

THE EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION

LUTHERAN AND REFORMED.

BY

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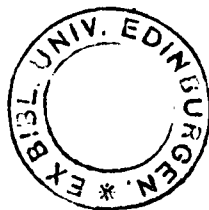
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I.

"Take, read..."

...from a neighbouring house I heard a voice as of a boy or of a girl, I know not, singing and oft repeating, "Take, read: take, read"... I seized, opened and in silence read the passage, upon which my eyes first fell: "Not in drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof". (Rom.13.14.) No further would I read: nor was there need: for instantly at the end of this sentence: as though my heart were flooded with a light of peace: all the shadows of doubt melted away."
The Confessions of St. Augustine VIII.12

The voice which St. Augustine heard in the garden and the light which flooded his heart, penetrated to him from without. This was not "the voice of conscience" nor "the inner light" but he perceived the voice distinctly as that of a young person, either boy or girl, and could even indicate the direction whence it came. The "light of peace" by which "all the shadows of doubt melted away" was it not the same light that "hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? (1) This light had no other source than the Word of God, for the book which Augustine took up and read was Holy Scripture.

In religious conversion man has the experience of God's power calling him and drawing him by the influence of His Holy Spirit and through the medium of His Word. In representing the doctrine of conversion, we must rely on the Word and the Spirit of God. It is impossible to find a psychological

(1) II Cor. 4.6

explanation of this doctrine, because psychology cannot take account of the source and the purpose of the new birth. The eminent Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung admitted that the science of psychology is incapable of interpreting religious conversion. "The dogma" he writes⁽²⁾ "represents the soul more completely than a scientific theory, for the latter expresses and formulates the conscious mind alone. Furthermore, a theory can do nothing but formulate a living thing by abstract notions. The dogma, on the contrary, expresses aptly the living process of the unconscious in the form of the drama of repentance, sacrifice and redemption."

The drama of conversion has been represented in various forms on the stage of Christendom, sometimes as a grand pantomime, in which the scene is magnificently set, but the dramatis personae remain dumb, and sometimes as extempore acting with little regard to the creative work of the playwright. The Augustinian representation of the conversion drama avoids both the pantomimic, objectified performance of mere sacramentalism and the ex-tempore "testimonies" of purely subjective conversion experiences in which the human actor stands in the limelight, but the author remains in the background.

The Augustinian drama remains faithful to the author's "Vrit" while realising at the same time that the dramatis personae are human beings of flesh and blood. The Augustinian

(2) Carl Gustav Jung, Psychology and Religion, New Haven 1938, p. 57.

doctrine of conversion includes both Lutheran and Reformed theology. Variations and differences of opinion cut across both schools of theology, but there is agreement between Lutherans and Calvinists on the fundamental principles of conversion. Following the definition of Charles Hodge (3) "the common doctrine of Protestants, i.e. of Lutherans and Reformed", is in this thesis called "The Evangelical Doctrine of Conversion".

Many who sincerely believe in the need of a new birth and claim for themselves that they are converted (whether rightly or wrongly, God may judge) are suspicious of any doctrine. To them dogma is a dead thing compared with the living experience of one who has surrendered to the Lord. But the "Evangelical doctrine of conversion" is the living experience of the whole Church. "Doctrine is not an affair of the tongue, but of the life....To doctrine in which our religion is contained we have given the first place, since by it our salvation commences, but it must be transfused into the breast, and pass into conduct, and so transform us into itself, as not to prove unfruitful". (4)

This doctrine is based on the Word of Holy Scripture. The convert who is led to the study of God's Word, who has heard the call "Take, read", discovers with amazement that his experience is not the private affair of his own spiritual life, but it is foretold, analyzed and interpreted in the

(3) Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, London and Edinburgh, 1880 Vol.III, p.29f.

(4) John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1559, various translations, III.VI.4.

Bible, for "the Bible is the drama of the conversion of the world, of the turning, or rather the return of man to God."⁽⁵⁾ But the term "conversion" is not frequently used. John Wesley who preached again and again on the New Birth admitted that he rarely used the word "conversion" at all, "because it rarely occurs in the New Testament."⁽⁶⁾ But the thread of the history of conversion runs through the whole Bible from the days of the Patriarchs to those of the apostles. We see Enoch walking with God⁽⁷⁾, Noah separating himself from the doomed world⁽⁸⁾, Abraham turning from a land full of idolatry and following the Lord into a land which was unknown to him. Jacob sees the heavens open⁽⁹⁾, Moses stands in the presence of God⁽¹⁰⁾, Joshua dedicates himself and his house to the service of the Lord⁽¹¹⁾, Ruth cleaves to her mother-in-law and to her God⁽¹²⁾ and the child Samuel hears the voice in the temple.⁽¹³⁾ The call to conversion is addressed to those whom God has chosen, but the responsibility for other lives is also laid upon God's elect. The prophets are converted not merely for their own sake, but for the sake of those to whom they were sent. God

(5) James Strahan, article in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Edinburgh 1911, Vol. IV. p. 105.

(6) John Wesley, Complete Works, 3rd ed. London 1829-1831 Vol. IX p. 8

(7) Gen. 5.24

(8) Gen. 7.7

(9) Gen. 28.12

(10) Ex. 3.2

(11) Josh. 24.15.

(12) Ruth. 1.16

(13) I Sam 3.4

impresses upon his prophet Ezekiel his responsibility as a watchman⁽¹⁴⁾ and our Lord establishes once for all the link between conversion and missionary challenge in his commission to Peter: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren". In the whole of Biblical history there is not a single example of a man who finds God by seeking Him before he is called. But God finds those whom He has called. The first reaction of man is in many cases resistance against God's call. "I am a man of unclean lips"⁽¹⁵⁾. "I am a child"⁽¹⁶⁾ or "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man"⁽¹⁷⁾. The resistance of man against God's call may even take the form of violence and yet "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks"⁽¹⁸⁾. But the struggle is unequal, the elect must submit to the will of God, and when he is converted he accepts his commission gladly with words like "Here am I, send me"⁽¹⁹⁾ or "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do"⁽²⁰⁾.

Men may meditate on the stories of those who were converted and the echo of God's words, spoken to the prophets or

(14) Ezek. 33.7

(15) Is. 6.5.

(16) Jer. 1.6.

(17) Luke 5.8

(18) Acts 9.5.

(19) Is. 6.8

(20) Acts 9.6

apostles, makes their hearts sing. The New Testament itself contains the example of a stranger who was converted while pondering over a Scripture sentence (21). St. Augustine confesses that his experience was similar to that of St. Anthony who was struck by our Lord's words: "Go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow me". (22) Anthony took the place of the rich young man, forsook his possessions and followed the Master. Luther was called into his new life by the watchword "The just shall live by faith"(23). Pascal's heart was turned not by philosophical speculations but by the message which came to him from the 17th chapter of St. John. On Monday, the 23rd of November, between half past ten and half past twelve at night, Pascal wrote down these remarkable sentences..."He is to be found only by the ways taught in the Gospel..."Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee". Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.."(24) The list of Biblical texts which were instrumental in the conversion of Christian men and women are endless. Wesley may be quoted whose heart was strangely warmed after a meeting in which Luther's Preface to the "Epistle to the Romans" was read. Thomas Chalmers' awakening is thus

(21) Acts 8.32 f.

(22) Mt. 19.21

(23) Hab. 2.4

(24) Emil Cailliet, Clue to Pascal, London 1944, p.48

described in his journal "The verse, Acts 26.18, has struck me this night as a compendious expression of Christianity - the object of which is to give forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Jesus". (25)

The eyes of numberless Christian men and women were opened when they first read the third chapter of St. John or listened to a sermon on texts like "Ye must be born again" and "For God so loved the world..."

The doctrine of conversion is concerned with man's entry into new life. This doctrine is not only founded on Biblical revelation, but the Word of God is the door by which man enters into the newness of life. This doctrine unfolds the beginning and the end of our life in Christ. The life in Christ is not mere enthusiasm, it is not personal experience existing independently - as it were - of Biblical revelation, but the experience of communion with the God-Man as revealed in Scripture. One way of explaining this intimate relationship is to assume that the man who is born again enters fully into the - historical - life of Israel, of Christ and of His Church through Scripture Revelation.

This view is taken by Karl Barth in his "Doctrine of the Word of God":

"H.F. Kohlbrugge on being asked when he was converted is supposed to have given the laconic reply: "on Golgatha".

(25) Hugh Watt, Thomas Chalmers and the Disruption, Edinburgh 1943, p.37

This reply was in its principal essence by no means the sophisticated answer which a non-convert would give in his embarrassment, but the only possible and very humble answer of a real convert. The events of faith in our own life can be nothing else indeed but the birth, the suffering and death, the ascension and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the exodus of Israel from Egypt, their pilgrimage through the wilderness, their entry into the land of Canaan, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and the mission of the apostles to the heathen. Every verse in the Bible is virtually a concrete event of faith in my own life... Have I to record anything about myself, which I cannot infinitely better record if I appropriate the simplest part of the testimony of the Old or New Testament? Have I experienced anything more important, more decisive, more serious, more up-to-date than that I was personally present and participating in Israel's passage through the Red Sea, but also at the worship of the golden calf, at the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan, but also at the denial of Peter and at the betrayal of Judas so that all this has happened to me here this day?...What then remains of the bold assertion by which I claim first these or those turning points and high spots and then gradually my whole life as a sort of second "Heilsgeschichte"? (26)

But Dr. Barth's beautiful figure of our participating

(26) Karl Barth, Kirchliche Dogmatik, Zollikon 1938
Vol. I.2 p.795

in the historic events of Biblical history, would not be more than a figure unless we also believed that the reading of the Bible itself is a sacrament of regeneration.

A different way of interpreting the new life in its relationship to Biblical revelation is by tracing it to an extension of Christ's own life. As adopted children of God we do not live the life of Christ over again; rather the life of Christ is extended to the believing members of His Church on earth. This was in the mind of Luther when he described the new man. "Such is the man by whom God both speaks and performs what He has spoken. His tongue is God's tongue, his hand is God's hand and his word is no longer the word of man, but the Word of God". (27)

This idea of the "extension" of God's personality is found both in the Old and in the New Testament. It has recently been pointed out that in the Old Testament "human personality is thought of as being both singular and plural at the same time. The soul of a whole family or kin-group, such as the inhabitants of a city or all Israel, is spoken of again and again in the singular. In the same way the angels, God's messengers, were envisaged one - in some family sense - with the Being of God, going on their journeys for Him, they were extensions of God's personality". (28)

We can find the same line of thought in the "Letters to the Seven Churches" (Rev. 2 and 3) where the promise made "to him that overcometh" (3.12) is extended to the community of

(27) Martin Luther, Werke, Erlanger Ausgabe Vol. VII p.170

(28) George Knight, For Jews only - about Christians, Proof Copy, Edinburgh 1945 p.42f.

the faithful in Philadelphia, as represented by its angel. Two alternatives may then be offered as explanations of the conversion phenomenon:

1. The convert lives the life of Christ and of His people over again.

2. The individual conversion experience is the extension of the promises, trials and triumph of Christ to those whom God has chosen.

In the first case the doctrine of conversion would be part of the doctrine of the Word of God and would barely need a separate treatment in theology. In the second case the doctrine of conversion may reveal to us the mystery of the New Birth by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Among Evangelical theologians there is common consent as to the cause and the principal issue of conversion, but different theologians lay stress on different aspects of the New Birth. Luther in his great emphasis on faith declares "Faith (itself) is the renewal" (Der Glaube ist die Verneuerung) (29). Calvin identifies conversion with repentance. "Wherefore it seems to me that repentance may be not inappropriately defined thus: A real conversion of our life unto God, proceeding from a sincere and serious fear of God and consisting in the mortification of our flesh and the old man, and the quickening of the Spirit". (30)

(29) Erlanger Ausgabe VII p.170

(30) Institutes III.III.5

Melanchthon sees foremost in conversion the bending of the will. "Fiducia est motus in voluntate" (31)

The Formula of Concord which is one of the most important sources for the Lutheran doctrine of regeneration, defines conversion as "a change through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the intellect, will and heart of man of a kind by which man (through the operation of the Holy Spirit, of course) can apprehend the grace that is offered to him" (32). The Scots Confession mainly stresses that the agent of conversion is the Holy Spirit. "And so as we confess, that God the Father created us, when we were not, as his Sonne our Lord Jesus redeemed us, when we were enemies to him: so also do we confesse that the holy Ghost doth sanctifie and regenerate us, without all respect of any merite proceeding from us, be it before, or be it after our Regeneration. To speak this ane thing in mair plaine words: As we willingly spoyle our selves of all honour and gloir of our awin Creation and Redemption, so do we also of our Regeneration and Sanctification, for of our selves we are not sufficient to think one gude thocht, bot he quha hes begun the wark in us, is onlie he that continewis us in the same, to the praise and glorie of his undeserved grace." (33)

(31) Philip Melanchthon, Loci 1543 XXI 741, quoted from E.F. Fischer, Melanchthon's Lehre von der Bekehrung, Tuebingen 1905, p. 121

(32) Formula of Concord, II/II.83, quoted from Mueller, Symbol. Buecher der evangelischen Kirche p.608

(33) Scots Confession Art. XII

The Westminster Standards use neither the term conversion nor regeneration (though both the noun and the verb "regenerate" occur several times) but substitute them by "effectual calling". The definition of effectual calling in the Larger Catechism contains all the elements of conversion doctrine. "Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace, whereby (out of his free and special love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto) he doth, in accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ, by his word and Spirit: savingly enlightning their minds, renewing and powerfully determining their wills, so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein". (34)

For the sake of its brevity the statement of the Dutch divine Hermann Witsius is impressive. "Regeneration is that supernatural act of God whereby a new and divine life is infused into the elect person, spiritually dead, and that from the incorruptible seed of the word of God, made fruitful by the infinite power of the Spirit". (35)

In outlining the doctrine of conversion, we are confronted with the problem that the terms "Conversion", "Regeneration", "New Birth", "Effectual Calling" etc., are often used interchangeably while sometimes distinctions

(34) Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 67.

(35) Hermann Witsius, The Economy of the Covenants between God and man, London 1857 p.322

are drawn between these different terms. "This change is sometimes called regeneration, when that word is taken in its most limited sense, as distinguished from conversion: and in that case, regeneration means the first implantation of spiritual life, - the process of vivification or making alive - while conversion describes the process by which men, now quickened and renewed - no longer passive, but active - do willingly turn to God, and embrace Jesus Christ as all their salvation and all their desire: and the whole is comprehended under the designation of effectual calling, which includes the whole work of the Spirit, in applying to men the blessings which Christ purchased, and in effecting that important change in their condition and character which is, in every instance, indispensable to salvation". (36)

The doctrine of conversion is in the following pages treated in its wider sense as the new life with its generation in heaven, its beginning on earth, its growth, its trials and its fulfilment in the life everlasting. "...It is all one" wrote David Dickson (37) "whether (a man) be born again, or be effectually called, or endued with saving faith, or be a justified man or be reconciled to God, or be an adopted child... he is any of these... he is all of these".

(36) William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Edinburgh 1870, Vol.II, p.411

(37) David Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra*, Edinburgh 1697, p.302

II

In Scripture conversion is spoken of in two different ways, as man's return to God and as God's turning of man to him. Theologians of various schools of thought are sometimes tempted to prefer those proof texts which suit their doctrine and to suppress the others which seem to support a different point of view. A superficial critic may simply state that the Bible contradicts itself and therefore deny its authority altogether. But evangelical doctrine as a whole has tried to interpret the Biblical references to conversion as stating the same thing from different angles. At the end of the war we may read in the newspapers reports like this: "The liberated prisoners were flown to their native land": the P.O.W.s would say: "We flew home a week after our liberation". In the same way the prophet puts these words in the mouth of Ephraim who repents his sins: "Bring me back (and) let me return" (38). The first half of the sentence is transitive and the second half intransitive. Johann Musaeus, the Lutheran divine who represents a moderate orthodoxy, begins his his voluminous work on conversion (39) with the definition of transitive and intransitive conversion. "Conversion of sinful man is usually conceived in a twofold sense:

(38) Jer.31.18(Moffatt)

(39) Johannes Musaeus, De conversione hominis peccatoris ad Deum, Jena 1661, Disputatio I, cap. 1

either transitive as the conversion by which God is said to convert the sinner, and the sinner to be converted by Him or intransitive as the conversion by which the sinner is said to convert himself. Thus by the use of language it is understood in both cases that God converts the sinner and the sinner himself."

Both in the Old and in the New Testament men are turned to God by change of heart, but they are also exhorted to return to God. The word שׁוּב in the Old Testament can express both the transitive and the intransitive movement. Thus in Jer. 31.18 (H&R. text verse 17) we read $\text{וְשׁוּבֵי יְרֵמְיָהּ וְשׁוּבֵי יְרֵמְיָהּ}$ The Hebrew preserves - much more than our terms- "conversion" "to convert" and "the convert" - the figure of an actual movement. For instance the rendering of the A.V. "Zion shall be redeemed with judgement, and her converts with righteousness" (40) misses the idea of a return, while the reading in the margin "they that return of her" does not convey the religious and moral implication of conversion. But the $\text{וְשׁוּבֵי יְרֵמְיָהּ}$ are the homecomers, the repatriates, who are restored to their own country and to their God, being released from captivity and from the bondage of sin. The figurative meaning of the return of the sinner to God, is most distinct in the Book of Hosea, for the return of the "Prodigal Wife" is the conversion of Israel that yields fruits of repentance

(40) Is. 1.27

"The usual meaning of the verb is therefore not merely to turn or change, but to turn right round, to turn back and home. This is obviously the force of its employment to express repentance." (41) The specific Hebrew word for 'repenting one's own action', that is to say being grieved on account of one's own deeds is נָחַם but it is rarely used in the sense in which we find 'repentance' in the New Testament. It is only once used in that New Testament sense in the great conversion passage in Jeremiah 31.19 (Heb. verse 18) in close connection with נָחַם "Surely after that I was turned, I repented".

