

CHAP. III.

On Regeneration. How it is wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost, who quickens it with spiritual life, and makes it a partaker of the divine nature^a.

GOD'S love, which is from everlasting to everlasting, ineffable, and incomprehensible, hath been discovered towards the elect in such a manner as shews the interest of the divine persons in the Godhead in them. The Father's love was manifested in electing them *in Christ* and together with him before the foundation of the world, in predestinating them to the enjoyment of all those spiritual and communicable blessings of his grace, which followed upon their union and relation to the person of his dear Son, considered as God-man, whom he had given to be their eternal head. This love, which is in God, from whence all these spiritual and supernatural blessings flow, surmounts the utmost conception of the glorified, and consequently will for ever and ever exceed all their expressions of it.

The open display of this love in God the Father, made known in the eternal

^a 2 Pet. i. 4.

redemption of the elect by Christ from sin, satan, the world, death, and hell, which is but the overflowings of everlasting love in the fruits and effects of it, cannot, in its greatness and glory, be fully conceived of on earth by the church militant, nor uttered in Heaven by the church triumphant. The love of God the Son, manifested in his condescending to become God-man, their head and husband, is inexpressible. His love in becoming the surety of his people cannot be fully explored by the saints to all eternity. He loved them to such a degree, and made it evident in such a manner, as will fill the minds of the elect angels and saints with perpetual astonishment throughout the ages of eternity. His emptying himself of his personal glory, by laying it aside and putting it off for a season, was a manifestation of love to us which can never be expressed. His taking on himself the form of a servant, appearing in our world in the likeness of sinful flesh, and giving his whole person an offering for sin, his soul to be bruised, his body to be broken, his blood to be shed, and laying down his life, which exceeded in value the whole creation of God, is love, in its eternity, immensity, perpetuity, and effects, surpassing all understanding. On earth it affords an Hea-

ven to saints, when their minds are engaged in the contemplation of it. And it will yield a perpetual feast to such as are admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The love of the Holy Ghost towards the elect, of which there is express mention made by the apostle Paul^a, in its eternal spring and origin is equal with the love of the Father and the Son. The peculiar way in which he makes it known to the objects of it is in and by spiritual *regeneration*. The apostle^b tells us, we are saved, “Not by works
 “ of righteousness which we have done,
 “ but according to his mercy he saved
 “ us, by the washing of regeneration
 “ and renewing of the Holy Ghost,
 “ which he shed on us abundantly
 “ through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

In this passage the concern and interest of the eternal Trinity in salvation-work are most gloriously expressed. The part and office of the *Holy Ghost in our salvation consist in renewing us*. He quickens the elect with spiritual life, enlightens their minds to know Christ, reveals him to them, forms him in their hearts, and brings them to build all their hopes of eternal glory on him alone. He sheds abroad the Father’s love in their hearts, and gives them a real sense of it. In which experience of his gra-

^a Rom. xv. 30.^b Titus iii. 5, 6.

cious and effectual influence on their souls they say with the Psalmist, “ Blessed is
 “ the man whom thou choosest, and
 “ causest to approach unto thee, that he
 “ may dwell in thy courts; we shall be
 “ satisfied with the pleasures of thy house,
 “ even of thy holy temple^c.”

The Holy Ghost in the exercise of his gracious office on their behalf and in their souls, proves to a demonstration, that his love towards the heirs of glory is ineffable and incomprehensible. As the work of the Holy Ghost consists in making our souls alive to God, in realizing the transactions of the Father and the Son in the everlasting covenant, and in creating in us spiritual faculties, whereby we are fitted for the enjoyment of God and for holding communion with him, it is internal; hence it is, that, his work being within us, we are apt to overlook him, and are prone to neglect giving him the glory of his spiritual distinction in deity, and essential Godhead; and most sadly fail to give him his true and proper praise for his great grace towards us. Thus it is with all believers; they find themselves more disposed to think on the love of Christ, and on the Father’s love in the gift of him, than in exercising their minds spiritually in soul-enflaming and heart-warming meditations

^c Psalm lxxv. 4.

