversity in knowledge, the herald of the gospel dishonours his cause, by betraying an ignorance, which previous care could have prevented. We ought never to offer a sacrifice which costs us nothing ; nor substitute a zeal, which must soon become hypocrisy, in the place of knowledge. Much labour is nevertheless saved by orthodox theological systems, especially when subjected daily to the animadversions of free conversation with a competent instructor, whose general information, and conscientious regard to truth, have banished the fear of man, and elevated his mind above the clogs, and trammels of sectarian Shibboleths, and persecuting bigots. I do not imagine, that you have confined yourself to the leading

strings of catechetical compends, or that you preach a gospel given you by theological professors, without having made it your own ; it proceeds like the spider's web from your own vitals. What you gave us yesterday was with sincerity of heart ; and I had no objection either to your enjoyment of your own opinions, or to your exhibiting to my people your views, in full detail, with your best arguments in support : but since an unforeseen occurrence has recalled your subject, I may take the liberty to say, that the excellent writer, from whom you extracted the last argument has followed too servilely older writers.\* The relations, which the adorable Persons sustain in the work of man's salvation, are as he has represented them. But the way of salvation is one and the same for all mankind, and there are no successive applications to the divine persons. The Father sustaining the majesty of the Godhead, and thus Three in One, is the only proper object of worship ; to him we come for forgiveness,

\* Vide note H. in appendix.

for it is God who justifies ; to the Son we apply, not to obtain an interest in his sacrifice, but *ask the Father in his name*, as Christ has left it in charge, and plead his merits before God in reliance upon the veracity of his written promises ; nor is there a hope remaining, if through wilful ignorance, or unbelief we reject the only name by which we can be saved. The Son did on earth forgive sin, but it was to prove his deity. To reject the immediate sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, which Beza and Turretine suppose to be the sin which excludes salvation, is never mentioned in the word of God. We know not when, or how he operates ; his influence is secret, and insensible ; and must be effectual before its fruits can discover that we are the subjects of his grace. The only blasphemy of the Spirit mentioned in the Scriptures, being that which we have examined, has been shown to have been directed against the Second, and not against the Third Person. But these things having already occurred, require no further investigation.

*Missionary.* It gives me pain to confess, that irremissible guilt, ignorant as I have been of the things you have kindly communicated, was not a matter of such conviction with me, as to justify my teaching it to others. I knew that the language of the Saviour related to a single crime, for he spoke of all others as pardonable, and that he termed it *the blasphemy of the Spirit*. On the other hand, the epistle to the Hebrews affirmed it impossible to renew unto repentance the apostates there described, this is not predicated of a particular offence, but of a wilful defection. If the epistle spoke of an unpardonable sin, as I supposed, the writer could be reconciled to the Saviour in no other way, than by identifying the apostasy in the epistle, with the blasphemy in the gospels. To effect this, the blasphemy must be of the Third Person; whereas I now clearly perceive it was intended of the Second. Because the truths of the Gospel are by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the general apostasy a resistance of them, this I consented to be *the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost*,

which I had thought to be the only crime pronounced by the Saviour to be unpardonable. Thus I agreed with all the systems we now use. Augustine made the sin an obstinate perverseness continued till death. His disciple of Geneva dissented, because of the Saviour's expression *in this world*; and thought it a malicious abdication of the Gospel, and church of Christ, "merely for the sake of resisting it." Archbishop Tillotson thought this a contradiction, and that it is impossible, that any should thus oppose what they believed and knew to be true. Doctor John Edwards, of the same church, answered his Lordship uncourteously, by saying, the contradiction was *his own*: the latter divided that, which the Saviour described as one, into four; resisting, scoffing, persecuting, and apostatizing. Before the reformation, it had been usual to make six species, presumption, despair, resistance of known truth, envy, obstinacy, and final impenitency; unto each of which, they attached maliciousness. Others have made more numerous divisions of the one supposed unpardonable offence. I

have always thought that it could not exist, where the fear of it was found ; but admitted the thing. If the blasphemy of the Spirit was spoken of Christ's divinity ; and it was pronounced unpardonable, merely in correction of a Jewish mistake ; and if the repentance of apostates was not pronounced an absolute impossibility, and I have incautiously followed the multitude in the three mistakes ; yet I am anxious to have your views on the passage, which I mentioned from John,\* " If any man see his brother sin a sin, *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them, that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it."

*Pastor.* The whole difficulty lies in the phrase, "*sin unto death.*" You have followed those, who have assumed an irremissible offence, and then identified these expressions with it. Having abandoned your interpretation of the two other passages, you will not be able to maintain that *death* can

\* 1 John v. 16.



mean in this place everlasting despair. Here you are on the affirmative, and I am ready to countervail your proofs. Should you decline the effort; the terms *sin unto death*, must mean either an offence which will be punished with temporal death; or presumptuous sin, thus designated by those of John's nation, but which may be understood by Christians, as a sin inconsistent with a state of grace. The learned Werenfelsius thought temporal death was intended by *unto death*; and by a *sin unto death*,\* a crime that God would certainly punish with temporal death, as when an earthly ruler will never pardon certain offences. He supported this opinion, by the fact that the primitive church was governed by extraordinary interpositions, as when Ananias and Sapphira were slain, and some of the Corinthians were sickly, and others slept, for their irreverence. Such examples obtained, because the church was under a Pagan persecuting establishment, at

\* προς θανατον John xi. 4. and חפא למוה Num. xviii. 22.

the head of which was the emperor, who did not even censure certain crimes ; it made the cause respected ; and was not only for the good of the church, but of the sufferer, when it was, that he might escape final condemnation.\* For the encouragement of the saints at that period, there were also given extraordinary deliverances to the prayer of faith.† But here is an exception, if He has determined to punish an offence with death, the prayer will not be successful ; if therefore a Christian saw a brother sinning, he ought to pray for him, unless he knew the sin was of a high kind ; but always with the condition, that what he asks, should be consistent with the glory of God, the good of the church, and the offender's ultimate advantage. Accordingly John says ;‡ If we know that God hears us, whatsoever we ask ; we know we have the petition which we asked of him :” that is, if we are firmly persuaded, that God always hears our prayers, we cannot avoid

\* 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32.

† James v. 14.

‡ 1 John v. 15.

the belief that He has, in any particular case, given what was best, and that our prayer has been propitiously answered.

*Missionary.* That the church was, during the lives of the apostles, under extraordinary government is unquestionable. That then this passage may have had such construction, and been of importance are possible. Also it may be admitted, that such a discrimination of sins, would not have been more difficult if unto temporal, than unto eternal death. When nevertheless prepossessions might lead me to prefer the latter meaning, your arguments against the existence of a moral agent in this world, whose time of trial is past, seem to forbid such a decision in its favour.

*Pastor.* Those, into whose hands this epistle of John at first came, must have been generally acquainted with the Jewish distinction between sins of ignorance, and sins of presumption; and have known, that for the first only sacrifices had been provided by the law of Moses,\* whilst for the latter the pun-

\* Num. xv. 27, 28.

ishment of cutting off was assigned ; which was public death under the Theocracy ; and afterwards, offenders were left for God to execute in the course of his providence ; to which an allusion is had in the words, " let him be anathema Maranatha."\* Besides the general duty of praying for each other, Christian elders were particularly required to pray for the sick, and *the prayer of faith should save* them. It was also directed, that fellow Christians should pray for each other, when seduced into sin, and promised, that such should have life, if the sin was not unto death ; that is presumptuous, or malicious, for which no sacrifice was provided by the law of Moses, and under the gospel it was equally hateful, as evidencing the unregenerate state of the party. Such had no right to the promise of life made to the prayer of faith. The special duty of praying for Christians, founded upon such privilege, being also removed, their condition was restored to that

\* 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

of the impenitent world, for whom we are to pray ; to whom salvation must be offered ; and who are to be required every where to repent ; and be shown, that nothing excludes them, but their own sinful aversion to God and holiness, whereby they destroy themselves.

