

UPDATED TO MODERN ENGLISH



THE DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION

THE NEW BIRTH, THE VERY BEGINNING OF A GODLY LIFE

ISAAC AMBROSE

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Half-title page

PRIMA, THE FIRST THINGS

In reference to The Middle and Last Things:

Or, The Doctrine of REGENERATION, THE NEW BIRTH, The very beginning of a godly life.

Delivered by ISAAC AMBROSE,

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. - 1 COR. 5.17.

Minister of the Gospel at PRESTON in Amounderness in Lancashire.

Contents

To the Honourable Mayor, Aldermen

To his highly esteemed friend, Mr. Isaac Ambrose.

To the Reverend Author

1. The New Birth
2. Unless
3. A Man
4. Be Born Again.
5. He Cannot See the Kingdom of God
6. Appendix
7. Appendix A:
8. Appendix B:
9. Appendix C
10. Appendix D:

11. Appendix E:

To the Honourable Mayor, Aldermen

AND OTHER RESIDENTS OF THE TOWN OF
PRESTON IN AMOUNDERNESS,

The Apostle Peter, aware that his earthly life was coming to an end, as revealed to him by our Lord Jesus Christ, endeavored to ensure that God's people would always remember the teachings he imparted to them. Thus, we have, to this day, the written portion of holy Scripture that he left behind. If Peter's example is worth following, I believe the same responsibility rests upon me. I do not possess any revelations, but I have many afflictions and weaknesses that I consider to be signs of my impending departure from this world. I have taught you certain things, including these First Things, and now, after my passing, it is important that you continue to remember them. With that purpose in mind, I now present to your eyes what I once delivered to your ears. Just as you were willing to listen then, I trust that you will now peruse these writings. There is one observation I would like you to make throughout this treatise: when, in the name of Christ, I earnestly beseech, exhort, and command the unregenerate to believe, to be reconciled with God, to pray, to engage in various duties, it is not because they are capable of accomplishing anything by their own

strength or power. Rather, it is because Jesus Christ, in His exhortations, entreaties, and commands, exercises His own power and strength to enable them. When Paul exhorted the jailer to believe in the Lord Jesus for salvation, it was God who empowered the jailer to believe. Life and power are conveyed to the soul through the commands and exhortations of the Gospel. Just as breath entered the dead bones when Ezekiel prophesied over them, causing them to live, so too, when the Lord's prophets preach over unrepentant and sinful listeners, who are like dry bones, the heavenly breath, the Spirit of the Most High, enters into them through the ministry of the Gospel, making them new creations and granting them a glimpse of the Kingdom of God. I have no more to add, except to beseech God that you may receive a blessing upon your humble souls through these feeble labours. It is my sincere prayer.

Yours faithfully, ready to serve you in all Christian services, Isaac Ambrose.

*To his highly esteemed friend, Mr. Isaac
Ambrose.*

Dear Sir,

I have carefully read through your heartfelt exploration of this joyous rebirth. In doing so, I can confidently affirm that your dedication, expertise, personal involvement, and innate right to delve into this subject matter are evident. Such a topic could not have been handled so effectively without being felt deeply. One must be both a participant and an author to accomplish it so well. One cannot truly be eloquent on this matter unless they have experienced it firsthand. Only those who have experienced it can truly express it with utmost clarity. How similar is the movement and language of a puppet in a play to the most captivating sermon on the subject of the uninvolved man? My prayer aligns with that of the Apostle, that all of us ministers may possess the ability to comfort others through the same comfort we ourselves have received from God. And what comfort can compare to the one that, like the woman in labor, causes us to forget all our sorrows and rejoice at the birth of a child? What does it truly mean to be born to learn if we do not learn to be born in this way? As Solomon said,

wisdom is good when accompanied by an inheritance. How much better is this wisdom then, which not only preserves but also entitles us to the inheritance of the saints in the light? May your own experience of this divine birth bring forth abundant fruits for many generations to come. This is my prayer.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Herle

To the Reverend Author

REGARDING HIS LEARNED TREATISES, TITLED
PRIMA, MEDIA & ULTIMA, THE FIRST, MIDDLE,
AND LAST THINGS.

The First, Last, and Middle Things—what more could be desired? Thus, the well-prepared scholar, drawing from his abundant knowledge, presents both new and old teachings. The First Things lay the foundation, the Middle Things build upon it, and the Last Things bring everything to its culmination. Through the First Things, Christians embark on their journey of life. The Middle Things provide further progress in their spiritual journey, while the Last Things grant them eternal life. Let no one separate what God has joined together. May I experience the workings of the First Things within me, O Lord, and direct my mind towards the Middle Things, so that when the First and Middle Things have passed, I may rejoice in the fulfillment of my hopes—the Best at Last.

T.W.

The New Birth

INTRODUCTION

"Unless a person is born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God." -John 3:3.

In the previous chapter, John 2:23, we read that when Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Passover feast, many believed in him because of the miracles he performed. Among those believers, there was an unlikely one, as stated by St. Augustine. Who was this unlikely believer? He was a Jew, a ruler, and a Pharisee. It is unimaginable that someone like him would believe in Jesus. Have any rulers or Pharisees believed in him? However unlikely it may seem to us, the Spirit of God blows wherever it pleases. Among the many believers, there was Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. He was a Jew, a ruler, and a Pharisee. God is capable of raising children to Abraham even from the stones. Yes, even though they may seem as hard as stones, our Saviour melts the heart of one of them with a miracle and through a new birth, He will make him a true son of Abraham. A

miracle brings Nicodemus to Christ, and Christ leads him to a new birth. Nicodemus, in his first confession, says, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these miracles unless God is with him." Our Saviour responds as if saying, "I am sent from God, and being born again is necessary for you to enter Heaven. Your confession is correct, acknowledging that I am sent from God, but your way of life is wrong because you have not been born again. You come to me with a confession of faith, but there is more to learn, another lesson. Therefore, if you consider me your teacher, you must learn these fundamental principles, these basics, these foundational truths. This text is like the ABC of Christian religion: 'Unless a person is born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God.'"

In exploring these words that all point to the significance of the new birth, we will follow the order set down by the Holy Spirit, which consists of:

1. The necessity of the new birth—there is no entrance to heaven without it, expressed in the word "unless."
2. The universality of the new birth—every person is obligated to experience it, as indicated by the word "man."
3. The manner in which a person is transformed by the new birth—they must be born again.
4. The outcome of the new birth—the effects it produces, such as entering the Kingdom of God and beholding it. A person who is born again will see the Kingdom of God, whereas someone who is not born again will not be able to see it.

These are the aspects we will explore, and with God's help, we will gather fruit from each of them for the nourishment of your souls. The first aspect we will delve into is captured in the opening word, "unless."

Unless

This "unless" applies to everyone without exception, for without being born anew, there is no possibility of reaching Heaven. Just as we are born before we begin living in this world, likewise, we must be born anew before we can truly live in the next world. Just as no one enters this world without the first birth, it is equally impossible for anyone to enter Heaven in the next world without the second birth. This highlights the necessity of Regeneration.

Unless a person is born anew, they can never be saved. These are the words of our Savior, and He emphasizes it with a double affirmation: "Truly, truly, I say unto thee." This repeated affirmation, found only in the Gospel of John and appearing frequently in discussions about this matter, should leave no room for doubt about this truth. We have the witness of Christ Himself and His solemn assurance with His "Truly, truly, I say unto thee."

Furthermore, God the Father counsels not only Nicodemus but all the Jews of the old Church, saying, "Make yourselves a new heart and a new

spirit, for why should you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 18:31). Despite all their privileges—for they are Israelites, to whom belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the service of God, and the promises (Romans 9:4)—there is one essential requirement that surpasses all others. They must have a new heart and a new spirit, which means they must be born anew. Otherwise, death is the only way. See how the Lord, with cords of love, draws them away from death, enticing them, wooing them, and questioning, "Why would you choose death, O house of Israel?"

Moreover, it is not only the Son and the Father who affirm this truth, but the Holy Spirit as well. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." And what does the Spirit say? "To him who overcomes, I will give a white stone, and on the stone, a new name written. I will also write on him the name of the New Jerusalem and my own new name" (Revelation 2:17; 3:12). This means that whoever is born anew and overcomes sin, God's Spirit will grant them His grace, symbolized by the white stone, and His Kingdom, represented by the New Jerusalem. They will also receive a new name, the name of being a child of God (as stated by a modern interpreter). Here we witness the transformation of all things, as the old passes away, and everything becomes new. Through the new birth, a person receives a new name and a new inheritance. Therefore, just as the Spirit is likened to a purifying fire that removes impurities and makes souls radiant and new, we must pass through this fire to enter Paradise.

This doctrine is not without reason or foundation.

For unless a person undergoes the second birth, they are initially unholy and therefore entirely unfit to enter Heaven. Without holiness, no one can see God (Hebrews 12:14). What is man before being born anew? If we examine their soul, we can see it deformed by sin, stained with lust,

overwhelmed by passions, carried away by affections, consumed by envy, burdened by gluttony, boiling with revenge, and filled with rage. The image of God in them is transformed into the hideous likeness of the Devil. Even if we take a closer look, every faculty of the soul is filled with iniquity. The understanding comprehends nothing concerning godly matters (1 Corinthians 2:14), the will desires nothing good (Romans 6:20), and the affections do not pursue the things of the Spirit (Galatians 5:17). In short, the understanding is clouded, the will is enslaved, the affections are disordered, the memory is defiled, the conscience is numbed—every aspect of the inner self is tainted by sin, and there is no part that is good, not even one. And what about the body? Surely, it is no better. It is a decaying carcass, utterly useless and good for nothing. Shall we examine every part and member of it? The mind schemes mischief, the eyes observe vanity, the ears allow sin to enter, the tongue utters oaths. If we look lower, the heart harbors lusts, the hands commit murder, the feet hasten towards evil. All the senses serve as catalysts to ignite lusts, deceits, envies, and more. How desperately is a new birth needed in such a case! Can one who is wholly consumed by earthly desires enter Heaven? Will the precious gates of gold and pearls open for a sinner? No, they must first be transformed and sanctified, or else they are excluded. "Unless a person is born anew."

Secondly, "unless." In this state, man is an enemy of God. There is no greater opposition than that between God and a sinner. Let us consider God in His essence and attributes. In His essence, He is called Jehovah, signifying both His existence and His promises. In terms of existence, God is contrary to sin, for sin is disorder, confusion, and a lack of being, while God is order, perfection, holiness, an absolute and simple existence. In regard to His promises, there is a clear opposition to sin, for although He

promises a reward to the regenerate and His name Jehovah assures us that He will forgive us if we repent, He also promises storms, tempests, fire, and destruction to the unregenerate. Thus, His name and nature are completely opposed to sin and sinners. Let us now examine God's attributes: His justice, truth, patience, holiness, anger, and power. His justice punishes the unrepentant according to their deeds, His truth brings about the plagues He has spoken of, His patience delays the destruction of sins until they are fully ripe, His holiness abhors all impurities (He cannot tolerate iniquity), His anger stirs up revenge against all offenses, and His power gathers all His creatures against His enemies. What can we say except that if all these attributes are at odds with sinful man, woe to the man because of his offenses! It would have been better for him not to have been born than to not be born anew. Alas! What will become of him? Can one who is an enemy of God behold God in His glory? No, there is only one way—unless he repents, unless he is born again.

Thirdly, "unless." Through the new birth, man is without Christ. "If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation." If a person is not in Christ, what hope is there for them? Only Christ opens Heaven, only Christ is the Way to Heaven. Apart from Him, there is no way, no truth, and no life. If we are in Him, like a branch in the vine, it is necessary that we bear good fruit. Under these conditions, His death becomes effective when we become new creations. Otherwise, all His merits (His shed blood, crucified body, agonized soul) mean nothing to us, and we are not improved by them. He died for all, but His death is not applied, His Kingdom is not opened, except to those who have learned and practiced this principle of exception: unless a person is born again.

Fourthly, unless one is excepted before the "except," they are essentially a servant of Satan, a child of darkness, and a member of the family of Hell. Reflect on this, all who are outside the state of grace—how miserable is the bondage of your souls? If someone were to call you servants or slaves of Satan, you would vehemently reject it. However, accept it as you will, if you are not born anew, you are no better off. Paul appeals to your own understanding: "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey?" (Romans 6:16, 23). So, if you obey the suggestions of the Devil (which you do, being unregenerate), what are you but the Devil's servants? And if he is your master, what is your payment? You can see it in the final verse: "The wages of sin is death"—death of the body and death of the soul. Death in this life and death in the fires of Hell thereafter. Alas, that Satan should have such power over mankind! He, who is nothing but an enemy and brings nothing to a sinner but death and damnation, becomes their lord and tyrannizes over them at his own whim! Would anyone willingly choose to serve lions and tigers? And is not the Devil a roaring lion, prowling and seeking whom he may devour? To serve the one who would devour his servant is the most wretched bondage. What reward can one expect from the Devils except roaring, devouring, and the tearing of souls? This is the plight of the servants of Corruption, rightly called slaves of Satan. For "by whatever a person is overcome, to that he is enslaved" (2 Peter 2:19). To conclude this point, let us ask, "Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle? Who shall rest on your holy mountain?" If we believe David, it is not the one who slanders with their tongue, or does evil to their neighbor, or lends money at interest, or takes bribes against the innocent. No, such individuals are servants of

Satan, and this serves as an exception against them: "Unless a person is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God."

In summary, without regeneration, there is no access to the kingdom. Whether we consider man in relation to himself, God, Christ, or Satan, if he is not born anew, he is unholy, an enemy of God, outside of Christ, and in the clutches of Satan. If the new birth is indeed necessary, then we must strive to be born again. I do not mean, like Nicodemus, to enter our mothers' womb and be born again. It is not through human seed in the womb of our mother, but through the seed of grace in the womb of the Church that we are blessed. And if we are born by grace, then we are sanctified, made children of God, heirs with Christ, over whom Satan has no power at all. Therefore, if you value your souls and desire Heaven as your ultimate destination, make every effort to attain this one essential thing. Lift up your hearts to God, that you may be cleansed and justified, sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus. Through the Spirit of God, walk in new ways, speak with new tongues, for you are new creatures created for good works. If you thus wait on God in His ways, I trust that the Lord, in His mercy, will remember you and His Spirit will move within you. Then you will experience such a transformation within you that you will bless God forever for being born again in this way. Otherwise, how woeful is your condition when considering this barrier at the gate of Heaven, preventing the unregenerate from entering. "Unless a person is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God."

So far, we have discussed the exception; now we turn to the person who brings the case, the "unless": a man.

A Man

And this man refers to every individual and every aspect of man. It encompasses all men, as all are obligated to it, and it encompasses all of man's body and soul, as every part needs to be renewed for salvation. The word "man" is therefore universal, whether we consider it in terms of the general category of all men or in terms of the individual components of man's being, including both body and soul.

Let us begin with the general category of all men: It is necessary for all men, all of humanity, to be regenerated before they can be saved. Not a single descendant of Adam will enter heaven without being born again. As you contemplate (guided by God's word) the paradise above, walk its streets, behold its towers, and observe its inhabitants from one end of heaven to the other, who do you find there? None who live and die in sin. Nothing defiled, no abominations, no lies shall enter into it (Revelation 21:27). Yet, if such sinners repent, the gates will not be shut against them. All the saints who now walk in its light were once sinners, but they were

first cleansed by the Lamb and sanctified by the Spirit. They were regenerated, and thus they were saved.

You may raise an objection: What about infants who die before being born? Can a man enter his mother's womb a second time and be born again? (as Nicodemus asked). But can a man enter into a second birth in his mother's womb (you ask) and be born again before being born once?

