

The Grounds and Reasons of Christian Regeneration

by William Law

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Christian regeneration, highlighting the original dignity and glory of man's creation, the fall and its consequences, and the necessity of regeneration for salvation.

Scripture: John 1:12-13, John 3:3, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:1-5, Colossians 3:10, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 John 5:1

Topics: "New Birth", "Regeneration"

Description

William Law emphasizes the profound significance of Christian regeneration, urging both Christians and Deists to recognize the necessity of the New Birth. He explains that humanity was created in the image of God, but through sin, this divine image was marred, leading to a state of inner turmoil and separation from God. Law passionately calls for a return to the divine nature through the regeneration that only Christ can provide, highlighting that true salvation is found in the restoration of the Son of God within the soul. He expresses a deep compassion for the lost, desiring that all may experience the transformative power of God's love and redemption.

Transcript

The Introduction.

I should reckon it a Matter of great Importance, if I knew how to bespeak the serious Attention of the Reader to one of the greatest Articles of the Christian Religion, and of the greatest Concern to himself.

And though the Subject is particular, and seems only to relate to one Point, yet the Things which will here come under Consideration, will extend to Matters of the most general Moment, and contain the most affecting Reasons to awaken and convert the Heart both of the Deist, and the Christian.

For it is my Intent so to search and lay open the true Grounds and Reasons of the Christian New-Birth, that the Things said, may equally reach both these sorts of Readers.

For the Deists, and Unbelievers, have a great Share of my passionate Affections, and I never can think, or write of the infinite Blessings of the Christian Redemption, without feeling in my Heart, an impatient Longing to see them the happy Partakers of them. And as one naturally believes, what one strongly wishes; so I cannot help hoping, that both Christians and Deists will here find Truths of such a

Nature, as must in some Degree touch their Hearts, if not read with Prejudice and Aversion.

OF THE
Nature and Necessity
OF
R E G E N E R A T I O N,
OR, THE
N E W - B I R T H

[Reg-1] Man was created by God after his own Image, and in his own Likeness, a living Mirror of the Divine Nature; where Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each brought forth their own Nature in a creaturely Manner.

[Reg-2] (2.) As the Son, who is begotten of the Father, is the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son, as an amiable, moving Life of both; so it was in this created Image of the Holy Trinity. In it, the Father's Nature generated the Nature of the Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeded from them both, as an amiable, moving Life of both.{See "An Appeal to Deists, Arians, &c.ī, c.i., pp. 45-58.} This was the Likeness or Image of God, in which the first Man was created, a true Offspring of God, in whom the Divine Birth sprung up as in the Deity, where Father, Son, and Holy Ghost saw themselves in a creaturely Manner.

[Reg-3] (3.) In the Divine Nature the Father cannot possibly be separated from the Son, nor the Holy Ghost from both, or either of them. But such Separation could come to pass in the Trinity, become creaturely, or in the created living Image of the Trinity.

[Reg-4] (4.) If such Separation could not have happened, Man could not have fallen out of Paradise; for so long as this Image of the Holy Trinity continued unbroken, so long it must be in Paradise, Heaven, or the Kingdom of Divine Joy.

[Reg-5] (5.) But that this Separation could happen in this created Image of the Trinity, viz., that the Birth of the Son, and the Arising or Proceeding of the Holy Ghost, could be separated or lost, is also certain; because Man is actually fallen out of Paradise into this poor, wretched, perishable World.

[Reg-6] (6.) Whilst Man continued an unbroken Image of the holy Trinity, he was necessarily in Paradise, in the open Enjoyment of the Kingdom of God. He stood indeed upon the Earth, and with the same outward World about him, as we do now; but Paradise was over all, the Cover of all; and therefore he neither saw nor felt either his own outward Body, or the Things of this outward World, in the Manner, as we now see, and feel them. His own dark, gross, heavy, fleshly Body, which appeared after the Fall, and the naked Grossness, Heaviness, Darkness, Discord, Contrariety, and Enmity, of the Elements of this outward World, the Strife of Heat and Cold, of Storms and Tempests, were Things suppressed in Paradise, and as entirely hid from his Eyes, as the Darkness of the Night is hid from our Eyes by the Light

of the Day.

[Reg-7] (7.) This is plainly taught us in the Holy Scripture, where it is said of our first Parents in Paradise, before the Fall, that "they were naked, and were not ashamed." And again, after the Fall it is said, "their Eyes were opened," and "they saw they were naked," and through Shame sought for a Covering. It is not said, they saw their Nakedness in Paradise, but that though they were naked, that is, had such Bodies as afterwards appeared to be naked, yet they were not ashamed, And the Reason of their not being ashamed, was because that Nakedness was not then visible, could not then show itself, but was concealed and covered from them by their paradisaical Glory; but as soon as by Sin, they died to the paradisaical Life and Glory, then they saw their Nakedness, which Sight filled them with Shame and Confusion.

[Reg-8] (8.) From these two Passages of Scripture it is most plain, first, that another sort of Seeing, or another Sight of Things, was opened in Adam after the Fall, than that which he had before it: For he then first saw his own Nakedness, and therefore first also then saw the outward World, with such Eyes as he saw his own Body, that is, in the same State of Nakedness, as he saw himself, destitute of its paradisaical Glory. Secondly, That before his Fall, his Seeing was divine, by means of a divine Light, shining forth from the Kingdom of God, that was then not hid, but powerfully opened within him. It was then with him, as with the heavenly City, of which St. John says, "It had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to shine in it; for the Glory of God did enlighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof." Rev.xxi.23. Thirdly, That after the Fall, when the Image of the Holy Trinity was broken in him, this divine Light departed from him, and he was left to the firmamental Light of this World, to the Light of Beasts, to see himself, and all other outward Things, in no other Light and Glory, but such as the Sun, Stars, and Elements, cast upon one another. Thus he stood with regard to this outward World, a poor Prisoner of this earthly Life, as much under the Power and Slavery of the Elements, as his Fellow-creatures the Beasts.

[Reg-9] (9.) Paradise being departed from the Earth (which before kept all in harmony) now Discord and Contrariety broke forth in all the Elements, and Animals upon it. The Elementary Nature in Man, and Beasts, was in the same Disorder with the outward Elements and Stars. From this time Storms and Tempests, Thunders and Lightnings, Earthquakes, and all sorts of Strife and Contrarieties through all temporal Nature; and in Man, and other Animals, arose the same Disquiet; for the Elements in and without man, were of the same Nature, and therefore acted upon one another. Hence, Heat, Cold, Pain, Sorrow, Fear, Disquiet, Diseases, Sickness and Death, came upon Man, fallen out of Paradise into this World.

[Reg-10] (10.) This was the State of the World, and of Man in it, after that Paradise was retired from it; when, instead of the Light and Glory of Paradise, which before made it all Peace and Unity, and a sweet Habitation of Divine Joy, it had now only the Light of the Sun, which could only keep the Elements in such Harmony, and Discord, as we now see in the World. Thus stood Man in this outward World; let us now look at the inward State of his Soul, and see what Condition he was of, in the inward, and spiritual World.