*Missionary.* This passage in John's epistle very fairly implies, that a Christian is not to lose his hope for every accusation of conscience ; and that even where he may be subject to chastisement for his sins, they may not be *unto death* ; that is, as you understand it, they may not prove *a state of spiritual death*, nor be beyond the relief promised to the prayer of faith ; a believer may thus suffer severely the just reproofs of his delinquencies, and instead of being cast off for ever, his gourds may wither for his good, and his blossoms be blasted to ripen him for glory. But it appears also, that there is a *sin unto death*, and for those who commit it, we are not to pray.

*Pastor.* If you mean by the last sentence, that there is a state of unpardonable guilt, then you have used the phrase *sin unto death*

in two different senses; for a sin which proves a state of present impenitency; and for a sin which is irremissible. The former was the apostle's meaning;\* but he is not to be understood, as making an exception to the general duty of praying for all men; but only as limiting the particular injunction before given of praying for a brother, who has fallen by sin; if the sin be presumptuous, and should discover the professor to be an unconverted person, then is he not entitled to the Christian privilege; as the presumptuous offender found no sacrifice in the law of Moses.

*Missionary.* This Scripture has been brought as a proof of the lawfulness of prayers for the dead. The *sin unto death* was understood to be any offence, which was evidence of enmity, and terminated in impenitency, and the text a prohibition of praying for such, who could be known only at their death, and consequently implying the lawfulness of prayers for the other dead. The

\* Vide Note I. in appendix.

reformers removed the argument by considering the *sin unto death*, the same with the *final apostasy*, and the *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*. That there could be but one irremissible sin they thought clear, for Christ had asserted, that all others may be forgiven. Yet I acknowledge there is much difficulty in perceiving any resemblance between that offence, which may be of any kind, if presumptuous and malicious, and the defined crime of blasphemy, or speaking against character. But I have endeavoured to confine my descriptions of it to two ideas, *apostasy*, and *resistance of truth given by inspiration*.

*Pastor.* If the expression *sin unto death*, or sin in death, was at first understood of wilful or presumptuous, yet it meant not unpardonable sin ; and still less could it have been the blasphemy of the Spirit : by no means could it have been intended of temporal death extraordinarily inflicted, for of this the apostles only were the ministers ; and except John, they were dead. The first Christians being tolerated only as Jews, wor-

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shipping the same God, reading the same Scriptures, and assembling in the Synagogues, they must have understood the Jewish phrase *sin unto death*\* as the Scribes did, to mean sin, for which no sacrifice was provided, but the party was left to *cutting off by the hand of Heaven*.† We ought therefore to understand it as they did, a sin which evinces the state of the perpetrator to be that of unpardoned, or impenitent guilt, and not entitled to the promise of restoration by the prayer of a Christian brother. But we are not prohibited from praying for him in his own character, as part of a race lying in sin. And should he repent, which is not impossible, though not in our power to effect, he may still be saved.

*Missionary.* You understand by *sin in or unto death*, any iniquity which will discover the party to be still unregenerate, but does the context require such sense ?

\* חטא למות Num. xviii. 22.

† כוזה בין שמים Lightfoot's Works, vol. ii. p. 1095.



*Pastor.* The chapter begins with two proofs of a renewed state, *he that is born of God—believes and loves*. At the fourth verse, the apostle adds a third proof, *he overcomes the world*, or subordinates the idolatrous love of creatures. As this argument evinces a *birth of the Spirit* by proving the strength of faith, he occupies from the fifth to the eleventh verse, in exhibiting the record or testimony, *that God has given us eternal life, and that it is in his Son*. Christ was divinely attested at his baptism, and at his crucifixion, (verse 6.) The personal agency of the Father, the Word, and the Spirit respectively now witness\* this truth (verse 7th) in heaven. Also on earth there are three testimonies of the same one† truth or record, (verse 8th.) Spiritual

\* — οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι. So in 1 Cor. iii. 8. He that planteth and he that watereth, ἐν εἰσιν.

† οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσιν, these three are (agree) to the same (τὸ) one thing, that is according to verse eleventh, *that God has given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son*.

gifts, baptism, and the cup of blood. The divine is more worthy of belief (verse 9th,) than human testimony. Also every man who has a true faith (verse 10th) has an internal testimony of the same thing, in the grace by which he believes and obeys. The eleventh verse exhibits the record or testimony itself, by telling, what it is, namely, *that we have eternal life, and that it is in his Son.* He next asserts, (verse 12th and 13th,) not only, that faith in Christ is a proof of spiritual life, but that the object of his letter was to show the believer, that he has this life. He gives (verse 14th and 15th,) the confidence which the believer has in his devotions, and the propitious answers of his prayers, as proofs of a renewed state, or life in Christ. In the 16th, where you suppose is a reference to a sin, which is never pardoned, he contrasts the opposite character, a professor destitute of spiritual life, and who is supposed to be distinguishable by his committing presumptuous sins, which are denominated in the

writings of Moses\* *sins unto death*. In the 18th he affirms, that believers *do not sin*, but he has directed them to pray for the forgiveness of each other, he therefore means, that they do not sin in the same manner; loving God, they cannot sin maliciously; they keep themselves, watching against temptation. Thus the context imperiously requires the interpretation I have given of the *sin unto death*.

*Missionary.* Then the *sin unto death* was not so denominated by John because irremissible; nor because certainly to terminate in death temporal, or eternal, nor because the party would never repent; for that could not be known so as to determine the propriety of prayer; but because it discovered a heart unchanged, and the perpetrator to be still in a state of spiritual death, and not entitled to the prayers of the saints, in the same manner as they are, who are the children of adoption, and heirs of the kingdom; whose lapses are from ignorance, fear, temporary embarrassment, or violent temptation.

\* Num. xviii. 22. חטא למות

*Pastor.* True, the party, who is an enemy, is not to expect faith to be exercised in prayer in his behalf; yet even for such, prayers may be offered without importunity, or a full hope of success. When John had said that life *should be given to the prayer* he had enjoined, he wrote under inspiration; and the divine promise, which he recorded, was intended to be confined to the case of one saint's praying for another saint: but this interpretation cannot easily be made, if the *sin unto death* mean any thing, but evidence, that the party is not a regenerate person. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews describes an apostasy from the profession of Christianity: John cautions against treating as a saint one who sins a sin, which shows his profession to have been false. So wide are the cases, that one renounces what the other claims. Yet both are sinners, both may repent, for both Christ died, both may be saved, we may pray for both, and exhort both, but have no right to tempt either of them to despair, by affirming, what is not true, that their sins are

either blasphemy or irremissible. Those Scriptures do show, that to reclaim an apostate is impossible *to us* ; and that though we may not judge the heart, nor debar from ordinances without the authority of the sacred Word, yet we are not bound to consider a man as a Christian brother, whose wilful crimes plainly discover him to be an alien, and enemy to God.