on the love and mercy of the Holy Ghost towards them, and his delight in them; though all they know and enjoy of the Father's love, by faith in the finished salvation of the Son, is entirely from the inward teaching and supernatural influences of the eternal Spirit. This must be acknowledged a great defect, which is too plainly evidenced in our neglecting to pray distinctly to him as a divine person in Godhead, and as Lord and God. It originates from our forgetfulness, that all the persons in the Godhead are equally interested in our salvation, and in each and every act of grace concerning us; *viz.* in those which are *immanent* in God towards us, as his eternal love fixed on us, out of which he chose us, and bestowed and decreed all blessings for us; likewise in those acts *in Christ* done for us in his incarnate state, wherein he represented us, and lived and died in our law-place, room, and stead; and also in those wrought in us and upon us in bestowing all those blessings of the spirit discovered in our effectual calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification.—The Holy Ghost, as a person in the Godhead, distinct from the Father and the Son, is the object of faith, hope, love, and every act of spiritual worship. Yet his divine, efficacious, and powerful work, which is

inherent in the souls of his people, is rather a subject for their spiritual sense and judgment to be exercised on, than the object of their faith. His work being within us, and Christ's work without us, and the latter being our salvation, and the former the application of it unto us, we are apt to overlook the Holy Spirit's work within us, and himself as the author of it. SALVATION is *wholly* of GRACE, both in its origin, execution, and application. Nor is grace a whit more glorious in the one than in the other. The elect "were not appointed unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us^d." And by his death they were redeemed out of the hands of all their spiritual enemies. Yet, the Father's love and the Son's salvation, with all the unspeakable blessings thereof, remain unknown to them for a season. In their fallen, guilty, and sinful state they remain *dead in trespasses and sins, without hope, and without God in the world.* The bringing them out of this state, and raising them from a death of sin unto a life of righteousness, is the true and proper work reserved for the Holy Ghost, in order to display and manifest thereby his love and Godhead. To quicken the dead sinner with spi-

^d 1 Thess. v. 9, 10.

ritual life in his soul, to enlighten the dark mind with the marvellous light of life, to become the fountain and spring of everlasting life by his secret and mysterious in-dwelling in the soul, and to produce such a new creation as deserves to be dignified with the title of *The divine nature*, are altogether the acts, prerogative, and glory of the eternal Spirit, whose distinct personality and essential divinity are evidenced hereby. He knows the names, persons, state, and cases of all the elect, with the love of the Father's heart, and how it abounds, and superabounds towards them. He is fully acquainted with the present and everlasting virtue, efficacy, worth, and dignity of the person, work, and offering of *Immanuel*; and what his heart was, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and how infinitely and everlastingly well pleasing it was to Jehovah the Father, who hath it in everlasting remembrance. The Father and the Son having committed the revelation and application of their great salvation to the persons of all the elect, to the Holy Spirit; he is pleased, therefore, out of the riches of his own free and sovereign grace, to work in due season on all the heirs of glory. And like as Christ died but once, his death being all-sufficient to answer every design to be effected by

it; so the Holy Ghost by one act works effectually in the soul, produces a spiritual birth, and changes the state of the person, *once for all*. So that the regenerate are thereby brought out of, and delivered from, the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son^e. And thus they pass from a state of *spiritual death* into a state of *spiritual life*^f. Regeneration, the necessity of which is taught us by Christ himself^g, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except "a man be born again, he cannot see "the kingdom of God," is the act and work of the Spirit of God in the soul, whereby it is quickened with new and spiritual life. Without this divine and supernatural birth, we cannot see spiritual and heavenly things, objects, subjects, and blessings in their true worth and excellency. "That which is born "of the spirit is spirit^h." In consequence of which the spiritual mind thus produced in us in *spiritual regeneration* is suited to all things spiritual, and distinguishes such as are born of God from others who are not. Hence the apostle saith, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of "God, for they are foolishness unto "him: neither can he know them, be-

^e Col. i. 13.^f 1 John iii. 14.^g John iii. 3.^h John iii. 6.

“ cause they are spiritually discernedⁱ.” To say “ Because they are spiritually “ discerned” is giving the reason why a natural man cannot receive them. Because, if they are rightly discerned, they must be discerned in their *spirituality*; as they are in themselves *spiritual things, as spiritual*.