I answer that being "born again" implies being born once indeed. Therefore, according to the literal meaning, our Saviour speaks of a man who is already born into the world, emphasizing that he must be born again. However, if we seek the spiritual interpretation, being "born again" (as explained by our Saviour) means being born of water and of the Spirit. In this sense, infants who have not yet been born into the world can be born again. We see examples of this in the cases of Jeremiah, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I sanctified you" (Jeremiah 1:5). We also read of John the Baptist, of whom the angel of the Lord said that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). Through these examples, we see what the Lord can do, even though we may not fully comprehend the manner or observe it ourselves.

You may still object: "To be born again" means, according to our Saviour, "to be born of water and of the Spirit." Water refers to outward baptism, and the Spirit refers to the inward grace (as the Ancients have understood this text, as Hooker says). However, infants who have not yet been born (although they are sanctified by the Spirit) cannot receive baptism with water. Therefore, they cannot see the Kingdom of God.

I respond: In cases of extremity or impossibility, if actual baptism is not possible, the desire for baptism is sufficient, and our adversaries grant us

this to some extent. Even if actual baptism is lacking, baptism in desire is enough for salvation. Aquinas states that although it may be lacking in reality, baptism in desire is sufficient for salvation. He cites Augustine, who says, "Sanctification may be without baptism, and baptism without sanctification. If sanctification is present, even without baptism, it is effective for salvation. But if baptism is present without sanctification, it is of no avail at all." Our conclusion is this: All men, young and old, men and women, children and the elderly, all must be regenerated, or they will never see the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, the process of sanctification must encompass every aspect of a person, just as it does for all individuals. Every part and faculty of both the body and soul must undergo sanctification, although not attaining full perfection, before our earthly bodies are no more. Theologians distinguish between two types of regeneration or sanctification: inchoate and consummate. Inchoate sanctification begins in this present life, while consummate sanctification is perfected in the next. Our Saviour speaks of this in Matthew 19:28 when he says, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." However, the regeneration we are referring to is the one that leads to this glorious state. We must experience regeneration here on Earth in order to partake in God's glory there.

Now, let us consider the individual parts of a person; each part must play a role in this process of rebirth. The body must be regenerated, and the soul must be renewed. Let us begin with the body. In the past, you offered the members of your body as servants to impurity and wickedness, leading to further wickedness. However, in the new life, offer your body as servants to

righteousness, leading to holiness (Romans 6:19). Just as every part of the old self is filled with sin, every part of the new self must be renewed through grace. Let us examine some of these parts. The heart, which in the old self is filled with evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, is the first part that must be renewed in the new self. Grace first takes root in the heart and then spreads throughout. The heart is considered the prime mover of all human actions, guiding the other parts of the body. Therefore, in the new self, the renewal begins with the heart. When the heart is pure, desires, intentions, affections, words, actions, and conversations flow sweetly, clearly, and pleasantly. Likewise, the eye, which in the old self acts as the mediator between the heart and sinful objects, engaging in sinful bargains, as referred to by our Saviour as an evil eye, and by S. Peter as an adulterous eye, must now direct its gaze towards other objects in the new self. Job made a covenant with his eyes, saying, "Why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1). David declared, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" (Psalm 121:1). Similarly, the ear, which in the old self is closed to the voice of wisdom, or if open, allows sin and Satan to enter freely like the gatekeeper of death, must now become the gateway to life and the doorway of faith in the new self. The ear is the sense that the devil envies the most, as demonstrated by the example of the man possessed by a deaf devil in Mark 9:25, where the devil afflicted the sense of hearing, considering it the most excellent. Additionally, the tongue, which in the old self is a source of iniquity, defiling the entire body and setting ablaze the course of nature, being set on fire by hell itself, must now become the instrument of divine praise in the new self, as David called it, the pen of a ready writer, speaking only those things that are dictated by the heart with sincerity and truth. In

summary, the heart is where grace first takes root and is experienced last. God instructs, "My son, give me thine heart" (Proverbs 23:26), David prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10), and Solomon advises, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). If a regenerate person encounters sin in their heart, it would be impossible for it to manifest in action. If the heart of a person who is born again were to confront sin with this dilemma, "If I commit this sin, I must either repent or not repent for it. If I do repent, it will cause me more heartache and spiritual suffering than the fleeting pleasure is worth. If I never repent, it will result in the death and damnation of my soul," this thought, when conceived and followed rightly in the heart of the regenerate, would be enough to crush sin at its inception. And indeed it does, for if a person is born of God, they do not sin. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (1 John 3:9). They are renewed, and all parts of their body conform to the sovereignty and rule of grace. Their body is preserved blameless, holy, and acceptable unto God. It is a member of Christ and the temple of the Holy Ghost. How fortunate is the person who possesses such a body! Surely, a person who is born again will see the kingdom of God.

Secondly, just as the body, so the soul of this person is to be renewed by grace. Therefore, as St. Paul says, "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:20). Both the body and the spirit must glorify God, as well as all the faculties of the soul.

First, let's consider the understanding. In the old self, it is blind and ignorant about heavenly matters. Even if it possesses knowledge about many things, it can never attain saving knowledge. In the new self, it must be anointed with the eye-salve of the Spirit, infused with the knowledge of

divine truths, especially those sacred and saving mysteries that pertain to the kingdom of God.

Next, the will. In the old self, it desires only base and vain things and is stubborn and resistant to godliness. In the new self, it must discern and approve what is good, acceptable, and perfect according to the will of God. Moreover, it must be attentive and submissive to the grace of God, for it is God alone who works in us both the will and the deed (Philippians 2:13).

Moving on to the memory. In the old self, it is unreliable when it comes to matters of God. Even if it is naturally good, it is not spiritually beneficial. In the new self, it must be sanctified for virtuous actions. Though it cannot increase in natural perfection (for grace does not accomplish this), the perfections it possesses must be directed rightly and focused on God. Moses exhorts, "Remember the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Now, let's consider the conscience. In the old self, it may be dormant or troubled, as if a legion of demons has possessed it. In the new self, it must be calm and peaceful, yet not asleep or inactive. Instead, it should gently and lovingly rebuke sin wherever it is found. It should never rest until, through kind but earnest appeals, it brings the sinner before God to confess their faults and seek forgiveness.

Lastly, the affections. In the old self, they are sensual, disorderly, enchanted, and directed towards wrong objects. In the new self, they must be redirected. Take the example of Mary Magdalene, who was consumed by impure desires. However, the Lord redirected this sinful passion, and she became penitent, thirsting for grace. In summary, all these faculties—the understanding, will, memory, conscience, and affections—must be renewed.

But to feel more of their sweetness, I will pound these spices, and dwell a while on them. Now, for you to become better acquainted with the

regenerate person and to understand their differences from the unregenerate, pay attention to the following passages.

Firstly, I say that in the new person, the understanding must be renewed. As the Apostle says, "The new man is renewed in knowledge" (Colossians 3:10). This knowledge encompasses two aspects: wisdom and prudence. Wisdom refers to speculative knowledge, while prudence pertains to practical knowledge. Through wisdom, the child of God has their mind opened and enlightened, enabling them to comprehend the mysteries of salvation, the secrets of the Kingdom, the entire counsel, and the wonders of God's law. Through prudence, they possess the capacity for judicious sincerity, allowing them to deliberate and make informed decisions in matters of conscience, piety, and the experiential aspects of a Christian life.

If we focus on wisdom, how is it possible for an unregenerate person to grasp the mysteries of salvation? They may possess knowledge within the scope of natural discourse and reason, and may be well-versed in various subjects, but they lack true knowledge of spiritual wisdom. Why is this the case? Because all their knowledge, like the moon's light, is directed outward and does not reflect upon their own soul. They may know many things, but remain unaware of the darkness of their understanding, the disorder of their affections, the slumber of their conscience, and the deadness of their heart. In contrast, a regenerate person, no matter how limited their knowledge may be, possesses saving knowledge. In this regard, they surpass even the greatest scholars and learned individuals. They have a steadfast understanding of God, recognising their own insignificance, baseness, and contemptibility. Through their new birth, they have learned about their inherent wickedness, and as a result, they find themselves odious and repugnant in their own eyes.

Now, if we consider prudence, how can an unregenerate person experientially understand the practice of piety in the Christian life? Let us take the example of Nicodemus, a ruler and teacher of Israel. Despite his learning, when he engages in a conversation with Christ about the salvation of his soul, he displays a childlike and naive understanding. When told about the necessity of the new birth, he regards it as an impossibility, akin to an old person reentering their mother's womb and being born again. The natural person cannot discern the workings of grace or comprehend the dark and fearful path that leads from the state of nature, through soul-shaking terrors and torments, to the rich and glorious happiness of Christ's kingdom. Conversely, a regenerate person who has experienced the power of godliness within their own soul can perceive and evaluate the light of grace. They can taste and savour the fruits of the Spirit. Hence, it often happens that individuals whom the world considers simple and despises—both men and women—are, in matters of the spirit, wiser and more knowledgeable than the most learned scholars.

Secondly, the will must be renewed. Within the regenerate person's will, two elements exist: rectitude and readiness. First, the will is rectified when it aligns with the will of God. Secondly, it is inflamed with love for goodness, causing the person to willingly and eagerly pursue it. Considering rectitude, we observe through experience that the unregenerate person's will is entirely misaligned. They desire nothing but evil. This is not surprising, given their lack of God's image, the blindness of their heart, their inclination towards evil, and the strong pull of their affections, which sway the will and cloud judgment. In contrast, the regenerate person's will, prompted and accompanied by God's grace, becomes enlivened and revived. Now, their will is fully surrendered to God's will. If they perceive

that God commands or prohibits something, they willingly choose to follow His commands, regardless of the consequences. This is the very essence and core of regeneration. Indeed, a person who prioritises pleasing God above all else is truly a person of God and shall be rewarded by God.

Considering readiness, it is lamentable that the unregenerate person finds no pleasure in goodness. They fail to recognise its sweetness, and therefore, the ways of godliness appear burdensome to them. On the contrary, the regenerate person's will is willing. This willingness, in fact, represents the perfection of their will. Moreover, we can even say that it is the highest degree of their perfection in this earthly life—to be willing to do good.

Thirdly, the memory must be renewed. The memory serves a twofold purpose: firstly, to reflect on God's presence everywhere; and secondly, to recall the things pertaining to God at appropriate times. Regarding the first aspect, the unregenerate person does not have God in mind. God is absent from their thoughts, akin to a blindfolded fool who, seeing nobody, believes that nobody sees them. They say in their hearts, "How does God know? Can He judge through the dark clouds? Thick clouds serve as a veil for Him, and He walks in the circumference of heaven." On the contrary, the regenerate person remembers their Creator in the days of their youth. Although God, being a Spirit, is absent from their senses in some sense, through the power of their sanctified memory, which makes absent things present, their eyes are fixed on God. They consider God as an eyewitness to all their thoughts, words, actions, and dealings. They know that nothing can be hidden from the all-seeing eye. Even if sin tempts them with the most enticing opportunities of night and darkness, they constantly remember that if their eyes see nothing, the eyes of heaven (of God and His angels) are always upon them. Therefore, they respond to the Tempter, "How dare I sin in the

presence of the One who observes my every action? If I would not dare to commit this folly before humans, how could I dare to do it before those heavenly witnesses, God and His angels?"

Turning to the second aspect (the Word of God), the unregenerate person never burdens their memory with such blessed thoughts. If they occasionally come across it, it is either by compulsion or by chance, never with a deliberate intention to dwell on it or follow it. However, the regenerate soul, like Mary, treasures all these things in their heart. They are like David who proclaims, "Thy word have I hidden in my heart" (Psalm 119:11). Whatever lessons they learn, like precious jewels in a treasure chest, they store them safely. Then, as the need arises, they remember their treasure and make the best use of it. I will not deny that anyone, whether good or evil, can retain good things to the extent that their natural ability allows. However, the regenerate person, whose memory alone is sanctified, possesses what they retain readily at hand. In times of temptation or affliction, they remember and apply the truths they have stored in their memory. By remembering to apply and applying what they remember, they are empowered to resist evil and pursue the good things that the Lord has commanded.

Fourthly, the conscience must be renewed, and it can be accomplished in two ways: by drawing the soul towards good or away from evil. Firstly, in drawing towards good, the unregenerate person, for the most part, lacks such a conscience. Their conscience lies dormant in their bosom, or if it stirs occasionally, they make every effort to suppress it while awake. Even if men and angels were to preach to such a person, they are so captivated by sin that they have no inclination towards goodness. If they ever do perform a good deed (which is rare), it is not out of a conscience to do good, but for

some ulterior motive or personal gain. It is different for the regenerate person. Their conscience prompts them towards good, and they do good out of conscience. They are not concerned with personal pleasure or profit. Guided by the standard of God's holy truth, they submit to their conscience solely out of obedience to God. That is why, regardless of the circumstances, whether prosperity or adversity, their focus remains fixed on God. If anyone opposes what God commands, they are quickly resolved, as stated in Isaiah 51:12, "I, even I, am he who comforts you; who are you that you should fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass, and forget the Lord your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?"

Secondly, in the second function of conscience (drawing the soul away from evil), the unregenerate person either does not hear or disregards their conscience's call to repentance. If it speaks, they first attempt to lull it back to sleep, and if it persists and refuses to be silenced, they (in defiance of goodness) continue from one sin to another, often transitioning from presumption to despair. On the other hand, the regenerate person possesses a conscience that draws them away from evil and keeps them from it. This is particularly evident through two characteristics: remorse and sensitivity. Remorse reflects on past sins and evokes sorrow for sin and disgust towards it. As soon as they contemplate how their numerous sins have offended God, crucified Christ, and grieved the Holy Spirit, their heart bleeds and breaks at the realization of their wickedness against such a gracious God. This sorrow for sin leads to a loathing of sin; they cannot help but hate it, as it has caused their heart to break. They despise sin and even the mere thought of it. Each reflection deepens their detestation, and every contemplation reopens the wounds of remorse. Sensitivity of conscience

engenders a careful watchfulness to avoid future sin. The moment sin presents itself to their conscience, they recoil at its sight and reflect on its vanity. They meditate on the strict and all-encompassing account they will one day have to give for it. When weighing these thoughts against the allure of sin, they dare not act wickedly for the sake of worldly gain. You may observe that this sensitivity (or readiness to be affected by the apprehension of sin) is distinct and exclusive to a conscience that is enlightened, sanctified, and cleansed by Christ.

Fifthly, the affections must be renewed, and this is achieved by directing them towards right objects. Let me provide examples of some of these affections: love, hatred, hope, fear, joy, sorrow. I will begin with love, which in the unregenerate person is improperly attached to earthly things. Just as one sin begets another, love for any worldly object gives birth to sin. For instance, the love of honour breeds ambition, love of wealth breeds covetousness, love of beauty breeds lust, and love of pleasure breeds sensuality. Whatever the unregenerate person loves (since the object is earthly), it brings forth sin. In doing so, they wickedly prioritize earthly matters over heavenly ones, preferring a dung heap over paradise, a fleeting moment of bittersweet pleasure over everlasting, immeasurable joy. However, the regenerate person directs their love towards different objects. Just as a carnal person focuses on carnal things, a spiritual person loves spiritual things. As soon as they undergo a profound and comprehensive transformation from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, they begin to settle with a deep contentment on the flowers of paradise, heavenly glimpses, and saving graces. Their boundless love continues to ascend until it embraces the highest Being, God Almighty. How sweet is the love that fully surrenders itself to the embrace of the Creator? How blessed is the

person who yearns, melts, clings, and cleaves to their gracious God? This is true love, and for this, the Church is commended, as stated in Song of Solomon 1:4: "The upright love you." Alternatively, as others translate it, "She loves you rightly." Her love is directed towards the right object—God. It does not mean that the regenerate person loves nothing else. They love the Law, the Ministers, and all the ordinances of God established for their benefit. However, whatever they love, it reflects back to God. They love all things for God's sake, and God for Himself.