[Reg-11] (11.) We have before shown, that Man was created a living Image of the holy Trinity in Unity, that the Divine Birth arose in him, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, saw themselves in him, in a creaturely Manner.

[Reg-12] Now by his Transgression this Image of the Holy Trinity was broken; the Generation of the Son, or Word, and the Proceeding of the Holy Ghost in him, were at an End; in the Day that he sinned, in that Day he died this Death. And therefore what was he as to his Soul? What must be said of it? It was

something, that was deprived of that Birth, which was the Brightness of its Glory, and which should be that in it, which the Son of God is to the Father; it wanted that Spirit, which was its amiable Life, and which was to be that to it, which the Holy Ghost is to the Father, and the Son.

[Reg-13] Yet the Soul was still a Life, an imperishable Life, that could not be dissolved, or cease to be. Now seeing every Life, whether spiritual or corporeal, consists in Fire, or rather is Fire; therefore we may say of the Soul in this State, that it is a spiritual dark, Fire-breath, an Anger-fire, that must heat, and torment itself with its own inward burning Strife, and yet be unable to reach, touch, or obtain any Spark of Light and Love, to make its Fire-Life sweet and amiable, or such a Flame of Fire, as Angels are said to be.

[Reg-14] (12.) This was the State of the Soul after the Fall, when the Birth of the Son of God, and the Proceeding of the Holy Ghost, were no more to be found, or felt in it. It was in the State and Condition of the Devils, who in their fallen Nature, are from Flames of Love, become this spiritual, dark, raging, aching Fire-breath, that can draw no Light of Love into it.

[Reg-15] And the Reason why, even the most profligate Persons do not fully know, and perceive their Souls to be in this miserable State, a dark Root of self-tormenting Fire, is this, because the Soul, though thus fallen, was still united to the Blood of an human Body, and therefore the sweet, and cheering Light of the Sun, could reach the Soul, and do that for it in some Degree, and for some Time, which it does to the Darkness, Sharpness, Sourness, Bitterness, and Wrath that is in outward Nature, that is, it could enlighten, sweeten, and cheer it in a certain Degree.

[Reg-16] But as this is not its own Light, that is, does not arise in the Soul itself, but only reaches it by means of the Body; so if the Soul hath in this time got no Light of its own, then, when the Death of the Body breaks off its Communion with the Light of this World, the Soul is left a mere dark, raging Fire, in the State of Devils.

[Reg-17] And if all the Light of this World was to be immediately at once extinguished, all human Souls that were not in some real Degree of Regeneration, would immediately find themselves to be nothing but the rage of Fire, and the horror of Darkness.

[Reg-18] (13.) Now, though the Light and Comfort of this outward World, keeps even the worst of Men from any constant, strong Sensibility of that wrathful, fiery, dark, and self-tormenting Nature, that is the very Essence of every fallen, unregenerate Soul; yet every Man in the World has, more or less, frequent and strong Intimations given him, that so it is with him, in the inmost Ground of his Soul.

[Reg-19] How many Inventions are some People forced to have recourse to, to keep off a certain inward Uneasiness, which they are afraid of, and know not whence it comes? Alas, it is because there is a fallen Spirit, a dark aching Fire within them, which has never had its proper Relief, and is trying to discover itself, and calling out for Help, at every Cessation of worldly Joy.

[Reg-20] Why are some People, when under heavy Disappointments, or some great worldly Shame, at the very Brink of Distraction, unable to bear themselves, and desirous of Death of any kind? 'Tis because worldly Light and Comforts, no longer acting sweetly upon the Blood, the Soul is left to its own dark, fiery raging Nature, and would destroy the Body at any rate, rather than continue under such a Sensibility of its own wrathful, self-tormenting Fire.

[Reg-21] Who has not at one time or other felt a Sourness, Wrath, Selfishness, Envy, and Pride, which he could not tell what to do with, or how to bear, rising up in him without his Consent, casting a Blackness over all his Thoughts, and then as suddenly going off again, either by the Cheerfulness of the Sun, or Air, or some agreeable Accident, and again, at times, as suddenly returning upon him? Sufficient Indications are these to every Man, that there is a dark Guest within him, concealed under the Cover of Flesh and Blood, often lulled asleep by worldly Light and Amusements, yet such as will, in spite of everything, show itself, which if it has not its proper Relief in this Life, must be his Torment in Eternity. And it was for the sake of this hidden Hell within us, that our Blessed Lord said when on Earth, and says now to every Soul, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest."

[Reg-22] For as the Soul is become this Self-tormenting Fire, only because the Birth of the Son of God was extinguished in it by our first Parents; so there is no other possible Remedy for it, either in Heaven or Earth, but by its coming to this Son of God, to be born again of him.

[Reg-23] Oh, poor Unbelievers, that content yourselves with this Foundation of Hell in your Nature, and either seek for no salvation, or, what is worse, turn your Backs with Disregard on the one only Saviour, that God himself can help you to!

[Reg-24] Think not of saving yourselves. It is no more in your Power, than to save the fallen Spirits that are in Hell; you can no more do the one than the other. Talk not of the Mercy and Goodness of God; his Mercy is indeed infinite, and his Goodness above all Conception; but then the Infiniteness of it consists in this, that he of his own mere Mercy found out, and offered this Saviour to all Mankind, because in the Nature of Things, nothing less than this Saviour could redeem them.

[Reg-25] Therefore to rely upon a Mercy of God, that is not within the Christian Scheme of it, is to rely upon a Fiction of our own Minds; because all the Mercy that God can show to Mankind, all that his omnipotent Love can do for them, is done and offered to them in, and through the Redemption Jesus Christ.

[Reg-26] If either Devils, or lost Souls could possibly be annihilated, neither of them would by the Goodness of God, be suffered to exist in Misery, for Misery's sake. But a Man may as well expect that his Soul shall be annihilated through the Goodness of God, though Annihilation is impossible, and what cannot be done, as to expect to be saved through the Divine Goodness, without the Mediation of the Son of God, when the Birth of the Son of God in the Soul, is the one only Salvation, that the Omnipotence of God can bestow upon him.

[Reg-27] Therefore to choose or rely upon some other Goodness of God besides that, which he has offered to us in Jesus Christ, is the most dreadful Mistake that can befall any Man, and must, if persevered in, leave him out of the Possibility of any Kind, or Degree of Salvation. For as the Son of God is the Brightness and Glory of the Father, so no Soul made in the Likeness of God is capable of any Degree of Brightness and Glory, but so far as the Birth of the Son of God is in it; therefore to reject this Birth, to refuse this Method of Redemption, is to reject all the Goodness, that the Divine Nature itself hath for us.

[Reg-28] (14.) But to return. I have shown in few Words the original Dignity and Glory of Man's Creation and State in Paradise, and the lamentable Change, that the Fall has brought upon him.

[Reg-29] From a divine and heavenly Creature, he is so wretchedly changed, as to have inwardly the Nature, and dark Fire of the Devils, and outwardly the Nature of all the Beasts, a Slave of this outward

World, living at all Uncertainties, amongst the Pains, Fears, Sorrows, and Diseases, till his Body is forced to be removed from our Sight, and hid in the Earth.