*Missionary.* I fear lest by considering these three portions of Scripture to mean things wholly different ; and particularly, by interpreting the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost to have been a caution against a gross imputation on the divinity of Christ, you will remove that terror of the unpardonable sin, which hangs over the heads of hardened offenders. Yet I am unable to parry your arguments, or to deny the fairness and correctness of the several interpretations. I did think, both that *the apostasy*, and the *sin unto death*, were irremissible ; and I saw, that if they were, they must be one and the same offence, and each identified with *that blas-*

*phemy*, which the Saviour declared, was not to be *forgiven in this world, or in that which is to come.*

*Pastor.* We must use our reason in interpreting the words of inspiration, and ought neither to defeat the sense of the writer, by too close an attention to the import of the words; nor wander from the letter to indulge in fanciful constructions. But we are bound, fearless of consequences, to accept what God has spoken. Every sin is committed against the Holy Ghost, as well as against the Father and the Son. We worship one God, not Three; and although a blasphemy may be uttered against one Person, the crime is committed against the Eternal Spirit, who is God. No one of these three Scriptures\* mentions either of the others, or any expression of another, so as to warrant the supposition, that the writer of any one of them had on his mind either of the others. No reader has a right to say, that either of the two latter

\* Mat. xii. 32. Heb. vi. 4-6. 1 John v. 16.

offences, the *apostasy*, and *sin unto death*, is an unpardonable sin. Also with regard to the first, although it may be approximated, and often is by the Socinian, yet is it not literally perpetrated. Because the words were spoken under the Jewish dispensation, and do admit a fair interpretation suited to the views of those, to whom they were directed; and every other sense is so much at variance with the offers of the Gospel, and the duties both of christians and unbelievers, the probability arises nearly to absolute certainty, that the idea of an unpardonable sin, of which nothing appears to have been mentioned in the apostolical age, nor afterwards till heresy contrived the exclusion, was not that, which the Saviour intended, or his enemies understood, at the time of their blasphemy.

*Missionary.* But he has said, that *Who-soever speaketh against the Spirit that is holy, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in that which is future*;\* yet you

\* Matt. xii. 32.

have concluded, that it is *nearly absolutely certain, that the idea of an unpardonable sin—was not that which the Saviour intended.* May it not be said; a sin which is neither forgiven in this world, nor the next is certainly an *unpardonable sin*; and if so, it is that of which Christ was speaking, and of course the thing that he intended, and has existence?

*Pastor.* A sin may not be forgiven either in this world or the next, and yet not be an *unpardonable sin*, in the ordinary meaning of the expression. If you understand by an unpardonable sin either an offence, which God has purposed never to remit; or a crime, for which the offender, do what he will, can never obtain forgiveness; it is *nearly absolutely certain, that the Saviour intended neither.* For with regard to the first, there is no probability that he designed to reveal the secret purposes of Infinite Wisdom, or spoke in his prophetic character; but merely to warn his enemies of their danger, for their good, and that of his cause: in respect of the second,



he could not have intended to make an exception to his laws and government, so extraordinary, as that a sin of which the party repents in deep self-abasement, and in heart turns from it unto God, shall not be forgiven, and the penitent shall obtain no benefit by faith in his blood. It was observed by a Nicene father, that the Saviour did not say; that they should not be forgiven, if they repented; but only that such as *speak against* his divinity, that is, *persist in speaking* against him, shall not be forgiven. Such rejection of Christ, persevered in, with, or without blasphemy, must necessarily exclude salvation, *for there is no other name—whereby we can be saved.*

*Missionary.* You distinguish correctly between sin which is unpardoned in event, for such are all those under which men die in impenitency; and sin, which is supposed on account of its malignity, or offensiveness, to be absolutely irremissible by the divine purpose; and for which, repentance is either impossible, or would not be accepted. Thus whilst you admit, that sin may in event never

find pardon, you allege that it results from the party's wilful impenitency.

*Pastor.* Time and reflection will enable you to realize the distinctions we have discussed, meet other objections, and reconcile seeming oppositions ; whilst the supposition of an irremissible sin in a state of trial will be found unsupported by revelation and reason, and at variance with responsibility, moral agency, mental powers, and even with justice and a final judgment. Man deserves eternal death, and impenitency through life will produce it. This can never be forgiven, because God will not cease to be just ; nor exercise his Sovereignty to the dishonour of his Rectoral Government ; nor abandon the wisdom and propriety of redemption ; the defence of this truth prompted the warning given his traducers, that their blasphemous rejection of Emmanuel, persisted in, could never be forgiven.

*Missionary.* *The blasphemy of the Spirit,* the Saviour clearly intended of his own divinity ; and if so, no blasphemy of the Holy

Ghost, the Third Person, is mentioned in the Scriptures. Nor is it less evident, that the exclusion of pardon, was expressed to evince the impossibility of Salvation without a Mediator ; and such rejection implies perseverance till death.

*Pastor.* The subjects of pardon and of condemnation are unknown to us, judgment is not ours. The duties of submission and repentance are in no instance superseded, by the express revelation of an unpardonable sin. Nor are we authorized to announce even to the vilest of the vile, that their trial has terminated, their harvest is past, their persons placed beyond the offers of the Gospel, the door is shut, and mercy clean gone for ever. Scarcely can imagination frame a more appalling condition, than that of one who had been commissioned to announce the glad tidings of reconciliation to all mankind, himself placed at the bar of the final judgment, to answer the cries of despair, charging their final impenitency upon his denial of remission. If *the merciful* only, are

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on that day to *find mercy*—but the books are not open to me. Be it my labour, while life lasts, to conduct all to the bleeding sacrifice of him, who prayed in dying accents for his blasphemers, “Father forgive them, they know not what they do.”

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**APPENDIX.**

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## APPENDIX.

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### NOTE A.—P. 13.

#### SPIRIT.

THE Hebrew רוּחַ which is used in nearly the same manner in the Chaldee, Syriac and Arabic languages, radically signifies *air*; from the invisibility of which, it became the word for incorporeal beings, good and bad; for life; soul or human spirit; mind, or intellectual faculties, disposition, moral powers, and affections. It was an expression for Deity, Isa. xl. 13. For the Messiah, or Word; Psa. xxxiii. 6. and civ. 30. and for the Holy Ghost, Psa. li. 11.

The Greek πνεῦμα is used appellatively in all those senses. It designates God himself; Πνεῦμα ὁ Θεός, John iv. 24. *God is a Spirit*, πη οὐσία; each Person is a Spirit, πη ὑποστάσει. Also the divine nature in Christ, is Spirit.

*The last Adam*, εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιου. The passages in which πνεῦμα, occur for his divinity, are Matt. xii. 28. xxviii. 18. Mark iii. 29, 30. Luke iv. 1. iii. 22. xi. 20. 30. xii. 10. Acts i. 2. x. 38. Rom. i. 3, 4. 1 Cor. xv. 45. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Heb. ix. 14. 1 Pet. iii. 18. 1 John v. 6. To these proofs of his divinity, may be added his history, prior to his incarnation, John i. 1—14. antecedent prophecies, his titles, works, ubiquity, John iii. 13. and other perfections, the christian baptism, the future judgment, and the blasphemy of the denial.