The second affection is hatred, which in the unregenerate person is so excessive that they become haters of God (Romans 1:30). Not that they hate God in His essence (for God is universally good and cannot be hated), but they hate Him in certain respects because He restrains them from their pleasures, punishes them for their sins, or opposes their wicked desires with His holy commands. And just as they hate God, they also hate their fellow human beings (1 John 2:11). Hence, arise the envies, rivalries, conflicts, and contentions among those who profess to be Christians. As St. Paul could say, "One brother goes to law against another" (1 Corinthians 6:6). However, the regenerate person hates sin, and whoever is ruled or governed by sin, they cannot help but hate. David asks in Psalm 139:21, "Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?" It is not that David, or any of God's saints, hate the person of anyone, but they hate the sin present within the person. In this respect, they are said to hate them for the sake of the sin within them. David expresses his defiance towards them in the following verse, "I hate them with a perfect hatred; I count them my enemies" (Psalm 139:22). I understand that there is an ongoing struggle in the regenerate person between the flesh and the Spirit. Therefore, we must understand this hatred, which David refers to

as "perfect hatred," in terms of completeness in parts but not in degrees. Only Christ truly hated sin to the fullest extent, with all His strength and might. Yet, to some degree, His servants' hatred is perfect, leading them to consistently hate sin in others and often in themselves. After committing any wrongdoing, they begin to repent and abhor themselves (as Job did) in dust and ashes (Job 42:6).

The third affection is Hope (which I prefer to call by its name rather than desire, because whatever we hope for, we cannot help but desire it, and so desire is implied in it). Now, in the unregenerate person, this hope is fixed on this world and its earthly things. They hope for advancement, riches, or similar things. As for their hope of Heaven, it is nothing more than a dream of a waking man. Did I say a dream? Yes, just as dreams in the night fill us with illusions and empty forms (you know a beggar may dream of being a king), hope, deceiving the imagination of the unregenerate, often fills their souls with vain and empty contentments. But the hope of the regenerate person both has the right object and the right means. Their focus is on future good, and they strive to pursue it until they attain possession. If, in their pursuit, they encounter crosses, losses, grief, disgrace, sickness, or any other calamities, their hope is capable of sweetening the bitterest misery that may befall them. The afflictions of this life remind them to look for something better; a cross here directs their attention to the glory above. Although this hope may face many difficulties and struggles (hence it is compared to an anchor that holds a ship in a storm, Hebrews 6:19), it holds and clings so firmly to God and His promises that they are confident that after this life, a heavenly crown will be placed upon their head by the hands of God and His angels.

The fourth affection is fear, which in the unregenerate person is either worldly or servile. If it is fixed on the world, then they fear the loss of their reputation or profit. And because they know that they must eventually part from the world, they fear this separation above all fears. "O death," says the wise man, "how bitter is the remembrance of you to a man who lives at rest in his possessions, to the man who has nothing to vex him and has prosperity in all things?" (Sirach 41:1). Oh, these thoughts of the dreadful forms and ugly face of death, of parting from all worldly pleasures forever, of decaying in the grave, of facing the judgment and terror of the last day, they cannot help but make their heart shudder in horror, and often tremble like an aspen leaf. Or if their fear is directed towards God, then it is a servile fear. Just as a servant or hireling works not out of love for their master but only out of fear of punishment, or as an adulterous woman is afraid of her husband not out of love or affection but out of fear that he will reward her according to her despicable actions, they fear God out of fear of the punishment they deserve from Him. It is different for the person who is born again. Their fear is either initial or filial. In the pangs of the new birth, or in the newborn babe, it is called initial because they cast away sin both out of love for God, which they have partially attained, and out of consideration for the woeful effects of sin, which they have deeply contemplated. With one eye, they behold God, and with the other eye, they behold punishment. So, this fear is a middle ground, so to speak, between servile and filial fear. Just as a needle draws in a thread, this fear draws in charity and paves the way for filial fear. If, through growth in grace, they are fully matured in filial fear, then they fear God out of love for Him, as proclaimed by the Prophet Isaiah, "The fear of the Lord is his treasure" (Isaiah 33:6). Never was treasure more precious to worldlings than the fear

of God is to them. Their love for God, their desire to please God, and their fear of being separated from God keep them in such reverence that even if there were no punishment, death, or hell at all, they would not commit wicked, willful, and malicious sin for all the treasures in the world.

The fifth affection is joy, which in the unregenerate is purely sensual and brutish. Its objects are nothing better than gold, greatness, offices, honours, and the like. But what are all these? They are but shadows, passing ships, fleeting birds, arrows swiftly shot, or a passing post. They are like crackling thorns under a pot or flashes of lightning before an everlasting fire. However, the joy of the regenerate is a spiritual joy. Its source is the light of God's countenance, the robe of Christ's righteousness, the promises of God's word, and above all, God Almighty, blessed forever. As David said, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you" (Psalm 73:25). This is a joy that no one can comprehend except the one who experiences it. It is like a white stone whose brilliance shines only upon heavenly hearts. It is a glimpse of heaven's glory that springs up in a sanctified heart from the wells of salvation. It is carried along with the addition of fresh comforts from the Word and Sacraments throughout the fruitful course of a person's life. Finally, it is welcomed into the boundless and bottomless ocean of heavenly joys. I will not deny that it may sometimes be assailed and hindered by doubts, distrust, or weaknesses to some degree. Yet, in terms of its creation, essence, and blissful outcome, it is, as one said, a true glimpse of heaven, a pure taste of the rivers of life, and the first fruits of everlasting joys.

The sixth affection is sorrow, which in the unregenerate is a worldly sorrow, and its effects are death, as the Apostle says, "The sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Corinthians 7:10). In this type of sorrow, how

endless are the sorrows of people for their losses or misfortunes that may sometimes befall them? And no matter how others may try to comfort them in Christ, they are so hardened that nothing can convince them or bring them any satisfaction when it comes to matters of heaven or salvation. But in the regenerate, sorrow is directed towards God. It is not the contemplation of God in Himself that brings sorrow to a person, for He is a most comforting object. As David said, "The light of Your countenance brings gladness to my heart." However, it is the contemplation of sin, which hinders one from having a clear vision of that object, that breeds sorrow. This is what the Apostle calls godly sorrow, which works repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted. It is not just any sorrow, but godly sorrow. The Apostle says, "I rejoice not that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance." And who sorrows to repentance? It is he, and only he, who groans and sighs under the heavy weight and burden of his sins, who has a broken and contrite heart, who trembles at God's word, who is grieved by his own transgressions, who forsakes all sins, and who submits himself in all holy obedience to God's blessed will. This sorrow is a blessed sorrow that brings forth joy and immortality. Therefore, take comfort, comfort all who mourn in Zion. Though you may lie in sorrow and weeping for your sins during the night of the new birth, know that the day will dawn. Ride on because of the word of truth, and a day star will arise in your hearts that will never set. Yes, weep and weep again until you can say with David, "All the night make I my bed to swim with my tears," and soon the Sun of righteousness will appear. He will dry away your tears and shine upon you with everlasting light. Certainly, it is the same with every regenerate person. They love, hate, hope, fear, rejoice, and sorrow, and all these passions are renewed within them. To give an example, for all the

regenerate, David's love is evident when he says, "My delight shall be in your commandments which I have loved." His hatred is evident when he says, "I hate your enemies with a perfect hatred." His hope is evident when he says, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." His fear is evident when he says, "His judgments are terrible, I tremble and quake." His joy is evident when he says, "Your testimonies are my delight, I rejoice in them as one who finds great spoils." His sorrow is evident when he says, "My eyes gush out with rivers of water." Here we see love, hatred, hope, fear, joy, sorrow, and all of them are directed towards their right spiritual objects.

You now see a depiction of the new man, which should be the case for all individuals. My text states indefinitely, "A man," implying every person and every aspect of a person. Every individual should be regenerated, and every part of a person should be renewed. Since a person consists of two parts, the body and soul, all the members of the body, such as the heart, eyes, ears, and tongue, particularly, as well as all the faculties of the soul, including the understanding, will, memory, conscience, and affections in general, must be renewed. The entire person must be born again.

However, beloved, I do not mean to suggest that a renewed person is never overcome by sin. I know that within them, there is a continual struggle between the flesh and the spirit, each striving to gain strength over the other. Sometimes, the flesh prevails, and sometimes, the spirit prevails. Sometimes, their hearts lust, their eyes wander, their ears are enticed, and their tongues curse. Sometimes, their understanding errs, their will rebels, their memory fails, their conscience sleeps, and their affections turn towards sensual objects. But what sets them apart from the unregenerate individual is that if they sin, they do so with a gracious reluctance. They resist it with

all their abilities, and if they do eventually commit sin due to the force of temptation, conquering the weakness of the flesh, they are immediately ashamed. They then set repentance to work in all the parts and powers of their body and soul. Their conscience troubles them from within and will not be at peace until the cistern of their heart, being overwhelmed, causes their eyes, the floodgates, to overflow the cheeks with tears of contrition. Thus, they are cleansed, justified, sanctified, and restored to their former integrity.

Therefore, examine yourselves, you who desire heaven as your ultimate goal. Do you want to inherit the Kingdom? Do you want to live with angels? Do you want to save your souls? Examine and test whether your bodies and souls are sanctified throughout. If you have no sense or feeling of the new birth (for it is a mystery to the unregenerate), then do not expect to see the kingdom of God in that state. However, if you perceive the effective working of saving grace within you (and you cannot help but perceive it if you have it), if you feel the power of godliness first seizing your heart and then spreading throughout all the parts and powers of your body and soul, or more specifically, if your heart is softened by the Spirit, if your eyes are fixed on God, if your ears listen to His word, if your tongue praises Him, if your understanding attains to saving knowledge, if your will conforms to the will of God, if your memory is filled with heavenly teachings, if your conscience is tender and sensitive to even the slightest sin, if you love what is good, if you hate what is evil, if you hope for the blessings above, if you fear the one who can destroy both body and soul—in short, if you rejoice in goodness, if you sorrow for sin—then you are born again. A person in this state is truly fortunate to have been born, and every individual must be in this state, or they cannot be happy. Unless a

person (every person, every part of a person) is born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God.

Thus, we have discussed the subject, "man," and now we come to the action or deed to be done—they must be born again.

Be Born Again.

The children are brought to birth, and to avoid the truth of the saying that there is no strength to bring forth, I shall now (with God's help) proceed to the actual birth itself. Here we have the manner of it, and we can observe a twofold manner:

First, regarding the words that contain the new birth.

Secondly, concerning the new birth that is contained in the words.

The manner of the words is evident in the original text, with two words, each having its own variant reading. One word, "genitus," as Valla suggests, would rather mean "begotten"; "Except a man be begotten." Others commonly say "natus," meaning "born"; "Except a man be born." And just as "anothen" can mean "from above" or "heavenly," some would have it translated as such; "Except a man be born from above." Others commonly translate it as "again"; "Except a man be born again." Chrysostom cites both of these readings, and from each reading, we can gather something for our own understanding.

"As man that is born of a woman is begotten of a man, so he that is born again," says Valla. The new man must also have a begetting, just as a person who is born of a woman is begotten by a man. [Teaching] That is why it is sometimes called "renascentia," a new birth, and sometimes "regeneratio," a new begetting or regeneration. If you ask by whom the new man is begotten, Saint James tells you in James 1:18: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." The former words indicate the impulsive cause, while the latter words refer to the instrument. It was God who begat us, and it was through the seed of the word.

First, God begot us, and so we are called God's children, born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:13). Regeneration is the work of God, and because it is an external work, it is therefore shared by each Person in the Trinity. "You are sanctified," says the Apostle, "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all sanctify and work the same work. However, just as in the Godhead there is one Essence yet three distinct manners of existence of the same Essence, so in God's external operations, all the Persons work the same thing but not in the same way. For example, the works of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification are common works of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Yet, each of these works that are common to all three is directed towards one of them. The Father is said to create, the Son is said to create, the Holy Spirit is said to create. The Father is said to redeem, the Son is said to redeem, the Holy Spirit is said to redeem. The Father is said to sanctify, the Son is said to sanctify, the Holy Spirit is said to sanctify. Thus, all three contribute to each of these works, and yet each of these works is directed, specified, and formed in the very final act by one of these three.

The work of Creation is immediately attributed to God the Father. The work of Redemption is immediately attributed to God the Son. The work of Regeneration is immediately attributed to God the Holy Spirit. It is worth noting that just as the shared nature of these works (ad extra) depends on the unity of God's Essence, the diversity of their attributions depends on the diverse ways in which God exists or subsists. The Father is self-existent, neither made nor begotten, and therefore it is most fitting for Him to create all things out of nothing, which is the work of Creation. The Son is from the Father alone by the reflection of His intellect and is called the representation of His Father's Image. Therefore, it is most fitting for Him to represent His Father's mercies to mankind by saving them from death and hell, which is the work of Redemption. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, being breathed forth by both through the act of the will. Therefore, it is most fitting for Him (who blows where He pleases) to blow upon our wills and, by His breath, to purify and cleanse us, which is the work of Regeneration. In summary, this work of Regeneration (or Sanctification, or whatever else you may call it) is, in terms of the work itself, the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But in terms of the final act, it is the work of the Holy Spirit and not of the Father or the Son. And thus our Saviour concludes, "That which is born of the spirit is spirit, and so is every person who is born of the spirit" (John 3:8).

Secondly, as God's Spirit is the primary cause, God's Word is the instrumental cause of our Regeneration. "You are born again," says Saint Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and remains forever" (1 Peter 1:23). This word is referred to as the word of life by St. John, the producer of faith by St. Paul, and the power of God unto salvation. Indeed, this word is living and powerful, sharper

than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Those who are born again cannot forget how quick, powerful, and sharp God's word was during their Regeneration. First, like a hammer, it struck their hearts until they were broken into pieces. Then, like a sword, with a formidable, cutting, piercing power, it instilled trembling and shaking into the very core of their souls. Lastly, like oil, when they were truly wounded, it began to soothe those wounds, heal the bruises, and refresh the weak and tender heart with all the promises of God revealed in Christ.

In this manner, a person who is begotten by the Spirit with the word of truth eventually comes to birth. Therefore, we read, "Unless one is born" (John 3:3). And I believe this expression is more comprehensive than the other, because begetting can occur without a subsequent birth, as in the case of many who are suffocated in the womb. They are begotten but not born. However, if there is birth, it presupposes begetting, and thus implies it: "Unless one is born," that is, unless one is begotten and born, they cannot see God's kingdom. If you ask of whom are they born? I answer, just as God is the Father, so the Church is the Mother of every child of God. In this regard, the Apostle says, "Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:26). What is Jerusalem but the Church? Just as that City was the dwelling place of David, so is this Church the dwelling place of Christ, symbolized by the kingdom of David (Revelation 3:7). And thus, God proclaims about both, "Here shall be my rest forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it" (Psalm 132:14). The Church is rightly called our mother, first because she is the spouse of our Father, betrothed and united as one (Hosea 2:19; Song of Solomon 6:3). Secondly, because we are children

born of her. This teaches us to honour our mother and, like little children, rely on her breasts for our sustenance. "Drink deeply of her glory, enjoy her comforting presence like a nursing child" (Isaiah 66:11). It is the Church that gives birth to children of God through the ministry of His word. And if we are children of this mother, we must feed on the milk that flows from her two breasts, the Old and New Testaments. As newborn babes, we should desire the pure milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2). In summary, there is no salvation outside the Church. Those who do not have the Church as their mother cannot have God as their Father, as the saying goes. And it is with good reason, for outside the Church, there are no means of salvation, no word to teach, no sacraments to confirm. All of these and every other means are within the womb of the Church. It is here, and only here, where the Spirit of immortal seed begets grace in the heart, and thus a person is born again.