[Reg-30] Now from this short View of what Man is fallen from, and what he is fallen into, we may see at once in the strongest Light the divine Excellency and absolute Necessity of those Doctrines of our blessed Lord, calling us to all Kinds of renouncing the World, to so many Ways of denying all the Passions and Inclinations of Flesh and Blood.

[Reg-31] Were the World, as it now is, and we, as we now are, in the very first State in which God made it and us, there would be some Foundation for saying, as some do, "What are all these Things for, if they are not to be enjoyed? Why have we these Passions and Inclinations, if they may not be gratified?" But all these Questions are fully answered, as soon as it is known, that the first State of Things is quite altered; that we were not created to be in this World in the Manner we are now in it; that Paradise was our first State, where we should have stood in divine Strength and Ability, insensible of any Evil from outward Nature; that Sin destroyed this first State of Things, destroyed the Divine Life in the Soul, and removed Paradise from off the Earth;--that Man, cast out of Paradise, came as a Malefactor into this outward World, to be punished and scourged by all its divided, warring Elements; that by his falling into this World, it got the same Power over him, as over the Beasts, that are its proper Inhabitants, and of the same Nature with itself; that thus fallen under its Dominion, it continually breathes its own corrupt Nature into him, feeds him with such Husks as the Swine eat, and proposes such Pleasures to him, as make him unwilling, and unable to regain his first Divine Life.

[Reg-32] Now, as soon as this is known to be the Condition of Man, thus fallen from a Divine Life under the Dominion of this World, then all the renouncing, self-denying Doctrines of the Gospel, appear to have the utmost Reason and Necessity in them; then it appears to be as much our Happiness, to deny the Tempers and Inclinations of this earthly Nature, and to be delivered from the Power of its Pleasures over us, as to be delivered from the Power of Death and Hell.

[Reg-33] And the most sober Reason thus acquainted with the Nature of our Fall, must be forced to consider this World as having merely the Nature of an Hospital, where People only are, because they are distempered, and where no Happiness is sought for, but that of being healed, and made fit to leave it.

[Reg-34] (15.) To proceed: That I have not stated Man's first Dignity too high, is evidently plain from the Scripture Account of it. It is a fundamental Truth of our Religion, that he was created in Paradise for a Life suitable to it. But Paradise is a Divine Habitation, still existing where it was at the first, though not visible to Eyes which see only by the Light of the Sun, and is the Habitation of such as have attained their first paradisiacal Nature; it was in this Paradise, that our Saviour, through a Miracle of Love, promised to be with the Thief on the Cross.

[Reg-35] It is also a fundamental Truth of Scripture, that Man was created to be immortal, incapable of Death, and of everything that had any Likeness to it, so long as he continued in the Perfection of his State. That it was Sin alone which brought Sorrow, Pain, Evil, Distress, Sickness and Death upon him.

[Reg-36] But if this be a Truth that cannot be denied, then it must be equally true, that before he sinned, he must have stood in such a Paradise, as kept everything in the outward World entirely under him, so that neither Fire nor Water, nor any other Element, could have the least Power over him. But if Fire, the fiercest of the Elements, had not the least Power of touching his Body in any hurtful Manner, or of causing any Pain to it; then it must be granted, that Paradise covered, and governed the Power of all the Elements of

this outward World; that Man lived in it as an absolute Lord over it; and therefore it undeniably follows that the Manner, in which he now is under the Power of the Elements, capable of receiving Pain and Evil from them, is a State that he was not in, till Sin took Paradise from him, and left him in the same poor Condition, that we now are in, capable of receiving Pain and Death, from almost everything that is about us.

[Reg-37] That Man in Paradise lived in this World insensible, and also incapable of any Evil from it, superior to all its Elements, is plain from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

[Reg-38] For how could it be more plainly told us, that outward Things, the Stars and Elements could not affect his State, or make any Impression upon him, than by telling us, that he had no Knowledge of Good and Evil in this World, till he had eaten of that Tree? Is not this directly telling us, that before such eating, he was above the Nature of this World, that it had not Power to operate upon him, or give him any Sense or Feeling, of what there was of Good or Evil in it.

[Reg-39] Now that he was created to be, and to continue thus a Lord over all temporal Nature, superior to all the Influences and Effects of the Stars and Elements, is also plain from the Prohibition given him, not to eat of this Tree of Knowledge.

[Reg-40] But he was not content with this happy Superiority above the Evil and Good of outward Nature. His Imagination, helped on by the Devil, longed to look into, to know and feel the secret working Powers of that outward Nature, which it was his Happiness, and Paradise to be insensible of.

[Reg-41] When God forbade his eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, it was the same thing as if he had said, Fall not into the outward World, under the Dominion of its Stars and Elements, but keep thy State in Paradise.

[Reg-42] When Man disobeyed God, and took the Fruit of the Tree into his Body, which brought the Nature and Power of the Stars and Elements into it; this is not to be considered, as that single Act of Eating, but it signifies as much as if he had said; By eating this Fruit, I desire to come within the Influences of the Stars and Elements, and to be made sensible, and feeling of the Good and Evil that is in them.

[Reg-43] Therefore, small as the Action seems to be at the first View, and of a very limited Nature, it was his refusing to be that, which God created him to be; it was his express, open, voluntary Act and Deed, by which he chose to fall into this outward World, in the Manner we now are in it.

[Reg-44] Therefore it was not the mere eating of a Fruit, that brought Adam's Misery upon him, but it was the eating a Fruit, as his chosen Means of entering into this World.

[Reg-45] God himself was not angry at all, or at a small Act of eating a Fruit, and so in Anger turned Man out of Paradise, into a World cursed for that Sin. But Man freely and voluntarily chose, against the Will, and Command of God, to be in the World in its cursed State, unblessed by Paradise; For he chose to enter into a Sensibility and Feeling of its Good and Evil, which is directly choosing to be, where Paradise is not; for nothing that is in Paradise, can be touched, or hurt by anything of the outward World. Therefore the first State of Man was a State of such Glory, and heavenly Prerogatives, as I have above related; and his Fall, was a Fall into, or under the Power of this outward World.

[Reg-46] (16.) If it be also further asked, What sufficient Proof there is, first, that the Likeness and Image of God, in which Man was created, signified thus much, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each brought forth their own Nature in him, and in him saw themselves in a creaturely manner? And then, secondly, that

by the first Sin, this Birth of the Son of God, and Proceeding of the Holy Ghost was extinguished and lost in the Soul of Man? It may be answered, that these great Truths stand attested by undeniable Evidence of Scripture.

[Reg-47] First, from the Means and Manner of our Redemption. For there is nothing that can so fully, and justly show us the true Nature of our Fall, as the Nature and Manner of our Redemption. And it seems highly suitable to the Wisdom of God to let the first, be but in part discovered, till the latter showed and proved itself in an undeniable Manner. And this, no doubt, is the Reason why Moses is suffered to write no more of the Nature of the Fall of Man, or what it implied, than he has done. Because the Time for a plain Insight into that Matter, was not then come, and it was to lie as much a Secret, as to the true Nature of it, as the Nature and Manner of our Redemption then did; which was then only obscurely declared, by an Enmity between the Seed of the Woman, and the Seed of the Serpent.