The effect of the *new birth* is, that the man born again loves spiritual things, as spiritual, and values spiritual blessings on account of their being purely spiritual. The fulness of life, which is lodged in Christ for all the elect, is displayed in the following way. He is the head in the spiritual and eternal world; and he conveys his spiritual life in regeneration to his members, who are then born into it. The second birth, by which the elect are born again into Christ, into the spiritual world, is a *new creation* — *the workmanship of God*. The spirit of life from Christ enters into them, and is the spring of all their spiritual life—the root of all their graces—the perpetual spring of every divine principle within them. So says Christ, “ The “ water that I shall give him (*speaking “ of a believer*) shall be in him a well “ of water, springing up into everlast- “ ing life^k.” Thus, *regeneration* introduces the elect into a capacity for the

ⁱ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

^k John iv. 14.

enjoyments which are peculiar to the spiritual world, and makes that alteration in the person's state before God, which will last for ever. Hence the apostle saith, "He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost¹." All other alterations are gradual. Even that great change from grace to glory is but from faith to sight,—from imperfection to perfection. The state of the renewed man, as to the grace of God, in life and after death is one and the same. He is the Lord's in both. All our meetness for the heavenly state is wrought in us in *regeneration*. Therefore the apostle addresses the regenerate in the church of Christ at *Colosse* thus, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And he shews wherein that meetness consisted, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son^m."

Regeneration is one and the same in all saints. It admits of no increase nor decrease. All grace and holiness are then implanted in the soul. We hereby have eternal life abiding in us, and all that remains, from the first moment the

¹ Titus iii. 5.

^m Col. i. 12, 13.

new creation is wrought in the soul to its actual entrance into the state of glory, is only for the eternal Spirit to breathe within us; to shine on his own work wrought in us, and draw it forth into act and exercise. Hence Paul prays thus for the Thessalonians; “Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with powerⁿ.”

Regeneration is the foundation of every gracious, spiritual, and holy act, performed by saints throughout the whole course of their lives. It is the fruit of election—the first blessing which takes place within us, and our open introduction into the enjoyment of all others. It is wrought in the soul by the word, and by the Spirit of God. “Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever^o.” The word is the seed sown in the heart, which the Holy Ghost puts life and power into; and without any concurrence of the creature. He speaks, and it is done: he commands, and the work of the new creation abideth for ever. So that the new birth “is not of blood,

ⁿ 2 Thess. i. 11.

^o 1 Pet. i. 23.

“ nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the
 “ will of man, but of God^p.” All the
 divine persons are engaged in this di-
 vine act of grace. It is ascribed to God
 the Father by the apostle James, “ Every
 “ good gift, and every perfect gift is
 “ from above, and cometh down from
 “ the Father of lights, with whom is no
 “ variableness, neither shadow of turn-
 “ ing. Of his own will begat he us
 “ with the word of truth, that we should
 “ be a kind of first fruits of his crea-
 “ tures^q.” It is attributed to Christ by
 the apostle John^r, “ If ye know that he
 “ is righteous, ye know that every one
 “ that doeth righteousness is born of
 “ him.” It is so peculiarly applied to
 the Holy Spirit as to derive its denomi-
 nation of *Spirit* from him. Hence our
 Lord says, “ That which is born of the
 “ *spirit* is SPIRIT.”

We find the apostle Peter blessing
 God for the inestimable blessing of *re-*
generation after this manner, “ Blessed
 “ be the God and Father of our LORD
 “ JESUS CHRIST, which according to
 “ his abundant mercy hath begotten us
 “ again unto a lively hope, by the resur-
 “ rection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
 “ to an inheritance incorruptible, and
 “ undefiled, and that fadeth not away,
 “ reserved in Heaven for you, who are

^p John i. 13.

^q James i. 17, 18.

^r 1 Ep. ii. 29.

“kept by the power of God through “faith unto salvation^s.” The new birth is noble, divine, and heavenly. It is wholly of God. The same power, which was put forth to raise Christ from the dead, is put forth in regeneration. The apostle would have those persons rejoice and glory in this, that they had God for their Father,—that they were begotten again by him, through the incorruptible seed and Spirit of God,—that their hope in God was a lively one, being founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,—that they were born heirs of God, to an inheritance incorruptible, reserved for them, and that they were kept for the enjoyment of it by the power of God. Christ’s resurrection hath a virtual influence in our resurrection. Christ’s resurrection is the exemplary pattern of it, according to which, as the Spirit wrought in him, so he works in us a work conformable to his resurrection. As the resurrection of Christ was the great declaration of his being the Son of God; so is regeneration, of our being the sons of God; it being the evidence of our adoption, and also the first discovery of our election. As Christ’s resurrection was the first step to his eternal kingdom and glory; so regeneration, is the first open introduction into all the blessings of that state

^s 1 Pet. i. 3, 4, 5.

of grace, into which the child of God is now introduced.