In the New Testament both ἐπιστρέφειν 'to turn' in the sense of being converted and μετανοεῖν 'repent' are used. Twice in the Acts of the Apostles both terms are combined.

Peter in his address to the Jews tells them *μετανοήσατε ὁδοὺ καὶ ἐπιστρέψατε* (42) and Paul in his apologia before Festus and Agrippe defines his mission to Jews and Gentiles as urging them that they should repent and turn to God (*ἀπαγγέλλον μετανοεῖν καὶ ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν*) (43)

"While ἐπιτροπεία signifies the change of religious direction
μετανοεῖν signifies the change of moral attitude". (44)

(41) George Adam Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets,
London. 13th edition (no date) Vol. I. p.335 f.

(48) Acts 3.19

(15, Acts 26.20

(44) Reinhold Seeberg, Bekehrung, Article in Real Enzyklopaedie der protestantischen Theologie, Leipzig 1897, Vol.II p.542

μετανοεῖν is of course always intransitive, while ἐπιστρέφειν like ἔρχομαι may be either transitive or intransitive.

The passive conception with God as subject is not frequent in the New Testament. It is found in I. Peter

2.25 ἐπιστράφητε ὑμεῖς ἐπὶ τὸν ποιμένα ἡμεῖς
ἐκείνου τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἐκείνου.

These Biblical references taken at their face value seem to indicate that the intransitive character of conversion prevails. But it is in the nature of the prophetic and apostolic writing that they are much more concerned with the call to repentance and conversion than with a statement about the doctrine of conversion, as in the passage from I Peter which is quoted above. In the most prominent conversion passages which are contained chiefly in the Johannine writings the figure used is that of a new birth. There can be no doubt that God is the subject and man the object of regeneration.

Luther commenting on Psalm 85.6 "Wilt thou not quicken us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee", distinguishes between transitive and intransitive conversion in this way: "This is the greatest and first conversion by which He is united with our nature. Second is the conversion by which He is spiritually united with our spirit through faith and love. This is the conversion by clear vision. For thus He is one flesh with us, and we are one spirit with Him. In fact the second and third is rather our conversion by which we are converted to Him, but the first is His own ineffable conversion by which He is converted to us " (45)

(45) Martin Luther Werke, Weimarer Ausgabe Vol IV p.8

In Lutheran theology the distinction between transitive and intransitive conversion was further developed. Active or transitive regeneration is the operation of God who grants new spiritual life to man who was dead in sin. It is called new creation, a spiritual revival (vivificatio) and a raising from spiritual death (resuscitatio spiritualis), while intransitive conversion (the expression "passive conversion" is sometimes used, but it is misleading, for only a transitive verb can have a passive voice) indicates the spiritual change which takes place in man.

Luthardt quotes Baier a representative of typical orthodoxy as saying "intransitive conversion means that according to scripture man can convert himself, but transitive and intransitive conversion is as far as the matter itself is concerned one and the same action, for it always implies a spiritual change in man through which the sinful man, by powers not of his own but of grace, is brought to acknowledge his sins, to regret them and to believe in Christ". Then follows a quotation from Hollanz who

already belongs to the beginning of pietism though he may be called the last of the orthodox Lutheran Dogmaticians. He calls conversio intransitiva "the act of the immanent and responding will by which the sinner converts himself

Ἀταυροῦτε καὶ μετετέτετε (Acts 3.19). In the transitive sense conversion is identical with regeneration, in the intransi-

tive sense with penitence which includes contrition and faith"(46)

Footnote: O. Christian Ernst Luthardt, Kompendium der Dogmatik, Leipzig 1937 p. 388

It may then be stated that according to Lutheran doctrine ~~intransitive~~ conversion is the end and the effect of transitive conversion, and itself is identical with penitence in which the sinner by the powers that are conferred on him through the influence of grace which he has received, is said to convert himself. These powers are given from above; they are not part of human nature.

A prominent Lutheran theologian of more recent times modifies this characteristic of man by maintaining that "natural man has a *capacitas passiva*". (47)

In Reformed Doctrine the same distinction is usually maintained, while a different terminology is sometimes used. "Turretin" distinguishes between *conversio habitualis seu passiva* and *conversio actualis seu active*. The *conversio habitualis* or *passiva* is wrought through the infusion of a supernatural character by the Holy Spirit. But the *conversio actualis* or *activa* through the practising of these goods. Through the former one the man is renewed and converted by God, through the latter one the man after being renewed and converted turns himself to God, and he who has been acted upon, acts himself. The former is better called regeneration; for it has the character of a new birth, by which man is reshaped after the image of his Creator. But the latter one is conversion; for it includes the operation of man himself". (48)

(47) H. A. Frank, *System der Christlichen Wahrheit*, Erlangen-Leipzig 1894, Vol. II, p.329

(48) ref. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, London 1880, Vol. III, p.3f.

It is of course evident that regeneration which Turretin calls *conversio habitualis seu passiva* is the same as transitive conversion while *conversio actualis seu activa* is identical with intransitive conversion in the writings of Lutheran divines.

John Brown of Haddington who often found most impressive definitions of difficult doctrines asks: "Why then doth God call men to make to themselves a new heart and spirit? Answer; It is to show men their duty, and convince them of their inability that they may flee to Christ for strength". This work of God's Spirit by which he enables men who before and during his conversion is merely passive to work out his own salvation, is ordinarily named "A calling, regeneration, or new birth, conversion, resurrection, and new creation".⁽⁴⁹⁾

Thus conversion cannot be studied in its effect on man alone, but we must first consider how it is accomplished. With reverence and in humility we approach the courts of heaven, beholding the greatest miracle of all, the making of a new man from afar. The evangelical doctrine of conversion is not an invention of theologians but it is the interpretation of a heavenly vision. "And I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth), how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter".⁽⁵⁰⁾

(49) John Brown (Haddington) An help for the ignorant. An essay towards an easy explanation of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechism. Edinburgh 1758, p. 160.

(50) II. Cor. 12.3f.

II.

Prologue in Heaven

"Before the beginning Thou hast foreknown the end,
Before the birthday the death-bed was seen of Thee:
Cleanse what I cannot cleanse, mend what I cannot mend,
O Lord All-Merciful, be merciful to me."

Christina Georgina Rossetti.

The new creation is more than an allegory of God's work of regeneration. St. Paul in describing the man in Christ does not merely use a metaphor: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"⁽¹⁾..... for we are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works"⁽²⁾ God created man as a whole personality with body and soul. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul".⁽³⁾

The Hebrews of old and Christians of all times have believed that every human soul is a separate creation of God who "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things"⁽⁴⁾ If there is a marked difference between the life of the

(1) II.Cor. 5.17

(2) Ephes. 2.10

(3) Gen. 2.7

(4) Acts 17.25

redeemed and the existence of the unredeemed, then every new birth must be a new creation. The power by which God regenerates man is "equal to that whereby he created the world and raised up the dead". (5) The creation of faith in man is, like the first one ex nihilo. "The Spirit as he enters into the word gives faith, much in the same manner as God created the world by speaking to nothing, and saying, let such things be". (6) Regeneration as the creative work of God precludes second causes as much as the creation of the universe or of the first man. (7)

One of the frescos of Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel depicts the animation of Adam. The first man awakening from his slumber is touched by the finger of the Godhead coming down from heaven in a great wind upon him. The vision of the new birth as conceived by the greatest revival preacher of recent centuries is similar to the artist's vision of the animation of Adam. "The spirit or breath of God is immediately inspired, breathed into the new-born soul, and the same breath which comes from, returns to God." (8)

Thus by the power of God man is born again. The child of God enters like a new-born baby upon a new state of

(5) Canons of Dort, ed, by Thomas Scott, Philadelphia 1856, Art. IV, p.214

(6) John Brown op.cit.p.149

(7) ref. Charles Hodge op.cit. Vol. II, p.700

(8) John Wesley, Works, 3rd ed. London 1829, Vol. V. p.226

existence. It is not its own act. It is born... As soon as the baby is born, all the faculties are awakened. It sees, feels, hears and gradually unfolds rational and moral faculties. The same applies to regeneration. A whole class of objects, before unknown or unappreciated are revealed to the newborn babe in Christ. (9)

The relationship between creation and recreation is a real one, but as any two things which are similar are not identical, so are the first and the second creation two different acts of God. The material used by God in His workshop as He forms the new man, is not "the dust of the earth" nor a stone or a stock, but humanity. The great change does not mean that some lifeless matter is transformed into a human personality, nor does it imply that the natural man is raised to the estate of an angel or a superman. Man is man. By his regeneration he becomes a Christian, even Christ-like, if he is a true saint, but never the Christ. In the person of man as in the person of Christ the nature of man is unconfounded. While to the Son of God humanity is His second nature which He has taken to Himself, to man is granted one nature only, the nature and essence of man. Christ draws man to Himself, but not stones and stocks. By putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, redeemed man puts off the old man but he does not rid himself of humanity.

"We reject the error of the Enthusiasts.... that God in the conversion and regeneration of the old Adam destroys the substance and being and especially the reasonable soul, and

9. ref. Charles Hodge, op.cit. Vol. III. p. 35.

(10)
creates a new spiritual being out of nothing" . Not the nature of the new man but his faith is created ex nihilo. The more emphasis is laid in preaching and teaching on the fact of the new birth, the greater is the temptation to fall into the error of the "Enthusiasts!" Wesley's language suggests at times that he saw in the new birth a change of the whole nature of man, for instance when he states that "being born of God... implies... a vast inward change, a change wrought in the soul, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, a change in the whole manner of our existence...we are as it were in another world".⁽¹¹⁾ But even Wesley would not assume that human nature itself is changed, what is changed is merely the manner of his existence by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Augustinianism maintains the difference between the new birth and the erroneous teaching of a change of substance.⁽¹²⁾ According to St. Augustine Paul himself "has declared, what this is, to put off the old man and to put on the new man, when he says: "put off lying and speak the truth! Behold, this is to put off the old man and to put on the new".⁽¹³⁾ Calvin in an argument with Osiander who held the view of an "essential righteousness" rejects the "transfusion of divine essence into man" as a

(10) Formula of Concord, I/II. 13-14 (Mueller op.cit. p.525)

(11) Wesley, op.cit. Vol. V p.224

(12) Quoted in the Formula of Concord, II/II. 81

(13) This is not an exact translation but a paraphrase of Col. 3.9-10

form of Manichaeian heresy. "He (Osiander) says that we are one with Christ. This we admit: but at the same time we deny that Christ's essence is blended with ours".⁽¹⁴⁾ St. Patrick prayed in all humility: "May Christ be with us. Christ before us. Christ in us. Christ over us". But never would he have uttered such a blasphemy as "Let us be Christ".

John Brown in his simple clarity answers the question, why regeneration is called a new creation. "Because God does not mend old qualities in the soul, but, out of nothing, by the word of His power, makes qualities quite new". To the further question, whether man's substance or his qualities are renewed, the reply is given - "The qualities".⁽¹⁵⁾

The error of asserting a change of the essence of man is represented by two opposite extremes in Christian theology. The one extreme in its emphasis on the spiritual deadness of natural man goes as far as to assume that he is not much better than a piece of stone or a brute. In Lutheran theology Matthias Flacius took this extreme view by which he exposed himself to the charge of falling into the Manichaeian heresy. Orthodox doctrine disagrees with them "who so inconsiderately assert that man is no more disposed for regeneration than a stone, or an irrational animal. For there are naturally such faculties in the soul of man, as render him a fit subject of regeneration, which are not to be

(14) Instit. III.XI.5

(15) John Brown, op.cit.p.161

found in stones or brutes. Thus a man can be regenerated,
(16)
but a brute or stone cannot".

Both mediaeval scholastics and sectarian "Enthusiasts" overemphasised the saintliness of the new man. They treated regeneration "in the light of a physical rather than of a moral question".
(17) The difficulty may arise from the fact that Scripture itself is silent about "the modus operandi". It describes to us "not the consecutive terms of the production, but it describes to us very particularly the qualities of the product".
(18)

The conversion of man is the work of the Holy Trinity, insofar as the three persons concur in all opera ad extra. But on the other hand the different stages in the regeneration of man must be referred to one of the three persons predominantly. The Father creates and elects, the Son redeems; and the Spirit calls and sanctifies. The distinctive part which each of the three persons plays in regeneration may be defined also in this way: The Father founds the new life, the Son lends reality and the Spirit actuality to the work of re-creation. In other words God, the Father has chosen the redeemed, but the redemption is realized by the work of Christ, and applied to man in the moment of his conversion by the influence of the Holy Spirit. "God does not only declare, but he also creates a new man...We do not

(16) Witsius, op.cit. p.330

(17) Thomas Chalmers, Works, Edinburgh 1856, Vol.VIII. p.461

(18) Ibid. p.463

only believe in the new man, but in faith we put him on, just as in repentance we do not only condemn but put off the old man...In as much as we believe that Christ died for us and is risen again, we have a real share in his death and resurrection, and our real, new life consists in this participation...The new life is not only believed in, but realized by faith. Yea, faith itself is the new reality...Love is...not merely a matter of the future, but is taking effect in believers now already, The Holy Spirit likewise, as the token of the new life, is a creative reality which is already present in them".⁽¹⁹⁾

There is deep consolation in the assurance that God created the new man. To those who can behold the Godhead with a pure heart, who fix their eyes towards heaven, without trying to analyse their own spiritual movements, the call of man according to God's eternal decree does not involve any serious problem. In the early Church "theology" in its original meaning, that is to say the doctrine of God, was the principal concern of believers. But in the later development of the Church when Christians began to think more of themselves and less of God, they were troubled by the apparent contradiction between God's election and His claim on man to be converted. To the unconverted the doctrine of election must be a stumbling block while it is consolation to the redeemed. Pascal at the time of his conversion was troubled by the Biblical notion of election, till he heard God saying to him: "Console thyself. Thou wouldst not be seeking me,

(19) Emil Brunner, Wahrheit als Begnung, Berlin 1938, p.76 f

if thou hadst not already found me...Thy conversion'tis my
(20)
concern".

Christian doctrine knows nothing of a "self-made" man, but testifies that "God who separated me from my mother's womb, called my by his grace".⁽²¹⁾ Augustine in repudiating the Pelagian heresy interprets the doctrine of regeneration by viewing it in the light of predestination. Luther preserved the Augustinian conception in "De servo arbitrio": "Who (you say) will endeavour to amend his life?' - I answer, No man! No man can! For your self-amenders without the Spirit, God regardeth not, for they are hypocrites. But the Elect and those that fear God, will be amended by the Holy Spirit: the rest will perish unamended.

'Who will believe (you say) that he is loved of God?' - I answer, no man will believe it! No man can! But the Elect shall believe it; the rest shall perish without believing it, filled with indignation and blaspheming, as you here describe them...

And as to your saying that - "by these doctrines the flood gate of iniquity is thrown open unto men" - be it so. They pertain to that leprosy of evil to be borne, spoken of before. Nevertheless by the same doctrines, there is thrown open to the Elect and to them that fear God, a gate unto righteousness - an entrance into heaven - a way unto God!"⁽²²⁾

(20) Blaise Pascal, Oeuvres 13.483, quoted from Cailliet, op.cit. p.32f

(21) Gal. 1.15

(22) Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will, Michigan 1931, p. 67f.

(23)

According to Seeberg Luther later almost gave up the predestination conception of conversion in favour of the idea that all depends on "the gracious will of God, as revealed in the Word" (ref. Erlanger Ausgabe 54.22; 55.162).

From the very beginning the Reformers encountered some difficulty in reconciling the doctrine of election with the call to conversion. Two questions could be asked: Firstly, what assurance is given to me who would like to be converted that I really belong to the elect? And secondly, what have I to think of the conversion of others? Is the man who says that he is converted, chosen by God? John Calvin gave the answer which should satisfy our doubts, an answer similar to that which Pascal later found. "...every one ought to consider his calling as a token of election. Further, although one cannot judge with the same certainty as to another's election, yet we must always with the judgement of charity conclude that all that are called, are called to salvation, I mean efficaciously and fruitfully." (24)

But both in Lutheran and Reformed Theology the relationship between conversion and election remained a difficult problem. It played a considerable part in the synergistic controversy of the Lutheran Church while the Formula of Concord (25) maintains that conversion is foreordained by God. But the

(23) Seeberg, Art: in R.E.P.T. Vol. II, p. 543.

(24) John Calvin, Works in the edition of the Calvin Society, Edinburgh, Comm. on I Cor. 1.9.

(25) Form. of Conc. II/XI 25-30 (Mueller p. 709 f.)

Formula of Concord deals solely with predestination to salvation, while reprobation is not mentioned in this context. Hodge thinks that in this respect the Formula of Concord was inconsistent, for if some are chosen for salvation, the rest must be chosen for reprobation.⁽²⁶⁾ Reformed Theology was generally more outspoken in assuming that God ordains not only who should be converted, but also who should remain outside the pale of the chosen ones. Perhaps the reason was that the corresponding controversy in the Reformed Churches was much more fundamental than that in the Lutheran Church, for "The departure of the Remonstrants from Reformed doctrine was much more serious than that of the Synergists in Lutheranism".⁽²⁷⁾ The allegation made against orthodoxy in regard to conversion was that the call of God would not be sincere if regeneration depended on previously ordained election rather than on the response of man to God's call. The Articles of the Synod of Dort after stating the natural inability of man to save himself, acknowledge that the grace of enlightenment is given to the elect beyond and contrary to all merit. "But as many as are invited by the gospel, are invited sincerely, For sincerely and most truly God shows in his word what is pleasing to him, namely that they who are called, should come to him. And He promises to all who come to Him and believe, the peace of their souls and eternal life".⁽²⁸⁾

(26) ref. Charles Hodge op.cit. Vol.II, p.721 ff.