[Reg-48] But when the Seed of the Woman showed itself to be the Son of God, the Second Person of the holy Trinity, united to our human Nature; then the Nature of our Fall, and what we fell from, and what was the Seed of the Serpent in us, manifested themselves in the same Degree of Certainty. And therefore it is very unreasonable to hold, that we ought to say no more of our first State before the Fall, of its Dignity and Perfection, and what was lost by the Fall, than what is openly and expressly declared by Moses. For as it seemed Good to the Divine Wisdom to conceal the Mystery of our Redemption and Salvation for many Ages, and to let Moses only discover it under a Declaration of a Serpent-destroyer; so there was a Fitness, and even Necessity, that the Nature and Degree of our Fall should be kept in the same Degree of Secrecy, then only to be discovered with a sufficient Degree of Plainness and Certainty, when our Redemption and Salvation came plainly to be laid open. The Religion of the Jews was suited to that State of Things and Times in which they lived; neither the Mysteries of the Creation, nor Redemption, were then discovered; Things past, and Things to come, had then only their Figures, Shadows, and Types.

[Reg-49] But when the Son of God became incarnate, and showed forth in the plainest Manner, the Nature, Manner, and Necessity of our Redemption through his Blood, and a Life received from him, then the Nature and Degree of our Fall became equally plain and manifest; and everything that he has told us of the Nature and Necessity of a new or second Birth from him, was so much told us of our first Birth in Paradise.

[Reg-50] For the Nature and Greatness of our Redemption, must show the Nature and Greatness of our Fall. These Things have such a necessary Correspondence, as cannot be denied, but by a Mind utterly indisposed to receive Conviction.

[Reg-51] If our Redemption proposed to restore to us a Divine Sight, would not this be a sufficient Proof, that by the Fall we had lost some Divine Manner of seeing? So, if God himself takes our Nature upon him to redeem us, and it be declared that nothing, but this uniting the Divine Nature to the Human, can be our Redemption, can we want a Proof, that the Divine Nature existed in some manner in us, before the Fall?

[Reg-52] Now it is a plain, manifest Doctrine of the holy Scriptures, that Man by the Fall is in such a Condition, that there was no help or Remedy for him, either in the Height above, or in the Depth below, but by the Son of God's becoming incarnate, taking the fallen Nature upon him. If this alone could be the Remedy, does not this enough show us the Disease? Does not this speak plainly enough, what it was that Man had lost by his Fall, namely, the Birth of the Son of God in his Soul; and therefore it was, that only the Son of God in so mysterious a manner, could be his Redeemer?

[Reg-53] If he had lost less, a less Power could have redeemed him. If he had lost something else, the Restoration of that something, would have been his Redemption.

[Reg-54] But since it is an open, undeniable Doctrine of the Gospel, that there can be no Salvation for Mankind but in the Name, and by the Power of the Son of God, by his being united to the fallen Nature, and so raising his own Birth and Life in it, is it not sufficiently declared to us, that what was lost by the Fall, was the Birth of the Son of God in the Soul?

[Reg-55] Secondly, this same Doctrine is not left to be drawn from any Consequences of Things, but is in express Words taught us, when it is said, that we must be born again from above, born of God; for this is expressly telling us what Birth we have lost, and is only saying, that the first Birth is to be restored, or that the Divine Birth is to arise, or to be brought again into us, as at the first, when the living Image of the Holy Trinity was brought forth in us.

[Reg-56] What this new regained Birth is, we are plainly told by St. Peter, that is a being born again of an incorruptible Seed by the Word, that is, the eternal Word, or Son of God. Which Divine Word being only in the Soul as a Seed, is to restore by Degrees the first Birth of the Word, or Son of God in the Soul. Which is Proof enough that this was the State of the Soul in its Creation, that this Birth was then in it, and so was an Image of the Holy Trinity; and that the Death which Adam died in the Day that he sinned, was the losing this holy Birth from his Soul. And on this Account it was, that nothing could restore him, but that which was able to restore this Birth again to his Soul, and make it again such an Image of God, as that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, might therein see themselves again in a creaturely Manner, and dwell in it, and it in them.

[Reg-57] Thirdly, the Holy Ghost is in the Scriptures declared to be the Sanctifier, or Renewer of Holiness in the Soul, and this in such a manner, that all the Motions and Operations of the Soul, so far as they are without it, and unmoved by it, are so far unholy, and unable even for a good Thought.

[Reg-58] Now how could our Thoughts or Operations be unholy in themselves, and want the Sanctification and Renewing of the Holy Ghost, unless this Holy Spirit had first existed in us, and by our Fall had been separated from us?

[Reg-59] Had not the Birth of the Holy Ghost arisen in us at our Creation, we could no more be unholy for want of it, than the Beasts are, nor any more now have wanted to be renewed by it, than the Beasts that never had it. But since there is now no Sanctification or Redemption for us, but by having the Holy Ghost as a free Gift of God breathed again into us, it is no less than a Demonstration, that we had before we fell, this Holiness by the Nature which God gave us at first; and that the Holiness of our Creation consisted in this, that the Holy Spirit then proceeded, or arose forth in our Soul, as the Birth of the Son of God did; and that it might for the same Reason be then called the Holiness of our Nature, as it is now after the Fall, called a Holiness by Gift or Grace. For if we are now to be born again of the Spirit by Grace, does not this tell us, that we had this Birth of the Spirit in us at the first, and that then it was the Birth of our Nature by Creation?

[Reg-60] Fourthly, these same great Truths are evidently signified to us in the fullest Manner by our Baptism, and the Form of it. Our Baptism is to signify our seeking and obtaining a new Birth. And our being baptized in, or into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, tells us in the plainest manner, what Birth it is that we seek, namely, such a new Birth as may make us again what we were at first, a living real Image or Offspring of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

[Reg-61] Is it not owned on all hands, that we are baptized into a Renovation of some Divine Birth that we had lost? And, that we may not be at a loss to know what that Divine Birth is, the Form in Baptism openly declares to us, that it is to regain that first Birth of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in our Souls, which at the first made us to be truly and really Images of the Nature of the Holy Trinity in Unity. The Form in Baptism is but very imperfectly apprehended, till it is understood to have this great Meaning in it. And it must be owned, that the Scriptures tend wholly to guide us to this understanding of it. For since they teach us, a Birth of God, a Birth of the Spirit, that we must obtain, and that Baptism, the appointed Sacrament of this New Birth, is to be done into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, can there be any doubt, that this Sacrament is to signify the Renovation of the Birth of the Holy Trinity in our Souls? And that therefore this was the holy Image born or created at first, when God said, "Let us make Man in our Image, after our own Likeness," that is, so make him, that we may see ourselves, our own Nature in him, in a creaturely Manner.

[Reg-62] What an harmonious Agreement does there thus appear, between our Creation and Redemption? and how finely, how surprisingly do our first and our second Birth answer to, and illustrate one another?