“The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by “Christ Jesus,” invests us with a meetness for, and with a manifestative right and title to, the kingdom of Heaven; by giving us in regeneration a spiritual life in our souls, which will issue in life eternal. A right to, and foretaste of which, are then given us, when we are called with an holy calling, and made partakers of the divine nature. This expression, “that ye might be partakers of “the divine nature,” is made use of by Peter^t. He is speaking of what is bestowed on us in regeneration, and he addresses himself to the regenerate thus, “To them that have obtained like precious faith with us (*i. e.* the apostles) “through the righteousness (or in the “righteousness) of God and our Saviour “Jesus Christ: grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, “according as his divine power hath “given unto us all things that pertain “unto life and godliness, through the “knowledge of him that hath called us “to glory and virtue; whereby are “given unto us exceeding great and “precious promises; that by these ye

^t 2 Epistle i. 4.

“ might be partakers of the divine nature.” The *divine nature* is bestowed in *regeneration*, in which are contained all the principles of grace and holiness, with all the seeds of spiritual and everlasting life. And, by *regeneration*, the *divine nature* is inherent in our souls.

It is styled, *The divine nature*, because it is the perfect image of God's nature, and perfectly conformable to it, suited to what is in God, and fits the soul for holding communion with God, and receiving gracious communications from him. Thus, as the chosen had in election a supernatural life and being given them in Christ, and supercreation-blessings bestowed on them in him; so in regeneration they receive, and are made partakers of the divine nature, suited to the enjoyment and participation of all those blessings. It is not the nature of God, but it is a nature suited to all things in God, which fits us to take in his glory, and to be happy in him for ever; on which account it is styled, “*The divine nature.*” Hereby the regenerate are filled with all those spiritual faculties which qualify them for taking in the knowledge of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, and for holding communion with them, both on earth and in heaven.—Paul, speaking of the

new creature, says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature^v." Of a believer he speaks thus, "I knew a man in Christ^w." Of spiritual life, he speaks thus, "Christ liveth in me^x." Of the new creation he saith, "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works^y." All which very peculiar expressions point out, how high and truly divine that life is, which Christ bestows upon us. That, consequently, it is in all its acts holy, spiritual, and supernatural. "Your life," saith the apostle, "is hid with Christ in God^z." Believers are styled, "*The temples of the Holy Ghost*." The Holy Ghost is said to "dwell in them^a." He is the soul of their souls. He *quickens them together with Christ*; with the very same life wherewith Christ was quickened when he was raised from the dead.

The Holy Ghost is the fountain of all spiritual life in us, and of all our spiritual quickening and enlargements in the whole course of our walking with God. It may be said of all the regenerate; "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quick-

^v 2 Cor. v. 17.

^x Gal. ii. 20.

^y Eph. ii. 10.

^a 1 Cor. vi. 19.

^w 2 Cor. v. 17.

^z Col. iii. 3.

“ened us together with Christ^b.” It is an act passed, and is so everlastingly complete, that all after-quickenings are but the fruits and effects of it. The Father is the fountain of life, which the God-man hath, and communicates to his members. “As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself^c.” The God-man hath *life in himself*. He is the *Prince of life*. Yet he hath not this life in himself originally as God-man, but from the Father: he is the fountain of it. Hence our Lord thus speaks, “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me^d.” As Christ lives *in* the Father, as the elect live *in* Christ, and as Christ lives *by* the Father; so he bestows life on his people, which the Holy Ghost conveys to them by his regenerating power: and thus Christ gives life to them, and they live by him; and thus they are made *partakers of Christ* by an admision into divine communion with him. They have communion with him in his death, and also in the virtue and efficacy of his resurrection. Their union with him, is the foundation of all their communion with him. His being their head, surety, and representative, is

^b Eph. ii. 4, 5.^c John v. 26.^d John vi. 57.

the ground and cause of all the blessings of his grace being freely imparted to them. Hence arises that communion, which they are admitted to in spiritual regeneration. On this account the apostle says, "God is faithful, by whom "ye were called unto the fellowship of "his Son Jesus Christ our Lord^e." The Holy Ghost is the great witness of this union. He it is who gives the evidence of it. He dwells in the saints, and carries on all the communion betwixt Christ and them, which they have the experience and enjoyment of both on earth and in glory. Our Lord, when he spoke concerning his sending his Spirit to his apostles, told *them*, and *us* in them, "At "that day ye shall know that I am in my "Father, and ye in me, and I in you^f." And again, treating on the same subject, he said, "When he the Spirit of truth is "come, he will guide you into all truth: "for he shall not speak of himself, but "whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he "speak, and he will shew you things to "come. He shall glorify me, for he shall "receive of mine, and shall shew it unto "you. All things that the Father hath are "mine: therefore said I, that he shall "take of mine, and shew it unto you^g." The elect *in regeneration* are partakers

^e 1 Cor. i. 9.