It is, since his descent at Pentecost, most used for the Third Person. The divinity of the Holy Ghost appears from his perfections, particularly his omnipresence, his works and worship. His distinct personality is proved by his appearance at the baptism of Christ; by his being sent by Christ from the Father, as another comforter; by his distinct testimony in heaven; and from the christian baptism.

There are numerous senses attributed to



the word πνευμα, which are gathered merely from circumstances, whilst the word itself has its primary appellative meaning of *wind*, John iii. 8. or that of *Spirit*, for the most part. Thus it is supposed to express the powers, and gifts, which God bestowed upon the first christians. But it is distinguished from wisdom, Acts vi. 3. *full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*; also from power, Luke i. 17. *in the spirit and power of Elias*, Acts i. 8. *receive power, the Holy Ghost coming upon you*: he is distinguished from knowledge, Luke xii. 12. *the Holy Spirit shall teach you*. The apostles received Him, spoke by Him. He was the divine agent who produced the effect in those by whom He acted. Modern criticisms may be tested by substituting their interpretations, instead of the word Spirit: thus for *a man full of the Holy Ghost and Wisdom*, Acts vi.3. the moderns say, "a man full of holy prudence and wisdom:" for, *Peter full of the Holy Ghost spake unto them*, Acts iv. 31. "then Peter thus spoke to them with the greatest liberty of mind:" *How there-*

*fore does David by the Spirit call him Lord?* Matt. xxii. 43. has been rendered, "But how does David, singing by a divine afflatus, of the times of the Messiah, call him Lord?" *Except a man be born of the Spirit*, John iii. 5. is substituted by, "unless any one be by the help of the Christian religion changed for the better and altogether amended." After the same manner, revelation, religion, knowledge, have been deemed respectively the senses of πνευμα; but these are the shameless efforts of infidelity.



NOTE B.—p. 26.

#### POSSESSIONS.

THAT there is one Satan, or first adversary, or tempter, appears from the history of our degradation. That there are numerous spirits of the same character, to whom the name is common, and who have fallen from primitive rectitude, is the testimony both of

revelation, and tradition. That they cannot search the heart, and possess not ubiquity, must be admitted, both from their limited powers as creatures, and because these are the peculiar claim of Deity. Also, that they can affect our intellectual or moral powers, otherwise than through the medium of the body, does not appear; but the reverse, for if they could compel us to sin, we should be thereby exculpated. The facts relative to possessions, occurring in the Gospel history, are supported by that of the fall of angels; the Old Testament record from the earliest period; the testimonies of Jews and Gentiles; and the denial of them is the denial both of inspiration, and of the moral character of Christ.

That possessions and diseases are distinct things, whilst the former generally produced the latter; that dispossessions are sometimes directly described; at others, by healing the affection, which was the sensible proof, will appear to every unprejudiced inquirer. In the case described in Matt. xii. 22. the pos-

session of the body produced the diseases of blindness, and dumbness; the dispossession removed the causes of the maladies, and thus he *healed him*. That he *cast out* devils was asserted by his enemies, ver. 24. and acknowledged by himself, ver. 28.

The word *demon* was among the Gentiles, god; with the Jews, devil; with the former a powerful being, but in fact a dead man deified, as the Christian apologists of the second century repeatedly, and irrefragably proved; and consequently a mere name; with the latter a powerful malicious spirit, imposing himself on the Pagans as God. They, who deny the verity of possessions, suppose the Saviour chose to conform to the vulgar prejudices of the day, and merely healed the diseases, which the people accounted possessions. If it was a common delusion, it was the cause of a pernicious fear, which distressed common minds, and led them to idolatry; and to imagine, that Christ would connive at such deception, is an imputation upon the simplicity of his character. Yet he not only

avows the dispossession of Satan, but erects an argument for the presence of the Messiah in himself, upon his own exertion of such superior power. And still more, whilst he speaks of obloquy uttered against his human character, as comparatively of small importance, he pronounces the attribution of his miracle to satanic power, as a blasphemy originating in malignity, and perpetrated with presumption. That Satan assumed the name Beelzebub, Python and Apollo, who was the same with Horus, a deified king of Egypt, vide Athenagoras, p. 252. Tatiani Orat. ad Græcos, p. 31. 2 Kings i. 2. and note C. prox. sequent.

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NOTE C.—P. 48.

BEELZEBUB.

The king of Samaria, Ahaziah, sent messengers, 2 Kings i. 2. to “inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether he should recover of his disease.” The seventy read it, “and he sent messengers, and said to them,

go and inquire in the *temple* of Baal, of the fly-god Accaron, if I shall recover of my infirmity :” and Josephus has—“ being ill, sent to inquire of Accaron, the fly-god, for that (Accaron) was the name of the deity.” Bryant supposed with probability that אלה is the true reading for אלהי *the god*, not the *god of Accaron*, which is supported by the septuagint Vulgate and Josephus. Ahab the father of Ahaziah had married Jezebel the daughter of the king of Zidon and Tyre, and had built in Samaria a house and altar to the Tyrian Baal, according to Josephus, 1 Kings xvi. 31, 32, but the priests had been slain by Elijah, c. xviii. 40, and the temple deserted. Ahaziah sent to the same god, to Accaron, the Baalzebub of the Tyrians. Tyre was north of Samaria which was the course of the messengers. Elijah was sent to meet them, “ *go up to meet the messengers of Ahaziah, king of Samaria.*” Tyre being north, and Gilead northeast of Samaria, Elijah who was of Gilead, 1 Kings xvii. 1. was rightly directed *to meet* them ; but had they

gone to Ekron in Philistia, southwest of Samaria, he must have been sent to follow, and overtake them.

Jesus having been named the Christ by some of the possessed, was to the Jews, it is supposed, a convincing proof of his not being such ; because Satan would favour deception. Thus the testimony of the possessed was injurious to the cause of Christ, which he showed by his prohibition of the disclosure. His authority over the demons they acknowledged, and as Baal of Tyre whom they called Accaron, (Baalzebub,) to whom a house was erected in Samaria, was a principal Baal, or Pagan god, they supposed his power was derived from him. In Luke xi. 15. 19. the Greek word is Beelzebul, and Athanasius so read in Matt. xii. ; that is, the *god of the dunghill*, the place of the origin of flies. This Baal of Tyre, and Ahab, was a god also of medicine, as appears by the sending to him by Ahaziah, 2 Kings i. 2. Jesus performed cures, and therefore the Jews thought that it was by this Baal.

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Apollo was a god of medicine, “Θεραπειῶν ὁ Ἀπολλων.” *Tatiani Orat. ad Græc.* p. 31. He was an ἀπομμυιος, or fly-god of the Greeks. He was called also Python, or *rottenness*, which corresponds to Beelzebub, the name of reproach given by the Jews, and the *unclean spirit*, Mark iii. 30. In all the three names, Apollo agrees with Accaron.

The Tyrians and Greeks both came from Egypt. The fly was no object of terror in Palestine and Greece, but it was a dreadful scourge in Egypt, and is so to this day. Neither man, nor beast, can remain in the black lands of southern Egypt at a certain season of the year, but, according to Bruce, escape to the sands of Bija, during the rainy season. Isaiah has mentioned this fly in Egypt, c. vii. 18, 19—*the Lord shall hiss for the fly, that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt.* Athenagoras tells us, p. 252. that Apollo, the god of the Greeks, was Horus, a king of Egypt, the son of Osiris, and that “whom they had at first as kings, these afterwards became their gods.” Beelzebub,



was therefore the Baal of Ahab, the Accaron of Tyre, the Apollo of the Greeks, and the Horus of Egypt.