[Reg-63] At our first Birth it is said thus, "Let us make Man in our Image, after our own Likeness", when the Divine Birth was lost, and Man was to receive it again, it is said, "Be thou baptized into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost": which is saying, Let the Divine Birth, be brought forth again in thee, or be thou born again such an Image of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as thou wast at first.

[Reg-64] These Considerations all taken from the plain Words, and acknowledged Doctrines of Scripture, do, I think, sufficiently declare and prove to us, these great Truths of the last Importance, namely, that the Image in which Man was created, was such, as in which, the Holy Trinity saw itself, or its own Nature in a creaturely Manner, in which the Father's Nature generated the Nature of the Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeded from them both, as the amiable moving Life of both.

[Reg-65] That by Adam's Sin, this holy Image of the Holy Trinity was broken, and in such a Manner, that the Birth of the Son of God, and of the Holy Spirit, was no more in it, and that therefore in a stupendous Mystery of Love, the Son of God united himself to our fallen Nature, to recover, and restore to it, all that it had lost, and in such a Manner, that it might never be lost again to all Eternity.

[Reg-66] As soon as it is observed and known, that our Fall consisted in the losing of the Birth of the Son of God in our Soul, and consequently the proceeding forth of the Holy Spirit in it, there appears a surprising Agreeableness and Fitness, in the Means of our Redemption, namely, that we could only be saved by the eternal Son of God; that he only could save us, by taking our Nature upon him, and so uniting it with him, that his Life, or Birth might again arise in us, as at the first, and so we become again a perfect living Image of the Holy Trinity.

[Reg-67] (17.) Now the Reason why I have gone thus far in inquiring into the Dignity of Man's original State, and searched thus deep into his lamentable Fall, is this, to point out to the Reader the true Nature of the Christian Religion, and the infinite Importance of it; which Religion is administered by God, as our only Relief from our sad Condition; and that he may at one View see the Height and Depth of Divine Love, which has had so great Care of Mankind.

[Reg-68] I persuade myself, no one can see these Truths, in the Manner that I have represented them, without being in some degree inclined to believe them; and in the same degree stirred up to act in

Conformity to them.

[Reg-69] We know nothing truly of the Nature of the Christian Religion, and our deep Concern in it, but so far as we see into the Nature of our first State in the Creation, and our present State by the Fall. And as this Knowledge is in some Degree necessary, so is it also in some Degree obvious to every Man.

[Reg-70] Every Man has a Consciousness within himself, that a Perfection in all Kinds of Virtue becomes him; this Consciousness obliges him to set the best Foot forwards, and to put on the Appearance of all the Virtue that he can. Now what else is this, but an inward strong Testimony of his own Mind, declaring to him, that Perfection was his first State, and that because his Nature once had it, he can neither lose the agreeable Idea of it, nor quit his Pretenses to it; so that every Man carries in his own Breast, in the Depth of his own Frame and Constitution, a strong Proof of all those Truths, that I have deduced from Scripture. For I have not been speaking of things foreign or strange to us, but of things sensibly felt within us, and spoken to us, by the whole Form of our Nature.

[Reg-71] (18.) The Condition in which I have represented our Soul to be by the Fall, a mere dark Fire-breath, of an hellish Nature, showing itself in every Man more or less by its Fruits, by such Eruptions and Breakings forth of dark Passions, but hiding itself under an outward Appearance of Good, and a feigned Civility or Rectitude of Manners, is what every Man must be forced to own to be more or less in himself.

[Reg-72] For this is the State of every Man's Soul, because it has lost the Birth of the Son of God in it, and so is only as a strong Root of a fiery Life, unenlightened, and unblessed by that holy Word, which is the Brightness of the Father's Glory.

[Reg-73] This dark Root of a fiery, self-tormenting Life, which is the whole Nature of the fallen Soul, destitute of the Birth of the Son of God in it, is a Life that subsists in four Elements, as the Life of this World hath its four Elements.

[Reg-74] Now the four Elements of this dark, fiery Soul, or fallen Nature, are, (1.) A restless Selfishness; (2.) A restless Envy; (3.) A restless Pride; and, (4.) A restless Wrath or Anger. I call them the Elements of the fallen Soul, because they are that to it, which the four Elements of this World are to the Life of the Body.

[Reg-75] Now these four Elements which nourish and keep up the Life of the fallen Soul, are also the four Elements of Hell, in which the Devils dwell; they can no more depart from, or exist out of these Elements, than an earthly Life can depart from, or exist without the four Elements of this World, Fire, Air, Water, and Earth.

[Reg-76] Now, as the Soul, by the losing of the Birth of the Son of God in it, is become an aching dark Root of Fire, that has this restless Selfishness, restless Envy, restless Pride, and restless Wrath in it, which are the four Elements of Hell; so by its being in these, or having them in it, it is come to pass, that evil Spirits have such Communion with it, and so great Power over it.

[Reg-77] Every stirring of the Soul in the Element of Pride, is a moving in the Devil's Element, where he is, and has Power to join and act with it; every Motion in the Element of Envy or Wrath, is so far empowering him to enter into the Breath of our Life, and settle his fiery Kingdom in us.

[Reg-78] And thus in every one of these four Elements, so far as we willingly are in their Sphere of Activity, and act and stir according to them, so far we become Members of the Devil's Kingdom, and have him for our Leader, and Guide. How watchful therefore ought we to be of our Hearts, how fearful of consenting to, or not enough resisting every Motion of these Elements within us, since every voluntary yielding to them, is opening the Kingdom of Darkness in our Souls, and giving the Devil Power to infuse his wretched Nature into us. And we have still further Reason for this Fear and Watchfulness, if it be considered, that as no one of the Elements of this outward World could be, or subsist, if the other three were not, because they are the mutual Cause of one another; so it is in these other Elements, if we live in one, we live in all; Selfishness cannot be, or subsist without Envy, nor Pride without Wrath and Selfishness, nor any one of the four, without carrying the other three in its Bosom; therefore we must have the same Fear of any one, as of them all, for the Name of every one is Legion.

[Reg-79] Could we see, as we see outward Objects, what a dreadful Misery these four Elements bring upon our Souls, we should shun and fly from everything that gave Life and Strength to them, with more Earnestness, than from the most violent Evils that could threaten our Bodies; we should choose to burn in any Fire, rather than in that of our own Wrath and Pride, any Poverty of outward Life, rather than that of our own pinching Envy, any Prison, rather than to be shut up in our own dark Selfishness. For all outward Fires, Chains, Torments, Slaveries, Poverties, are but transient Shadows, of the tormenting, fiery, dark Slavery of an unredeemed Soul, left, and given up to these four Elements of Hell.

[Reg-80] And the Reason why they are not a Hell to profligate Men now upon Earth, is, as has been said, because we now live in Flesh and Blood, under the cheering Influences of the Sun, and the Diversion and Amusement of outward Things, and in several Forms of Happiness, which our Imaginations play with in time. This Wandering of the Imagination through its own Inventions of Delight, hinders the poor Soul from feeling what it is, in its own Nature; and therefore, though ever so much a Slave of these Elements, it only feels or perceives the Torment of them by Fits, and on certain Occasions. And yet sometimes it is seen, that one or other of these Elements awakens so violently, as to become intolerable, and to give a true and plain Foretaste of the Condition and Nature of Hell in the Soul that feels it.