(27) Ibid. p.724

(28) Canons of Dort III/IV 8.(Scott p.208)

Not unlike the Formula of Concord in the Lutheran Church, the Articles of the Synod of Dort were mainly concerned with the whole matter of regeneration. The enthusiastic description given by one of the English observers, Bishop Hall, though he disagreed with the Dutch divines on some points, sounds hyperbolical. "There was no place upon earth so like heaven as the Synod of Dort, and where He should be more willing to dwell."⁽²⁹⁾ But even as sober a Church historian as Principal Cunningham wrote nearly 250 years later that "no synod or council was ever held in the Church, whose decisions, all things considered, are entitled to more deference and respect."⁽³⁰⁾ He stated very clearly the difference between the Arminian and the orthodox viewpoint in this way: "Arminians hold that spiritual blessings - at least reconciliation and pardon - were impetrated or purchased for all men, but that they are applied only to some: while Calvinists hold that they were purchased only for some, but that they are applied to all for whom they were purchased."⁽³¹⁾

Wesley believes in predestination only to the point where man is confronted with a clear issue to accept Christ or to reject him. "Election in the Scriptural sense is God's doing anything that our merit or power have no part in. The true predestination or fore-appointment of God is that 1. He

(29) Canons of Dort Introduction p. 24

(30) William Cunningham, Historical Theology, Edinburgh 1870, Vol. II, p.379

(31) Ibid. p.394

that believeth shall be saved from the guilt and power of sin. 2. He that endureth to the end shall be saved eternally. 3. They who receive the precious gift of faith thereby become the sons of God; and being sons, they shall receive the spirit of holiness to walk as Christ also walked. Throughout every part of this appointment of God, promise and duty go hand in hand. All is free gift; and yet such is the gift, that the final issue depends on our future obedience to the heavenly call. But other predestination than this, either to life or death eternal, the Scripture knows not of".⁽³²⁾ But the passage on which Wesley's notes are based is I Peter 1.2. The apostle addresses his epistle "to the elect" of the Christian diaspora. They are the ἐκλεκτοὶ κατὰ πρόβλεψιν Θεοῦ πατρὸς. There are in fact few better prooftexts for the interdependence of the doctrine of predestination and conversion than this text. The election is referred to God the Father. "The hope of ultimate salvation rests on the consciousness of being predestined and chosen by God the Father, who has taken up their lives into His eternal will and purpose for all time. Such is the basis and hope of Christianity for Peter as for Paul".⁽³³⁾ This election takes place ἐν ἀγαπῇ τοῦ πνεύματος and is directed εἰς ὑπακοήν καὶ ῥαυτισμὸν αἵματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

(32) Alexander Macdonald, Wesley's Revision of the Shorter Catechism, Edinburgh 1906, p.52

(33) James Moffatt, The General Epistles, London 1942, p.90

As our conversion is founded on the free choice of God, so is our new birth realized by the blood of Christ. Our obedience does not create the reality of new life, but is made to embrace the reality of Christ for whose sake the eternal election takes effect.

Thus Christ is in a special sense the cause of our regeneration. He is not only "as God, together with the Father and Spirit, the principal, but economically considered the meritorious and exemplary cause of regeneration...The holy and glorious life of Christ is also the most perfect pattern of our new life".⁽³⁴⁾ The Christian doctrine of conversion does not begin by viewing the results of regeneration or by comparing a converted with an unconverted man, but it begins with the ultimate cause and then proceeds to trace the effect of regeneration on the human race. Herein lies the essential difference between conversion to Christianity and the "conversion" to pagan cults. "A man used Mithraism but he did not belong to it body and soul; if he did, that was a matter of special attachment and not an inevitable concomitant prescribed by authority".⁽³⁵⁾ The faithful Hebrew of Old Testament times and the Christian were aware that they were chosen by God and that in Him "we live and move and have our being".⁽³⁶⁾ The Hebrew knew the demand God made on man. The prophets had a vision of a new life in God. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death upon them hath the light shined".⁽³⁷⁾ Isaiah and Jeremiah, Hosea and Micah called Israel to conversion, but none of them would have been able to lay down a doctrine

(34) Witsius op.cit. p.334

(35) A.D. Nock, Conversion in religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo, Oxford 1933, p.14

(36) Acts 17.28

(37) Is. 9.2

of conversion based on the full revelation of God. The trouble is not that they did not possess the New Testament, for the Old Testament alone contains enough proof texts for the doctrine as such, but unless we know the person of the Redeemer, we are unable to consider the full meaning of redemption. Delitzsch in his Biblical Psychology finds that the only possible scheme to consider "the new spiritual life of the redeemed man" is "to proceed from the divine human archetype, the person of the Redeemer"⁽³⁸⁾. Christ, unlike the first man who was made in the image of God, bears the divine image by His very nature. Whether the created image of God in which Adam was made got entirely lost or was so utterly corrupted that man himself could not restore it, is of no relevance as far as the doctrine of conversion is concerned. In both cases the new imprint had to be taken from the original, the incorruptible archetype. "Now, a new creature, whereby the image of God is renewed is not made or helped by an law or works, but by Christ, by whom it is created after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness"⁽³⁹⁾. The Christian does not approach God by beholding his navel like the Buddhist, nor does he submerge into the mystery of the soul by means of psychoanalysis, but he looks up to Christ and waits upon Him who alone can draw him to Himself even out of the depths of sin.

(38) Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Psychology, Edinburgh 1867, p.381

(39) Martin Luther, Commentary on Galatians, Harrison Trust Edition p.380 (Gal.VI.15)

Luther realized that we cannot behold God in any other way but "by looking at the man Jesus as the revelation of the divine Being"⁽⁴⁰⁾. It is impossible to have a true notion of God, unless we are converted to Christ; at the same time everyone who believes in Christ with heart and soul is converted; for except he is chosen by God, he could not behold Jesus Christ: "Therefore no one can be converted to God except he is first converted to Christ, as He says: 'No one cometh to the Father but by me'"⁽⁴¹⁾.

There is not such a thing as conversion to Christianity, but only conversion to Christ. Saul heard the voice of Jesus, and not the call of Christianity, on the Damascus Road. Whether a man is drawn to Christ by reading the Scripture, by vision, by prayer, by listening to a sermon, by singing a hymn or by fixing his eyes on a Crucifix - the power which overtakes him is always the love of Jesus Christ. Luther in his cell and the young convert who goes up to the platform at an evangelistic meeting and confesses "I give my life to Christ" find themselves face to face with Jesus.

Wherever we turn in the realm of Christian religion, we are always confronted with the person of Jesus Christ as the principal cause of conversion. By Him fallen man is sought out, of Him he is begotten and after His image the "imago Dei"

(40) Reinhold Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmatik, Vol. IV/I. (Die Lehren Luthers) Leipzig 1917, p.93

(41) Martin Luther, Weimarer Ausgabe Vol. IV, p.7

is restored in man. Athanasius uses a striking illustration to convey the doctrine of redemption. "You know what happens when a portrait that has been painted on a panel becomes obliterated through external stains. The artist does not throw away the panel, but the subject of the portrait has to come and sit for it again, and then the likeness is re-drawn on the same material. Even so was it with the All-holy Son of God. He, the Image of the Father, came and dwelt in our midst, in order that He might renew mankind made after Himself, and seek out His lost sheep, even as He says in the Gospel: "I came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19.10). This also explains His saying to the Jews: "Except a man be born anew..." (John 3.3.) He was not referring to a man's natural birth from his mother, as they thought, but to the re-birth and re-creation of the soul in the Image of God".⁽⁴²⁾

The surrender has to be made to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, for through Him alone the eternal election of the Redeemed becomes an actual fact. How amazing is the similarity of the experience which men and women of different religious outlook and different genius have undergone in the presence of the God-Man! There is no essential difference whether a new born child of God utters the cry: "Thou are Christ, the son of the living God" or "Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly". It is mere theory to construct an antithesis between the

(42) Athanasius, The Incarnation of the Word of God, London 1944, cpt.3, par.14

adoration of Jesus and of Christ. But doctrine is not theory, it is the living experience of revealed religion. "The unique attractiveness of the central figure of Christianity as presented in the Synoptic gospels" is an idea, we are told by A.B. D
(43) Nock, which is the "product of nineteenth century idealism and humanitarianism". The central idea of early Christianity is according to this view "that of divinity brought into humanity to complete the plan of salvation, not that of perfect humanity manifested as an inspiration; it is Deus de deo rather than Ecce homo". Nevertheless He is the same God-Man, the same Jesus-Christ to whom Justin Martyr and Augustine or Spurgeon and Moody surrendered. The most startling thing for early Christians must have been that a person who was known to have lived a few centuries ago, was in reality the Son of God, very God of very God. The evangelical Christian of the 19th century on the other hand was fascinated by the old truth which seemed quite new to him that the same Christ whom he had known so well as the supreme authority of his life, as the Head of the Church and as the God whom his forefathers worshipped, is invested with human nature and is to them who are drawn to Him, a real brother. The congruity of the conversion experience as the drawing of Jesus Christ is much more striking than the question whether the converted sinner is mainly attracted by either the divine or the human nature of the God-Man, Christ, the efficacious cause of our conversion is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. The mediaeval saint and the evangelical reformer know that to be

(43) Nock, op.cit. p.210

crucified with Christ, is the only way to life. The Lady Julian of Norwich recorded her visions of the crucified Lord in "A revelation of Love that Jesus Christ, our endless bliss, made in sixteen shewings, or revelations". While she beheld the Cross she knew that she was surely safe. "And then I saw well, that there was nothing betwixt the Cross and Heaven that might have harmed me...Thus was I learned to choose Jesus to my Heaven, whom I saw only in pain at that time: melike no other Heaven than Jesus, which shall be my bliss when I come there"⁽⁴⁴⁾. We must be crucified with Christ in order to escape eternal death. The Reformers experienced the same transition from death to life, with this additional truth that before coming to the Cross we are condemned by the authority of the law. "God has rescued us from the wreakage of the law and restored us by His grace to yonder life"⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Not only the Hymn writers of Pietism, Revivalism and 19th century Liberalism, but orthodox theologians of the uncompromising kind praised the overflowing love of Christ which is able to "over-save and out-love infinite worlds of sinners". Samuel Rutherford wrote the following "prose hymn" which could find a place in any Redemption Hymn Book if it were arranged in metre and set to a fitting tune.

"There lies and flows
such a sea and ocean of infinite love
about the heart and in the bowels of Christ,
as would over-save and out-love
infinite worlds of sinners.

(44) Quoted from A.E. Baker, Prophets of the Day of Judgement, London 1944, p.47

(45) Corpus Reformatorum, Joannis Calvini opera, Vol.1 p.198

So all could come and draw and drink and suck
the breasts of overflowings of Christ's free grace,
.....
that if you appoint banks to channel
or marches to bound the free love, (46)
God should not be God, nor the Redeemer the Redeemer!"

The reality of the conversion-event depends on the reality of Christ's divine-human nature. The true mystery of Christ's drawing consists in His actual work as the incarnate Son of God. Not the Christian ideal, but the Christ came into the world. Schleiermacher rightly insists that the historic appearance of Jesus Christ is needed as the only way in which regeneration can become a fact. "In the grip of conversion, every sense of human intermediation vanishes, and Christ is realized as immediately presenting all His redeeming and atoning activity, prophetic, priestly and kingly". (47)

The work of Christ regarding man's conversion may roughly be divided into two parts: the purchase of them who are chosen by the blood of the Saviour, and the actual application of the redemptive work to the individual. John Brown asks his catechumens "Can we be any better of Christ's purchase if it is not applied" and the simple answer is "No more than of buying food, cloaths, etc. without using them". (48)

(46) Samuel Rutherford, Christ dying and drawing sinners, London 1647 p.233

(47) August Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, Edinburgh 1928, p.492

(48) John Brown, op.cit. p.147

III.

Not even the application of Christ's purchase is left to the unaided activity of man though man's cooperation may be called forth at a later stage. In the economy of the Holy Trinity the third person is the agent by whom the conversion of those whom the Father chose and the Son bought with His blood are translated into the new life. "The faithful are never reconciled to God without the gift of regeneration: nay we are for this end justified - that we may afterward serve God in holiness of life. Christ indeed does not cleanse us by His blood, nor render God propitious to us by His expiation, in any other way than by making us partakers of His Spirit, who renews us to a holy life...".⁽⁴⁹⁾

The newborn child of God lifting up his eyes unto heaven, makes a wonderful discovery. He has read of God the Father, of Christ, the Son of God and of the Holy Spirit of God. All of a sudden he realizes that the "Fatherhood of God" is not merely a figurative way of expressing man's intimate relationship to the ruler of the universe, but that God is our Father in the true sense of the word, and that human fatherhood is only derived from divine fatherhood. Saviour, Lord, elder brother, friend, Mediator and King are not just illustrations of Christ's office, but we know that Christ has saved our life more certainly than one who has just rescued a man from drowning. We know him to be not only the Lord over our life, but the Lord

(49) John Calvin, Comm. on Romans VI.2

of our life. We may be separated from our earthly brother but never from our elder brother Christ; friends may deceive us, but the friendship of Christ endures. When we engage a solicitor, we risk him losing the case; but we are assured that the mediation of Christ leads to our acquittal. In similar manner the names given in Holy Scripture to the Spirit of God, are not empty symbols, but mark the actual experience of anyone who has surrendered his heart to Christ. Leaving the depressed atmosphere of an overcrowded and badly aired room, we feel refreshed and quickened as soon as the wind touches our face. Thus refreshed is everyone who leaves the depressed atmosphere of the prison house of sin, vice and unbelief and feels the wind of God blowing on him. Walking with Christ like the disciples on the road to Emmaus we ask ourselves: "Was not our heart burning within us...?" This fire is so real that others may even notice the glowing cheeks and the shining eyes of those who had been with Jesus. Turning to his place of worship, where the heavens touch the earth, the child of God approaches a fountain that enlivens not only himself but transforms the world around him to the very image of paradise. "From the Eternal's house shall pour a stream to water the wady of Acacias".⁽⁵⁰⁾

As we fill our lungs with air, when we breathe, so may we be filled with the Holy Ghost; and as we moisten our dry gums when we drink, so is our soul bathed in that same Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in Scripture "described to us as

(50) Joel 3.18 (Moffatt)

a Fountain, whence all heavenly riches flow to us; or as the Hand by which God exerts His power, because by His divine inspiration He so breathes divine life into us, that we are no longer acted upon by ourselves, but ruled by His motion and agency...By the same grace and energy of the Spirit we become His members, so that He keeps us under Him, and we in our turn possess Him".⁽⁵¹⁾

The work of the Spirit must be distinguished from the work of Christ. Luther makes this distinction not only in regard to the mode of the divine actions but also according to the time when they take place. "First is the grace which is revealed through Christ, by which we possess Christ and God is reconciled...Later is the gift of the Spirit with all His benefits..⁽⁵²⁾".

As soon as the redemptive work of God is applied to man, the question of time and of the different stages of the regeneration process arises. These temporal implications of man's conversion will be treated later. In this chapter we are mainly concerned with the economy of the Godhead. It is doubtful whether it is possible to speak about "prior" and "posterior" in heaven. But we can at least state this negative proposition that the Spirit's action - whether in heaven or in earth - can not precede the work of Christ, just as the re-creation through Christ cannot precede the creation through the Father.

(51) Institutes III.I.3

(52) Quoted from P.Gennrich, Die Lehre von der Wiedergeburt, Leipzig 1907, p.130

The agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is recognised by most Christian theologians, even by those who are not strictly speaking "evangelical". Though the Church is divided on many issues of doctrine, prayers are offered everywhere for the gift of the Spirit, so that the eternal work of God may take immediate effect in the hearts of believers.

"Every prayer...for the conversion of men, for their sanctification and for their consolation, is a recognition of the doctrine that God works in the mind of men by His Holy Spirit according to His own good pleasure"⁽⁵³⁾.

Both Luther and Calvin have pictured the influence of the Spirit upon the converted sinner. Luther compares the sinner with "a crystal melting away at the fire of the Holy Spirit; thus he pines away and is entirely consumed. Who-soever is so dissolved, is confirmed by God"⁽⁵⁴⁾. Calvin looking at those who are confirmed by the Spirit of God sees that "the hearts of believers are stamped with the Spirit as with a seal."⁽⁵⁵⁾

But how does the Spirit take effect in man? Lutheran and Reformed theology maintain that the Spirit works mainly through the Word and the Sacraments. The Formula of Concord for instance states that there are two effective causes of conversion, "the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as the instrument of the Holy Spirit, by which He works out man's

(53) Charles Hodge, op.cit. Vol. II, p.663

(54) Weimarer Ausgabe Vol. III, p.513

(55) Inst. III.II.36

conversion.." ⁽⁵⁶⁾ In the "Solid Declaration to the Formula of Concord" the Word is called "an office of the Spirit". ⁽⁵⁷⁾ This work of the Spirit is foreordained. "This doctrine gives the wonderful comfort that the conversion, justification and blessedness of every Christian is so near to God's heart... that before he laid the foundations of the world, he took council about it and ordained it by His providence, how He could bring ⁽⁵⁸⁾ me into that state and preserve me in it!"

Similar are the statements of the reformed theologians. ⁽⁵⁹⁾ "God through His Word and Spirit" says Heidegger "calls, draws, leads, converts and finally moves the will, so that it gives heed to the argument of the proclaimed Word, to its truth and goodness". But Word and Spirit are to be kept apart in the evangelical doctrine of conversion. As a blacksmith swings the hammer with his arm, so God uses the Word by the power of His Spirit. The arm of God is the Spirit which used the Word as His medium, but acts upon the thought, will and life of man essentially, finally and irresistably in a way which is quite ⁽⁶⁰⁾ independant of the natural efficacy of the Word.