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NOTE D.—p. 49.

HARMONY OF THE EVANGELS.

Dr. Macknight thinks the composers of harmonies mistaken, who have confounded the miracle, Matt. xii. 22. with that in Luke xi. 14. and that the “ answer was twice spoken, not only because the order and connexion of the history make such a supposition necessary, but because the arguments of which it is composed, though the same in both instances, are differently arranged in each.” It would be a strange coincidence of circumstances, that should require eleven verses in Luke’s gospel to have been the same, that Matthew had given, and yet to have been on a different occasion. We are also to recollect that unless the evange-

lists are giving the same history, Luke has wholly omitted what Matthew has said, but gives another occurrence exactly similar, and Matthew in like manner has omitted what Luke has said. The inspiration of superintendency did not extend to either the style, or the order of the several events, truth being the important object; and the inspiration of suggestion which was promised to the apostles, was at first attributed to no others. Also Luke must be considered, not an eye witness, as Matthew was, who for that reason would be more likely to observe the succession of events, but as relating what he had received from others, in broken order. Luke i. 1-4. The substance is to be chiefly regarded, and is infallibly true; and it is reasonable to consider the descriptions of similar events, especially when the words are the same in the different gospels, to be relations of the same occurrences. Townsend, who may be considered, in this instance at least, unprejudiced, observes, (in loc.) "As the minute circumstances, with

which the casting out of the demon, as described by Luke, agree so entirely throughout, with the relation of the same event in the other two evangelists, I have transposed the account of Luke, and am supported in this arrangement by Doddridge, Newcome, and Michaelis. Compare Matt. xii. 22-50. Mark iii. 20-35. Luke xi. 14-36. Luke it will be observed, relates the event as an isolated fact, as a circumstance which had taken place, but he makes no allusion to its time, or order; and it can be separated from his narrative without injuring the context."

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NOTE E.—p. 75.

PASSIVITY IN REGENERATION.

REGENERATION has various meanings, we now use it neither for the reception of a Jewish proselyte, nor Christian convert; nor for reformation of conduct; nor for the rite

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of baptism; but in its common acceptation for the immediate effect of the Spirit's influence upon the human soul.

Man came from the hand of his holy Creator morally pure; like himself; and immediately took complacency in the same things. The change of his original bent of disposition to good, was the effect of a lapse into sin; the indisposition, which is now connatural with him, is termed death, and excludes happiness.

Neither is the disposition nor indisposition to good, incompatible with moral agency; the human faculties of every man may be exercised at his pleasure, and the absence of restraint is that negative idea, which we denominate freedom. Thousands return from evil, and live, and thousands might who choose death.

There being neither defect of power, nor of motives, conversion is man's act, and its constituents repentance, and faith, with respect to the objects forsaken and pursued.

It is said, "That God, in some way un-

known to us, yet in consistency with our active powers, controls the faculties of men, so as to secure the result," "the great transition of the soul from death to life." That the active powers should be unaffected, whilst the faculties are controlled seems contradictory; for the moral agent must lose his freedom, so far as his faculties are under the control of another. Also if the transition from death unto life is accomplished by the controlled faculties of the man, they are the instruments of the transition, not the efficient cause, and another proof of a loss of liberty. Our faculties are given us to be exercised on objects external to ourselves; it seems contrary to their nature, if they should be made to operate reflexly upon ourselves. If this could be conceded; how the agent should become the object of the reflex action, and thus be passive under his own act, requires to be shown.

It is asked; "Is it not—absurd and—impossible that passive regeneration should

exist ?” A passive act is absurd, and so must passive regeneration appear to be to those, who resolutely persist in taking regeneration in the sense of conversion. But the regeneration which produces conversion, is an act, not of man, but of the Holy Ghost, under which man is passive ; there can be no absurdity in supposing God to be the agent, active in creating man anew, that is in changing his heart or disposition, and man the patient, or rather unperceiving subject of the change. Since our brethren, *manu forti*, wrest the word regeneration from our possession, which we and our fathers have holden by prescription from time immemorial ; and are like to make all the world consent to take it in the sense of *conversion* ; there is neither “ absurdity,” nor “ impossibility” in admitting the existence of the expression *passive regeneration*, to designate the sense of the old term *regeneration*, in opposition unto the modern sense it now obtains of conversion or reformation, in which all are known to be active.

It is again inquired, "Is it (regeneration) not wholly moral, in contradiction to physical, in its nature?" In the sense of conversion, or reformation, it is man's act, and consequently moral; but in the meaning of an effect of the Spirit's influence upon the soul, it is God's act, and consequently holy in him; the subject of the new creation no more perceives it, than Adam did, his coming into existence; as he has no choice, so he cannot be moral in the change. When it is denominated moral, its effects or fruits are intended. Doctor Williams, who was second to no divine in our age, shall answer the question; "We must therefore conclude, that the operation, which renders the means effectual to salvation, is *internal*, or in the person himself. The Word of God is in itself perfect, and needs no operation to make it more excellent: consequently it is not *in*, nor, strictly speaking, *with* the word, in order to make it different from what it always was. *It must then be a physical operation, as contradistinguished from what is moral.* Let not the reader be alarmed

at the term *physical* operation : for we do by no means intend by it, what some have been pleased to suggest. The term is used by Calvinists, not to convey the idea of producing a superadded physical power, or natural faculty, but to represent a positive and actual agency by the Holy Spirit, enabling (disposing) the person to exercise the powers he had before, in a proper manner. It is not used as a contrast to spiritual or supernatural, but rather to any agency, which may be supposed to exist in objects of choice presented to the mind. The latter are properly denominated *moral means*, because they act according to the will and disposition of the person." *Defence of modern Calvinism*, p. 34.

The interrogator proceeds, "Is it not—absurd—that we should be morally regenerated in the order of time or nature, or correct thoughts, or any other order, *before* we do our duty?" If by *morally regenerated* be meant *converted*, or turned by repentance and faith, from sin to God ; this is our duty before, and after regeneration, till effected ; and



is consequently, neither in order of time, nor nature, before duty. But if by *morally regenerated* be intended, that effect of the Spirit's immediate influence upon the man, which is a change of heart, or disposition; man being passive in it, it is no more absurd, that it should precede the performance of duty, both in order of nature and time, than it is absurd, that a man should be *born of the Spirit, before he can see the kingdom of God*; or that a *tree* should be of a *good* kind before it produces *good fruit*. It is correctly observed, that "God requires this change; not merely to attempt to do it, but actually to do the thing, *make you a new heart and a right spirit,*" and that the "sinner is not to wait till God does it." There is probably not a more destructive delusion, than that which is here exposed. Man destroys himself, his hands are not tied, he possesses the necessary talents. The defect is not of power, strictly, but of inclination to good; man cannot obtain salvation, because he will not, *ye will not come unto me; seek and ye shall find; every*

*one that asketh receiveth.* Both in providence and grace man is called upon to act, and not to wait for the unseen hand of his God in either yet are we dependent in both for every good ; and Sovereignty will do with his own as he pleases. At the last, Justice will reveal, that the whole has been rightly administered. To make regeneration a condition precedent, upon which the duty of conversion is suspended, is one soul destroying scheme ; and to make it a human effort, the mere result of moral suasion, is the opposite error, equally destructive of man, and in defiance of God. Whilst modern theology exerts itself in ferretting out, and repudiating the mischievous mistakes of Augustine, Calvin and Owen ; she retains her opposition, and will never intermit her vigilance against the fatal errors of Pelagius, Arminius, and Episcopius.