[Reg-81] Here again, I cannot help observing by-the-by, the wondrous Excellency and Divine Nature of the Gospel Religion, which knowing our Fall to consist in this darkened Fire of the Soul, dwelling in these Elements of Hell, has set before us such amazing Representations of Humility, Meekness, and Universal Love, as the Imagination of Man could never have thought of; namely, the Humility, Meekness, and Lowliness of the Son of God, who left his Glory, to take upon him the Form of a Servant for our Sakes; the great Love of God towards us Sinners, in giving his only begotten Son to redeem us, and the Love of God the Son, in laying his Life down for us, that we might imitate this amazing Humility, Meekness, and Divine Love, and love one another as he has loved us. These are Mysteries of Love and Mercy that are set before us, to quench the fiery Wrath of our fallen Nature, and to compel us, if possible, to abhor our own dark Passions, and in Humility and Meekness become Lovers of God, and one another.

[Reg-82] (19.) Now so far as we, by true Resignation to God, die to the Element of Selfishness and own Will, so far as by universal Love, we die to the Element of Envy, so far as by Humility we die to the Element of Pride, so far as by Meekness we die to the Element of Wrath, so far we get away from the Devil, enter into another Kingdom, and leave him to dwell without us in his own Elements.

[Reg-83] These are not Fictions of a visionary Imagination, but sober Truths, spoken by the Word of God in Scripture, and written and engraven in the Book of every Man's own Nature.

[Reg-84] No man since the Fall, but is a living Witness to these Truths; to deny them, is to own and prove them: for we could not tell a Lie, or resist the Truth, but because we have this dark Enemy to Truth hidden in our Bosom.

[Reg-85] (20.) Now the greatest Good that any Man can do to himself, is to give leave to this inward Deformity to show itself, and not to strive by any Art or Management, either of Negligence or Amusement to conceal it from him. First, Because this Root of a dark Fire-life within us, which is of the Nature of Hell, with all its Elements of Selfishness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath, must be in some sort discovered to us, and felt by us, before we can enough feel, and enough groan under the Weight of our Disorder. Repentance is but a kind of Table-Talk, till we see so much of the Deformity of our inward Nature, as to be in some degree frightened and terrified at the Sight of it. There must be some Kind of an Earthquake within us, something that must rend and shake us to the bottom, before we can be enough sensible, either of the State of Death we are in, or enough desirous of that Saviour, who alone can raise us from it.

[Reg-86] A plausible Form of an outward Life, that has only learned Rules and Modes of Religion by Use and Custom, often keeps the Soul for some time at ease, though all its inward Root and Ground of Sin has never been shaken or molested, though it has never tasted the bitter Waters of Repentance, and has only known the Want of a Saviour by Hearsay.

[Reg-87] But Things cannot pass thus: Sooner or later, Repentance must have a broken, and a contrite Heart; we must with our blessed Lord go over the Brook Cedron, and with him sweat great Drops of Sorrow, before he can say for us, as he said for himself, "It is finished."

[Reg-88] Now, though this Sensibility of the Sinfulness of our inward Ground, is not to be expected to be the same in all, yet the Truth and Reality of it must, and will be in all, that do but give way to the Discovery of it; and our Sinfulness would ever be in our Sight, if we did not industriously turn our Eyes from it. If we used but half the Pains, to find out the Evil that is hidden in us, as we do to hide the Appearance of it from others, we should soon find, that in the midst of our most orderly Life, we are in Death, and want a Saviour, to make our most apparent Virtues to be virtuous.

[Reg-89] It is therefore exceeding good and beneficial to us, to discover this dark, disordered Fire of our Soul; because when rightly known, and rightly dealt with, it can as well be made the Foundation of Heaven, as it is of Hell.

[Reg-90] For when the Fire and Strength of the Soul, is sprinkled with the Blood of the Lamb, then its Fire, becomes a Fire of Light, and its Strength is changed into a Strength of triumphing Love, and will be fitted to have a Place amongst those Flames of Love, that wait about the Throne of God.

[Reg-91] The Reason why we know so little of Jesus Christ, as our Saviour, Atonement, and Justification, why we are so destitute of that Faith in him, which alone can change, rectify, and redeem our Souls, why we live starving in the Coldness and Deadness of a formal, historical, hearsay-Religion, is this; we are Strangers to our own inward Misery and Wants, we know not that we lie in the Jaws of Death and Hell; we keep all things quiet within us, partly by outward Forms, and Modes of Religion and Morality, and partly by the Comforts, Cares and Delights of this World. Hence it is that we consent to receive a Saviour, as we consent to admit of the Four Gospels, because only Four are received by the Church. We believe in a Saviour, not because we feel an absolute want of one, but because we have been told there is one, and that it would be a Rebellion against God to reject him. We believe in Christ as our Atonement, just as we believe, that he cast seven Devils out of Mary Magdalene, and so are no more helped, delivered, and

justified by believing that he is our Atonement, than by believing that he cured Mary Magdalene.

[Reg-92] True Faith, is a coming to Jesus Christ to be saved, and delivered from a sinful Nature, as the Canaanitish Woman came to him, and would not be denied. It is a Faith of Love, a Faith of Hunger, a Faith of Thirst, a Faith of Certainty and firm Assurance, that in Love and Longing, and Hunger, and Thirst, and full Assurance, will lay hold on Christ, as its loving, assured, certain and infallible Saviour and Atonement.

[Reg-93] It is this Faith, that breaks off all the Bars and Chains of Death and Hell in the Soul; it is to this Faith, that Christ always says, what he said in the Gospel, "Thy Faith hath saved thee, thy Sins are forgiven thee; go in Peace." Nothing can be denied to this Faith; all things are possible to it; and he that thus seeks Christ, must find him to be his Salvation.

[Reg-94] On the other hand, all things will be dull and heavy, difficult and impossible to us, we shall toil all the Night and take nothing, we shall be tired with resisting Temptations, grow old and stiff in our Sins and Infirmities, if we do not with a strong, full, loving, and joyful Assurance, seek and come to Christ for every Kind, and Degree of Strength, Salvation and Redemption. We must come unto Christ, as the Blind, the Sick, and the Leprous came to him, expecting all from him, and nothing from themselves. When we have this Faith, then it is, that Christ can do all his mighty Works in us.

[Reg-95] (21.) From the foregoing Account anyone may be supposed already to see the Nature and Necessity of Regeneration, or the New Birth. It is as necessary as our Salvation. By our Fall, our Soul has lost the Birth of the Son of God in it; by this Loss it is become a dark, wrathful, self-tormenting Root of Fire, shut up in the four hellish Elements of Selfishness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath; considered as a fallen Soul, it cannot stir one Step, or exert one Motion but in, and according to these Elements; therefore it is as necessary to have this Nature itself changed, and to be born again from above, as it is necessary to be delivered from Hell, and eternal Death.