But the Spirit of God may act in any other way apart from the Word of God, just as the arm may not always use the hammer to bend the iron, but other instruments as well.

(56) Form. of Conc. I/II.19 (p.526)

(57) Ibid. II/XI.29 (p.710)

(58) Ibid. II/XI.45 (p.714)

(59) Heinrich Heppe, Die Dogmatik der evangelischen-reformierten Kirche, Neukirchen, 1935, p.417

(60) ref. Heinrich Heppe, Die Dogmatik des deutschen Protestantismus im 16ten Jahrhundert, Gotha 1857, Vol.II.p.363

"The Reformed, while they teach that, so far as adults are concerned, the knowledge of the Gospel is necessary to salvation, yet hold that the operations of the Holy Spirit are confined neither to the Word nor to the sacraments. He works when and where He sees fit. The saving efficacy of the Word and sacraments, where they take effect, is not due to any virtue in them but only to the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them".⁽⁶¹⁾

In this respect Lutherans differ from the Reformed, inasmuch as they believe in a mystical union between the Spirit and the Word. But the Arminians go further than that in assuming that "the Spirit is in the Word".⁽⁶²⁾ Arminianism and those sects which are derived from it attribute to the Word the same inherent power which Romanists attribute to the sacraments. This is evident in the form of approach to the unconverted which is used by either Roman or sectarian missionaries. The one makes sure that the object of their missionary enterprise receives baptism, the other that he takes a Bible tract home. Schleiermacher in his reaction against mysticism meets the Arminian view more than half way. "In the public teaching of the Church regeneration is usually ascribed to the Divine Spirit...Now in the first disciples both (faith and conversion) were effected by the Word in its widest sense, that is by the whole prophetic activity of Christ. And we must be able to understand this that we have in common with them, if need be,

(61) Charles Hodge op.cit. Vol.II, p.665

(62) Ibid. p.655

without a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, just as the disciples⁽⁶³⁾ understood their own condition without any such doctrine".

One is tempted to answer with a quotation from Schleiermacher's older contemporary Goethe who said in his "Faust": "Ich kann das Wort so hoch nicht schätzen, und muss es durch den Geist ersetzen". Even if the disciples had a scanty knowledge of the doctrine of the Spirit, they had the Son of God with them, who was not only the incarnate Word, but was begotten of the Spirit and upon him the Spirit descended. At the end of His ministry Christ left with His disciples not a volume of Holy Scripture, but the Holy Spirit. In the light of this Spirit they understood the sayings of Christ, and in the light of the same Spirit the Scripture truth is revealed to us. Whether the Word is mystically united to the Spirit or is only one of the instruments the Spirit can use, "where the Holy Ghost is, there He creates⁽⁶⁴⁾ a new heart".

It seems hard to conceive that anyone who was really touched by the Holy Ghost, could remain an enemy of Christ. Nevertheless "it is a point sometimes controverted among Calvinists themselves, whether the non-elect are ever the subjects of motions or operations of the Spirit...Upon this point, our Confession of Faith (Chap.X, Sec.4) takes the side,⁽⁶⁵⁾ that they may have some common operations of the Spirit".

(63) Schleiermacher, op.cit. p.490

(64) Erlanger Ausgabe Vol.XII. p.413

(65) Cunningham, Historical Theology, Vol.II, p.409

But these "common operations of the Spirit" are rather like those which were active in the creation of the world and may still be active in natural birth. But we cannot imagine that anyone who has been subject to the spirit of regeneration and is drawn to God by His irresistible grace, can remain unconverted. It might be pointed out on the other hand that some who saw our Lord in the flesh, who heard Him speaking and even touched Him, were among the reprobate. But was Judas or Pontius Pilate ever touched by the Holy Ghost? Did they not just from the outside behold the temple in which the Spirit dwelt?

A case which caused general interest and much excitement in the time of the Reformation was the strange self-accusation of a certain Francesco Spiera who was convinced that he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. He declined every comfort. When friends told him that David sinned most grievously and yet was accepted by God after he had repented, Spiera protested: "David was always one of the elect and pleasing to God, and though he lapsed badly, the Spirit of God never left him wholly: on the contrary he prayed God that He would not cast him away and take not His Holy Spirit from him. But I am in quite a different state. I am neither elect nor pleasing to God, but was always rejected and condemned: nor can I pray; take not the Holy Spirit from me, for He is wholly taken from me and will never be given back to me".⁽⁶⁶⁾ Whether that wretched man who died a terrible

(66) Condensed from Philip Schaf, Die Suende wider den Heiligen Geist nebst einem historischen Anhang ueber das Lebensende des Francesco Spiera, Halle 1841.

death ever possessed the Holy Ghost, who may have told him that if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, God alone knows!

To the rest of repentant sinners, the work of the Holy Spirit brings everlasting joy. "The gifts of blessedness are given and imputed to us by the Holy Spirit", writes the devout Spener, who was one of the forerunners of Lutheran pietism, "which Christ obtained by His merit
(67)
according to the Father's decree".

(67) Philipp Jacob Spener, Der Hochwichtige Artikel von der W~~i~~dergeburt, Frankfurt a.M. 1696 p.86

(III)

Before Dawn.

"I weep me here, but yet I walk and sing
To purge the past as soon as heaven permits
I see the day of hope already dawn.
By power that guides thy steps, at fitting time,
Bethink thee of my sorrow."

Dante, Purgatorio, Canto XXVII.

In Dante's Divine Comedy the mental torments of the souls in Purgatory are almost as painful as those suffered by the reprobate in hell though their physical suffering may not be the same. The Reformation abolished the doctrine of Purgatory, while present-day Liberalism frets at the mention of Hell. (It would be better if the danger of damnation were preached with vigour again.) But Hell and Purgatory are sometimes used as allegories of the wretched life of the unconverted on earth. If we take up this allegory, we may find that there is little difference in the mental state of those who dwell in hell on earth and those who go through purgatory before being called by God unto salvation. Reformed theologians agree that the elect before their conversion can hardly be distinguished from the reprobate. "Before they are gathered to that chief Shepherd, they go astray, scattered in the common wilderness, and differing in no respect from others, except in being protected by the special mercy of God from rushing down the precipice of eternal death. If you observe them therefore, you will see the posterity of Adam, partaking of the common corruption of the whole species. That they go not to the most desperate

extremes of impiety, is not owing to any innate goodness of theirs: but because the eye of God watches over them, and His hand is extended for their preservation".⁽¹⁾

The new-born child of God, as he looks back upon his past life, realizes with shame that in his wretchedness he almost touched the pit bottom. Augustine's confessions reveal with unique candidness the extent of his sinful behaviour in his unholy living before the great change occurred in him. Luther was more concerned with the inherited sinfulness of his state as man. His personal life was not so much a struggle against actual sin but against sinfulness in general. All who are born in concupiscence are sinful. Original sin is Man's natural selfwill. The life of the unconverted is sheer concupiscentia et voluntas propria.⁽²⁾ Luther found himself in the vicious circle of despair and useless efforts to turn the wrath of God from him. He often spoke about that period later. "In the monastery I did not think of woman, money or possessions, but the heart trembled and jerked, how God would become gracious to me. For I had abandoned faith and I could not bethink me of anything else but that I had caused God's wrath and that I must reconcile Him again with my good works".⁽³⁾

(1) Institutes III. XXIV. 10

(2) Seeberg, Die Lehren Luthers, p.85

(3) Weimarer Ausgabe Vol. XLVII p.590

Only one who experienced the state both of grace and of disgrace, could see the hopelessness of the sinner's state; not so long as he tries like the famous Baron Muenchhausen to drag himself out of the mud by pulling himself by the forelock. Whosoever is "not re-born (lit. old-born) he wriggles and struggles, he looks this and that way, and tries to nurture his human reason. But he who is born again, reasons: "Aye, I am in God's hand: He, who has before sustained and nurtured me on wondrous ways, will hence nurture and sustain me and save me from all misery"⁽⁴⁾. Evangelical Christians generally agree that the unconverted man is not necessarily a notorious evil-doer, he may even be a respectable person in the eyes of the world. "Let us beware of considering the deceitful lusts, as the Papists do, to mean nothing more than the gross and visible lusts, which are generally recognised to be base. The word (corruption of the old man) includes also those dispositions which, instead of being censured, are sometimes applauded - such as ambition, cunning, and every thing that proceeds either from self-love or from want of confidence in God"⁽⁵⁾. Therefore a partial change in manners and even a nominal adherence to Christianity is no sign of real conversion. There have been periods in the history of the Church when great stress had to be laid on this distinction. While in the early days of the Church and among the younger Churches of this age, the adherence to Christianity

(4) Erlanger Ausgabe Vol. XII p.387

(5) Calvin, Comm. on Ephes, 4.22

and the renunciation of gross evils, has been a witness in itself and often a true mark of conversion; respectability and regular Church attendance alone are of small value when Christianity with its moral implications is firmly established in a country. John Witherspoon teaching in an age when the Church and ordinary morality had a firm hold on the majority of the people said "A new birth implies a universal change. It must be of the whole man, not in some particulars, but in all without exception..."⁽⁶⁾ He makes three points where partial change is quite insufficient. Often it is produced merely by a natural or accidental change in age, temper or situation. "It often happens that the folly and levity ..of youth gives way to the ambitious projects of riper years, and the hurry of an active life: and these again are succeeded by sordid, selfish, covetous age. Remember that though your conduct may be wiser and more prudent and your character more respectable in the world than before, this is no proof of regeneration"⁽⁷⁾. His second point is that "sometimes a partial change is produced by strong occasional convictions,⁽⁸⁾ either from the word or providence of God". These customary Christians may have a form of outward godliness, though they are utter strangers to communion with God. Not all "decent people" are ready to take up the Cross and follow their Master.

(6) John Witherspoon, A treatise on regeneration, Edinburgh 1815 p.123

(7) Ibid. p.125

(8) Ibid p.127

Thirdly "sometimes a partial change is produced by... even by the love and attachment which men have to some one darling and governing sin. The less willing they are to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye, the more zealous and diligent they will be in other things, to atone⁽⁹⁾ for the indulgence, or to cover it from their own observation".

Witherspoon concludes from all this that man ought to judge himself not by the greatness of the change in any particular aspect of life, but by the general change of heart.

The Evangelical doctrine of conversion must therefore seek to find the original source of man's sinfulness, which is his fallen state. Wesley, whose doctrine of sin is truly evangelical, impresses upon those to whom he preaches the new birth, that every descendant of Adam comes into the world spiritually dead. "This then is the foundation of the new birth - the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is that being born in sin, we must be born again"⁽¹⁰⁾. In another sermon on Ephes 2.12 Wesley tells a story which seems not very plausible from the standpoint of natural history, but illustrates the state of the "old-born man" very well. A large toad was found alive inside a very old oak tree when that tree was cut down. "It had lived but what manner of life? This poor animal had organs of sense yet it had not any sensation...And as this poor animal was destitute of sensation, it must have equally

(9) John Witherspoon, A treatise on regeneration, Edinburgh 1815 p.129

(10) Wesley op.cit. Vol.VI, p.68

been destitute of reflection....It scarce could have any memory or any imagination. Nor could it have any locative power, while it was so closely bound on every side...."

Wesley compares unregenerate man with that toad. "But the moment the Spirit of the Almighty strikes the heart of him that was till then without God in the world, it breaks the hardness of his heart, and creates all things new..."⁽¹¹⁾

The chief characteristic of unconverted man is not merely that he is without, but that he flees the light. "For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov⁽¹²⁾ed". There is little difference between the elect before his conversion and the non-elect. Many who have died, unreconciled with God, may have prayed like Augustine on the eve of his conversion "Presently, oh, presently, let me ^{be} a little while"⁽¹³⁾. Thus man flees God as long as he is driven by his natural instincts. Yet God pursues those whom He has chosen, and overtakes the fugitive. Zwingli in "De vera et falsa religione" interprets the origin of sin as it is found in the story of the Fall by assuming a "conversion" of Adam when God confronts him with his sin. "Religion has its origin where God recalls the fleeing man who otherwise would always remain a fugitive. He saw

(11) Wesley op.cit. Vol. VII, pp. 349-351.

(12) John 3.20.

(13) St. Augustine, The Confessions, various editions, Book VIII, ch. 5, par. 12.

his nakedness, that is his guilt which was of such a kind and of such magnitude that he (Adam) despaired of his return to grace. But the most gracious God has mercy with us, as we continue to flee and with our shattered mind, and like a kind father, who while he hates the son's foolishness and impudence cannot possibly hate the son, calls the lost and despairing back and asks, however matters stand: "Adam where art thou?"...The heavenly Father asks him where he is so that man will always remember, at which place and in which circumstances the gracious God called him".⁽¹⁴⁾ It may be assumed with some justification that the person^{who}/flees from the presence of God is not one who is without any spiritual interest at all. He is rather of that ilk whose ancestor was a certain scribe to whom Jesus said: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God".

When we look around us, we must admit that even in "Christian countries" the converted Christians form a minority, while the majority may be good and decent folk, "not far from the Kingdom of God". The question must be asked, what shall we think of the works of these good people who have not yet or will never give their lives to Christ. The attitude of 17th century orthodoxy was uncompromising in this matter. Hermann Witsius declared: "If at times (the unregenerate persons) seem to perform any things that have some appearance of vital actions this proceeds not from a principle of life, but resembles those automatic or artificial motions, by which statues ingeniously

(14) Quoted from August Baur, Zwingli's Theologie, Halle 1885, Vol. I, p.393

framed, counterfeit living animals..."⁽¹⁵⁾ But neither Scripture nor experience teaches that unconverted men in their "good works" behave like the mechanical toys which Witsius may have seen at the fair in Leyden or Rotterdam; for normal human reason is a natural gift of man, the endowment of which is bestowed upon rational creatures by common grace. George Lawson, who was both a sound theologian and a faithful pastor, speaking of "the good works of unregenerate persons which are the fruits of moral seriousness" says that "in these works they make use of those divine ordinances which God hath appointed for the conversion of sinners as well as for the edification of them that believe"⁽¹⁶⁾. The grave danger involved in this "moral seriousness" is on the other hand, that unconverted persons may take it for true godliness. It is only too true that the hypocrisy of a mere moralist may be a greater hindrance to conversion than the immorality of a law-breaker. The message of the Church today is largely addressed to the "decent man", the moralist outside the pale. He must know that "enlightenment" is not the same as the sun of righteousness, and that it is still before dawn, as long as he cannot see the first ray of that sun on the horizon of his world view. Thomas Chalmers impressed upon his theological students that the breaking up of the tranquillity of nature is most necessary but it is not sufficient. "Man must realise "wherein...his

(15) Witsius, op.cit. p.323

(16) George Lawson, A discourse on the condition and duty of unconverted sinners, Edinburgh 1805, p.228

precise deficiency lies, and what that is which...will repair the deficiency".⁽¹⁷⁾ Unconverted man is inclined either to self-righteousness or to utter despondency. Mild suasion would neither call the self-righteous to the consciousness of his total depravity, nor convince the desperate of the overwhelming power of the Spirit of conversion. "If the depravity of man is so entire and total as that he labours under an inability to will anything spiritually good and therefore... must have his will renewed by a power from without...then... the power by which the renovation of the will was actually effected must have been such that he could not resist or overcome it...If it were a power that could be overcome, it would not be sufficient to effect the result".⁽¹⁸⁾

Reformed theology ^{ascribes!} contributes little value to the dissatisfaction of an unconverted sinner with his former life, unless he submits entirely to the discipline and the mercy of God. A man who has just lost a week's wages by gambling might stop a strange minister in the street and tell him of his folly. He is grieved because he has staked his money on the wrong horse - but not because he is a sinner. Attrition which played an important part in scholastic theology, is not considered as a first step to contrition by the teachers of the evangelical Churches. Calvin himself dealt with the objection of those who find that it is "harsh and at variance with the divine mercy, utterly to deny forgiveness to any who betake

(17) Chalmers op.cit. Vol. VIII, p.462

(18) Cunningham, Hist. Theology, Vol. II, p.410

themselves to it. This is easily disposed of. It is not said that pardon will be refused if they turn to the Lord, but it is altogether denied that they can turn to repentance, inasmuch as for their ingratitude they are struck by the just judgment of God with eternal blindness". Calvin mentions the example of Esau who tried in vain by crying and tears to recover his birthright and of the Israelites who wept when they saw the result of their wickedness. "Such modes of expression do not denote true conversion or calling upon God, but that anxiety with which the wicked, when in calamity, are compelled to see what they before securely disregarded, viz. that nothing can avail but the assistance of God. This, however, they do not so much implore as lament the loss of it."⁽¹⁹⁾

Examples of this state of mind are numerous. Lawson tells very vividly, from his own pastoral experience, the story of a man who when he was dangerously ill made promises to live a Christian life if God would preserve him. He recovered and for a time changed his ways. But he left it off after a while. When illness seized him for the second time, he gave up hope and died unreconciled. Lawson then refers like Calvin to the children of Israel who when the Lord slew them "sought him, and returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that the Lord had been their rock and the High God their Redeemer. Yet they lied unto God with their mouths and flattered him with their tongues.

(19) Inst. III.III.24

They did not intentionally lie, they were frequently sincere
(20)
in their promises, but not with a godly sincerity."

Such teaching would drive the sinner to despair or even to despise the Christian faith altogether, if the assurance could not be given at the same time that God seeks those who are lost and prepares them for the great change. Does the preparation of the sinner take place before dawn in the darkness of the soul before the new birth, or does the first auroral light of a new day fall upon this strange pre-conversion experience of the elect? It cannot be said that this question has been satisfactorily answered in evangelical doctrine. It is significant that the Formula of Concord does not even mention the preparation for conversion in the life of the unregenerate.