The suggestion, that unhappy effects have resulted, from representing the work of the Spirit in regeneration, as *the implantation of a holy principle, or a principle of spiritual life in the soul* is true. Some learned and

excellent men, both in Europe and America, have incautiously used this language. By *principle* they meant the beginning of a thing; by *principle of life*, the commencement of activity to holiness, in opposition to the figurative expression *death*, which may denote a state of the heart, or disposition, in which it is comparatively no more liable to be moved, or impressed by moral good, than a corpse by sensible objects. *Principle of spiritual life* was used to denote, either that the Spirit was the cause of such life, or that the activity was towards the objects, which the Spirit presented. 'The whole was said to be an *implantation*, representing figuratively, that such life was not in the soul, till communicated by the Holy Ghost. Such representations have the unhappy effect of producing a delay, until evidence of grace.

It is further said, "By *holy principle*, I mean *love to God*, and not any thing antecedent to it; and by *love to God*, I mean *loving him*, and in that, the subject is active." *Love*

*ing* and *love* do not signify the same thing, the former is an action, the latter an affection; an effect of a cause. Every *love of God* is not holy; and nothing produces a holy love of him, whilst the heart is inimical. There must be something *antecedent* to the love of God, either a previously rectified disposition, where the love follows a faith, which contemplates the divine excellency; or if the love be that of a carnal mind, some advantage must be seen, which shall be the unholy exciting cause. “*By holy principle I mean love to God*” was perhaps designed to express, that regeneration (the change of heart) consists in *love to God*, or a bent of the disposition to real good. Where such a state exists, repentance, faith, love, hope, joy, peace and the full character will follow; and we ought not to strive about words. Where it does not exist, happiness cannot, for the man is at variance with his God, and the universe. Restoration requires no additional faculty; he has understanding, will,

evidence and every necessary means; but moral means are not agents, or if they be, they must act in subserviency to the disposition of another agent; or his freedom is restrained, and his responsibility removed. Unregeneracy is therefore the mere defect of rectitude of heart; which invincible ignorance alone can exculpate. The possibility of removing the obstacle, without destroying liberty, by a divine influence, will not be denied by those who have just conceptions of Deity. The Scriptures assert the new birth, or creation by the Spirit, and deny that it is *by blood, the will of the flesh, or the will of man*. The word is able objectively to make us wise, moral suasion and other means seem necessary to conversion, which is man's act; but when the strongest evidence, and most powerful means are seen to fail; we are forced to yield that every real christian has been in order of nature previously *born of the Spirit*. The heart, or disposition, being the source of moral action, must

be the immediate subject of the imperceptible influence; the faculties of the soul and powers of the body are affected mediately. The disposition is the man, and passive under the positive, active, new creating influence of the divine Agent. This being unnecessary to the vindication of justice, is the grace of a Sovereign; who has secured the honour of his rectoral government in the gratuity, by a scheme of redemption rising out of eternity, and spreading its lustre over the face of the universe. Thus in nature, grace, and glory every good and perfect gift comes from the throne of God.

## NOTE F.—p. 85.

## HEBREWS, CHAP. VI. 4—6.—APOSTASY.

Αδυναλον γαρ τους απαξ φωτισθεντας, γευσαμενους τε της δωρεας της επουρανιου, και μελοχους γενηθεντας πνευμαλος αγιου, και καλον γευσαμενους θεου ρημα, δυναμεις τε μελλοντος αιωνος, και παραπεσοντας παλιν ανακαινιζειν εις μελαιοιαν, ανασταυρουντας εαυτοις τον υιον του θεου, και παραδειγμαλιζοντας.

The word αδυναλον, though radically implying an absolute impossibility, is here limited by ανακαινιζειν, which expresses the action, that is said to be impossible. With God, nothing but moral evil, and contradictions can be impossible. If to man repentance and faith could not result from an impartial and diligent investigation of the evidence of religious truth, he could not be justly culpable.

Ανακαινιζειν when put for regeneration, is the act of restoring the moral image of the Creator ; here it is restricted by παλιν to mean

no higher a state than had been possessed. If εἰς μετάνοιαν also mean the former condition, it extends not beyond amissible attainments ; but if it be intended of a higher moral state, than that which preceded the lapse, which is probable, because πάλιν belongs only to the verb ; then it means an evangelical repentance ; and it fairly implies, that every one who truly repents may be saved. That the former condition of those, here supposed to have apostatized, was not intended of a state of salvation ; is rendered certain by the ninth verse—" we are persuaded better things of you, even those which accompany salvation though we thus speak." The description of previous advantages ought consequently to be interpreted merely of a profession, which mode of solution is rendered the more probable because during the lives of the apostles, spiritual gifts were numerous, but afterwards failed, being imparted by no others.

—ἀπαξ φωτισθεντας is the first item in the description ; and that it may signify *saving*



*knowledge*, is as certain, as that it may describe the effect of the Word on a renewed mind. φως is also used for *reason*, but that light, compared with Christianity, was darkness. Christ φωλιζει, John i. 9, *every one who cometh into the world*; and Paul wished φωλισαι Eph. iii. 9. *all men*; in each is implied less than saving knowledge. Every man, who professes Christianity, though unrenewed, may be said to be φωλισθεις by the objective light.

— γευσσαμενους τε της δωρας της επουρανιου. The force of τε is often less than of και, and is merely επιδοτικην showing a little increase of the φωλισθεντας by the γευσσαμενους &c. If the former word expressed a partial reception of the light of the gospel, then it must be the same gospel which is meant by the δωρας της επουρανιου *the heavenly gift*; and it is correctly represented as a gift from heaven, for the Gentile philosophers *by wisdom knew not God*. γευσσαμενους expresses the application of the perceptive faculty. Accordingly we read,

Mat. xxvii. 37, γευσάμενος, *having tasted*, he was not willing to drink. Christ *tasted*, but did not *drink*; so in John ii. 9, *when the master of the feast γευσάτω*, he reprov'd; he had drunk inferior and *now tasted* better wine. This language applied to the Word and Spirit, cannot be taken literally, for neither of them can be tasted; the perception is mental, but intended by such figurative expression to be limited. Sometimes the limitation is still more restricted by χειλῶν ἀκροῖς, *the edges of the lips*; when contrasted with κτείν and ἐσθιείν, the limitation is rendered still more palpable. Verbs, which express perception by the senses, ought regularly in the Greek to be followed by the case of origination, the Genitive, and whatever excites the sense, should be in that case, this is a matter of common observation. But in the passage, γευσάμενος is twice used, the Genitive follows it in the first instance, but in the other it has the transitive influence; the first gives the idea of passiveness in receiving the

impress, which touched the sense; the second expresses the action of the party in applying himself to the Word to obtain a speculative knowledge of the truth.—και μελοχους γενηθεντας πνευματος αγιου. Had γενομενους been substituted, it would have been more indefinite than the first aorist, which expresses the certainty of the thing, whilst indeterminate as to the time. Here are four first aorists, which present four characteristics with the positiveness, that four adjectives could effect. The apostates are supposed to have been *made partakers of the Holy Spirit*, but not in the sense in which men are regenerated by his ordinary transforming influence; in this sense *the world cannot receive him*, John xiv. 17, but they partook of his extraordinary gifts, with which multitudes were endowed, who never attained *the more excellent way*, the spiritual love of God.