[Reg-96] For these Elements are Hell, and eternal Death itself, and not without, or standing at a distance from us, but Hell and Death springing up in the Forms, and Essences of our fallen Nature; they are the Serpent that is in us, and constitute that gnawing Worm which never dieth; for they mutually beget, and mutually torment each other, and so constitute a Worm, or worming Pain, that never dieth.

[Reg-97] Now as this Hell, Serpent, Worm, and Death, are all within us, rising up in the Forms and Essences of our fallen Soul; so our Redeemer, or Regenerator, whatever it be, must be also equally within us, and spring up from as great a Depth in our Nature. Now the Scripture sufficiently tells us, that it is only the promised Seed of the Woman, the eternal Word, or Son of God made Man, that can bruise this Head, or kill this Life of the Serpent in us; therefore this Seed of the Woman must have its Dwelling in the Ground and Essence of our Nature, because the Serpent is there, that a new Life or a new Nature may arise from this Seed within us; and therefore it is plain, that Regeneration, or the New Birth, is, and can be no other thing, but the recovering of the Birth of the Son of God in the fallen Soul.

[Reg-98] And this is what the Scripture means by the Necessity of our being born of God, born again from above, born of the Spirit. Hence also we see in the clearest Light, the Meaning of all those Passages of Scripture, where we are said to be in Christ, that Christ is in us;--that he must put on Christ;--that he must be formed in us;--that he is our Life;--that we must eat his Flesh and drink his Blood;--that he is our Atonement, that his Blood alone cleanseth us from all our Sins; that we have Life from him, as the Branches have Life from the Vine;--that he is our Justification, or Righteousness; that in him we are created again to good Works; that without him we can do nothing, and have no Life in us: All these, I say,

and the like Sayings of Scripture, have a wonderful Congruity and Plainness in them, and fill the Mind with the most excellent and solid Truths, as soon as it is known, that Regeneration is absolutely necessary, and that this Regeneration signifies, the recovering of the Birth of the Son of God in the Soul.

[Reg-99] (22.) And as it does this Justice to so great and concerning a Part of Scripture, so it sets the whole Scheme of the Christian Salvation in the most agreeable and engaging Light, and such as is enough even to compel everyone, to embrace it with the utmost Earnestness. The Mystery of this Salvation is still preserved, and yet hereby so unfolded, that every Man has as much Reason to desire to be born again, and to believe that the Son of God can only bring forth this Birth in him, as to believe that God made him, and can alone make him happy.

[Reg-100] A Mediator, an Atonement, Regenerator, thus understood, must be as agreeable and desirable to every human Mind, and as much according to his own Wishes, as to be delivered from the Uneasiness and Disquiets of a Nature, which he finds himself not Master of, nor able to fix it in a State of better Enjoyment.

[Reg-101] What is it that any thoughtful, serious Man could wish for, but to have a new Heart, and a new Spirit, free from the hellish, self-tormenting Elements of Selfishness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath? His own Experience has shown him, that nothing human can do this for him; can take away the Root of Evil that is in him; and it is so natural to him to think, that God alone can do it, that he has often been tempted to accuse God, for suffering it to be so with him.

[Reg-102] Therefore to have the Son of God come from Heaven to redeem him by a Birth of his own Divine Nature in him, must be a way of Salvation, highly suited to his own Sense, Wants and Experience; because he finds, that his Evil lies deep in the very Essence and Forms of his Nature, and therefore can only be removed by the arising of a New Birth, or Life in the first Essences of it.

[Reg-103] Therefore an inward Saviour, a Saviour, that is God himself, raising his own Divine Birth in the fallen Soul, has such an Agreeableness and Fitness in it, to do for him all that he wants, as must make every sober Man, with open Arms, ready and willing to receive such a Salvation.

[Reg-104] (23.) Some People have an Idea, or Notion of the Christian Religion, as if God was thereby declared so full of Wrath against fallen Man, that nothing but the Blood of his only begotten Son could satisfy his Vengeance.

[Reg-105] Nay, some have gone such Lengths of Wickedness, as to assert that God had by immutable Decrees reprobated, and rejected a great Part of the Race of Adam, to an inevitable Damnation, to show forth and magnify the Glory of his Justice.

[Reg-106] But these are miserable Mistakers of the Divine Nature, and miserable Reproachers of his great Love, and Goodness in the Christian Dispensation.

[Reg-107] For God is Love, yea, all Love, and so all Love, that nothing but Love can come from him; and the Christian Religion, is nothing else but an open, full Manifestation of the universal Love towards all Mankind. {See Spirit of Prayer}

[Reg-108] As the Light of the Sun has only one common Nature towards all Objects that can receive it, so God has only one common Nature of Goodness towards all created Nature, breaking forth in infinite Flames of Love, upon every Part of the Creation, and calling everything to the highest Happiness it is

capable of.

[Reg-109] God so loved Man, when his Fall was foreseen, that he chose him to Salvation in Christ Jesus, before the Foundation of the World. When Man was actually fallen, God was so without all Wrath towards him, so full of Love for him, that he sent his only begotten Son into the World to redeem him. Therefore God has no Nature towards Man, but Love, and all that he does to Man, is Love.

[Reg-110] (24.) There is no Wrath that stands between God and us, but what is awakened in the dark Fire of our own fallen Nature; and to quench this Wrath, and not his own, God gave his only begotten Son to be made Man. God has no more Wrath in himself now, than he had before the Creation, when he had only himself to love. The precious Blood of his Son was not poured out to pacify himself (who in himself had no Nature towards man but Love), but it was poured out, to quench the Wrath, and Fire of the fallen Soul, and kindle in it a Birth of Light, and Love. {See Spirit of Love, part ii, p. 50, &c.}

[Reg-111] As man lives, and moves, and has his Being in the Divine Nature, and is supported by it, whether his Nature be good or bad; so the Wrath of Man, which was awakened in the dark Fire of his fallen Nature, may, in a certain Sense, be called the Wrath of God, as Hell itself may be said to be in God, because nothing can be out of his Immensity; yet this Hell, is not God, but the dark Habitation of the Devil. And this Wrath which may be called the Wrath of God, is not God, but the fiery Wrath of the fallen Soul.

[Reg-112] And it was solely to quench this Wrath, awakened in the human Soul, that the Blood of the Son of God was necessary, because nothing but a Life and a Birth, derived from him into the human Soul, could change this darkened Root of a self-tormenting Fire, into an amiable Image of the holy Trinity, as it was at first created.

[Reg-113] This was the Wrath, Vengeance, and vindictive Justice that wanted to be satisfied, in order to our Salvation; it was the Wrath and Fire of Nature and Creature kindled only in itself, by its departing from due Resignation, and Obedience to God.

[Reg-114] When Adam and Eve went trembling behind the Trees, through Fear and Dread of God, it was only this Wrath of God awakened in them; it was a Terror, and Horror, and Shivering of Nature, that arose up in themselves, because the Divine Life, the Birth of the Son of God, which is the Brightness and Joy of the Soul, was departed from it, and had left it, to feel its own poor miserable State without it. And this may well enough be called the Wrath, and Justice of God upon them, because it was a Punishment, or painful State of the Soul, that necessarily followed their revolting from God.