But it is evident that there existed various shades of opinion on this question which reflected the different viewpoints concerning the nature of unregenerate man in general.
(21)
The theologians who followed Melancthon would like Hunius in his "De libero arbitrio" and "De providentia Dei..." ascribe "the inclination of learning and of understanding saving truth" to the natural man. Hunius refers specially to Amos 8.11 "Behold the days come saith the Lord, God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord". It seems obvious that those who have felt that hunger and that thirst

(20) ref. Lawson op.cit. p.204 f.

(21) For the following references Luthardt, Kompendium p. 389-391

are not yet converted, and yet their hunger and thirst are preparatory acts of God. Quenstedt shows certain stages of conversion. The *gratia incipiens et praeventura* abolishes the natural inability to receive conversion, the *gratia praeparativa* binds the resistance of the unregenerate, the *gratia excitans* includes an external knowledge and general confidence and at last the law brings forth the feeling of repentance because of past sins. The *gratia operativa* effects the conversion itself and opens the heart, the *gratia perficiens* produces the acknowledgement of sin and the act of faith, but the conversion itself is a matter of one moment and only after it the cooperation of man begins.

It must be asserted that Quenstedt goes much further than any other orthodox theologian in ascribing certain stages in the conversion of man to his preparation. Especially repentance as will be seen later is generally considered as one of the fruits of conversion if not as the act of conversion itself. But it may be right to assume that these variations in the evangelical doctrine of conversion are closely related to the individual experience of different theologians. It is obvious that at the outset of a great religious movement the majority of believers may suddenly be struck by a great conversion experience, the diligent study of the Word of God, repentance, faith and sanctification follow. But in the case of men who already stand in a religious tradition certain preparations seem to precede

the actual conversion experience. But it may also be asserted that God prepares his elect in different ways. Paul received his preparations at the feet of Gamaliel, Timothy on his mother's knee.

Over against theologians like Quenstedt and Chemnitz, who inclined towards the synergistic doctrine of Melancthon, stand the dogmaticians of the ultra-orthodox type who see in the desire for information, which the elect often show before their actual conversion, the effect of anticipating grace rather than a preparatory grace, and a desire for news rather than for truth. It is of course possible to quote Bible passages for both sides. Nicodemus was a seeker after truth, while the Athenians to whom Paul preached spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.⁽²²⁾ It is quite likely that Dionysius, the Areopagite differed before his conversion not a bit from the average Athenian.

Musaeus, who represents the middle line of thought in Lutheran theology, ascribes to the natural man as far as spiritual things are concerned certain pedagogic acts of understanding and will^{which} may even go the length of a certain general valuation of salvation, though conversion or the acts of the spirit (pious thoughts connected with the desire and effort to acquire the good) have not yet started.

(22) Acts 17.21

The whole problem of preparation was more clearly defined and brought up for discussion in the writings of the Reformed theologians.

Typical of continental orthodoxy in Reformed theology are the statements of Heidegger and of the Leidener Synopsis⁽²³⁾. Heidegger says that when the hour of salvation has come, the elect will not receive the grace of God in vain (II. Cor.6.1), but useful and fruitful things will be done, yet no disposition, preparation, fitness, sufficient or efficient grace can be recognised in anyone who is not yet regenerated. The Leidener Synopsis saw in the call of nature, law and gospel no real preparation; but those who resist that call make themselves more liable to condemnation and are without excuse.

The question of preparation before conversion was discussed at the Synod of Dort. Bishop Hall, the English delegate, who was full of praise for the work of the Synod and identified himself with most of its findings, was nevertheless at variance with the continental theologians as far as this particular point is concerned. He wrote in his Via media⁽²⁴⁾, after confirming that there is no active power in the will of the natural man to work his own conversion, "There are yet certain foregoing acts that are pre-required to the conversion of a man, and they are both inward and outward. Outward as to go to the Church, to sit reverently, to hearken

(23) Heppe, Dogmatik der ev. - ref. Kirche, p. 419

(24) Joseph Hall, Works, London 1863, Vol. IX, p.493

to the word spoken: in these we have freedom of will either way. Inward as the knowledge of God's will, the feeling of our sin, the fear of hell, the thought of deliverance, some hope of pardon: for the grace of God doth not use to work upon a man immediately by sudden ruptures, but by meet preparations. ... These inward acts tending towards conversion, are by the power of the word and Spirit of God, wrought in the heart of a man not yet justified." He explains that these foregoing inward acts are through the fault of the rebellious will often choked and quenched, so that the reprobates fall away again and give themselves up to their own lusts. Even the elect behave in these foregoing acts often in such a way that they deserve to be forsaken of God, who nevertheless draws them to Him. "When the hearts of his elect are thus excited and prepared by the foregoing acts of grace, God doth - by His secret and wonderful work - regenerate and renew them".⁽²⁵⁾

Witsius, who represents the strict view of the Dutch Reformed Church, acknowledges that the statements of the British divines do not favour Pelagianism. He quotes for instance Perkins who reckons among the preparations, "1. A breaking of the natural obstinancy and a flexibility of the will; 2. a serious consideration of the law; 3. A consideration of their own sins and offences against God; 4. A

(25) Ibid. p. 495

(26) Witsius, op.cit. p.327

legal fear of punishment and a dread of hell and consequently a despairing of their own salvation with respect to anything of themselves."

But Witsius does not accuse the British theologians who hold the views of Perkins, Hall and others of heterodoxy, in so far as he admits "the orthodox differ more in words and in the manner of explaining than in sense and reality..⁽²⁷⁾"

But it is obvious that he formulates all his statements in such a way that they cannot be turned into anything which may remind of Arminianism. Therefore he thinks that it is more accurate to speak of "preparations to the further and more perfect operations of a more noble and plentiful spirit". These are "not preparations for regeneration, but the fruit and effects of the first regeneration".

Little progress has been made in later development of Evangelical theology as to the preparation of the unconverted. All dogmaticians agree that even if we suppose that there is a definite preparation before conversion, this is not the work of natural man, but of grace. Schleiermacher for instance states "All that preparatory grace has already brought to pass within him co-operates of course, but this is itself part of the divine work of grace and not of his own action"⁽²⁸⁾. Neander who follows Schleiermacher closely distinguishes between those who yield to the lusts of the flesh without being

(27) Witsius, op.cit., p.328

(28) Schleiermacher, op.cit., p.493

conscious of the law of the Spirit at all and those "who are already conscious of the divine law, but have not yet received the light concerning their own relationship to the law. They feel the difference between that which is of the spirit and that which is of the flesh; they feel that the goods of the flesh cannot give them satisfaction, which their higher nature demands. But because they have the law of the Spirit before their eyes, because they strive for that which is of the Spirit, because they do not yield to the desires of the flesh, they think that they have already fulfilled the law of the Spirit...They are satisfied with their own wisdom and righteousness".⁽²⁹⁾ Neander chose as a typical representative of this state of mind before conversion Nicodemus, and he was apparently thinking of himself before he became a "ῥεὸς ἀρχῆς". But it is even the Nicodemus - Neander type who would most certainly have lived and died as unconverted men, always near the Kingdom of God and yet outside of it - if Christ had not entered the life of such men. The value of the preparation seems very small and rather ambiguous, compared with the power of the grace of conversion.

Seeking for some guidance among Reformed theologians of the last century, we find nothing which has not already been discussed at the Synod of Dort. Hodge calls "the operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind which precedes and excites its efforts to return to God" not very happily "preventing grace"⁽³⁰⁾

(29) August Neander, Die mannigfachen Wege des Herrn in der Bekehrung, contained in Kleine Gelegenheitsschriften, Berlin 1829, p. 161 f.

(30) Charles Hodge, op.cit. Vol. II, p.654

which may be followed by real conversion or not.

This prevenient or preventing grace is sometimes identified with "sufficient grace", an expression which leads to a great deal of misunderstanding. It may be said that sufficient grace belongs to the terminology of "lucus a non lucendo", for it is a form of grace which is not sufficient to work conversion in man. It may be sufficient to convince man "of sin and of their need of redemption, of the truth of the gospel, of their duty to accept its offers and to live in obedience to its commands and that their impenitence and unbelief are due to themselves...But it is not sufficient...to change the heart and to produce regeneration".⁽³¹⁾

In Arminian doctrine "sufficient grace" is believed to be God's design to save all men under the condition that they accept His outward call. Calvinists on the other hand assert that God's call is "mainly designed to effect the result of calling out and saving God's chosen people: and they deny that grace, or gracious divine assistance, sufficient to produce faith and regeneration, is given to all men".⁽³²⁾ Therefore the preparation of the sinner for God's call is sufficient if the person is one of those chosen to be born again, but it is insufficient if the sinner will never be led along the Damascus Road.

(31) Charles Hodge, op.cit. Vol. II, p. 677

(32) Cunningham, Hist. Theol. Vol. II, p.397

The principal issue which arises out of this discussion is the value of the preaching of the law and the gospel to the unconverted. Augustinian theology is always exposed to the accusation of Pelagians and Arminians, that their doctrine of conversion discourages the missionary approach. This fallacy is clearly rejected by all theologians who take their evangelical commission seriously.

On the other hand it cannot be denied that the evangelical theologian who preaches the gospel, has been faced with a much more difficult task than either the Roman Catholic or the Arminian. For several centuries Jesuits were the most active missionaries in non-Christian lands, for conversion in the Roman Catholic sense was achieved when the population of a village or of a province received baptism. Also those missionaries whose theological ancestors are Pelagius and Arminius, whether they acknowledge it or not, seemed to have a more vigorous message than Calvinists and orthodox Lutherans, for they could appear before the unconverted with the gesture of the Roman ambassador to Carthage who said that he had peace and war in his hand. They had to choose between peace with God or war on the side of Satan. If some of the reformed theologians failed in their missionary effort, it is impossible to blame the doctrine of Paul and Augustine for it, because Paul himself is the outstanding example that the doctrine of grace does not hinder but rather promotes the preaching of the gospel. It

has often been regretted that Luther especially lacked the vision of realizing the need for preaching the gospel to natives of continents beyond the sea. Missionary-minded people may find the position of the Reformers naive, that the gospel has already been preached by the apostles to all nations and that it would be presumptuous for men to reverse the ordinances of God by trying to convert them now. It may have been God's will to establish the evangelical faith first among the Christian people of Europe firmly, before sending out missionaries to every corner of the world, but it may also be that the delay of missionary enterprise was simply a failure of early Protestantism which revealed that even the saints have their shortcomings and that the Church on earth is still imperfect.

Yet the evangelical doctrine of conversion has inspired the modern missionary movement. In this movement the minister of the gospel is an instrument of God's prevenient grace. When Robert Morrison, who was to become the father of Protestant missions in China, set out on his journey in the year 1804, an incredulous American asked him: "Mr. Morrison, do you think you can make any impresion on China?" he answered "No, but I think the Lord can".

To teach the ignorant, to heal the sick and to proclaim the good tidings of Christ, is a task allotted to Christian missions. Schools, hospitals and Churches are accessible to anyone in those countries where Christianity

has been established for a thousand or for fifteen hundred years. They are open to those who are converted and also to those who are not. God does not withhold his prevenient grace from anyone, but from the number of them who are thus prepared, he has chosen his elect.

"The sovereignty of God's grace and the absolute freeness of his purpose of election, do not interfere with the use of means..."⁽³³⁾

It is the greatest privilege of a Christian believer to know that he or she may be used as means of bringing the tidings of salvation to others. Different tasks are appointed to doctors of the Church, preachers of the gospel and faithful believers who follow their secular calling. Not everyone possesses the gift of exhibiting Christian doctrine to an unbeliever, not everyone may have the ability of preaching the word, but even "a weak Christian with the armour of righteousness on his right hand and left, may bring to the ground a gigantic adversary armed only with straw or rotten wood".⁽³⁴⁾

But here a word of caution may be needed, especially for our present-day missionary enterprise which is not only concerned with the heathen abroad but also with the heathen among us. The multitude of means applied in order to draw unbelievers into the fellowship of the Church does not equal the effectiveness of one truly evangelical message. No one can be persuaded to be a Christian; he must be convicted of

(33) Lawson, op.cit. p.218

(34) Ibid. p. 375

his sinful state and thus be prepared for the moment of conversion. The apostle did not offer any apology for preaching the gospel, he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. The teaching of some of the post-reformation divines may seem rather negative in this respect and yet must their warning be taken to heart. It is wrong that "some gentle blast or air of golden words, some breathings and spirations of fine reasonings from man or angel can do much. No, but it is not so; no less can draw a sinner to Christ than the arms of the Father".⁽³⁵⁾

Suasion might be sufficient to bring a man to Christ if he were simply too weak to come by himself. But "weakness is...not the nearest cause of our not coming to Christ, but wilful weakness or rather weak-willfulness...Not only weakness but willfulness has influence in man's unbelief".⁽³⁶⁾

The unconverted sinner resists, as an untamed colt struggles and kicks. Those who try to lure him by arguments find that they themselves are lured out of the fence of the Christian faith. The unconverted sinner likes to argue about the lack of God's providence, the unreasonableness of Biblical history, the contradictions of God's words, the failures of the Church as a whole and some individuals who call themselves Christians in particular.

Soon the unconverted man thinks that he has gained the upper hand. "I do not feel better after having attended

(35) Rutherford, op. cit. p.231

(36) Ibid. p.232

Church. I cannot get anything out of that service. I serve God without prayer and worship and I am just as good as the rest".

John Wesley in a sermon on the "new birth" from which we already quoted, staged a dialogue between such a man and the preacher of the gospel. Its powerful message and pure evangelical truth is a model not only for the public preaching of conversion, but still more for the personal approach to one whose presumptions must be broken, till in his despair he will cry out: "What shall I do to be saved?"

The sermon deals with the questions why, how and to what end a man must be born again. Lastly Wesley answers objections.⁽³⁷⁾ The first objection raised by his opponents concerns baptismal regeneration. We shall come back to this point in Wesley's sermon when we deal with the relationship of baptism and conversion. The next objection is that of the "honest man". He hears him saying "I do no harm to any man: I am honest and just in all my dealings; I do not curse or take the Lord's name in vain; I do not profane the Lord's day; I am no drunkard; I do not slander my neighbour, nor live in any wilful sin". The answer is: "If this be so, it were much to be wished that all men went as far as you do. But you must go further yet, or you cannot be saved. Still, you must be born again". The honest man becomes indignant, for he is a "good man" too whose works testify for him. Wesley

(37) Wesley, op.cit. Vol. VI, p.75 ff

shows himself rather sceptical on this point, but concedes: even "if you really had done all the good you possibly could do to all men, yet this does not at all alter the case: still you must be born again". But there comes a last effort of the honest and good man; he claims to be a practising Christian. "I keep to my Church and Sacrament". Wesley gives a stern answer: "It is well you do. But all this will not keep you from hell, except you be born again...Let this therefore be your continual prayer: Lord add this to all thy blessing - let me be born again".

But how does man become aware of this urgent need? Who tells him that he must be born again? An animal would never feel the need of spiritual regeneration. Natural man is more than an animal. He is endowed with a gift which is a dangerous possession in the state of sin, but may be used by God as means of preparation - conscience. It is dangerous for the natural man, because there is nothing to quieten the "bad conscience" if man does not know the way out of hell, and there is nothing to stir him up if he thinks that he has a good conscience, for it reconciles him to his spiritual death instead of overcoming the power of death. "Let the most perfect man descent into his own conscience, and bring his actions to account, and what will the result be? Will he feel calm and quiescent, as if all matters were well arranged between himself and God; or will he not rather be stung with dire torment, when he sees that the ground of condemnation is within him, if he be estimated by his works? Conscience, when

it beholds God, must either have sure peace with His
justice or be beset by the terrors of hell."⁽³⁸⁾

What then is conscience? It is the awareness of judgement. It may overtake the sinner before dusk, for even Judas felt the pricks of an evil conscience, when the night of eternal death fell upon him. But it is also present in the unconverted sinner on the eve of his conversion. Before dawn when he is cited to the judgement seat of God, man is tormented by the stings of his conscience. To those who are of Judas' ilk it is the porch of hell, to those "which shew the work of law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accus-
ing or else excusing one another"⁽³⁹⁾, it is the last circle of purgatory "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men
by Jesus Christ according to my gospel".⁽⁴⁰⁾

Emil Brunner describes conscience as "a dark, alien hostile power". This terrible power, the Furies which were known even to pagan people, "is not a rational, but an emotional kind of knowledge. Man feels "disturbed, injured, affected by...the consciousness that things are not right with him". He can evade, but he cannot get rid of his conscience. Man realizes not only that a certain act is wrong, but he ex-
periences his responsibility."⁽⁴¹⁾

Conscience belongs so much to the nature of man that

(39) Rom. 2.15

(38) Inst. III.XIII.3

(40) Rom. 2.16

(41) Emil Brunner, Divine Imperative, London 1937, p. 156 f.

it is not lost even after conversion. It is wrong, utterly wrong to assume that conscience can produce faith, it is equally wrong to imagine that the evil conscience which frightens us before dawn is changed into a "good conscience" after daybreak. If "good conscience" means the doping of our fears by the emotions which often accompany the new birth, then it is worthless. If it means satisfaction with our human achievements then it is a form of hypocrisy. We must notice its presence at this stage of a soul's pilgrimage, but we cannot see the awakening of the soul promoted by man's conscience.