—και καλον γευσαμενους Θεου ρημα. In this instance γευσαμενους having an object, must be understood transitively, as has been mentioned.

They applied themselves to the word, following the heralds of the gospel, listening to the word, which *was able*, objectively, to make them wise unto salvation; but not having a heart, or disposition inclined to moral purity, they sought from regard to advantage, merely a speculative knowledge, and thus no more than tasted, without relish, that which could have nourished to eternal life.

—δυναμεις τε μελλοντος αιωνος. Here the τε again occurs επιδοτικην and merely connects δυναμεις with ρημα. Those to whom the epistle was written, knew that **אנה** **בליג** meant the future state and must have understood by μελλοντος αιωνος immortality or the world to come; see 1 Cor. iii. 23. Ephes. i. 21 ante p. 57. Neither the powers, nor miracles of the future state, literally taken are either experienced here, or could have been tasted by the apostates. The doctrine of immortality must have been meant, and δυναμεις well expresses the power or efficacy of that doctrine. Thus the *doctrine of the cross* is the δυναμεις Θεου,

1 Cor. i. 18. and the believer is said to *know* the *δυναμιν* of his resurrection, Phil. iii. 10. *Δυναμεις* is placed with *ρημα* as the object of *γευσάμενους* taken transitively, and is under the same circumstances. They, who are before spoken of as having professed the gospel, and tasted of the gift from heaven, and actually partaken of its extraordinary powers; and also, as having been in some degree theoretically taught in the word, which promises good things, are said here in the same manner to have speculatively received the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and the future glories of the heavenly state.

*και παραπεσοντας*. Here is a change of the tense, not the substitution of a future, as Beza thought, who translates it *si prolabuntur*, for which he is censured by Doctors Macknight and Clarke, who might have found such a future as *πεσω*. But it is the second aorist, after four participles of the first aorist. The reason of the change is obvious. Both the aorists express past actions in the indica-

tive, present in the imperative, and future in the optative and subjunctive modes : but, as we have noticed, the first is more definite with respect to the completion of the action, whilst the second aorist is rather an indefinite expression of the imperfect, or incomplete action, which the resemblance of the characteristics of the imperfect and second aorists is designed to show. Here *παρὰ πείσωντας* has been adopted to represent, in the most indefinite manner the language would allow, the lapse of the persons spoken of, from their unsanctified standing in the profession of Christianity. The attainments here described were certainly had according to the supposition ; but when, is not shown ; the lapse is not only left uncertain as to its time, but as to the fact of its accomplishment, to obviate a denial, and render the representation suited to general instruction. If it should be asked ; Warn mere professors against defection, whose state is graceless hypocrisy ? We answer that it is less a warning, than an

assignment of reasons for not always teaching *first principles*, Heb. vi. 1. To make a profession, without further effort, would be the loss of heaven ; and the professors, whose proficiency in externals was such as here described, might well be cautioned against turning back. Also laws, duties, warnings and reproofs, as well as encouragements, are in the Scriptures directed to saints and sinners, without discrimination ; and are talents for which an account will be demanded by the Rectoral Governor in the administration of justice ; but in matters of mercy, when the Sovereign exercises his pleasure in wisdom, and upon whom none have any claim, his purposes are the rules of his own conduct, and not given to his servants for promulgation.

—*ανασταυρουσιν τον υιον του Θεου και παραδειγματισουσιν*. The same persons are here said to crucify, &c. who were objectively placed after *ανακαινισειν*, and appear in the present to accord with the time of that verb. Persons

who lapse from such external attainments, and profession, do by renouncing Christ, take to themselves again the side of his crucifiers, and thus are said *αναστυρουν* ; also because the shame of such suffering is not expressed by the verb, being a merely adventitious circumstance, they are described as *παρδειγμαλιζοντες*, *casting a reproach* upon Christ. Apostasy establishes the self-deception, or hypocrisy, of every one who departs from the profession of the Gospel ; but an unjust world supposes a fair examination, and a deliberate rational rejection, which is never the truth of the fact.



## NOTE G. p. 91.

## REGENERATION, BAPTISM.

Heb. x. 32.—*ημερας, εν αις φωτισθεντες πολλην αδλησιν υπεμεινατε παθηματων*, Compare C. vi. 4, with C. x. 26. Dr. Hammond thought *φωτισθεντες* *enlightened, illuminated* “certainly signifies baptism, which among the ancients was generally called *φωτισμος*, illumination.” Justin Martyr within fifty years of the last apostle says, 1 Apol. s. 80. *καλειται δε τουτο το λουτρον φωτισμος ως φωτιζομενων &c. this washing is called illumination, φωτισμος, because they who gain the knowledge of these things are enlightened; s. 79. afterwards they are conducted by us where the water is, and they are regenerated (baptized) according to the mode of regeneration, by which we were regenerated. και τροπον αναγεννησεως, ου και ημεις αυτοι αναγεννηθημεν, αναγεννωμεν, for they are then washed in the water in the name of the Father of all even the Sovereign God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*and of the Holy Spirit. For Christ also said, unless ye are regenerated, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of the heavens.* Paul distinguished between λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας *the washing of regeneration* and ανακαινώσεως πνεύματος ἁγίου *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, Titus iii. 5. The two words used for regeneration by the apostle, and the martyr, are nearly allied, but are not the same. They come from Passive Perfect tenses of different verbs, of not precisely the same meanings. The root of αναγεννησις was used by Christ. John iii. 3. 6. 8. figuratively to signify the change of disposition produced by the Holy Spirit. The apostle has it in the same sense, 1 John ii. 29. iii. 9. iv. 7. v. 1. Paul has adopted the same word to express his own instrumentality in converting the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iv. 15. and Onesimus, Philem. 10. Peter has used the same root, compounded with ανα, to denote the spiritual change. 1 Pet. i. 3. 23.

The word\* παλιγγενεσις, which in Tit. iii. 5. we render regeneration, is used once beside,

Matt. xix. 28. where it signifies most probably the future resurrection, λουτροῦ is properly *washing*, and put for *baptism*; παλιγγενεσεως expresses *the introduction into a new society*, which is effected by the rite of baptism. This is in strict accordance with the Jewish idea of a proselyte's *being born again*, or regenerated, when denationalized, he is received among the children of Abraham, and Israel, by washing, circumcision and sacrifice; and has been made of a new stock. Although the Saviour intended a regeneration by the Spirit, when he first addressed Nicodemus, he immediately admitted, there was to be also a regeneration, or change of association, by the rite of baptism. In this sense Justin uses the word αναγεννησις *regeneration*, they were made christians by baptism; "they are regenerated," received into the christian church, or baptized, "according to the mode of regeneration," reception into the church, or baptism, "by which we were regenerated," received into the communion

of christians, or baptized. But when he calls baptism φωτισμος *illumination*, he alludes to the instruction, which its subjects obtained prior to their admission to the ordinance. In his description of this, he says nothing of an immediate enlightening of their minds by the Holy Spirit. Hence it results that the regeneration of which he speaks is mere water-baptism, and although the subjects of it were called φωτιζομενοι, and φωτισθεντες, it was without any reference, either to a spiritual suggestion of knowledge to the understanding, or to any gracious renovating influence of the heart, or moral rectitude of the disposition.