This, some read as "from above," [Doctrine], and thus the words go, "Unless a man is born from above." From above is where every good and perfect gift comes from. A person can receive nothing unless it is given to them from heaven (John 3:27). But then how does our Saviour say of the wind (to which he compares everyone born of the Spirit) that we do not know where it comes from and where it goes? I answer, [Verse 8] this "where" refers more to the cause than the place. We know the wind comes from the South, North, East, or West, but why it does so, we cannot tell. We know the Spirit is above, and the new birth or regeneration comes from the Spirit. But as for "whence," why it is so or what moves the Spirit to do so, apart from his good pleasure and will, we cannot tell.

Or if we read "again," as others do, then the words go as follows, "Unless a man is born again." Nicodemus's response seems more direct to this.

"How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb?" No doubt he took Christ's phrase $\rho\omicron$ \langle in non-Latin alphabet \rangle , only he misunderstood that the second birth should be like the first birth. Thus, he says, "Can an old man (such as himself) be born again?" No, says our Saviour, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and there is only one birth in this manner. But to be born again is to be born of the Spirit, and this is the second birth. A person is first born of the flesh [Doctrine], and they must be born again of the Spirit.

Hence, the difference between the first and second birth becomes clear. The first birth is of the earth, earthly; the second birth is from the Lord, heavenly. The first birth is of nature, full of sin; the second is of grace, full of sanctity. The first birth originates from flesh and blood; the second birth originates from the Spirit and water. In short, the first birth brings death, the second gives life. Generation lost us, and it must be regeneration that recovers us. Oh, blessed birth, without which no birth is happy! In comparison to it, even if one were to be born as heir to the whole world, it is all but misery! This was Moses' praise, that he esteemed the reproach of Christ above all the treasures in Egypt. He would rather be the son of God than be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Hebrews 11:24). No doubt, it is a great honour to be called the son-in-law of a King, but it is nothing compared to being the Son of God. This sonship is the degree beyond which there is no need to aspire, and beneath which there is no happiness, no heaven, no kingdom. "Unless a man is born again," they cannot see the kingdom of God.

So far, we have discussed the manner of the words, which contain the new birth. It is evident that the Father of it is God, the seed of it is the Word, the mother of it is the Church, and the place of it is from Heaven.

The time of it is after a person is once born; then they must be born again. "Unless a man is born again." Now, let us consider the manner of the new birth contained in the words. I understand that it is not experienced in the same way by everyone, and its manner is unknown to us, except insofar as it is sensible within us. Therefore, we must consider the state of a person before baptism, during baptism, and after baptism.

In some individuals, the new birth is brought about before baptism, as in the case of the eunuch under Queen Candace of the Ethiopians (Acts 8:37), the Centurion Cornelius and his kinsmen and close friends (Acts 10:47), and Lydia (Acts 16:14). Our charitable belief is that every infant who dies before baptism is renewed by the Spirit. However, we do not know the manner in which this occurs, as it is one of the secrets of the Holy Spirit.

In others, the new birth takes place during baptism, which is indeed the sacrament and seal of regeneration. But even though we witness the external seal in infant baptism, we do not see or feel the manner of the inward working, for this too is a secret of the Holy Spirit.

In others, the new birth occurs after baptism, as Polanus suggests. However, whether it happens after baptism or during baptism is not a matter for dispute. As it stands for us, I affirm that there is no manifestation of the new birth until after baptism. But when does it happen after baptism? I answer, whenever individuals receive Christ through faith. Though this may occur many years later, at that time they feel the power of God regenerating them and working all things in them that were offered in baptism. The usual manner of this feeling, or God's Spirit working, proceeds as follows:

According to theologians, there are certain steps or degrees through which it passes. Although these steps or degrees may not be easily perceived in those who have been blessed with a holy and Christian

upbringing, with the Spirit of God dropping grace into their hearts from a young age, they are more noticeable in individuals who have lived in sin for a long time, whose sins have been gross, great, and grievous. As soon as they experience the new birth, they can feel grace working in them step by step. We shall count these steps as eight in number.

The first step is a recognition of sin, and our Saviour considers this the initial work of the Spirit. "When he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin" (John 16:8). How does he convict the world of sin? It happens as follows: as this blessed change from nature to grace begins, the conscience, influenced by God's word, opens its book and presents to the soul a scroll listing the numerous, mighty, and heinous sins committed against God and fellow human beings. The individual may read in vivid, burning lines the abominations of their youth and the sins of their entire life. To bring them into order, the Commandments of God stand as a reminder before their eyes. The first commandment reminds them of loving something above God, the second of worshipping a false God or the true God in a false manner, the third of dishonouring God's great and mighty name, the fourth of breaking the Lord's day either by engaging in fleshly works or neglecting the works of the Spirit. But it doesn't end there. Just as they have sinned against God, they have also sinned against their neighbour. The fifth commandment reminds them of their stubbornness and disobedience, the sixth of their passions and desire for revenge, the seventh of their lewdness and lustful behaviour, the eighth of their thefts and covetous acts, the ninth of their lies, slanders, backbiting, and hasty judgments, and the tenth of their covetous thoughts and inclinations towards all sorts of evil. Good Lord! How many evils, indeed, what countless swarms of lawless thoughts, words, and actions does the conscience reveal?

But above all, their favourite sin, their beloved sin, is written in the largest characters. They discover that it has bewitched them the most and reigned above all other sins in their guilty conscience. This sin may be worldliness, licentiousness, usury, pride, revenge, or something similar. In others, it may be drunkenness, gluttony, gambling, vulgar jesting, simony, or the like. Whatever it is, the conscience reminds them of it again and again. They can read it alongside their other sins as the Spirit of God opens the eyes of their minds, allowing them to see the mud and filth of their souls that had remained unseen and undiscerned. This is the first work of the new life—a feeling of the old death of their souls in sins and trespasses. Here, the axiom holds true: no generation without corruption. A person must first experience this death before being born again.

The second step is a sense of divine wrath, which generates fear in the individual. As the Apostle says, "The spirit of bondage begets fear" (Romans 8:15), and this is how it unfolds: as soon as the person sees and feels their sin, God's Spirit (now referred to as the spirit of bondage) presents to them the arsenal of God's flaming wrath and fiery indignation. This makes them feel as if they have been pricked by an arrow, stabbed with a sword, or bitten by a venomous snake. They realize that they are a most cursed and damned creature, deserving all the miseries of this life and the fiery torments of hell in the life to come. This causes them to tremble and stand in awe, as if thoroughly frightened by the wrathful countenance of Almighty God. Would you like to see them in this state? Their conscience has awakened them from their dead, sensual slumber through the trumpet blast of the Law. Their heart is now scorched by the secret sense of God's angry face. Their soul is burdened heavily by innumerable sins. Their thoughts are filled with fear and astonishment, as if nothing less

than hellish horror were ready to seize their body and soul. I won't discuss the extent to which this wrath is poured upon all individuals in their conversion, as I believe that some experience more of it while others experience less. However, I truly believe that there are some who, during the pangs of the new birth, have been scorched by the very flames of hell. They could genuinely say with David, "Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you have afflicted me with all your waves" (Psalm 88:7). And it's no wonder, for this is the time of fear. Now, Satan busily strives to suffocate the new man in the womb. He had previously diminished the person's sins, making them appear insignificant in their eyes. But once he sees the person cast down into the place of dragons, covered in the shadow of death, he fills their mind with their countless sins and, immediately following that, the curse of the Law and the wrath of God. He makes the curse and wrath even more terrifying and fierce, intending to plunge them into the bottomless pit of horror and despair. Through this means, he convinced Cain to cry out (when he was in this state), "My punishment is greater than I can bear" or, as others translate it, "My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven" (Genesis 4:13). And thus, the unregenerate individual reaches this point with the one who is born again: both have a sight of sin and a sense of wrath. But here they part ways, as the unregenerate person either sinks under it or seeks to alleviate it with worldly comforts or some false calm. On the other hand, the person who is born again is humbled by it alone and seeks the right path to heal it. Eventually, with the help of God's Spirit, they pass completely through it—I mean, through this hell on earth—and enter the spiritual pleasures of the Kingdom of grace, which is to be born again.

The third step is sorrow for sin, which is more specific to God's child. There is a sorrow that is a common work of grace, which a hypocrite may

also experience. But there is a sorrow that is a work of special grace, and this precedes the exercise of faith.

However, some object by saying that Christ must work this sorrow, or it is worthless. Now, if Christ is in the soul working sorrow, then there is faith. Therefore, faith must come before sorrow.

I respond, even though it is true that Christ cannot dwell in the soul without the presence of the habit of faith in that very instant, it does not mean that faith precedes sorrow. Both of these graces exist together and simultaneously in the soul. However, it does not imply that the soul, as soon as Christ is in it or as soon as the habit of faith is infused, is empowered by an act of faith to apply Christ to itself. The question at hand is whether, from our perspective (since we can only assess the habit through the act), the soul can be said to experience sorrow or repentance before faith. The question does not concern which one the soul possesses first as a divine gift, but rather which one it manifests first for our understanding. Surely, from our viewpoint, it first sorrows over sin, and then it acts or exercises faith by turning to Christ and relying on Him for salvation, and so on. He grieves not only because he fears he must be damned (so Cain and Judas might), but because he knows he has deserved to be damned. This is the more particular cause of his sorrow, given his wickedness, sinfulness, rebelliousness, and opposition to God. This sin, I say, is the very sin in which he was conceived, born, lived, and continued, that makes him sob, and sigh, and sorrow, and mourn. And yet, this sorrow is sometimes broadly understood as encompassing the entire process of conversion, and sometimes strictly as conviction, contrition, and humiliation. Likewise, repentance is sometimes broadly understood and sometimes strictly. By making this distinction, it becomes evident how sorrow precedes

repentance, and how repentance precedes faith. Indeed, the latter is the great controversy, but some reconcile it in the following manner: Repentance consists of two parts—the turning away from sin and the turning to God. The latter part, the turning to God, is solely an effect of faith, while the former part, the turning from sin, is also an effect but not exclusively so. It begins before faith, though it is not completed until the end of our lives. Some object, arguing that God works repentance and faith together. However, our discussion does not concern how God works them, but rather how the soul manifests them. It is not about which one exists in the soul first, but about which one becomes evident first. Moreover, it is not a novel concept in philosophy to state that causes producing an effect, even though they exist simultaneously in time, have a certain order of priority in terms of their respective causalities. Therefore, a person must experience repentance before they can have saving and justifying faith. Yet, a person must have faith before the work of repentance can be perfected in the soul. Just as we maintain that repentance is a preceding work, we do not deny that it is also a subsequent effect. Sorrow is present even before birth, as the Apostle intimates: "Godly sorrow produces repentance," meaning that sorrow prepares a person for repentance; it precedes and prepares the way. And now, at this stage, God's Spirit begins to renew the heart, as God Himself proclaims: "I will give them a new spirit within them, and I will remove their heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh." The heart that was once as hard as flint now begins to relent, soften, and break into pieces. How does this happen? It is God's Spirit that pricks the heart, and this pricking softens it. As Jorom says, "Compunction softens and supple the heart, so that even if it is as stony as ever, it instantly becomes a heart of flesh." You know that those who are inclined to weep,

yearn, or feel sorrow are called tender-hearted. Therefore, someone who is pricked until their heart bleeds inwardly, someone who weeps blood (which every heart does when pricked in this manner), surely has a tender heart. I mean tender in the literal sense, as the very word implies— their heart weeps. Why? Because their heart is broken. David joins these two aspects when he declares, "A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Psalm 51:17). And it is no wonder that a heart that is broken, torn, wounded, and pricked sheds tears of blood. David himself could say in his brokenness, "I have wept, and furthermore, I have roared from the intense grief and restlessness of my heart" (Psalm 38:8). And again, "My soul (or heart) melts (or drops) with extreme heaviness" (Psalm 62:8). Not that his heart literally dropped, but because the tears he shed were not merely drops of water trickling from his eyes (an onion can cause that much). Rather, they flowed from his heart. Since his heart was afflicted and deeply troubled, it is said to be wounded. Therefore, his tears, originating from the heart, can be rightly called drops of blood flowing from a wounded heart. This is the experience of someone laboring in their new birth. Their heart grieves, and their eyes weep. Hence the proverb, "The way to heaven is through the cross of weeping." The path to God's kingdom is to cry like children entering the world. To be born anew, one must experience the pains, just as a woman labors in childbirth. And in this way, Christ is formed in us. Can a person be born again without the bitterness of soul? No, if they ever come to see their sin and if God's sanctifying Spirit works in them sorrow for sin, their soul will mourn until they can say with Jeremiah, "My eye flows without ceasing—my eye breaks my heart—because of all the daughters of my city, because of all the sins of my soul" (Lamentations 3:51). It is true that, like some infants causing more pain to the mother

during birth than others, the new man may experience regeneration with varying degrees of anxiety and labor. However, regardless of the intensity, it cannot be so minimal that the person laboring in these pangs will not mourn. There will be great mourning, comparable to the mourning for Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo, as described in Zechariah 12:11. What else can we expect? One cannot become a saint without first sailing through the ocean of tears. Therefore, the person falls on their face like Abraham, wrestles with God like Jacob, cries out their grief like Job, pours out their soul like Hannah, weeps rivers of tears like David, mourns like a dove like Hezekiah, and chatters like a crane or a swallow, as mentioned in Isaiah 38:14. Oh, the bitter pangs and intense travail of a person when they must be born again.

The fourth step is seeking comfort in the right way. One does not turn to the world, the flesh, or the Devil, for they are all miserable comforters. Instead, one turns to Scripture, Prayer, or the Ministry of God's word. If comfort is found in Scriptures, it is found in the Gospel. As the Apostle says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). The Law, indeed, reveals a person's wretched state but offers no remedy. However, we do not abolish the Law by attributing comfort only to the Gospel. Though the Gospel is not its cause, it is the occasion for comfort. The dreadful terrors and fears of conscience produced by the Law may naturally lead one to the gates and the brink of hell. Yet, I cannot deny that they can also serve as occasions for receiving grace. If it pleases God that the person laboring in the pains of new birth directs their thoughts rightly to the Gospel of Christ, there is no doubt that they may draw the sweetest comforts and delights ever revealed to humanity.

Or if comfort is found in prayer (which the person continually turns to in each of these steps), it is through Christ, for in His name alone does one approach the heavenly throne of grace. As soon as the King of Nineveh humbled himself, he proclaimed, "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?" (Jonah 3:7-9). Similarly, the person wrestling with the grievous afflictions and terrors of their conscience says, "Who can tell if God will turn away His fierce anger? Let me cry mightily to the Lord of heaven. Let me cry and continue crying until the merciful Lord looks upon me with mercy." And if, despite all this, God seems to reject the person for reasons known only to Himself, even if they cry out in vain the first, second, third, fourth, or many more times, they ultimately turn to the ministry of the Word. If given the choice, they would seek out the most skillful, experienced, searching, and faithful messenger among all God's servants. This was the case with Peter's listeners when their hearts were pierced and torn by the terrors of the Law, causing them to cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). The same was true for the jailer, who, after trembling and falling down in humble abasement, could then ask, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). And so, the person who is now ready to be born again, if they find no means to alleviate the rage and terrors of their guilty conscience, finally comes to God's Minister with the question, "What shall I do? What must I do to be saved? Alas! I now feel the wounded conscience, the broken heart, the spiritual blindness, the captivity, and poverty you have often described to me. If

there is any instruction, guidance, or duty that can lead to my good or free me from this evil, now open your lips, which should preserve knowledge. Now direct me in the fear of God, and I will willingly follow it with all my efforts."