All evangelical teachers and preachers admonish unconverted sinners to attend Church, to read the Bible and to pray. Though it may often happen that "those who diligently attend the means of grace/^{do so} to flatter themselves; but they live within the sound of a voice which is often crying in their ears; Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven"⁽⁴²⁾. The impulse must come from outside. "Take, read. Listen, believe. Arise, go. Repent and be saved. Ye must be born again." Whether these words are spoken by the mouth of an angel or of Christ, whether the sinner reads them in Holy Scripture or hears them from a fellow Christian in Church or in private exhortation, whether he is drawn by the example of others or by the call of his Saviour, he follows not his own voice, but the voice of God. Augustinian theology has endeavoured to contrast the darkness of the

(42) Lawson op.cit. p.221

unconverted soul with the brightness of the life in Christ. The Reformers were loath to indulge in speculations of the twilight in which the soul moves between night and day, for nothing can be proved in Christian doctrine that is not firmly established by revelation. In the full light of revelation alone Christian doctrine greets the new day that dawns on the horizon.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost".⁽⁴³⁾

(43) II. Peter 1.19-21

On the road to Damascus:

"Now, I saw in my dream, that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall that was called Salvation...Just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden was loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back, and began to tumble and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre where it fell in, and I saw it no more." John Bunyan, 'Pilgrim's Progress.'

Sudden is the change from the first dawn to the full blaze of the sun in the Syrian desert, but slowly the sun rises on the northern sky. Christians of different ages, of different races and of different mentalities live also in a different spiritual climate. Paul's Damascus experience was no doubt "the impression of a tremendous shining light, like the light of the first day of God's creation shining out of the darkness..."⁽¹⁾ The light which the Danish prophet of the 19th century perceived was hidden behind the clouds till the day was nearly spent. "Conversion is a slow process" Kierkegaard complains and feels uneasy about his own impatience. "If it cannot happen immediately one might just as well give up, or begin to-morrow and enjoy to-day; that is temptation - surely that is the meaning of the words: to take the Kingdom of Heaven by storm?"⁽²⁾

(1) Adolf Deissmann, Paul, London 1926 p.129f ref. II Co^r.4.6

(2) Soren Kierkegaard, Journals, London 1938, par. 61

In the Bible God reveals Himself to men by vision and by audition. Paul saw a light and heard a voice. God uses signs to reveal His presence. In the union between the signs and the things signified lies the reality of the experience. The light in whose wonderful-painful glare all material things vanish from our sight, is the visible sign of that illumination which enlightens the darkened mind. The voice from heaven is the echo of God's own call which He addresses to man in the state of conversion. "God's signs are always appropriate to the particular disposition of the person whom He calls and enlightens. Some are more sensitive to the things they see, others to the sounds they hear, while a third group may be impressed by both vision and audition. Luther who himself was a 'visionary' in the true sense of the word, though "the illumination which first gave an aim to his inward struggle has absolutely nothing miraculous in itself"⁽³⁾, lives through Paul's Damascus vision in his interpretation of Acts 9. "Now the right hour has come, when in the open he suddenly sees a magnificent light. No heart is strong enough though it were of gravel or diamond that could stand and not break. Therefore Paul falls to the ground, and is blinded by horror, so that he undoubtedly thought, it is all over now, thou must die. The painters do not represent the story rightly, for they paint how a thunder-stroke struck Paul to the ground. But as it is written here and in other places, it was neither lightning nor thunder,

(3) Heinrich Boehmer, Luther and the Reformation in the Light of modern research, London 1930, p.83

but a sudden light in which he saw the Lord Jesus"⁽⁴⁾ Does Luther perhaps allude to his first "conversion" experience in which lightning and thunder were the melodramatic accompaniment of his call to a monastic life? But the light which really illumined his mind was that in which he saw the Lord Jesus. This is no coup de theatre which the "enthusiasts" favour. Wesley in a letter to Rev. Mr. Downes rejects the insinuation that "the signs of (Methodist) conversion were frightful tremors of body and convulsive agonies of mind"⁽⁵⁾. No lightning and thunder, no attack of epilepsy either in the case of Paul or in the case of any other truly converted person, and yet - "we do believe" says Wesley "the new birth to be as miraculous or supernatural a work now as it was seventeen hundred years ago".

The story of conversion experiences makes a moving reading and a startling address. It is not the concern of this inquiry into the evangelical doctrine of conversion to draw up a record of the psychological phenomena which accompany the making of a new man. But on the other hand, we must be conscious of the fact that the great teachers of the faith were also men who had their own experience of life. Luther's theology cannot be understood without knowledge of his wrestling in the cloister in Erfurt, his journey to Rome and the awakenings of his soul when he was suddenly illumined by the sentence:

(4) Martin Luther, Werke, ed. by Walch, Vol. XIII, p.2525

(5) Wesley, op.cit. Vol. IX, p.104

"The just shall live by faith".

Calvin's conversion experience may appear less dramatic in some respects and yet it is the most convincing proof that his theology is the result not only of thought but even more of revelation.

There are several theories concerning the date of his conversion: the arguments for and against each one of these dates are carefully weighed by Calvin's great biographer Doumergue.⁽⁶⁾ We may anticipate Doumergue's assumption, which is now generally accepted that there are two principal records of Calvin's conversion from his own hand, one is found in the Preface to the Commentary on Psalms and the other in the letter to Cardinal Sadolet.⁽⁷⁾ In this letter Calvin represents an evangelical pastor defending his ministry before God. In the portrait of the pastor Calvin's self-portrait⁽⁸⁾ can easily be recognised.

In several aspects both the preface and the letter give an identical impression of Calvin's spiritual experience, in others they are complementary. In the Preface Calvin tells of his "sudden conversion". It is possible that he refers to this experience in the letter where he says: "I heard from Thy mouth that there was no other light of truth which could direct our souls into the way of life, than that which was kindled by Thy Word". The emphasis on the immediate hearing

(6) E. Doumergue, Jean Calvin, Lausanne 1899, Vol. I, pp.327-355

(7) Ibid. p.347

(8) Calvin, Tracts (Calvin Soc.Ed.) Vol. I, pp.56-68

from the mouth of God reminds us of the Pauline phrase "I received from the Lord..." Nevertheless nothing is said in the letter which seems to indicate beyond doubt that the hearing is confined to a single, miraculous audition. The conversion experience was definitely the beginning of a spiritual development which covered the space of several years.

The Letter contains more details than the Preface as to the existence which Calvin led before his conversion. He shared Paul's and Luther's experience of the man who seeks his own salvation by fulfilling the law. "When, however, I had performed all these things, though I had some intervals of quiet, I was still far off from true peace of conscience; for whenever I descended into myself, or raised my mind to Thee, extreme terror seized me - terror which no expiations nor satisfaction could cure". He describes the pricks of conscience under which he suffered, till he heard of the new doctrine which instead of leading away from the Christian profession brought him back to the fountain head. The following part of his experience resembles that of Paul, but not that of Luther. "Offended by the novelty, I lent an unwilling ear, and at first, I confess, strenuously and passionately resisted... One thing, in particular, made me averse to those new teachers, viz. reverence for the Church".

Though Calvin was never a persecutor of the new faith, he at first "kicked against the pricks". But the

evangelicals helped him to realize how he was led astray by his error, the Lord Himself bearing testimony "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15, 14). At this moment follows the illumination for which his mind was now prepared so that "I at length perceived, as if light had broken in upon me". (Letter) In the Preface we are told of a most remarkable and yet very typical stage in Calvin's life. A year after his conversion he who was himself still a novice, attracted all those who wished to learn the pure doctrine from him.

Again and again, the Preface Calvin speaks of his natural timidity, his bashfulness, his desire for a restful and quiet life of study. But like the prophets of old he overcame this mood which stood between him and his vocation.

The prophets became his examples, for they too were attacked by the priests of their age as being schismatics. Yet "they wished to revive religion which had fallen into decay". (Letter)

But Calvin's conflict was not over. The struggle which began in him when he was first converted reached its climax during a visit to Geneva, where William Farel detained him by a dreadful imprecation, "which I felt to be as if God had from heaven laid his mighty hand upon me to arrest me". (Preface)

Thus in Calvin's experience we find all the elements of Paul's conversion: the vain attempt to justify himself, the new teaching against which he objects at first, the

illumination by a great light, the acceptance of the call under fear and trembling and the neophyte's preaching of the true gospel.

Calvin's Confessions, far from being unique, are the pattern of evangelical conversion. John Knox' experience in St. Andrews for instance was very much like that of Calvin in Geneva, John Rough playing the same part in John Knox' life as William Farel in the life of John Calvin. Knox being charged "not to refuse this holy vacation" burst out into tears, shut himself up in his chamber and showed an anxious countenance till the day when he was compelled to
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preach in public.

There is one characteristic of genuine conversion which must always be present. Though it may be difficult to fix the actual date when the new birth took place, the great change is a fact in the history of a human life, so that there was in every man's life a time when he was not converted and there is also a time when the same man is undoubtedly regenerated. As the gospel of Christ is framed by events of secular history (ref. Luke 2.1 ff and 3.1 f.), so is the good news of man's conversion, an event in time which will be remembered in connection with the common happenings of every day life. In this respect the

(9) Thomas McKrie, Life of John Knox, London and Edinburgh 1905, Period II, p. 24 f. C/

biographical notes of Johann Georg Hamann are most remarkable. Hamann's life like that of Kierkegaard who lived almost a century later, was humanly speaking unsatisfactory. Both were prophetic natures, but neither of them became a preacher of the gospel. But Hamann's influence on others was as mighty as that of Kierkegaard. Yet Hamann's piety is simpler than that of Kierkegaard, his conversion experience is much more definite than that of the great Dane. Hamann who was born in Keonigsberg and held humble positions as private tutor in the Baltic provinces of Russia, went to London like Jonah to Tarshish. In his "Gedanken ueber meinen Lebenslauf" he tells us of his unsuccessful business transactions, of the terrible disappointment which the immoral life of a friend caused, of his landlord, of the coffee house in which he took his meals, of the constipation/which he suffered, ^{from} the debts which worried him till suddenly the great change occurred.

He had prayed God for a friend, a wise and honest friend - and God answered his prayer in a most wonderful way. He had read the Old Testament once from the beginning to the end and the New Testament twice. "While I wanted to make another start" he writes ⁽¹⁰⁾ "I seemed to become aware that a cover was spread over my reason and my heart, which had closed the book for me at the first time. I decided therefore to read it with greater attention, in better order and with more

(10) Johann Georg Hamann, Schriften, Berlin 1821, Vol. I, p.211

hunger, and to write down the thoughts which would come into my mind". These thoughts are collected in two small writings "Biblische Betrachtungen"⁽¹¹⁾ and "Brocken"⁽¹²⁾. The "Biblische Betrachtungen" are introduced by a short Preface or Motto whose Leitmotiv is this : Biblical history is a prophesy which is fulfilled in the soul of every man. The Spirit of God is revealed in His Word, is incarnate and dwells among us full of grace and truth. The "Betrachtungen" are dated "London, den 19. März am Palmsonntage 1758". The first sentence is a confession. "I began today with God to read the Holy Scripture for the second time". On the 31st of March he came to the 5th chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. In his meditation he thought of Abel of whom God said to Cain: the earth has opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. (Gen. 4.11)

God seems suddenly to fall upon Johann Georg Hamann convicting him of his guilt and at the same time calling him by his mercy and love. "I felt my heart beat, I heard a voice within moaning and groaning, as the voice of blood, the voice of a brother who was slain, who wanted to avenge his blood, if I did not hear it in time and continued to shut my ear against it... I could not hide it before God any longer, that I was the brother's murderer, the fratricide of his self-begotten son. The Spirit of God continued in spite of my

(11) Johann Georg Hamann, Schriften, Berlin 1821, Vol. I. p.49ff

(12) Ibid. p. 125 ff.

great weakness and in spite of my long resistance...to reveal the mystery of the divine love and the benefit of the faith in our gracious and only Saviour more and more to me".⁽¹³⁾

Hamann's experience is not unique, and the astonishing influence of this almost pietistic writer on great thinkers of the "enlightenment" Kant, Herder, Jacobi and others is simply that Hamann spoke in plain language about the mysteries which he had seen and heard. For this "speaking about" he may be numbered with the prophets. In the younger Churches of Asia and Africa the conversion experience is still in many cases accompanied by visions and auditions. Kagawa, whose earnest faith is not emotional at all, saw as a young student the crucified Christ in a vision, so real and so haunting that he could not escape it. He threw himself into the service of the Kingdom.⁽¹⁴⁾

Rudolf Otto in an essay "Das Auferstehungserlebnis als pneumatische Erfahrung" says that Isaiah's experience of his call, ordination and installation in his great vision was not a unique but a typical process; that is to say, it belongs to one category with all pneumatic-mystical experiences which are repeated in Jeremiah 1, Ezekiel 1 and 2, Amos 1 and Hosea 1. Even in Paul's conversion Otto finds the same "style", not the "style" of a narrative, but of typical, mysterious events. Paul classifies his experience with that of Peter and other

(13) Johann Georg Hamann, Schriften, Berlin 1821, Vol. I, p. 213

(14) Toyohiko Kagawa, The Religion of Jesus, London 1936, biographical introduction p. 9 f.

disciples. Peter has the gift to see visions (ref. Acts 10) and this prophetic experience of the spiritual call is the possession of the whole "Urgemeinde". The substance of the vision which prophets and apostles saw, was the same: God in His glory. Isaiah saw Him, sitting on His throne, high and lifted up between the cherubim. The apostles saw the risen Christ. To every Christian the assurance of Christ's resurrection is such that by believing in Him, he can behold His glory. He confesses: "I know that my Redeemer liveth". Otto has this fine comfort for those who doubt, for those who fear that "they have not got it". He tells them that "the risen Lord wants to be 'our consolation' and not a torment of our truth-conscience".⁽¹⁵⁾

The Damascus experience is the central point in the Christian life. No one has seen it clearer than a non-Christian thinker. Professor Ben Shalom of Jerusalem University concluded his "Religionsgespraeche" with George Sloan of Tiberias by openly confessing: "Something happened to Saul on the Damascus Road which completely altered his way of thought and life, so that it was right that hereafter he should have the new name of Paul. We Jews can never understand the secret the Christian entertains in his heart because we have 'not been along that road'".⁽¹⁶⁾

But Paul trembling and astonished said: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do.

(15) Rudolf Otto, Aufsätze das Numinoose betreffend, Stuttgart-Gotha 1928, p.159 ff

(16) George Sloan - Ben Shalom, pamphlet Das Christliche Verständnis des Alten Testaments/der Juedische Einwand, Jerusalem 1941

W r o n g l y n u m b e r e d

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V.

V O C A T I O N.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's Light:
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright".

Horatius Bonar.

The number of Christian believers who perceived visible signs and received an audible call in the hour of conversion is small, but every Christian has experienced a call and a vision at the beginning of his Christian life. These are the signs which signify his vocation and his spiritual enlightenment. Martin Luther taught the ordinary Christian man, woman and child to confess that "the Holy Ghost (1) has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me by his gifts.."

Spiritual enlightenment is not a flashing sign which vanishes, but a lifelong process, it is one of the marks of the new Birth, which will be examined in a later chapter. Vocation is the starting point in the life of any regenerate person and must be considered now; though the call may be repeated.

Two different views appear in the evangelical doctrine of conversion regarding God's call. The Lutheran Calov held that conversion and regeneration are cognates to (2) vocation, while most of the Reformed theologians believed that vocation is the cause of regeneration. (Burmann: "The

(1) Martin Luther, Kleiner Katechismus, Zweites Hauptstueck, Dritter, Artikel.

(2) ref. Werner Elert, Morphologie des Luthertum's, München, 1931. Vol. 1., p. 125.

first effect of vocation is regeneration" and Heidegger: "The work of divine vocation is the new birth, the regeneration or second birth".⁽³⁾

The Westminster Divines unified both views by practically identifying conversion and vocation. The vocation which effects conversion and becomes almost indistinguishable from regeneration is effectual calling. It is "the work of God's almighty power and grace, whereby (out of his free and special love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto" he doth, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ, by his word and Spirit; savingly enlightening their minds, renewing and powerfully determining their wills, so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer his call, and to accept the grace offered and conveyed therein."⁽⁴⁾

The elect is therefore not only bound to hear God's call, but by being effectually called he is already made new. It is significant that Wesley who accepted large parts of the Westminster Confession, deleted the articles referring to effectual calling. Arminianism as a whole maintains that man has enough free will left to say "Yes" or "No" when God extends His call to him. In Reformed doctrine on the other hand a clear distinction is drawn between the general call which appeals to every man whether elect or reprobate through the

(3) Heppe, Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformtierten Kirche, p. 416.

(4) Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 67.

gospel, and the effectual call which contains the definite promise: "Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be bright".

One of the principal reasons why in Reformed Theology the operation of the Holy Spirit by which man is brought to repentance and faith, is called Vocation, is simply that this term is frequently used in Scripture. Hodge claims that this adherence to scriptural terminology is one of the many excellences of the Reformed Theology.⁽⁵⁾ He quotes a great number of proof texts, from most of Paul's Epistles, from Hebrews, 1. and 2. Peter and Revelation, where heavenly and holy calling is always used in the sense of the saving influence of the Holy Spirit. But it should be noticed that this term is not used in the same sense in any of the gospels. In all cases but two the meaning of the word "to call" is in the gospels that of everyday language. The exceptions are a)⁽⁶⁾ "Many are called, but few are chosen" Our Lord contrasts the chosen with those who are merely called, while the writers of the epistles use the words "called and chosen"⁽⁷⁾ almost as synonymous. But Jesus refers to the general call of the gospel which can be heard both by the majority that is rejected and by the minority that is chosen. b) In the passage "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance"⁽⁸⁾ Jesus emphasized the possible success of the

(5) Charles Hodge, op.cit. Vol. II, p. 639.

(6) Matthew 22.14.

(7) Rev. 17.14.