^f John xiv. 20.

^g John xvi. 13, 14, 15.

of a supernatural birth; they are cut off and removed from their *old stock Adam*, and transplanted into Christ: so that speaking personally of one who is regenerate, it may be said, He is a *man in Christ*, and hath a supernatural communion with God agreeable to the state to which he is advanced. “And as the Lord hath chosen him that is godly for himself;” so he is pleased to impart his love to the regenerate in the sense, experience, enjoyment, and consolations of it in a manner and degree which are ineffable. They find in their own souls that communion with God is the quintessence of blessedness; and it is what his children have an experience of in the state of grace. So saith John, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ^h.” Fellowship with God the Father is thus expressed by the beloved apostle, “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Communion with Christ is so close, that Paul saith, “I am crucified with Christ—Christ liveth in me, and the life which I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God^k.” Communion with the Holy Ghost is expressly mentioned by the apostle Paul. And as he dwelleth in us and abideth with us for ever; so

^h 1 John i. 3. ⁱ Chap. iv. 16. ^k Gal. ii. 20.

his communion *with us* and our communion *with him* must be most close and intimate. He glorifies Jesus, takes of the things that are his, and shews them unto us, reveals unto us our interest in him, sheds abroad the love of the Father in our hearts, bears witness to our spirits in believing, that we are the children of God, and seals us unto the day of eternal redemption. In the manifestation of which glorious and divine acts of grace within and upon his people, he is pleased most sweetly to admit his beloved ones to some gracious communion with himself. Thus Heaven is begun on earth, and the regenerate are in a state of actual fitness and preparation for eternal glory, which they will enter upon the very moment death hath done its office on their bodies. This led *Paul* to say for himself and other new-born souls, “ We know, that if our
 “ earthly house of this tabernacle were
 “ dissolved, we have a building of God,
 “ an house not made with hands, eternal
 “ in the Heavens. For in this we groan,
 “ earnestly desiring to be clothed upon
 “ with our house which is from Heaven:
 “ if so be that being clothed we
 “ shall not be found naked. For we
 “ that are in this tabernacle do groan,
 “ being burthened: not for that we
 “ would be unclothed, but clothed up-

“ on, that mortality might be swallowed
 “ up of life. Now he that hath wrought
 “ us for the self same thing (*i. e.* eter-
 “ nal glory) is God, who also hath given
 “ unto us the earnest of the Spirit.
 “ Therefore we are always confident,
 “ knowing that, whilst we are at home
 “ in the body, we are absent from the
 “ Lord: for we walk by faith, not by
 “ sight. We are confident, I say, and
 “ willing rather to be absent from the
 “ body, and to be present with the
 “ Lord¹.” Thus grace, inwrought in
 our souls by the Holy Ghost, appears to
 be glory in the bud. And in the state
 of grace, into which we are manifesta-
 tively introduced by the Holy Spirit,
 we have many sweet foretastes of eter-
 nal glory.

O thou divine and Eternal Spirit! who
 proceedest from the Father and the
 Son, I believe in thy personality, and
 confess and acknowledge thee to be by
 essential union with the Godhead co-
 equal and co-eternal with the Father
 and the Son. Thou art uncreate, in-
 comprehensible, God, and Lord; who
 livest in the possession and enjoyment of
 all essential perfection and blessedness.
 Thou art the Lord and giver of all spi-
 ritual life. Blessed be thy holy name;
 thou givest incontestible evidence of

¹ 2 Cor. v. 1—8.

thy eternal power and Godhead in regenerating and quickening the souls of thy people with new, spiritual, and eternal life; and continuest a perpetual proof of it in the souls, which thou hast quickened, by maintaining that life in thy people, carrying on thy work in them, and crowning it in due season with everlasting glory. Help me to give thee thy true and proper glory for thy own work within me, for quickening me with spiritual life, giving me to *know* JESUS, and the POWER of HIS RESURRECTION, and for *filling my heart* at seasons with a sense of my heavenly Father's love to me in his dear Son. Keep me ever looking up to thee for thy life-giving influences and inward anointings. Lead me continually out of myself into communion with the Father in his love, and with the Son in the benefits and blessings of his salvation. O thou holy-making spirit, sanctify me throughout in body, soul, and spirit. I ask it for the honour of *thy own grace*. And to thee with the Father and the Son be equal praise for ever and ever. Amen.