And now (and not until now) God's Minister has a strong and timely calling to amplify and magnify the soul-saving sufficiency of Christ's death and passion. If the blood of Christ and the promise of Salvation were offered to an unwounded conscience, what would it be but pouring the most sovereign balm onto a sound part of a person? The only right and everlasting method is to first wound with the Law and then heal with the Gospel, to first cause pain for sin and then apply the remedy of Christ's blood. Therefore, when the heart is broken, then the man of God has the authority to bind it up again. Then he may magnify God's mercy, then he may proclaim the heavenly beauty of Christ's passion and person. Thus, by his high and holy art of comforting the afflicted, playing the role of a midwife, the child of God (prepared for his birth) finally becomes a man born again.

The fifth step is a clear sight of Christ laid open to the eye of Faith, and I do not mean a general sight, which he had before. No sooner is the poor wounded soul thoroughly informed about the mystery and mercy of the Gospel than he looks upon his Savior like the Jews looked upon the brazen serpent. Seeing him lifted up on the cross, he cannot help but see in him an infinite treasury of mercy and love, a boundless and bottomless sea of tenderness and compassion, a whole heaven of sweetness, happiness, peace, and pleasure. After the spirit of bondage, the Spirit of adoption enters. The terrors of the Law lead him to the comforts of the Gospel, his sorrow for sin brings him to the clear light of his Savior. Just as a person in the throes of

death lifts up their eyes to heaven from where their help comes, so, in the pangs of birth, he lifts up his eyes to Christ, who must either help him or he will sink under his sin to the bottomless depths of hell. And let me tell you, this sight of Christ Jesus to a humbled sinner, together with the glorious privileges he brings, such as Reconciliation to God, forgiveness of sins, adoption, justification, righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption, is the most pleasant, ravishing, and heavenly sight. Not even Solomon in all his splendor, nor the lilies of the field dressed better than Solomon, nor all the wondrous sights on earth, nor the sparkling stars in the sky, can possibly offer such pleasure or delight to the human eye as this one object (Christ bleeding on the cross) does to the soul of a sinner.

Imagine that you saw a criminal (whose trial and sentence were already concluded) being led to the doleful place of execution. Imagine hearing him wail and weep for his misspent time, for his bloody acts, for his heinous crimes. Yes, imagine his wailings and weepings so bitter that they were capable of eliciting tears from others, making all eyes well up and water just by looking at him. If this person, in such a state, suddenly saw his King running and riding towards him with a pardon in his hand, what a sight that would be! Surely, there is nothing comparable to it. It is the same with the person sorrowing for sin, while he laments his condition and confesses how close he is to damnation (as if he were standing at the mouth of hell, the very execution site). In a daze, he looks upon Christ, whom he sees with a spear in his side, thorns on his head, nails in his feet, and a pardon in his hands, offering it to all who would receive it by faith. Oh, what a sight indeed, capable of reviving even the wickedest person on earth, dead in sins and transgressions. And now there is hope for the birth; if it reaches this

point, there is more than just a likelihood of a happy delivery. We can call it the stirrings of God's child or the first signs of life before being born again.

The sixth step is a hungering desire for Christ and his merits, and blessed are those who reach this step. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6). Filled? How? "I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost" (Revelation 21:6). This step, like a rung on Jacob's ladder, lifts him up towards heaven. It is such a clear sign of true faith that the one who possesses it needs no more doubt that he believes than a breathing person needs to doubt that he lives. Why? Because his thirst for worldly things is cooled, while his thirst for heavenly things is inflamed.

Objection: But Christ says, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst."

Response: It is not the thirst of miserable need, but the thirst for more abundant enjoyment. No hungry person has ever desired food with more appetite, nor has a thirsty person desired drink, a covetous person desired money, or an ambitious person desired glory, as he now longs to be reconciled to God in Christ. In this case, if he had the pleasures and profits of a thousand worlds, he would willingly give them all up for the application of Christ's sufferings. It is that sovereign blood alone that can heal his soul, it is that bitter passion alone that can quench his thirst. Give him the merits of Christ's death (by which he and God may be reconciled), and he does not care if he suffers death and hell again. Yes, he is willing to risk his possessions, his life, everything. Or if that is not what the Lord requires, he will do whatever is necessary, even sell all, everything he has, part with every sin he loves, even if it is his right hand or right eye. Nothing shall be dear to him if he can only enjoy his Savior. Oh, here is a thirst

above all thirsts! It breeds fervent desires, intense longings, unutterable groans, and mighty gasps, just like the dry and thirsty ground that gasps, cleaves, and opens for drops of rain. David, though in the desert of Ziph, a barren and dry land without water, complained most about his thirst: "My soul thirsts for you, O God" (Psalm 63:1). This is the intense affection that God puts into the hearts of those who seek Him sincerely and truthfully. Ahab was never more sick for a vineyard, Sisera for milk, or Samson for water than a truly humbled soul is for Christ, always thirsting and longing to hide himself in His righteousness and bathe in the blood shed by his Savior. I have read about a gracious woman who, laboring in these pangs and longing for Christ Jesus, cried out, "I have borne nine children with as great pain as other women, and yet I would with all my heart bear them all over again, yes, bear them all the days of my life, to be assured of my part in Christ Jesus." When someone asked if her heart desired and longed for Him, she replied, "Oh! I have a husband and children and many other comforts, but I would give them all, and all the good I will ever see in this world or in the world to come, to have my poor thirsty soul refreshed with that precious blood of my Savior." Such is the eagerness and earnestness of each person's heart (parched by the angry countenance of God) for this blood. "I thirst, I faint, I languish, I long," he says, "for one drop of mercy. My spirit is melted into tears of blood. Because of sin, my heart is shaken and shattered. Because of sorrow, my soul is wasted and parched. My thirst is insatiable, my bowels are hot within me, my desire for Christ is extremely great and greedy." But wait! All these expressions fall far short of those longings. No one knows them except the one who receives them, the one who is born again.

The seventh step is relying on Christ. As soon as he considers and remembers the many heartfelt invitations of our Lord and Savior, such as "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me," "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters," and "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened with sin," he rests himself on the unshakable truth of these blessed promises and throws himself into the merciful and meritorious arms of his crucified Lord. Whether it be life or death, heaven or hell, whatever may come, he will stick with Christ forever. Paul declares, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword? No, I am convinced that neither these nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35, 38-39). This is the experience of the one laboring in this spiritual rebirth. He asks, "Does Christ call the heavy laden? Well then, Lord, I am heavy laden with the weight, the burden of sin. If he calls, Lord, I come, I come, and now that I have come, I will build my dwelling with you, I will rest with you forever." And this is no wonder. Experience tells us that the hunted beast flees to its den, the wounded person hastens to the surgeon. Similarly, the poor soul broken and bruised by the weight of sin, how could it do anything else but willingly cast itself into the compassionate and inviting arms of Christ, whose promises declare, "I will give him rest, I will refresh him"? Sometimes you may see a small infant, upon sensing and perceiving sudden danger, how quickly it runs into its mother's arms. Likewise, a truly wounded soul, pursued by the terrors of the Law and terrified by the wrathful countenance of Almighty God, flees with speed into the embrace of its blessed Redeemer. There it clings to his wounds, rests upon his meritorious death, grasps his crucified body, hides in the clefts of this Rock, and resolves that even if all terrors, temptations,

men, and devils combine to cast it into hell, they would have to tear, rend, pull, and drag it away from the bleeding wounds and tender compassion of its heavenly Savior. This was Job's case, who in the midst of his bitter anguish cried out, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (Job 13:15). And I must tell you, this confidence, dependence, adherence, reliance (or whatever else we call it) on the merits of Christ is true justifying faith. Once a person reaches this point, there is only one more step to being born again.

The last and highest step is universal obedience to Christ. As soon as he casts himself upon Christ, he takes him not only as a Savior to redeem him from the miseries of sin, but also as a husband, a Lord, a King, whom he will serve, love, honor, and obey. He willingly takes up his yoke, bears his cross, and follows him. He enters the narrow way, walks in the path of holiness, and joins the sect and brotherhood that is despised by many. He opposes all sin and breaks away from his old companions in wickedness. He strives to maintain peace and a good conscience towards God and others. He watches over his secret sins, lustful thoughts, and occasions of evil. He directs his words to glorify God and edify others. He aligns all his actions with the sovereignty of grace. He delights in the word of God, the ways of God, the company of the saints, and the services of God. He never turns back to folly or his former life of sin, even if Satan tempts him with enticements to keep him in bondage. He resolves, like Moses to Pharaoh, that not even a hoof shall be left behind. He knows that one breach in a city exposes it to the enemy, one leak sinks a ship, one stab kills a man, and one knot in a thread stops the needle as effectively as five hundred knots. Therefore, he is willing to give up everything, including his sins, down to the very last filthy remnant of his beloved besetting sin. And now, the new man is born among us. Do you want to see him? Old things have passed

away; behold, all things have become new (1 Corinthians 5:17). His heart, eyes, ears, tongue, understanding, will, memory, conscience, love, hatred, hope, fear, joy, sorrow, thoughts, words, actions, and affections are all new. This conversion is comprehensive and complete. Christ is now formed in him, and he is transformed into a new creature. He was in the process of becoming a new man, but now he is fully renewed. God the Father accepts him as His son, God the Son impresses upon him the image of the Father, and most directly, God the Holy Spirit has molded and fashioned him as I have shown you. And now he is born again, for unless a person is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Behold, these are the steps that lead a person to the state of regeneration: sight of sin, sense of misery, sorrow for sin, seeking for comfort, sight of Christ, desire after Christ, relying on Christ, obedience to Christ. One final word before we conclude.

You can see how God leads the person whom He intends to make His own. However, let no truly humbled sinner be discouraged if they do not observe these steps in such a distinct order or to the same degree as we have described. If the substance and effect of these steps have been worked in them, if they truly possess them (even if not to the same degree), I can confidently say that they are surely born again. One of our esteemed individuals has said that in our humiliations and other preparatory dispositions, we do not prescribe a precise measure or quantity, nor do we determine a specific degree or height. We leave that to the wisdom of our great Master in heaven, the only wise God, who is a completely free agent. However, it is certain that a person must have enough, and in that measure, to thoroughly humble them and bring them to their Savior. They must be weary of all their sins and completely willing to let go of Satan's bondage. I

mean they must be willing to part with their most cherished sinful desires, to sell all and not leave anything behind. They must recognize their danger and quickly seek refuge in the City. They must be aware of their spiritual misery so that they may earnestly thirst for mercy. They must see themselves as lost and condemned in themselves so that Christ may be everything to them. Afterward, they must develop a hatred for all false and evil ways and undergo a thorough change in their past behavior, companionship, and conversation, committing themselves to sobriety, honesty, and holiness. In summary, every soul is required to have the following: firstly, a truly penitent sight, sense, and hatred of all sin; secondly, a sincere and insatiable thirst for Jesus Christ and both imputed and inherent righteousness; thirdly, a genuine and wholehearted resolution to pursue universal obedience in all aspects of life going forward. If any person has experienced these affections and effects in their own soul, regardless of the measure (whether less or more), they are secure enough and can continue comfortably on the path of holiness.

Now, let me advise you (whoever you are reading this) to delve into your own soul and examine your own state, whether or not you have been born again. Search and see if the spirit of bondage has yet produced its effects in you. That is to say, have you been enlightened, convinced, and terrified with a clear understanding and personal acknowledgement of your wretched condition? Search and see if the Spirit of adoption has sealed you as His own. That is to say, after your heart has been broken, your spirit bruised, your soul humbled, and your conscience awakened, have you had a glimpse of Christ? Have you thirsted for Him, cast yourself upon Him, and followed His ways and commandments through universal obedience? If, upon searching, you can honestly say that this is true for you, then you may

praise God that you were ever born. Certainly (I dare say it), you are born again. But if you do not sense or feel these works, if everything I have said remains a mystery to you, what can I say? However, if you ever intend to see the kingdom of God, strive, struggle, and make every effort to become truly regenerated. As the minister speaks, it is Christ who comes with power through the word. You may argue that it is not within your power, that you are merely a passive recipient and God's Spirit is the agent, and who can command the Spirit of the Lord that blows wherever He pleases according to His will? I answer, indeed, it is the Spirit and not man who regenerates or sanctifies. But I also answer that the doctrine of the Gospel is the ministry of the Spirit, and wherever it is preached (as I am preaching it to you now), the Holy Spirit is present, and He comes there to bring about regeneration. Moreover, I can say more: there is a common work of illumination that prepares the way for regeneration, and this common work empowers a person to do what, when they do it, the Spirit of God may, and indeed will, work mightily in them for their revival and purification. So, if you do not yet feel this mighty work of God within you, but you earnestly desire to feel it and long for it (otherwise I confess it is in vain to speak), follow me in these passages. I will lend you two wings to carry you and two hands to guide you to the foot of this ladder. If you ascend these aforementioned steps, I can certainly declare that you are the person who has been born again.

The first wing is Prayer, which leads you to God's throne, and if you have your request granted there, then to the new birth. If I must instruct you on how to pray, Hosea 14:2 says, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." And then it follows, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (verse 4).

Jeremiah 30:18 says, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, turn thou me, and I shall be turned." The soul may object and say, "I can say these things and still not be better." But I answer, say it, even if you are not immediately better, because God commands you to say it. Say it, and say it again; perhaps He will come in when you say it (Hosea 14:4). Pray that God would please prepare your heart, sanctify your affections, order your will, preserve you from sin, and prepare you for growth in full holiness and righteousness. This was the effect of Jeremiah's prayer: "Convert me, O Lord, and I shall be converted; heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved. Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned" (Jeremiah 17:14; Lamentations 5:21). It is the Lord who converts, heals, saves, and turns, and Prayer is the means to bring about this effect in you. When we are commanded to pray, repent, and believe, we are not to rely on our own strength but to search the Covenant and turn the promise into prayer. As the Command is to repent (Acts 17:30), the Covenant is that "Christ shall give repentance" (Acts 5:31). Therefore, pray, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned" (Jeremiah 31:18). Then bow your knees and humbly, sincerely, frequently, and fervently implore the influence of God's blessed Spirit. Cry out with the Spouse in the Song of Solomon, "Awake, O North-wind, and come thou South-wind, and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow forth" (Song of Solomon 4:16). The more powerful and mighty this wind of the Spirit is, the more it will make you fruitful in His graces and blessings. Therefore, cry out again and again, "O Lord, let thy Spirit come upon me: create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. O Lord Jesus, send thy Spirit into me, which may restore me from this death of sin to the life of

holiness." This is how you should ask and continue asking, how you should cry out and continue crying out. Then I can assure you of the promise that God has made and cannot deny: "He that asketh receiveth; and, he that seeketh findeth; and, to him that knocketh (through continued persistence and perseverance), it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:8).