In the provincial Synod of Laodicea, which was a little before the council of Nice, φωτισθεντες is used in the third canon, probably in the sense of baptized; and in the forty-seventh canon φωτισμα occurs for baptism. But in the apostolical canons in 50. βαπτισμα and βαπτισω, and in 67. βαπτισθεντας are used. φωτισμος is found in Chrysostom, and Gregory

of Nazianzum for baptism, and *φωτισθεντας* in Photius for baptized, but all these are too late.

Neither the word of God, nor matter of fact proves, that every one who is baptized with water, is changed in his heart by the Holy Spirit, or justified by the righteousness of Christ.

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NOTE H.—P. 98.

REGENERATION PRIOR TO FAITH.

BEZA on 1 John v. 16. has observed, "Seeing true repentance flows from the Spirit of God and we obtain the Spirit of God in Christ alone, freely apprehended by faith, they who sin against the Holy Ghost never can repent, and therefore this sin can never be remitted. For if they should repent, they might certainly obtain pardon, since him who really repents, God can no more despise than his own Spirit." Beza's argu-

ment is founded upon the supposition, that faith in Christ precedes the influences of the Spirit. This error Augustine has told us he had embraced. "For I did not think, that faith was preceded by the grace of God, that by it might be given to us, what we asked for our good.—But that we could consent to the Gospel preached to us, I supposed was peculiarly our own, and to be to us from ourselves." But he afterwards opposed it, as Pelagian heresy. In times more modern, the Socinians have avowed it in their Raccovian catechism, "Is there not a necessity for an internal gift of the Holy Ghost to believe the Gospel? In no manner, for we never read in the Scriptures, that that gift was conferred on any one, except on him that believed the Gospel." Also Bishop Tomline of our own day has asserted that the communication of the Holy Ghost is subsequent to belief. "In the following passage, Saint Paul represents the faith of the Ephesians in Christ, to have been the

consequence of their having heard the Gospel preached, and the communication of the Holy Ghost to have been subsequent to their faith; '*In whom, namely in Christ, ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.*' The order to be here noticed is this, first the hearing of the word; secondly, belief produced by that; thirdly, the communication of the Spirit, in consequence of that belief. From these examples, which comprehend Jewish, Samaritan, and Gentile converts, we conclude in general, that those to whom the Apostles preached, expressed their faith in Christ, before the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them; and that the Spirit was never communicated to those, who refused to believe." It is probable that the ordinary influences of the Spirit have been communicated to few in our day in Christian countries, who have not refused to believe; but no subject of such

influence will persist in such refusal, when sufficient evidence of Gospel truths has been laid before him. With respect to the gifts of the Spirit, of which the Apostle was treating at the place quoted; they having been given to promote the spread of the Gospel, such purpose would have been defeated by bestowing them upon the avowed enemies of the design. Doctor Williams, in his defence, observes that the last mentioned writer, "takes for granted, what neither is, nor can be proved, that there is but one kind of communication of the Holy Spirit."—"In the next place, from the unproved assumption now mentioned, his Lordship draws this general conclusion; that those to whom the Apostles preached, expressed their faith in Christ, before the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them." The question however ought to be, in order to disprove the doctrine of the Calvinists, not whether faith preceded the extraordinary and miraculous effusion of the Spirit, but whether saving faith is prior



to his internal, ordinary, and enlightening influence. That those to whom the Apostles preached, expressed their faith in Christ, before they received the one, is no conclusive argument, that they were not the subjects of the other operation, prior to the expression of their faith. What is recorded of Lydia, is in point. It is expressly said that, *the Lord opened her heart*, as the predisposing cause of her attention and faith." "There can be no belief without testimony;" nor discernment of the truth it presents, without an understanding, nor an application of that faculty without an act of the will, nor a choice where the disposition is determinately adverse. Every faculty, motive, and mean is from divine providence, where all are furnished, man's duty is clear, and his liberty unrestrained; but Scripture and experience show, that he prefers and pursues evil. Doctor Williams has therefore justly concluded; "that the operation which renders the means

effectual to salvation, is internal, or *in the person himself*. The word of God is in itself perfect, and needs no operation to make it more excellent ; consequently it is not *in*, nor strictly speaking *with* the word, in order to make it different from what it always was." The Spirit's ordinary operation superadds no physical power, presents no additional moral means to our choice, suggests no other knowledge ; but in some unknown manner gives a new heart, or works upon the disposition, or bent of mind to change its direction, or moral character ; and " the immediate object of the Spirit's operation, is not the will, but the heart, as the source of moral actions."—" While the heart is hard, the understanding will be blind, to the same degree, notwithstanding the outward light of truth in the Scriptures. Hence the ablest expositors and preachers, have cause to pray that God may prepare the hearts of their readers and hearers, that they may earnest-

ly attend to, that they may understand, that they may mark, learn, and inwardly digest the truths represented."

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NOTE I.—P. 103.

SIN UNTO DEATH.

To express a final cause  $\pi\rho\omicron\varsigma$  may be used, and elegantly with an infinitive: To denote an effect, it may be put either with a Genitive, or an accusative: vide Acts xxvii. 34. and John xi. 4.  $\pi\rho\omicron\varsigma$   $\theta\alpha\nu\alpha\lambda\omicron\nu$  may therefore signify *producing*, or it might imply *continuance unto death*, Lu. viii. 13.  $\text{A}\mu\alpha\rho\iota\alpha$   $\pi\rho\omicron\varsigma$   $\theta\alpha\nu\alpha\lambda\omicron\nu$  may also express *sin pertaining to*, *with*, or *in death*.  $\pi\rho\omicron\varsigma$   $\zeta\omega\eta\upsilon$  2 Pet. i. 3. *pertaining to life*. The state of the party may often be determined by the circumstances of his sin indicating presumption, enmity, and impenitency, and leave no room to ques-

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tion the condition to be that of spiritual death. *Worthy of death* was an idea familiar to the Jews. Deut. xix. 6. xxi. 22. and expressed by ἀξίον θανάτου, Acts xxiii. 19. xxv. 11. 25. xxvi. 31.

Dr. Macknight describes the *sin unto death* to be, "a sin obstinately continued in, or at least not particularly repented of, the punishment of which is therefore to end in the sinner's death." But if this were the *sin unto death*, it could not be known till death, that the party would not repent of it; whereas John supposes the nature of the sin to be immediately seen, so as that the prayer shall or shall not follow it. The Doctor does indeed suppose this to be known by the gift of discerning spirits; if so the duty and success would have been unnecessary to have been shown by this apostle. But the late period at which this epistle was written, bears strongly against his opinion. The *sin unto death* was such a presumptuous offence as evinced a state unre-

generate, and thereby excluded the offender from the privilege peculiar to real Christians, of being assured that the prayer of faith should be successful. In accordance it is said ver. 18. " We know, that whosoever is born of God sinneth not," which must be understood of the same known and voluntary transgressions.

THE END.

## ERRATA.

Page 13, line	9, for your's read yours.
17,	20, for when read where.
	24, read <i>θαλασθεας</i> .
30,	14, read yours.
31,	13, read crime."
38,	2, read it."*
39,	22, read Isidore.
44,	4, read speak."
47,	23, read "When.
53,	22, read human.
57,	20, twice for Y read γ.
74,	4, read , talents,
103,	ult. for D read D.

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