[Reg-115] But still there was no Wrath, or painful Sensation, that wanted to be appeased, or satisfied, but in Nature and Creature; it was only the Wrath of fallen Nature, that wanted to be changed, into its first State of Peace and Love. When God spoke to them, he spoke only Love; Adam, where art thou? And he called him, only to comfort him with a promised Redemption, through a Seed of the Woman, a Spark of the word of Life which should reign in him, and his Posterity, till all Enemies were under their Feet. God therefore is all Love, and nothing but Love and Goodness can come from him. He is as far from Anger in himself, as from Pain and Darkness. But when the fallen Soul of Man, had awakened in itself, a wrathful, self-tormenting Fire, which could never be put out by itself, which could never be relieved by the natural Power of any Creature whatsoever, then the Son of God, by a Love, greater than that which created the World, became Man, and gave his own Blood, and Life into the fallen Soul, that it might through his Life in it, be raised, quickened, and born again into its first State of inward Peace and Delight, Glory and Perfection, never to be lost any more. O inestimable Truths! precious Mysteries, of the Love of God,

enough to split the hardest Rock of the most obdurate Heart, that is but able to receive one Glimpse of them! Can the World resist such Love as this? Or can any Man doubt, whether he should open all that is within him, to receive such a Salvation?

[Reg-116] O unhappy Unbelievers, this Mystery of Love compels me in Love, to call upon you, to beseech and entreat you, to look upon the Christian Redemption in this amiable Light. All the Ideas that your own Minds can form of Love and Goodness, must sink into nothing, as soon as compared with God's Love and Goodness in the Redemption of Mankind.

[Reg-117] I appeal to nothing but the State of your own Hearts and Consciences, to prove the Necessity of your embracing this Mystery of Divine Love. I will grant you all that you can suppose, of the Goodness of God, and that no Creature will be finally lost, but what Infinite Love cannot save.

[Reg-118] But still, here is no Shadow of Security for Infidelity; and your refusing to be saved through the Son of God, whilst the Soul is in the redeemable State of this Life, may at the Separation of the Body, for aught you know, leave it in such a Hell, as the infinite Love of God cannot deliver it from. For, first, you have no Kind, or Degree of Proof, that your Soul is not that dark, self-tormenting, anguishing and imperishable Fire, above-mentioned, which has lost its own proper Light, and is only comforted by the Light of the Sun, till its Redemption be effected. Secondly, you have no Kind, or Degree of Proof, that God himself can redeem, or save, or enlighten this dark Fire-Soul, any other Way than, as the Gospel proposes, by the Birth of the Son of God in it. Therefore your own Hearts must tell you, that for aught you know, Infidelity, or the refusing of this Birth of the Son of God, may, at the End of Life, leave you in such a State of Self-torment, as the infinite Love of God can no way deliver you from.

[Reg-119] You build much upon certain clear Ideas, founded in the Nature and Fitness of Things; but I beseech you to consider, that herein this great Point, on which all depends, you have no Ideas at all; for you have not one clear, or even obscure idea, that your Souls cannot be in this disordered State, or that they can be set into a right Order, without the Birth of the Son of God brought forth in them.

[Reg-120] But to return.

[Reg-121] (25.) What has been already said of the Nature of Regeneration, may sufficiently show us, how greatly it is mistaken, when it is said to signify only a moral Change of our Tempers and Inclinations.

[Reg-122] Tempers and Inclinations are the Fruits of the new-born Nature, and not the Nature itself; and as Fruits and Flowers are entirely distinct, and different from the Root and the Tree, and necessarily suppose the Root and the Tree, before they can be brought forth; so good Tempers and Inclinations are as distinct from, and posterior to that Nature, which is to produce them, as its Fruits.

[Reg-123] And if good Tempers rightly purified, could really arise, or be brought forth in us, without a Change first made in the Root, or Nature, that is to bring them forth, it would be no Absurdity to say, that Men may gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles.

[Reg-124] But if our blessed Lord has declared this, to be contrary to the Nature of Things, and has further said, that the Tree must first be made good, before it can bring forth good Fruit; then we can with sufficient ground of Assurance say, that our Nature must first be made good, its Root and Stock must be new made, or regenerated again, before it can bring forth good Fruits of moral Behaviour.

[Reg-125] (26.) Angels are justly represented to us, as Flames of Love; now every Flame must have a hidden Fire for its Root, from which it has its Subsistence; and the spiritual flaming angelical Nature, must have a spiritual Fire concealed under it. Now let it be supposed, that in an Angel this Flame of Love was extinguished, and that there then only remained that inward Root of a spiritual Fire. Let it be supposed, that this spiritual Fire that has lost its Flame of Love cannot cease to be, and to be a fiery Spirit; that it cannot, by any Properties of its Fire kindle itself in its first Flame of Love; that all its own Stirrings can produce no one Thought, Motion or Desire, but what solely tends either to Selfishness, Envy, Pride, or Wrath; that it can of itself no more come out of this State, than Fire locked up in a Flint, can of itself become a Flame; could it be said, that this Angel had only lost some moral good Dispositions? Must it not be said, to have lost that Nature, from which alone, its good Tempers could proceed? Let it be further supposed, that God, by a Miracle of Love entered into the fiery Root, or Essence of this fallen Angel, and by a new Birth made it again to be a Flame of Love; could it be said, that it had gained nothing by this new Birth, but only a Change of some moral Tempers? Must it not be said to have gained a new Nature, a Flame of Love, instead of a dark Fire? and from this new Nature, its angelical and good Tempers can alone proceed.

[Reg-126] (27.) But the representing the New-birth as signifying only a Change of moral Behaviour, is not only thus false and absurd in itself, but is also exceeding prejudicial to true Conversion, and saps the Foundation of our Redemption.

[Reg-127] That it is highly prejudicial to true Conversion, is most evident from this, that it hides and suppresses the real Nature of our fallen State, and the true Greatness of the Love and Mercy of God in our Redemption. Now these two things it inevitably does in a great Degree, and therefore the Hurt that it does us, is more than can well be imagined.

[Reg-128] And it is owing to this Cause more than to any other, that even amongst People of sober Behaviour, Religion is only a superficial thing, that has no true Depth in them, because they have never understood the true Depth of Religion, nor conceived, in how deep a manner, their Nature is concerned in it.

[Reg-129] A Heathen may say, that by going to such a Neighbourhood, or marrying into such a Family, or falling into Acquaintance with such a Man, he obtained an entire Change in his moral Behaviour. Now if Christians are told, that this is the true, and only Meaning of their new Birth in Christ Jesus, namely, a great Change in their moral Behaviour, a thing that happens to Heathens, by the ordinary Occurrences of human Life, it is no wonder, that they live all their Lives, Strangers to true Humility, and Penitence, are never truly converted to God, or have any just Sense of his infinite Mercy, in the manner of their Salvation.

[Reg-130] For if they are to believe, that to be born of God, born from above, born of the Spirit, born of an incorruptible Seed of the Word of God, signifies no more than this now mentioned, must not this naturally lead them, to take everything that is said of God and Christ, in the Mysteries of their Redemption, in a Sense as much below the Expression, as this of the New Birt

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