The second wing, or hand, that supports and guides you towards these steps of the new birth is constant hearing of the Word. You must attend the gates of wisdom and wait at her posts. You must go to God's house and listen to the preaching of the Word. Without a doubt, if you are consistent in this duty, God will raise up someone like Samuel, and He will use His ordained priests to bring about your rebirth. Understand this in a sensible manner, for even if Jesus Christ Himself were to preach to the soul every day but not give of Himself, the ordinance would be empty. It is Christ's presence in the ordinances that fills the empty soul with good things. That is why God's ministers are called spiritual fathers. Saint Paul says, "I have begotten you through the ministration of the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15). The pastor's tongue is the conduit through which the sweet and wholesome waters of life flow into the souls of the chosen ones. All you need to do is avail yourself of these means, and you will see that at some point God will show you mercy. It is true, I do not know when, and that is why I advise you not to miss any Sundays going to God's house, lest the day you neglect might have been the day of your conversion. It is certain that no one should expect God's blessing without His ordinances, just as there is no eating of bread without ploughing and sowing, no regaining of health without eating and drinking, no travelling on land without something to ride on, and no passage on seas without something to sail in. Similarly, there is no blessing, no grace, no regeneration, no new birth at all without waiting upon God in

His ways and ordinances. Now, if you desire heaven, or the way to heaven, to be born again, I implore you to highly esteem this ordinance of God, the preaching of His Word. In the preaching of the Gospel, light, movement, and power are extended to all, which some resist. And some are destroyed not because they couldn't believe, but because they resist and refuse to obey, and so they perish (Acts 7:51; Luke 13:34; Ezekiel 33:11; Hosea 13:9). Yet, I don't only want you to hear it, but also to consider it, reflect on it, and apply the threats, reproofs, precepts, and promises to your own soul. If you listen and meditate, I have no doubt that God's Word will be a word of power to you and, together with prayer, lead you towards the new birth. For unless a person is born again, they cannot possibly see the kingdom of God.

So far, we have climbed these steps, whose top, like Jacob's ladder, reaches up to heaven. This is evident in the next statement: "He that is born again shall see the kingdom of God, but he that is not born again cannot see the kingdom of God."

He Cannot See the Kingdom of God

The privileges of the new birth are twofold: to see and to see the kingdom of God.

First, to see, which is essentially to enjoy, as a modern saying goes. However, a person may see something without actually enjoying it. But without regeneration, there is no sight, let alone possession, of the kingdom of God.

To see, then, is the lesser happiness from which the unregenerate are excluded. But to see, in itself, is a great and gracious privilege granted to the regenerate. Whether the kingdom of God refers to the kingdom of grace or the kingdom of glory, happy are the eyes that witness these things.

But whose eyes are they? If we examine the unregenerate, they do not perceive the awesome majesty of God the Father, the beauty, mercy, and compassion of their Saviour, the glorious exaltation of God's Spirit in Heaven, or the closeness to their fellow brethren on earth. Hence, when they enter the Temple among the congregation of God's saints, their souls are not delighted by their prayers, praises, psalms, and worship. They find

no comfort, pleasure, or contentment in these actions. However, the new person has a better sight. The graces of the Spirit and the splendour of God's glory are all revealed to their eyes, as if the Lord were saying, "Come and see." Just as Moses was commanded to "Stand still and see the salvation of God," and Jesus told his apostles, "To you it has been given to see these things, while others only understand through parables." The one who is born again possesses a spiritual and celestial vision. The eye of their understanding is enlightened, as St. Paul says. It is anointed, as S. John says. And for what purpose? So that they may know the hope of their calling and the immeasurable richness of their inheritance among the saints (Ephesians 1:18). This is a privilege that the unregenerate are perpetually deprived of. Their minds are in darkness, even darkness itself (Ephesians 5:8). Therefore, it is not surprising that our Saviour declared they cannot, cannot see the kingdom of God.

The second privilege is the object of this sight, referred to as the kingdom of God. Some understand it as Heaven, others as the way to Heaven. Most of the ancient scholars say that the Kingdom refers to Heaven. Calvin believes it signifies a spiritual life. Aretius (and I agree with him) says that it doesn't matter much whether we understand it as one or the other. What is certain is that both Grace and Glory are associated with the new birth, and both can be implied in the term "the kingdom of God."

If we interpret the kingdom of God as the kingdom of Grace (as our Saviour speaks of it, "The kingdom of God is within you" - Luke 17:21), consider the great privilege that the new person has attained. All the graces of God and the fruits of the Spirit are poured into them. If you ask about these graces and fruits, St. Paul provides an answer: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians

5:22). Or if you prefer a more concise summary, St. Paul offers one elsewhere: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

First, righteousness. It can be understood as either active or passive: holiness of life or our righteousness in Christ. If it refers to the former, as soon as a person is born again, they enter the path of holiness. They turn away from all evil and stand ready to confront their most beloved sin. If ever a sin seizes them again (through the force of temptation), they are immediately brought back into the pains of the new birth. By renewing their sorrow and repentance, they become more determined and vigilant in their ways. As they detest evil, they cling to that which is good. Their faith, like the sun, causes the gracious heavenly stars to shine—hope, love, zeal, humility, and patience. In short, they exhibit universal obedience and bear fruit in all good works. All the duties of the first and second tables of the Law become natural and familiar to them. Although they may find some duties more challenging, they resolve and strive to do what they can. They are greatly displeased and grieved if they fall short of their duty. If righteousness is understood as passive righteousness, namely, our righteousness in Christ, as soon as a person is born again, they are clothed in this righteousness. The righteousness that comes from us is weak and imperfect, but it is the righteousness of God that makes us appear righteous before Him. To put it plainly, just as Jacob disguised himself in his brother's clothing to obtain his father's blessing, so the new person puts on the righteousness of Christ. Clad in this garment, God accepts them as if they were righteous, and their faults are covered by the perfection of their Saviour.

Secondly, from this righteousness arises peace. As soon as a person becomes righteous, they experience peace with others, peace with God, and peace within themselves. They are at peace with others. The prophet Isaiah says, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat" (Isaiah 11:6). This means that in the kingdom of Christ, when a person is called into a state of grace, they set aside their cruelty and live peacefully with all people, both good and bad. If they encounter bad people, the Apostle implies that they should strive to have peace with them as far as it depends on them (Romans 12:18). And if they meet good people, they cannot help but have peace with them. Even if they previously hated and maligned them, now they are filled with delight and love for them. They earnestly seek to establish a blessed communion with them. How can they not love and sympathise with those whom they believe they will one day meet in Heaven and enjoy forever? But that's not all. They are at peace with God. They have humbled themselves, confessed their faults, cried for mercy, cast themselves upon Christ, and vowed to change their ways. Now, God has spoken peace to their soul through His word. It is obtained through the mediation of Christ, and they feel it within them through the testimony of the Holy Spirit. This is the peace that surpasses all understanding. It made the angels sing, "Peace on earth." And it makes their soul respond, "My peace is in heaven." What more can be said? The storm has passed, and the rain has ceased. They, who once spent a night in the darkness of sorrow and weeping for their sins, now behold the Son of righteousness appear, bringing peace. It is as if they were standing on the Mount of Olives with the disciples, experiencing a serene and calm atmosphere. And there is more. They are at peace with themselves, particularly their own conscience. That which previously ignited the fire of

sin awareness and a sense of Divine wrath, causing fearful terrors, remorse, and true sorrow for sin, has now become peaceful and tranquil. Solomon calls it a continual feast (Proverbs 15:15). The holy angels attend this feast, and the cheer is joy in the Holy Spirit. God Himself and His good Spirit dwelling within the person are the feast-makers. This feast is not without music. God's word and the person's actions create a blessed harmony, and they strive to maintain it by keeping peace and maintaining a good conscience towards God and others.

Thirdly, from this peace comes joy in the Holy Spirit. As soon as a person is at peace with others, with God, and with themselves, they are filled with a joy that cannot be taken away from them. I believe this joy to be the blessed stirrings of the heart when the seal of forgiveness of sins is first placed upon the soul by the Spirit of Adoption. Here's how it happens: After going through the pains of the new birth, the soul is immediately immersed in the blood of Christ, cradled in the bosom of God's mercies, and secured by the Spirit as an heir of the heavenly inheritance. As a result, a sea of comfort typically follows, a tangible taste of everlasting pleasures, as if the person already had one foot in heaven. But I hear someone object, saying that they have experienced the pains, turned to Christ, resolved against sin, and yet no comfort has come. It may be so, although it is not the usual case. What is certain is that whoever has this joy is newly born, but not everyone who is newly born experiences this joy. If anyone finds themselves in such a situation, let them hear what the Spirit of truth says: "Since the beginning of the world, no one has heard, no ear has perceived, and no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him" (Isaiah 64:4). Waiting patiently for the Lord's comfort, whether in temporal or spiritual distress, is a pleasing and acceptable duty

and service to God, and He often crowns it with multiplied and abundant refreshment when He arrives. As the Prophet says, "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). Furthermore, if a person were to die in this state of waiting, as long as their heart sincerely detests all sin, earnestly thirsts for God's mercy in Christ, and genuinely resolves to pursue new, universal obedience in the future, they will undoubtedly be saved. This is because the Holy Spirit says, "Blessed are all those who wait for him" (Isaiah 30:18). If this does not satisfy their longing, let their longing intensify and activate the spirit of prayer with extraordinary fervency. Let them repeatedly turn to the promises of Scripture concerning the poor, burdened, penitent souls. And when the time comes, as appointed by God, they will experience this indescribable joy, the joy of the Holy Spirit. This is the pinnacle, the height, the summit, the highest step in the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of God.

Or secondly, if the kingdom of God refers to the kingdom of glory, then consider the privilege that awaits the new person. As soon as their breath and body are separated, their soul will be carried by the wings of angels above the starry firmament. There, it shall inherit the heavenly kingdom, a kingdom of God's own making, adorning and blessing. It is a kingdom befitting the glorious dwelling place of the King of kings, a kingdom that creates kings for all who inhabit it. But now, let your meditations take over, for I cannot fully describe this privilege. Conclude with Augustine, "May the soul that loves ascend frequently and run through the streets of heavenly Jerusalem, visiting the patriarchs, greeting the prophets, admiring the hosts." Soar on the wings of faith and behold in heaven those wondrous states: shining patriarchs, praising prophets, admiring saints, clapping

hands, melodious harps, dancing hearts. The exercise is a song, the melody is "Hallelujah," the choir members are saints, and the participants are angels, and so on. Let the newly born Christian immerse their soul in this fountain of pleasure, for it is theirs alone to see and enjoy. Only the one who is born again shall see the kingdom of God.

That concludes the discussion of the privileges of the new birth: the eye of faith, righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit, in a word, the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory.

And now, beloved, I ask you, what would you do to obtain these privileges? If someone offered you a crown for the effort to take it, or if someone laid a bag of gold at your feet, and you could make it your own by bending down, wouldn't you do so little for such a great reward? And what is God's service but perfect freedom? The yoke is easy, the burden is light, but the reward is grace, glory, and eternal felicity. Stir yourselves, then, and if you truly desire to see the kingdom of God, strive to undergo this new birth and live a better life than you have before. As the minister speaks, Christ comes with power, and therefore he speaks and persuades. I conclude with my words to you, whoever you are, holding this book in your hands: the truth is, the work is weak, and it reflects the weakness of its author. I have experienced many difficulties and suffered physically and spiritually while writing it, enduring pains in my side, pulls at my heart, and gripes in my stomach as I endeavored to practice what I have written. Yet the comfort I have received myself in this one necessary matter has compelled me (against the desires of my closest friends) to complete this brief work, even though it took me longer due to my ongoing illness. If, after I am gone, you reap any spiritual benefit from my enduring efforts, it is, next to bringing glory to God, my greatest desire. I care not how soon I might die

as long as I live to save your soul. Indeed, I could be willing (if it pleased God) for the lines you are reading to be written with the warmest blood from my heart. Willing? Yes, I would be willing and glad (even with the little blood left in my body) for it to flow and flow for your spiritual well-being, down to the very last drop in my veins. I say no more; consider what I have said. Unless a person is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God.

Appendix

AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING A MORE
SPECIFIC METHOD FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT
YET BORN AGAIN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
SECOND BIRTH.

Appendix A:

THE OCCASION AND METHOD OF THIS TREATISE.

There are some who, upon hearing the necessity of the new birth (or initial repentance) for salvation, realize that they have never experienced such a change or conversion within themselves. Therefore, they seek further guidance. Though you may be naturally blind, wretched, miserable, poor, and naked, the Lord has not left you without means and help. For this purpose, He has established His ordinances. It is not that man can bring himself to grace on his own, but rather, through the use of the ordinances, the Spirit of Christ can prepare man to receive habitual or sanctifying grace, even without it being present in the heart of man.

Indeed, in the previous treatise, I advised them to be diligent in prayer and in hearing the word. However, they say, "We have done so, yet we do not feel the conversion." It may be so, for it is not always the mere performance of these acts but the perseverance in them through Christ that attains the desired blessing. Yet, if they immediately devote themselves to the work, it is the Lord who says, "Break up your fallow ground" (Jer. 4:3). They should seek the Lord to break their hearts for them. They should

continue using the means, and the Lord may enter and soften their hearts. To provide them with further assurance, I will present a more specific method and, without taking a specific biblical text, allow myself more freedom to guide them in the right direction.

I consider two things necessary for those who desire to partake in the new birth:

To enter into it.

To be delivered from it.

1. The means to enter into it are:

--1. Self-examination.

--2. Confession of sins.

--3. Earnest prayer for the softening of their hearts.

By engaging in these three steps, they will accomplish the following:

-- Recognition of sin.

-- Awareness of divine wrath.

-- Sorrow for sin.

2. The means to be delivered from it is through the application of promises. Each promise, according to its intended purpose, yields various effects, including:

-- Vision of Christ.

-- Longing for Christ.

-- Dependence on Christ.

-- Obedience to Christ.

-- Comfort in Christ, which should not only be sought but also obtained when the promises are correctly applied.

Appendix B:

THE FIRST MEANS TO ENTER INTO THE NEW BIRTH

Section 1: The first means to enter into the new birth.

The means to enter into the new birth is first Examination. The method of examination is to present to individuals the clear mirror of the Law as their guide and source of enlightenment. For this purpose, I have included a Catalogue or Table here to display their offenses. I cannot possibly list all sins, but only their types. If I have omitted any, let awakened consciences bring to mind those not mentioned.

Therefore, whoever you are embarking on this blessed work, examine yourself using this Catalogue. Do it carefully and truthfully. When you find yourself guilty, either make a note in this book or write it on a separate piece of paper, so that they are readily available for your review during confession.

Section 2: Sins against the first Commandment.

In every Commandment, we must consider both the required duties and the forbidden sins, as both are implied in each Commandment. If you are

guilty of any sins related to the first Commandment, answer negatively. If you have fulfilled the duties, answer affirmatively. Now let us proceed.

The first Commandment states, "You shall have no other gods before me."

Regarding the required duties, ask yourself: Firstly, have you ever wholeheartedly acknowledged the true God in Christ as your God, both in your thoughts and desires? Secondly, have you displayed an abundance of the graces that bind you to God, such as a fervent knowledge, love, fear, joy, and trust in God? Thirdly, have you observed and reflected upon God's mercies, promises, works, and judgments towards you, taking particular notice of them? Lastly, have you associated with the godly, joined yourself to God's people, and found your greatest delight in them?