(8) Mark 2,17.

general call in the case of sinners but he certainly does not mean that this call is effectual in itself, for many of the sinners to whom He addressed His call to repentance heeded it not. In the Old Testament the call of a prophet is practically the same as the appointment of a prophet. The word is used in a similar sense by the writers of the Epistles for the making of redeemed Christians by the Spirit of Jesus. This consideration leads us to the conclusion that "effectual calling" is a scriptural term, based on a large number of texts, but it does not exclude other synonyms for regeneration which are used by evangelical divines who do not adhere to Reformed Theology in the strict sense.

But at the same time Reformed Theology distinguishes much more clearly the general call of the gospel from the effectual calling of Christ.

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According to Witsius the call is given "partly externally, by a persuasive power, called moral suasion, partly internally, by a real supernatural efficacy, which changes the heart. The external call is, in some measure, published by the word of nature but more fully by that of supernatural revelation..... The internal comes from the power of the Holy Spirit working inwardly on the heart; and without this, every external revealed word, though objectively very sufficient.... is subjectively ineffectual, nor will it ever bring any person to the communion of Christ".

John Brown in his invaluable catachetical commentary on the Westminster Confession and Catechism draws a fine

(9) Witsius, op.cit. p. 311.

distinction between an act and a work of God. Effectual calling is not an act, which is done in one moment, but a work of God which requires more time and "is made up of sundry acts"⁽¹⁰⁾ (His argument is of course based on the doctrine of the Westminster Confession which identifies effectual calling with regeneration.) In taking up John Brown's argument it may be inferred that the "sundry acts of God" which constitute the effectual call are strung on one chain holding the Christian life together. But the same continuity is lacking in the case of the external call. The unredeemed may hear the gospel call ten or a hundred times, but every call is a single incident and not part of one plan of salvation. Nevertheless the external call comes from God⁽¹¹⁾ and includes according to Hodge 1. A declaration of the plan of salvation, 2. The promise of God to save all who accede to the terms of that plan. 3. A command, exhortation and invitation to all to accept of the offered mercy. 4. An exhibition of the reasons which should constrain men to repent and believe, and thus escape from the wrath to come".

The external call is addressed both to the elect and to the reprobate. But those who are chosen are effectually called and enter thereby into lasting fellowship with Christ. This distinction is easily understood when applied to the sphere of our daily work. A teacher may receive a call to

(10) John Brown, op.cit. p.152.

(11) Charles Hodge, op.cit. Vol. II. p.641 f.

a certain school, a physician to a hospital and a minister to a particular congregation, but whether he is with heart and soul a teacher of the young, a healer of the sick or a preacher of the gospel depends on his internal vocation. To create the true sense of vocation in young people as they enter a profession or take up a trade, is the aim of modern education. In theology the need of vocation for those who have heard the gospel call is the fundamental principle of the doctrine of conversion. The Holy Spirit is the great teacher who creates this sense of vocation in those who are effectually called.

Lutheran theology seems to have missed this important point, for there is a certain confusion between the external and the internal call. Though Hodge's supposition is that this confusion is due to their "anxiety to get rid of the sovereignty of God in the dispensation of his grace", ⁽¹²⁾ (a rather strong criticism) the fact remains that the external and the internal call are merged into one.

Even in the careful statements of the Formula of Concord the distinction between the universal and the special call is vague. God, by the preaching and the hearing of the Word changes the heart and creates the new man, that "through the preaching of the law he may recognize his sinfulness and God's wrath... and that through the preaching and the meditation on the holy gospel of the gracious forgiveness of sins a spark of faith may be kindled". Though all this is in vain "unless the power and efficacy of the Holy Spirit

(12) Charles Hodge, op. cit. Vol. II. p. 645

is present... neither preacher nor hearer should doubt this grace and the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, but be assured of it if the Word of God is truly preached and men diligently and earnestly hear it... But if a man refuses to hear the Word of God... the same cannot console himself with God's eternal election nor obtain his mercy."⁽¹³⁾

It would hardly be fair to say that these propositions are in any way an encroachment on the sovereignty of God, but in two respects they are unsatisfactory. 1. If the regeneration came simply by the earnest preaching and the hearing of the Word of God, all nominal adherents of the Church would be converted Christians. 2. Who are those who have refused to hear the Word of God? The Lutherans generally believed that the apostles preached the Word of God to the whole world, and that the heathen who did not receive it, are among those who rejected it. This explains the lack of missionary interest in the Lutheran Church even after orthodoxy had lost its grip on the majority of Lutheran Church folk. (It is remarkable that during the recent Church struggle in Germany an unprecedented interest in Foreign Missions arose. This fact may be due to the doctrine of the Confessional Church which is mainly influenced by Calvinism). The liberal theologians of the 19th century bypassed the whole problem by considering the Biblical terms of conversion, new birth, new creation, etc. as parabolic. It is in this case almost irrelevant whether the new birth is the result of vocation or simply another figure symbolising the same thing.

(13) Formula of Concord II/II. 54-56 (Mueller p. 601 f.

It was the merit of H.R. Frank to reconsider the doctrine of regeneration and vocation. His conclusions are the nearest approach to the doctrine of Reformed Theology which can be found among Lutherans. He defines vocation as "a word of authority" (ein Machtwort)⁽¹⁴⁾ which is immediately communicative. He rejects the Romanist and synergistic view as if through this communication of saving knowledge certain forces which were dormant in man before his conversion would be set free and enable men to take possession of the salvation thus offered to them. Frank admits that the term vocation presupposes the existence of man, but he adds, that the new birth of man is generation out of the second Adam, the setting up of a new existence.

The man who is called into the newness of life though already in existence as far as his natural life is concerned, is spiritually a new creature. Regeneration is as real as generation. The reality of Christian vocation is apparent in the moral change which it effects. In Reformed Theology this moral change is affirmed by Mastricht who declares that moral conversion is accomplished through the mediation of the Word. In vocation the seed is sown and in regeneration the seed comes to life.⁽¹⁵⁾ The moral attitude of a regenerate person can be perceived even by the unbeliever. The Jews took notice of the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they had been with Jesus.⁽¹⁶⁾ At the time of the call the change may be noticed by the person alone in whom conversion

(14) H.R. Frank, System der christlichen Wahrheit, Vol. II p.326.

(15) ref. Heppe, Dogmatik der ev. ref. Kirche, p.418.

(16) Acts 4.13.

is wrought. Joyfully and painfully he feels the pangs of the new birth. Suddenly he becomes aware that his behaviour is undergoing a complete change.

"Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us,
Saying 'Christian love me more'."

The initiation into the new life with the beginning of a new morality is the first fruit of vocation. With this first fruit we have to deal here, while the process of sanctification in the whole course of the Christian pilgrimage must be treated later. Archbishop Temple made it clear (from the standpoint of religious philosophy rather than of evangelical doctrine) that the beginning of the new moral life is beyond the sphere of scientific ethics. "Inasmuch as vocation is of its very nature individual, and to each individual his own vocation is peculiar, the guiding of men towards the discovery of their vocation is a task for the evangelist and pastor rather than for the philosopher"⁽¹⁷⁾.

Dr. Temple points out further that "the chief practical problem of ethics is solved not by volition but by conversion, so the chief theoretical problems are solved not by reference to a Categorical Imperative but by reference to Vocation".

Evangelical theologians of all shades stand here on common ground. Luther already rejected the philosophical doctrine of the "Categorical Imperative" which was anticipated by Erasmus. In his writing against Erasmus he defines conversion not as the voice of demand and command, but as

(17) William Temple, *Nature, Man and God*, London 1940 p. 407.

the voice of consolation and divine promise by which nothing is exacted from us but grace is offered to us..... Conversion is not only the change of unbelief to faith but also a change and improvement of the whole life.⁽¹⁸⁾

In our first reference to the moral change which is wrought by vocation, we tried to point out that the initial stage may remain unnoticed by the world, but distinctly felt by the person whom God has called. We may draw a similar inference from Calvin. The fruits of the new life are ascribed by him to the repentance which God works in the converted sinner (ref. chapter on "Repentance"). Only then these fruits, viz. righteousness, judgment and mercy will become manifest. But this could not be the case if "mind and heart were not previously endued with sentiments of justice, judgment and mercy; this is done when the Holy Spirit, instilling his holiness into our souls, so inspires them with new thoughts and affections that they may justly be regarded as new."⁽¹⁹⁾

This particular act of the Holy Spirit may be identified with the moment of vocation. It is simultaneous with the discharge of the whole armament of God, by which the fire of faith is kindled in the human soul, the dark cloud of repentance descends upon man and the stubborn will of man is bent like iron in a furnace.

(18) Ref. Elert, op.cit. Vol. I. p. 129.

(19) Inst. III. III. 8.

VI.

THE ELEMENTS OF CONVERSION.

Three basic elements occur constantly in the Evangelical doctrine of conversion : Faith, repentance and bending of the will. We shall find passages in the writings of Luther, Calvin and Melanchthon which seem to indicate that Luther identified conversion with the embracing of faith, Calvin with repentance and Melanchthon with the bending of the will. This may appear a rough and ready statement. Did not Luther in the 95 Theses lay the foundation of the true evangelical doctrine of penitence and did not Calvin give pre-eminence to the power of faith ? But we are concerned with the doctrine of conversion, and its development in Lutheran and Reformed Theology. Schleiermacher quite rightly points to the different emphasis in Lutheran and Reformed writings when he states that in the (Calvinistic) Swiss Confession "the word *conversio*, which corresponds to our word conversion (*Bekehrung*), expresses only one part of it, *poenitentia*". He finds that in the Augsburg Confession on the other hand faith and contrition appear as the means of conversion, while in the Apologia which is influenced by Melanchthon "change for the better" is added, that is to say a movement of the will. ⁽¹⁾ Though we are warned by Lutheran scholars not to draw conclusions from Luther's own experience when ⁽²⁾ we deal with his doctrine, we can hardly avoid comparing the life

(1) Schleiermacher, op. cit. p. 481.

(2) ref. Hans Joachim Iwand, *Rechtfertigungslehre und Christenglaube*, Leipzig 1930, p. 6.

and the doctrine of the three Reformers and detecting some influence of their own experience and of other Christians on their conception of conversion.

A. FAITH.

"Without religious faith there can be no real understanding of life"

General Chiang Kai-shek.

The leader of China spoke these words when he was released from captivity, ten years after becoming a Christian. The understanding of the mystery of true life is to the recent convert life itself. His statement does not simply imply the recognition of Anselm's "Credo ut intelligam", but rather a "Credo ut vivam". To a convert from a non-Christian religion, faith must appear as identical with the new life itself, while to the Christian of succeeding generations who is already nurtured in the traditional belief of the Church, the conversion experience may appear as the turning back from his evil ways to the true way of life and consequently as the submission of his will to the will of God which is revealed to him in the faith he knows. To Martin Luther the discovery of the faith by which the justified man shall live was as new and startling an experience as to the converted Buddhist or Confucian. Calvin and Melancthon joined the evangelical movement which was inaugurated by Luther and their experience may therefore compare with that of the second generation in the younger Churches.

Luther had two experiences of conversion in his life.

The first "conversion" was his entry into the Augustinian monastery

in Erfurt. The term "conversion" was used in this sense by the monks. In our own age Roman Catholics would define "conversion" as the coming over of a person to Roman Catholicism (usually from Protestantism). When Luther forsook his secular career as a lawyer and entered a religious order, he was "converted" in the mediaeval sense. His own experience was sincere and earnest. Those first years in the monastery were spent in heartsearching and self-torment, till being directed by his superior to the reading of the New Testament, he found the sentence "The just shall live by faith". Then his eyes were opened and his real conversion took place. If we say that the second conversion was genuine and the first was not, we do not refer to his own state of mind. Subjectively the first experience was as genuine as the second ; but objectively, the "second" conversion was the beginning of his new life in Christ, for it was the regeneration which God wrought in him.

Many years later in his great sermon on the new birth from St. John 3, which he preached in 1538, Luther alluded to the monastic "conversion" in this way : "Our opponents say : Ay, I will go into the monastery, wear a cap and a shirt of hair, read mass and become a Carthusian. All that is nothing, for thou art not yet born again This is the new preaching that we become new men, and afterwards being new born we shall do good works as well; and this is the principal part of our Christian teaching, that men are instructed how they must be born again by water and the Holy Spirit, and not that they put on a cap and wear a tonsure.

(3)

For the cap only covers old knaves and does not make new men".

There is also this reminiscence of the past in his commentary on Galatians : "The monkish life and rule did so bewitch us .. that we thought there was no other way of salvation; but now we judge of it far otherwise. We are now ashamed of those things which once we loved as most heavenly and holy before we were regenerated into this new creature"⁽⁴⁾. Luther most clearly defines his own experience, the hope of regeneration through the first "conversion" and the assurance of salvation through the genuine change of heart, which is achieved by living faith. Luther's own experience convinced him that formal adherence to a religious order was not the same as conversion. In the treatise "De votis monasticis" he rejects the claim of the religious order that the taking of monastic vows is a second birth⁽⁵⁾. In the "Babylonian Captivity of the Church" he opposes the Romanist doctrine of penitence, and puts contrition in its right place. It is in Luther's view subordinate to faith. He contradicts those who teach "that contrition precedes faith", for "they take no account of faith which wrought such contrition and sorrow of heart"⁽⁶⁾. To Luther, faith alone is the instrument of conversion, while sincere repentance and penitence are its fruits. Luther's doctrine on this point as far as it differs from that of Calvin is largely explained by his experience in the monastery and by his controversies with Romanism on the issue of penance.

(3) Erlanger Ausgabe Vol. XLVI pp. 259 and 271.

(4) Luther, Comm. on Gal. VI. 15. (p. 380).

(5) Weimarer Ausgabe Vol. VIII. p. 596.

(6) Martin Luther, Works, Philadelphia 1916, Vol. II. p. 247 f.

Luther's and Calvin's doctrine regarding the means of conversion are not antithetic but rather complementary. Their views may be compared with those of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Without driving this parallel too far, we may say that Isaiah was the first of the prophets to consider faith as the vital force in religion. As Prof. Donald Baillie has pointed out, ⁽⁷⁾ Isaiah's counsel to King Ahaz and to the Jews ⁽⁸⁾ "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" was given in such epigrammatic form that it may have become a proverb in Israel. Luther's rendering "Glaubt ihr nicht, so bleibt ihr nicht" shows that the Reformer in his Bible translation laid hold on the meaning of Isaiah's words as indicating that faith is the essence of life.

Jeremiah was confronted with the problems not of a faithless but of an unrepentant generation. The "Reformation" of Josiah and the Deuteronomists took place in his own lifetime. He stressed repentance as the primary means of salvation. "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be ⁽⁹⁾ saved". Of course faith is also implied in Jeremiah's teaching, as repentance is not only implied but applied in the teaching of Isaiah. But we are justified in calling Isaiah and Luther the prophets of faith, Jeremiah and Calvin the prophets of repentance, because of the predominance which faith and repentance respectively occupy in their writings.

(7) Donald M. Baillie, Faith in God, Edinburgh 1927 p.10 f.

(8) Is. 7. 9.

(9) Jer. 4. 14.

(10)

In Luther, says Harnack the elder, the embracing of faith that justifies takes the place of conversion. "This faith that justifies is not merely the recognition and assent concerning all that Christ is and did, not merely a historical belief or a bare, empty, idle and drowsy thought of Christ... but it is a wholehearted consideration of the Word and promise of God ... The right faith is the certain trust and the strong and firm conviction of the heart, by which Christ is apprehended". Christ is the only objectum fidei and faith is not only directed towards Christ, but faith comprehends and includes Christ. Luther, as we mentioned before, set forth this fundamental equation. "Faith is renewal" (Der Glaube ist die Verneuerung⁽¹¹⁾".) Again in his sermon on Ps. 84 (Ps. 85 A.V.) he considers faith as the means of conversion while it is manifested through reason and volition. "Conversion takes place in acts of the reason and of the will"⁽¹²⁾. It is really the rise of faith, for per fidem convertimur".

Since Luther attributes to faith the power of conversion he demands that this faith must be an active power. The faith of Jews, Turks and Papists who all claim that they believe in God, is not the right faith because it is not creative, "but it leaves all as they are in the old birth and under the power of Satan and of sin... But this is called right victorious faith, that believes that Jesus is the Son of God; it is the insuperable

(10) Theodosius Harnack, Luther's Theologie, Erlangen 1862. p. 435 f.

(11) Erlanger Ausgabe Vol. VII. p. 170.

(12) Weimarer Ausgabe Vol. IV. p. 7.

faith which is wrought in the hearts of Christians by the Holy Ghost ... Where faith is, there must follow much fruit, victory and conquest, but if it does not follow - neither faith nor new birth are present".⁽¹³⁾

The substance of Luther's doctrine of faith in its relationship to the regeneration of man, has never been disputed among Evangelicals and was even accepted by those who in some aspects differed from orthodox teaching. John Arndt, who may be considered as one of the forerunners of Pietism, upheld Luther's proposition that faith is regeneration, in his popular work⁽¹⁴⁾ "Vahres Christentum".

Wesley in a sermon on John III. 8, "So is everyone that is born of the Spirit" describes faith as the first mark of the New Birth. His interpretation is distinctly Lutherish (not to say Lutheran), for Wesley refuses to consider faith as a mere assent to the proposition, Jesus is the Christ. Luther himself would not have expressed it differently: "To say this, were to say that the devils were born of God; for they have this faith". He then continues to define the true, living faith as "a disposition which God has wrought in the (believer's) heart, a sure trust and confidence in God that, through the merits of Christ,⁽¹⁵⁾ his sins are forgiven, and he is reconciled to the favour of God".