Or for the sins here forbidden, Firstly, have you not at times been guilty of blasphemy, idolatry, witchcraft, atheism, epicureanism, or heresy? Secondly, have you not been guilty of pride, a sin that directly opposes God and was first committed by devils? Thirdly, have you not entertained thoughts that there is no God, or that He does not see or know, or that there is no benefit in His service? Fourthly, have you not failed to love God, fear God, and place your complete trust in God? Fifthly, have you not placed your trust in humans, feared humans, loved the world, thereby turning your heart away from God? Sixthly, have you not sought the assistance of witches or, in the first instance, turned to physicians instead of relying on the living God? Seventhly, have you not tested God and, in matters pertaining to God, been either indifferent, lukewarm, or zealously misguided? Eighthly, do you not have a tendency to sin and even rebel against God in your entire being? Ninthly, have you not been neglectful in fulfilling the inward duties of sincere and truthful worship of God? If you

have transgressed in these matters, then you have broken the commandment "You shall have no gods but me."

Section 3: Sins against the second Commandment.

It is the second Commandment, "You shall not make for yourself any graven image."

Regarding the required duties, ask yourself: Firstly, have you ever worshipped the true God in a pure manner according to His will? Secondly, have you fulfilled all the outward duties of worship, such as prayer, vows, fasting, meditation, and others? Thirdly, have you attended God's house, observed family duties, and received the preachers of the Gospel?

Regarding the sins forbidden, ask yourself: Firstly, have you not at times followed the desires of your own heart, worshipping God out of habit or following the customs of your ancestors, engaged in self-imposed worship and superstitions? Secondly, have you not engaged in idol worship, forming conceptions of God in your mind or attributing to Him the likeness of a creature? Thirdly, have you not mentioned the names of other gods, either through swearing or making excuses? Fourthly, have you not made an image to represent God or shown gestures of love and reverence towards such images? Fifthly, in summary, have you been neglectful in worshipping God, calling upon the Lord, receiving God's ministers, or performing any other outward duties of God's worship? If you have transgressed in any of these matters, then you have broken the commandment "You shall not make for yourself any graven image."

Section 4: Sins against the third Commandment.

It is the third Commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

Regarding the required duties, ask yourself: Firstly, have you been a consistent learner, listener, and doer of God's Word and Will? Secondly, have you prayed with perseverance, understanding, and the power of the Spirit, without doubting or wavering? Thirdly, have you approached the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper with preparation, and upon participating, have you discerned the Lord's body? Fourthly, have you used all the titles, attributes, works, and ordinances of the Lord with knowledge, faith, reverence, joy, and sincerity?

Regarding the sins forbidden, ask yourself: Firstly, have you at times dishonoured the titles, attributes, religion, word, or people of God in your conversations, or shown disrespect towards anything that carries the imprint of His holiness? Secondly, have you sworn falsely or loved false oaths? Thirdly, have you caused the name of religion or the people of God to be discredited through your sinful way of life or by committing gross sins? Fourthly, have you read the Word, listened to sermons, received the Sacraments, or engaged in any other act of worship in a rash, unprepared, or careless manner? Fifthly, have you entertained blasphemous or contemptuous thoughts or speech towards God or anything related to God? If you have transgressed in any of these matters, then you have broken the commandment "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

Section 5: Sins against the fourth Commandment.

It is the fourth Commandment, "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day."

Regarding the required duties, ask yourself: Firstly, have you observed the Lord's day, as well as other days and times set apart for God's service, in accordance with the fairness of this commandment? Secondly, on those days, have you refrained from engaging in the works of sin and instead

rested and relied upon Christ for the forgiveness of sins, leading a holy and devout life in anticipation of entering the eternal rest of heaven? Thirdly, have you always prepared your heart before going to the house of the Lord through meditation on God's Word and Works, examination and correction of your ways, prayer, thanksgiving, and a sincere resolution to conduct yourself in the presence of God and to hear and obey whatever you should learn from the pure Word of God? Fourthly, have you attended the house of God in a timely manner and remained for the entire duration of prayers, readings, preaching of the Word, singing of Psalms, and receiving of the Sacraments? Fifthly, have you engaged in private religious acts on the Lord's day, such as private prayer and thanksgiving, confessing your offenses to God, reconciling with those you have offended or with whom you have conflicts, visiting the sick, comforting the afflicted, contributing to the needs of the poor, and instructing your children, servants, and other family members in the fear and nurture of the Lord?

Regarding the sins forbidden, ask yourself: Firstly, have you at times spent the Lord's day in idleness, worldly business, vanities, or sin? Secondly, have you neglected public duties, arrived late, or left early? Thirdly, have you engaged in buying or selling goods, carrying burdens, gathering sheaves, or working in the fields during those days? Fourthly, have you made use of your animals, servants, children, or anyone else to perform work, even if you yourself did not work? Fifthly, have you profaned the Lord's day through unnecessary work, words, or thoughts related to your occupation or recreation? Sixthly, have you found the strict observance of the duties of that day to be tedious, thinking in your heart, "When will the day be over?" If you have transgressed in any of these

matters, then you have broken the commandment "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day."

Section 6: Sins against the fifth Commandment.

It is the fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and your mother."

Regarding the required duties, they can be divided into three categories: Family, Common-weal (society), and Church.

First, for the Family: If you are a husband:

1. Have you ever loved your wife and treated her with understanding, giving her the respect due to her as the weaker vessel and as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers are not hindered? If you are a wife:
2. Have you submitted to your own husband in everything, as unto the Lord?
3. Have you adorned yourself with a meek and quiet spirit, which is highly valued by God? If you are a parent:
4. Have you brought up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?
5. Have you disciplined them without provoking them through excessive correction?
6. Have you provided for them in their vocation and material needs? If you are a child:
7. Have you obeyed your parents and received correction with submission and reverence?
8. Have you supported them in their needs?
9. Have you heeded their instructions and covered their weaknesses? If you are a master:

10. Have you shown hospitality to God's servants and treated your servants justly and fairly? If you are a servant:
11. Have you been obedient to your earthly master with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as unto Christ? Have you refrained from answering back and from stealing, but instead shown faithful service?

Secondly, for the Common-weal (society): If you are a Magistrate:

1. Have you executed just laws?
2. Have you corrected abuses according to your authority? If you are a Subject:
3. Have you obeyed the higher authorities in all just commands?
4. Have you been subject to them not only out of fear but also for the sake of conscience?

Thirdly, for the Church: If you are a Minister:

1. Have you taught diligently, both in opportune and inopportune times?
2. Have you let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works? If you are a hearer:
3. Have you shared with those who teach you in all good things?
4. Have you obeyed, prayed for, loved, and followed them, considering the outcome of their conduct?

Regarding the sins forbidden, and starting with the Family: If you are a husband:

1. Have you at times mistreated, struck, or harmed your wife in thought, word, or deed? If you are a wife:
2. Have you been wasteful, difficult, or idle? If you are a child:
3. Have you despised your parents' instructions?
4. Have you mocked, disrespected, cursed, struck, shamed, or grieved them? If you are a master:
5. Have you neglected the proper governance of your household?
6. Have you withheld fair and equal treatment in terms of food, wages, and encouragement? If you are a servant:
7. Have you been idle and slothful?
8. Have you served with grumbling rather than wholeheartedness?

Secondly, for the Common-weal (society): If you are a Magistrate:

1. Have you acted as a roaring lion or bear, intimidating and oppressing the poor people?
2. Have you made unjust decrees, showing favoritism to the rich and powerful? If you are a Subject:
3. Have you insulted God or cursed the ruler of your people?
4. Have you disobeyed the higher authorities or refused to pay taxes, customs, honor, or respect to whom they are due?

Thirdly, for the Church: If you are a Minister:

1. Have you lived a profane and wicked life?
2. Have you acted presumptuously without being sent or neglected the gift within you when you were sent?
3. Have you prophesied falsely and led God's people astray?

4. Have you engaged in simony or pursued personal gain, neglecting the welfare of the flock?
5. Have you encouraged evildoers by preaching peace to them?
6. Have you paid more attention to fables or unprofitable matters rather than godly edification based on faith? If you are a hearer:
7. Have you resisted the Minister and the Word preached by them?

Whether you are a husband, wife, parent, child, master, servant, Magistrate, Subject, Minister, or hearer, if you have transgressed in any of these areas, then you have broken the commandment "Honor your father and your mother."

Section 7: Sins against the sixth Commandment.

It is the sixth Commandment, "You shall not murder."

Regarding the required duties: Say, have you ever desired and made efforts, within lawful means, to preserve your own life and the life of your neighbor?

Regarding the sins forbidden:

1. Say, have you not at times envied others for their wealth, gifts, or the respect they receive from others?
2. Have you not offended others through gestures, gnashing your teeth or giving them sharp looks?
3. Have you not offended others through words, by criticizing, reviling, retaliating, or speaking ill of them?
4. Have you not offended others through actions, plotting against the innocent or causing harm to anyone?

5. Have you been angry with your brother without cause or held onto your anger for an extended period, allowing your wrath to endure indefinitely?
6. Have you rejoiced at the misfortune of others or wished curses upon their souls?
7. Have you harmed yourself through excessive fretting, grieving, drinking, indulgence, or expressing thoughts like, "I wish I were dead" in moments of passion?
8. Have you sown discord or in any way been the cause of discomfort or harm to your neighbor's well-being or life?

If you have transgressed in any of these, then you have broken the commandment, "You shall not murder."

Section 8: Sins against the seventh Commandment.

It is the seventh Commandment, "You shall not commit adultery."

Regarding the required duties: Say, have you kept yourself pure in soul and body, both in relation to yourself and others?

Regarding the sins forbidden:

1. Say, have you not been defiled through acts such as sodomy, incest, fornication, adultery, polygamy, self-gratification, or engaging in sexual acts contrary to nature?
2. Have you not sinned in situations that lead to impurity, such as idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, immoral company, provocative clothing, or the use of perfumes for seductive purposes?
3. Have you not sinned through your senses, gestures, or words, by engaging in filthy and inappropriate conversations?

4. Have you not harbored burning lusts, impure thoughts, or excessive and improper affections in your heart?
5. Have you not conducted yourself immodestly, intemperately, or shamelessly, by misusing your body or engaging in flirtatious and indecent behavior?

If you have transgressed in any of these, then you have broken the commandment, "You shall not commit adultery."

Section 9: Sins against the eighth Commandment.

It is the eighth Commandment, "You shall not steal."

Regarding the required duties: Say, have you ever, through all proper means, worked towards improving your own and your neighbor's material well-being?

Regarding the sins forbidden:

1. Say: First, have you not at times earned a living through an unlawful occupation?
2. Secondly, have you not impoverished yourself through idleness, luxurious living, or unnecessary expenses?
3. Thirdly, have you not withheld from yourself or others what should have been shared?
4. Fourthly, have you not obtained or kept your neighbor's belongings through falsehood or force, without making restitution?
5. Fifthly, have you not engaged in theft through usury, oppression, or fraudulent practices in buying or selling, actions abhorrent to the Lord?
6. Sixthly, have you not robbed God of tithes and offerings through sacrilege or simony?

7. Seventhly, have you not in any way harmed your neighbor's well-being? If you have transgressed in any of these, then you have broken this Commandment, "You shall not steal."

Section 10: Sins against the ninth Commandment.

It is the ninth Commandment, "You shall not bear false witness."

Regarding the required duties:

Say, have you always sought, through all means, to uphold your own and your neighbor's good reputation based on truth and a clear conscience?

Regarding the sins forbidden:

1. Say, First, have you not at times loved or spoken lies?
2. Secondly, have you not spread false reports that defamed others?
3. Thirdly, have you not criticized or judged others without considering the faults in your own life?
4. Fourthly, have you not flattered yourself or others, proclaiming the wicked as righteous?
5. Fifthly, have you not condemned others without evidence or refrained from testifying for others when you knew the truth?
6. Sixthly, have you not been uncharitably suspicious or shown contempt for your neighbor?
7. Seventhly, have you not told lies, whether in jest, out of a sense of duty, or with malicious intent? If you have transgressed in any of these, then you have broken this Commandment, "You shall not bear false witness."

Section 11: Sins against the last Commandment.

It is the last Commandment, "You shall not covet."

Regarding the required duties: Say, first, have you ever been truly content with your own outward condition? Secondly, have you rejoiced at the good of others and loved your neighbor as yourself?

Regarding the sins forbidden:

1. Say, first, have you not at times conceived evil thoughts in your heart?
2. Secondly, have you not taken pleasure in dwelling on sinful contemplations?
3. Thirdly, have you not been filled with discontentment regarding your own condition and state?
4. Fourthly, have you not experienced a conflict within yourself between the desires of your flesh and the desires of your mind?
5. Fifthly, have you not coveted something that belonged to your neighbor, either in will or through actual desire? If you have transgressed in any of these, then you have broken this Commandment, "You shall not covet."

Appendix C

THE SECOND MEANS TO GET INTO THE NEW BIRTH.

After examination (which can serve as one or two days' work), the next duty is Confession. Now, take the Catalogue of those sins (or if your awakened conscience can remind you of any other sins) that you know you have committed and noted, either in this book or on some other paper. Kneeling on your knees, spread your Catalogue before the Lord, I say, spread your Catalogue before the Lord, just as Hezekiah spread his letter. Read it seriously and specifically, saying, "O Lord, I confess I have committed this sin, and the other sin [as they are listed before you in order]. I am guilty of all these sins, especially those sins in which I took pleasure, my darlings, my favorites, my most cherished sins [take note of them and confess them again]. I am guilty of all these sins. And now, O Lord, standing as if before the judgment seat, I accuse myself, judge myself, and declare myself deserving of your utmost wrath and indignation. For one sin, you cast Adam out of paradise. For one sin, you cast the angels out of heaven. For one sin, you destroyed a world of people. What then will become of me, who have committed a multitude of sins? [Pause for a while

and reflect on your unworthiness.] Oh, how foolish, how brutish, how insane I have been to commit these sins, these numerous sins! Oh, by these sins, I have broken such a holy law and provoked such a good and great Majesty! What shall I do but remember my evil ways and despise myself in my own eyes (yes, abhor myself in dust and ashes) for my iniquities and abominations?... [Continue meditating on your unworthiness.] For the conclusion, you may imitate the tax collector who, not daring to lift up his eyes, struck his chest. Do the same, and sigh, and say with him, 'O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.'"

Appendix D:

THE THIRD MEANS TO GET INTO THE NEW BIRTH.

After Confession (which can serve as another day's work), the next duty you must strive for is to seek true sorrow and mourning for your sins. You must seek and never cease seeking until you feel your heart melting within you. For this purpose, read some texts about death, judgment, hell, Christ's passion, and the joys of heaven. Lastly (and I consider it the best of all), resolve to set aside some time every day to ask for it from the Lord. When Daniel set himself to pray, the Lord came to him (Daniel 9:3). When Peter went apart to pray, and when Paul prayed in the Temple, then the Lord came to them (Acts 10:6 and 22:17). And why should I not urge you to pray, just as Peter told Simon Magus, even when he was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity (Acts 8:22-23)? At the appointed time, fall down on your knees, spread your Catalogue, confess, accuse, judge, and condemn yourself again. After doing this, beg, beg the Lord to give you that soft heart He promised in Ezekiel 36:26: "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Say to

yourself, "Is this the Lord's promise? O Lord, fulfill it in my heart. Take away my stony heart, give me a heart of flesh, a new heart, a new spirit," etc. [Here, offer your own prayer; don't worry about the words, as long as they reflect the true voice of your heart.] And to further soften your heart, you may sob, sigh, and beat your breast. Above all, you must pray, call, and cry out with intense and fervent prayers that cannot be expressed in words. When you have finished, if the Lord has not yet heard you, pray again the next day, and the next day. Indeed, make the resolution never to stop praying until the Lord hears you in His mercy, until He makes your heart melt within you, and, if possible, until you see tears streaming down your cheeks because of your offenses. Perhaps the Lord will hear you the first or second time, but if He does not, persevere. Your request is just, and persistence will prevail. I can say that your resolute desire to sorrow is itself a degree of godly sorrow, and no doubt the Lord will increase it if you earnestly beg for it for a while.

Section 2: The first reason for this sorrow.

This must be done first because without pangs, there can be no birth. "What are the pains of one in childbirth but the pains of one repenting?" (as Saint Augustine says). The pangs of a penitent person are like the pangs of a woman. Just as there can be no birth without the pains of labour preceding it, true repentance also requires some terrors of the law and distress of conscience. "You have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear," says the Apostle to the Romans. And what does that mean? It means to show us that they had once received it. When did they receive it? It was in the very initial stage of their conversion, when the Spirit of God in the law bore witness to their bondage in such a way that it made them fear. Certainly, it is the same with every person in their initial conversion. Their

contrition must be piercing and intense, bruising, breaking, and rending the heart, experiencing the pains (like a woman in labor) before there can be a new birth or the new creature be brought forth.

Section 3: The second reason for this sorrow.

Again, without contrition, there is no Christ. Therefore, it was that God first opened the eyes of our first parents to make them see and be aware of their sin and misery (Genesis 3:7) before He promised Christ (verse 15). That's why John the Baptist (as Chrysostom says) first thoroughly frightened his listeners with the terror of judgment and the expectation of torment. He used the image of an axe and spoke about their rejection and the arrival of other children. By doubling the punishment, namely being hewn down and cast into the fire, he tamed and humbled their stubbornness. Only then did he mention Christ. Musculus says that Christ is seasonably revealed when the hearts of people, deeply pierced by preaching repentance, are filled with a desire for His gracious righteousness. Calvin also affirms that Christ is promised to those who are humbled and confounded by the sense of their own sins. Considering our miserable state without Christ is the first thing that leads us to Him. No one will come to Christ unless they are hungry. No one will take Christ's yoke upon them until they come to know and feel the weight of Satan's yoke. Therefore, every person must be broken by threats, scourges, and lashes of conscience so that, despairing of themselves, they may flee to Christ.

Section 4: The third reason for this sorrow.

Again, without heartfelt sorrow, there is no spiritual comfort. We must first be humbled before the Lord, and then He will lift us up. Christ was indeed anointed to preach good tidings, but to whom? To the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, those who are bound, and the bruised (Isaiah

61:11). God pours His mercy into a broken vessel. God never brings thorough comfort unless He finds humiliation and repentance for sin. The word of God has three degrees of operation in the hearts of His chosen. First, it falls on people's ears like the sound of many waters—a mighty, great, and confused sound. It often brings neither terror nor joy, but it causes wonder and acknowledgment of its strange force and power beyond human capacity. This effect was experienced by many who heard Christ and were astonished at His authoritative teaching, saying, "What kind of doctrine is this? No one has ever spoken like this man." The next effect is the voice of thunder, which not only evokes wonder but also fear. It fills the ears with sound and the heart with astonishment, but it also shakes and terrifies the conscience. The third effect is the sound of harping, when the word not only captivates with admiration and strikes the conscience with terror but also fills it with sweet peace and joy. Although the first two degrees can exist without the last, none experience the last without having to some degree experienced the first two. It is true that the deeper the sense of misery, the sweeter the sense of mercy. In our state of dead security before conversion, God allows the law, sin, conscience, Satan, and a deep sense of our abominable and cursed state to be unleashed upon us. He kindles the very fire of hell in our souls to awaken us and later raise and refresh us more sweetly and soundly. For after the most toilsome labor comes the sweetest sleep, and after the greatest storms come the calmest seas. Sanctified troubles and terrors establish the firmest peace, and the shaking of these winds allows the trees of God's Eden to take better root.

Appendix E:

THE MEANS TO BE DELIVERED OUT OF THE PANGS OF THE NEW BIRTH

Section 1: The means to be delivered out of the pangs of the new birth.

And now, if (by God's blessing) you feel this sorrow and melting of heart, the next thing you must do is to seek the remedy, which consists of these ingredients: First, a sight of Christ; secondly, a desire after Christ; thirdly, a reliance on Christ; fourthly, an obedience to Christ; fifthly, a sought-for and obtained comfort in Christ. You may say that these ingredients are indeed valuable, but how can I obtain them? I answer, through the application of promises. And since each ingredient has its particular promises, I will show them to you in order. However, you must apply them yourself. It is enough for the physician to prepare the medicine; your own body must receive it. So it is with this remedy. You must apply it if you want the health of your soul.

Section 2: The promises procuring a sight of Christ.

The first step or ingredient that brings comfort to your heavy soul is the sight of Christ. To procure this sight, you have these promises:

- Matthew 1:21 - "You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."
- Luke 2:10, 11 - "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all people, that is, that unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."
- John 1:29 - "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."
- John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
- John 3:17 - "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."
- Romans 3:25 - "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."
- 1 Corinthians 1:30 - "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."
- 1 Timothy 1:15 - "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."
- Hebrews 13:12 - "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."
- 1 John 2:1, 2 - "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

- Revelation 5:8 - "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

All these promises tell you that as you are a sinner, you also have a Savior. You only need to apply them, and they will certainly procure

Section 3: The promises procuring a desire after Christ.

You may say, "I see Christ, and I see that His person, death, and shedding of blood are precious and saving. But how can I make Him mine? How can I know that He is my Savior?" I answer, you must hunger and thirst after Him. This desire is the second step. To encourage you in this duty, consider these promises:

- Isaiah 55:1 - "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."
- Matthew 5:6 - "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."
- John 7:37-38 - "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'"
- Revelation 21:6 - "And he said unto me, 'It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.'"

- Revelation 22:17 - "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let him that heareth say, 'Come.' And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."
- Psalm 63:1 - "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."
- Psalm 145:19 - "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him."

All these promises may provoke you to thirst after Christ, that most sovereign and soul-saving fountain, opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1).

Section 4: The promises procuring a relying on Christ.

Yet you may say, "I thirst indeed, but I dare not drink. I desire, but I dare not come near to lay hold on Christ. How so? I am (you say) a most vile, unworthy, wicked wretch, and my sins are of a scarlet, crimson dye." It is true; for you to pretend to have a part in Christ while still wallowing in your sins, for you to believe that Christ is your righteousness while intending to continue practicing or allowing any known sin, would be a most cursed and horrible presumption. However, when all sin burdens you, every promise shines like gold, and your heart is sincere in seeking a new way, there you can be bold. You not only can, but you must. If you groan under sin, if you long for Christ, apply these promises, and they will compel you to lay hold of the Rock, to take Christ as your own, to throw your sinful soul upon the bleeding wounds of Jesus, and to cast yourself with confidence into the bosom of His love.

First, take note that Jesus Christ keeps an open house for all hungry and thirsty souls.

- Revelation 22:17 - "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Or if the concept of an open house doesn't fit without an invitation, listen to His call:
- Matthew 11:28 - "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Or if an invitation doesn't seem fitting without a proclamation, hear His proclamation:
- John 7:37 - "Jesus stood and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of water.'" And lest you think that you must come at a cost and bring something in your hand, hear how He doubles and triples His cry to the contrary:
- Isaiah 55:1 - "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." And yet, if you say, "I am so far from bringing anything in my hand, that I carry a world of wickedness in my heart, and I fear my sins will hinder my acceptance," no (He says again),
- Isaiah 55:7 - "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And if all this doesn't work without a more solemn invitation, then see how the Lord of heaven sends forth His ambassadors to move and entreat you to come in:
- 2 Corinthians 5:20 - "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be

ye reconciled to God." Or if He cannot woo you, behold, He commands you:

- 1 John 3:23 - "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And yet, to drive you to Christ, He not only commands but also threatens:
- Hebrews 3:18 - "And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?"

And what more can He do for His vineyard? Firstly (to welcome you), He keeps an open house; secondly, He invites; thirdly, He proclaims; fourthly, He calls you without cost, without money or anything of value; fifthly, He apologizes; sixthly, He sends; seventhly, He commands; eighthly, He threatens. Listen to what my author concludes from these premises: How cruel then is that person to their own wounded conscience who, in their extreme spiritual thirst, will not be drawn by this eightfold merciful cord to drink their fill from the fountain of the water of life, to cast themselves with confidence and comfort into the arms of the Lord Jesus? Indeed, how is it possible that all or some of these promises should not bring every broken heart to believe and everyone weary of their sins to rely on the Lord of life for everlasting welfare?

Section 5: The promises procuring obedience to Christ.

Yet you may say, "I have cast myself on Christ, is this all I must do?" No, there is yet another step. He is not only to be your Savior but your husband. You must love Him, serve Him, honor Him, and obey Him. You must strive not only for the forgiveness of sin and salvation from hell but also for purity, new obedience, and the ability to do or suffer anything for Christ. To motivate you in this duty, consider these texts:

- Matthew 7:21 - "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."
- Matthew 11:29 - "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."
- Matthew 16:24 - "If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."
- 2 Corinthians 5:15 - "He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."
- 1 John 1:6-7 - "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."
- 1 John 2:5-6 - "But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."
- 1 John 3:6, 9 - "Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God."

- 1 John 3:24 - "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."
- 1 John 5:18 - "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him."

All these may invite you to enter the path of holiness and to fight under Christ's banner against the world, the flesh, and the Devil until the end of your life.

Section 6: The promises procuring comfort in Christ.

Once more, you may say, "I have been truly humbled with the sense of sin, and sense of misery, and sorrow for sin. Yes, I have seen, and thirsted, and relied, and purposed universal obedience to my Savior, and yet no comfort comes." It may be so, but have you praised God for this wondrous work, the new birth wrought in you? If so, then there is another duty expected from you, one that is precious and pleasing to God, and that is waiting. Yet, I would suggest that you turn your attention to these precious promises, settle your soul on them through fixed meditation and fervent prayer. Where you perceive the condition of the promises being formed in you by God's grace, you may safely assure your soul of the favor expressly contained in the promises.

- Leviticus 26:40-42, 44 - "If they confess their iniquity... If their uncircumcised hearts are humbled... Then I will remember My covenant... that I may be their God; I am the Lord." The condition is to confess and be humbled. If you do this, the covenant is sure, and the Lord is your God.

- Job 33:27-28 - "He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. If any say, 'I have sinned and perverted what is right, and it did not profit me.'" The condition is, if any say, "I have sinned." If your heart says this sincerely and truthfully, the promise is sure. God will deliver your soul from hell, and you will see the light of heaven.
- Psalm 51:17 - "A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." The condition is a broken and contrite heart for sin. If your heart is in this state, be assured that God will not despise it.
- Proverbs 28:13 - "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins will obtain mercy." The condition is to confess and forsake sin. If you do this, as surely as God is God, you will receive mercy.
- Isaiah 57:15 - "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite." The condition is to be of a contrite and humble spirit. If you are in this state, it is true that God dwells in you to revive your spirit and heart.
- Isaiah 61:1 - "The Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted." The condition is to be meek and brokenhearted. If this is your case, then good news belongs to you, and Christ is sent to bind up your broken heart with the bundle of peace.
- Jeremiah 31:19-20 - "After I turned, I repented; and after I was instructed, I struck my thigh; I was ashamed, and I was confounded, because I bore the disgrace of my youth... Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the Lord." The condition is to repent, be ashamed, and confounded for sin. If

your case is like Ephraim's, God is the same to you. His heart yearns for you, and He will surely have mercy on you.

- Matthew 5:6 - "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." The condition is to hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Christ. If you do this, then you are blessed according to the words of our Savior.
- Matthew 11:28 - "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The condition is to labor and be burdened with sin. If you are in this state, the Word of God is sure. You will have spiritual and eternal rest.
- Revelation 21:6 - "To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment." The condition is to thirst after the heavenly streams of God's favor and Christ's sovereign blood. If you do this, then you have a share in the fountain of the water of life that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Revelation 22:1).

All these promises are so full of comfort that if you just squeeze them with the hand of faith, they cannot help but yield some sweetness to your afflicted soul.

Section 7: The means to apply the said promises.

I mentioned earlier that it is enough for me to prepare the medicine, but you must apply it. However, if you feel reluctant to perform your part, I will tell you about some means to encourage and assist you in carrying out this duty.

Take the promises and bring them into the presence of the Lord, just as you brought the Catalogue of your sins. Kneel down and implore God, for the sake of your Savior, to incline your heart to believe those promises. If you face resistance, pray again and again. In fact, make a resolution never

to cease praying until the Lord grants you some sense of the life within those promises. Someone may object, saying they have no heart or spirit to pray, but still make the effort. In your efforts, God may come in. And whenever you feel any of those promises to be spirit and life to you, whenever you experience (through a certain taste) the joys of the Holy Spirit descending upon you, oh, fortunate person that you are to have been born! Then you are truly and undoubtedly born anew, as you yourself can attest. Then you have undoubtedly accomplished this most glorious exercise of going through the new birth. And then you have every reason (as you cannot help it) to sing and praise God day and night, forever and ever. So true are the words of Christ, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Amen.

Section 8: The Conclusion.

Here we come to an end, and to you, to whom I have dedicated this work, my conclusion is this: The year has now completed its cycle since I first came among you, and you know best how the Lord has worked through me. As for me, if I knew that just one poor soul among you has truly been converted by such a weak and unworthy instrument, I would consider myself most fortunate for that soul and richly rewarded for my efforts. I know that neither Paul nor Apollo can do this unless God brings about the increase. Nevertheless, I must tell you, as Paul did, that my desire has been for this, ever since I arrived among you and departed, that Christ may be formed in you. And what is the outcome? Could the Lord say, "Shall I bring to the point of delivery and not bring forth?" And to engage with you, have I laboured over you in childbirth and not one of you brought forth? May the Lord forbid. I confess, beloved, that I have received many acts of kindness and love from you. Now, for the Lord's sake, do me this one more kindness:

give me at least one soul among you, that I may present it to God. Oh, what a kindness you would then do for me! All the wealth in your town, all the increase of your status, everything you have or will ever have, would not bring me as much joy on the day of my Lord Jesus as this one request I make. Then I could say, "Lord, I have not lost the fruits of my labor in this town. Look, here is the soul shining in glory, which I converted by your power. Look, here are the souls of so-and-so, who, through your grace and my ministry, were converted to you." If this were the case, then, beloved, you would bless me forever, and I would bless you forever, and together we would bless God forever for this gracious and blessed work. Now may the Lord in His goodness grant you a sight of your sins and a true sorrow for sin. And if not before now, then on this day, may the Lord set His mark and seal upon you.

Time is passing, and I have only a moment, a little time to speak to you. As a farewell, may these last words make a deeper impression on your hearts: If you were to do all that I would have you do, I could wish for nothing more than that, in addition to this humility or repentance, you would also add charity or love. The first you owe to God, and the second to your neighbor. Through the first, you could become new creatures, and through the second, true Christians, like those in the infancy of the Church, of one mind, one heart, and one soul. It is certain that we cannot have forgiveness of sins without being in communion with the saints. It is a great pity to hear about the many divisions in our Church, kingdoms, towns, and families. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper who love it. And let us also pray (for we are in need of it) for our own peace with one another. When you come to the Communion, you hear this lesson in the invitation: "You that truly and earnestly repent of your sins and are in

love and charity with your neighbors." Here we have both repentance towards God and charity (nay, even more than charity as we commonly use the word), which is love for your neighbors. As for me, I wish that my very heart's blood could mend the divisions of Reuben (which cause great concern) in this town, in this church, and in these kingdoms. I will say no more, but conclude with the words of the Apostle: "Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Aim for perfection, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and may the God of love and peace be with you forever and ever."

FINIS.