Reformed doctrine at the outset is not at variance with Luther's classical formulation. Thus Calvin affirms that "no man

(13) Erlanger Ausgabe Vol. VIII. p. 223.

(14) ref. John Arndt, True Christianity, London 1815 p.306 ff

(15) Wesley op. cit. Vol. V. p. 212 ff.

is a believer but he who, trusting to the security of his salvation, confidently triumphs over the devil and death..."⁽¹⁶⁾

In all these statements we find the same syllogism implied - Faith is trust in God, trust in God is the assurance of salvation, therefore faith is the saving knowledge of regeneration.

Some of the Reformed theologians of the later period seem to return to the old scholastic analysis of faith as notitia, assensus and fiducia. This division has the advantage that it answers to three stages in the process of conversion which we are trying to distinguish in the course of this treatise - preparatory works - vocation - assurance. We may attempt to illustrate this inter-relationship in form of a Table.

	1.	2.	3.
The Process of faith:	Notitia	- Assensus	- Fiducia
The Process of re-			
generation	Preparatio	- Vocatio	- Certitudo

Luther and those who follow him strictly, seem to dismiss the first two stages, to them fiducia alone is true faith, and assurance alone true conversion. The Reformed theologians, on the other hand, distinguish between faith and trust in this way: Faith is the acknowledgment and the assent of vocation. Man opens his heart by his assent to the work of the gospel, so that his faith is transfigured into trust.⁽¹⁷⁾ Faith in this conception begins at the second stage whence we may infer that conversion too begins at the second stage; and as faith at the third stage

(16) Inst. III. II. 16.

(17) Heppe, Dogmatik des deutschen Protestantismus, Vol. II
p. 374.

is transfigured into trust, so conversion is transfigured into assurance.

Since stage 1, that is to say, notitia and preparatio, would never be identified with faith and conversion respectively, the only other alternative is to compare the whole process of faith with the whole process of regeneration. Properly speaking conversion is the process of redemption as reflected in the human life, while faith is the means which accompanies and effects the different stages. "Faith and conversion both describe, in substance, - though in different relations and aspects - the one great process by which men individually are united to Christ, are turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God...Conversion is descriptive more immediately of the process or change itself; and faith in the sense in which it is here used, of the means by which it is effected"⁽¹⁸⁾.

The process of faith may then be compared to a sea journey, and faith to the ship by which we travel. Only when our vessel is anchored in certain trust, can we say that the safe harbour of our conversion is reached. In Emil Brunner's formulation: "Faith is not only knowing God and the Self (notitia), it is not only an assent and a resolve to live no longer in self-dependance, but in God-dependance (assensus), it is also feeling the certainty and joyfulness of belonging to God which lifts us above the abyss of absolute terror"⁽¹⁹⁾ (fiducia). To the

(18) Cunningham, Histor. Theology, Vol. III. p. 385 f.

(19) Brunner, Divine Imperative p. 160.

theologian the destiny of the journey is the decisive factor, but in the mind of the traveller the thing he may remember best, is often the passage itself. This is an experience which he will recollect even after many years. He may forget that the journey itself would have been a mystery tour if he had not reached the destination for which the ship was bound. And yet, as Prof. Donald Baillie points out, "a religious man sometimes looks back to a great 'experience' which he had at one moment of his life, and says that his faith is grounded on that. Many things may change ... but through all changes he looks back to that great experience of God's grace in his soul at his conversion"⁽²⁰⁾. It is quite natural that memories of this kind are invigorating amidst the dry places of life which even a converted man cannot avoid. But "the main thing is that he should experience God, and have a living religion, here and now in the present; and if he has not that, what is the advantage of having a kind of second-hand certainty based on an experience in the past ? It would be a poor thing to have the experience of God in one's past, but only the belief in God in one's present"⁽²¹⁾. Prof. Baillie therefore concludes that the true conversion experience, is a "faith-experience".

Looking back upon my own life-journey, I am fully aware that the only thing that really matters is my present faith and certainty, and yet I am strengthened by the recollection of the

(20) D. M. Baillie, op. cit. p. 99

(21) Ibid. p. 100.

moment when I embarked upon this journey, by the distance I travelled, by the incidents which occurred during the journey and by the winds which favoured it.

A doctrine which takes no account of the facts of experience lacks reality, and so does a conversion experience which loses sight of the ultimate destiny of faith - the certainty of salvation. We cannot conceive faith unless it is part of our experience, nor can we conceive a conversion experience unless it stands before us as the accomplished faith which is trust in God and the assurance of salvation.

B. REPENTANCE.

"In our great sorrow we shall rise again to joy, without which man cannot live, nor God exist, for God gives joy; it's His privilege - a grand one."

Dostojevsky, The Brothers Karamazov.

In Holy Scripture repentance, as a principal element of conversion, appears in three distinct forms.

A. Turning to God. Whenever the children of Israel had sinned against the first commandment, and were punished, they repented and turned to God. This attitude of man, which we previously mentioned as "conversio intransitiva" indicates the transition from faithlessness to faithfulness. It may be accompanied by acts of penitence and be followed by the blessings of God.

"Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness and repenteth him of the evil."⁽¹⁾

According to Luther "the root and chief source of all sin is unbelief in the depth of the heart"⁽²⁾ In order to get a gracious God, the sinner needs faith. True penitence consists of the earnest acknowledgment of sin and of the apprehension of the promise. "Scripture calls repentance a change and improvement of the whole life, when man recognizes that he is a sinner"

(1) Joel 2. 12 f.

(2) Luther, Preface to Romans par.11 (Walch Vol. XIV.p.112)

and feels that his life is not right, so that he abstains from it and enters into a higher existence with all his life, in words, works and in his heart⁽³⁾".

Melanchthon could say in praise of his friend that his principal achievement was the teaching of right penitence and of the proper use of the Sacraments. It is significant that the religious revival which seems to have swept through the Evangelical Church in Germany since the downfall of Hitler, started with the preaching of penitence from every pulpit.

B. Repentance of evil deeds. This is another form in which penitence is taught in the Bible. Sinful man does not only trespass against the first and second, but also - and how frequently - against the fifth and the rest of the commandments. Condemned are those who "neither repented of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts"⁽⁴⁾

But the sinner who is sorry for his evil deeds, is not truly repentant unless he realizes that by sinning against his neighbour, he has offended God Himself. There is a tendency both in private devotions and in public worship to reduce the confession of sins to a general statement of guilt without giving account of the actual sins which were committed in the course of the day or of the week. But we cannot turn to God and acknowledge our sinful state, unless we have the courage to name the various sins before Him. This is clearly demanded from us in the Confession

(3) Weimarer Ausgabe XII. 514

(4) Rev. 9. 21

of Faith : "Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance but it is every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins particularly"⁽⁵⁾. William Law in his instructions regarding the keeping of Evening Prayers suggested : "You perhaps have hitherto only used yourself to confess yourself a sinner in general, and ask for forgiveness in the gross, without any particular remembrance, or contrition for the particular sins of that day"⁽⁶⁾. Over against this practice, Law demands a detailed account of our sins in every act of confession. "If confession is to raise an abhorrence of sin, surely that confession which considers and lays open your particular sins, that brings them to light with all their circumstances and aggravations, that requires a particular sorrowful acknowledgment of every sin, must in a much greater degree fill the mind with an abhorrence of sin than that which only in one and the same form of words confesses you only to be a sinner in general. For as this is nothing but what the greatest Saint may justly say of himself, so the daily repeating of only such a confession, has nothing in it to make you truly ashamed of your own way of life".

It is part of the conversion experience to discover that God is concerned with the whole life of man. L  thi in his exposition of the Book of Amos has clarified this point. Firstly, "Every sin has a name. God's prophet does not stop at expiating upon our human sinfulness. He does not only address

(5) Westminster Confession XV. 5.

(6) William Law, A serious call, various editions, chpt.23.

us as men who "have despised the law of the Lord and have not kept his commandments and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked'. On the contrary he goes on to specify sin in its utter obnoxiousness...We must ask God for the power to be able to speak more clearly about sin." Secondly, Luthi notices how exact God is about sin. "He counts them down "three and four". He counts them down to the pint of beer and the pair of shoes⁽⁷⁾".

Only if man is made to realize that God is concerned with every detail of his actions so that trespassing against his neighbour is high treason against God Himself, will he cry out : "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and have done this evil in thy sight". The motive of right penitence is fear of God and not merely dread of the consequences of sin. The man who merely fears punishment, whether in this world or in the world to come, is not truly repentant. "Repentance proceeds from a sincere fear of God...As repentance begins with dread and hatred of sin, the Apostle sets down godly sorrow as one of its causes, (II Cor, 7. 10). By godly sorrow he means when we not only tremble at the punishment, but hate and abhor the sin, because we know it is dis-⁽⁸⁾pleasing to God.

C. Repentance as mortification. In this form repentance is wholly the work of God. Karl Barth analyses the meaning of the

(7) Walter Luethi, In the time of the earthquake, London 1940 p. 27 f.

(8) Inst. III. III. 7.

(9)
Baptist's call : Repent ye and believe the gospel". "But what is the meaning of *μετενοεῖτε*? Have we the ability to change our *νοῦς* ? And if we have, where and how have we got it ?" We learn of the Prodigal that he was dead and is alive again. Who can do that ? In John 5.24 and I. John 3.14 we are told that faith is a *μετάβασις* from death to life. Who is free to achieve this *μετάβασις* ? In Col. 3. 9 we are urged to put off the old man and to put on the new man. Who can fulfil this demand ? God alone can raise us from death to life. This answer is self-understood. But what about our death ? Is it our own action ? Is man his own "mortificator"? Dr. Barth denies it: "Dying, perishing, putting off the old man, being dead - this too is beyond our power". Death in Scripture, whether in the narrower or in the wider sense of the word, as indicated in these passages, is something which man must suffer. The world cannot punish itself. Mortification is the decisive part of repentance. Calvin mentions that "the very word mortification (10) reminds how difficult it is to forget our former nature" But it seems impossible to isolate mortification from the two other aspects of repentance, the return to God and the repentance of evil deeds. In the teaching of Calvin these three forms of repentance concur as they do in Scripture.

(9) Karl Barth, Dogmatik, Zollikon 1938 Vol. 1. 2nd part p. 284 f.

(10) Inst. III. III. 8.

When we now try to fit the three forms of repentance which we mentioned into the scheme of conversion, we may find that genuine repentance of our aversion from God and of our sins against our neighbour, constitute penitence in the true sense of the word. If we compare this penitence with the experience of faith and the process of regeneration (ref. Table in previous chapter) we may compare penitence with the assent of faith and the vocation of the regenerate. This act of penitence may be preceded by a certain regret. If this regret has no reference to the consciousness of God, but is merely fear of the consequences or perhaps disgust with the own self, it does not concern us here. But as Schleiermacher has pointed out there are various forms of regret. Some of them can be traced more or less directly to the vision of Christ, and are not always limited to some particular, but may show genuine pain at the general human state of sinfulness as illustrated in one's own person; but they do not develop into a continuous inward movement amounting to the dawn of living faith. All the same such stimulations, arising as they do from the influence of the common Christian life, even though they are only an unconnected and casually appearing mixture of elements, are to be regarded as divinely caused, and indeed involved in the divine ordinance which places all men in relation to the Redeemer; and in this sense such a condition is ascribed to the prevenient grace of God⁽¹¹⁾. This contrition which the

(11) Schleiermacher, op. cit. p. 485.

Reformers generally attributed to the opus alienum Christi, the teaching of the Law, appears at the first or preliminary stage of our pilgrimage, and coincides with the notion of faith and the preparation of the new birth.⁽¹²⁾

While penitence is thus preceded by contrition, it is succeeded by mortification, which corresponds to Trust in the process of faith and assurance in the process of regeneration. The table which we drew in the last chapter, can now be enlarged by showing the process of repentance.

	1.	2.	3.
The Process of Faith:	Notitia	- Assensus	- Fiducia
The Process of Repent.:	Contritio	- Poenitentia	- Mortificatio
The Process of Regen.:	Preparatio	- Vocatio	- Certitudo

It may be said that the conversion experience takes place at the second stage. Jesus coming to the rescue of the perishing raises the head of the drowning man over sea level. Thence he is brought to the shore of salvation. Only at this moment faith and repentance begin.⁽¹³⁾ Seeberg says that conversion "comprehends the beginning of both faith and repentance. Conversion is the act of a moment, but that moment is only in rare cases

(12) ref. Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, London 1941, Vol. I p. 273 "Without the knowledge of divine love remorse cannot be transmuted into repentance. If man recognizes only judgment and knows only that his sin is discovered, he cannot rise above the despair of remorse to the hope of repentance".

(13) Seeberg, Article in REPT Vol. XII. p. 544 f.

consciously experienced, it becomes apparent only after a comparison between our present and our former life: It is only then - we may add - that man becomes conscious of the impossible being made possible; he has put off the old man, his faith is anchored in certain trust and he is assured of his salvation.

Looking back at the time before our conversion we are aware of the tremendous difference which God's call has made in our life, whether we can remember the actual date or not. Before conversion we strove hard to keep ourselves floating and to believe that which we could see and handle, since our conversion we have lost this sense of self-reliance and self-preservation and are enabled to place our trust in the unseen and ever present God. Between these two areas of our life is the demarkation line, which is drawn by the grace of God. We may see this line forming a cross with the line on which our earthly pilgrimage proceeds. A modern Lutheran, Theodor Ellwein, uses this appropriate figure. "In penitence the horizontal of human self-reliance and self preservation ...is crossed, hurt and abolished by the vertical of the divine No." (14) As our eyes are now focussed on the second stage of regeneration, we behold the divine "No" that calls forth penitence, meeting the divine "Yes" that calls forth the assent of faith. Here is the symbol of this "crucial" moment

(14) Theodor Ellwein, *Evangelische Lehren* Muenchen 1933, p. 130

		Divine Yes			
From Unbelief	-	Notitia	Assensus fidei	Fiducia	} To Eternal Life.
From Sin	-	Contritio	Poenitentia	Mortificatio	
		Divine No.			

It may be a truism when we state that Calvin was deeply concerned with that aspect of the divine intervention that causes penitence. Is it not enough to have the right faith which includes right penitence. But in Calvin's interpretation faith is not the new life itself, it is the beginning of it. "Luther's fighting ardour is directed against another front ... He is not so much concerned with that which becomes of faith. But in Calvin's view even that which becomes of faith, is the criterion of its genuineness and liveliness." (15)

Calvin has then searched the relationship between faith and repentance. He discovered two things - a. that "repentance and faith, though constantly linked together, are only to be united, not confounded" (16) : b. that repentance is the fruit of true faith. But as far as the latter proposition is concerned, he may sometimes be quoted against himself. He is very emphatic in maintaining that faith causes repentance when he says : "Those who think that repentance precedes faith, instead of flowing from,

(15) Emil Brunner, Vom Werk des Heiligen Geistes, Tuebingen 1935 p. 38

(16) Inst. III. III. 5.

or being produced by it, as the fruit by the tree, have never
understood its nature..⁽¹⁷⁾"

But he seems to correct his own view a few paragraphs later, when he admits: "I am not unaware that under the term repentance is comprehended the whole work of turning to God, of which not the least important part is faith"⁽¹⁸⁾. It has recently⁽¹⁹⁾ been pointed out that in his exegesis of John 1. 13, Calvin reverses the relationship between faith and repentance by saying "faith is in several respects part of the new birth ... This pertains to our renewal, while the Spirit illumines our mind.⁽²⁰⁾ Thus faith flows from the new birth as from a source".

If we look for hard and fast statements which fix a casual nexus between faith and repentance, we are at loss, but Calvin himself realized this. "When we attribute the origin of repentance to faith, we do not dream of some period of time in which faith gives birth to it; we only wish to signify that a man cannot seriously engage in repentance unless he knows that he is of God". Calvin views the origin of faith and repentance as a stage in the regeneration of man. Both are produced by the birth from above. Repentance cannot be visualised without the presence of faith, and at the same time as soon as faith is present, repentance is called forth by the grace of God.

(17) Ibid. III. III. 1.

(18) Ibid. III. VII. 5.

(19) Alfred Goehler, Calvin's Lehre von der Heiligung, Muenchen 1934, p. 29.

(20) Calvini opera, Corp. Ref. XLVII. 13.

There may be little difference between Luther and Calvin on this point, but there is a much wider gap between Lutheran and Reformed Theology of a later period. Reformed Theology strictly adhered to the norm that repentance is the fruit of faith. On the other hand the Lutheran Divine, Jacob Spener, with his pietist leanings reversed that order, as seen from the following sentence : "When once in true penitence we have denied ourself and have come to the new birth and to a living faith, the faith works the rest in us..."⁽²¹⁾

Many statements for either side could be quoted with seemingly convincing proof-texts from Scriptures. But it is wiser to confess with H.R. Mackintosh that "the infinite variety of life scouts all such prescriptions. We can hardly venture on anything more than a generalisation such as this - Wherever you find a forgiven man, who as forgiven, is living in fellowship with God and in reconciliation with men, you may be sure that in the past his spiritual life has come to exhibit two mobile and permanent companion tendencies - the tendency to take humbly from God, which is faith, and the tendency to judge and amend himself, which is penitence"⁽²²⁾. The new life begins with those two tendencies whatever their theological name may be. With the new faith a new moral judgment enters the mind of man. Zwingli expressed that thought in "De vera et de falsa religione" from

(21) Spener, op. cit. p. 13

(22) Hugh R. Mackintosh, The Christian experience of Forgiveness, London several editions p. 234.

which we quoted before. "Piety proceeds from God...But piety is made perfect when we are converted to him who calls us back from ourself and from our inclinations ...Piety and religion consist in that God exhibits man to himself, that he may acknowledge his treachery and misery just as Adam did : thus it happens that man completely despairs of himself. But God at the same time displays the fullness and the riches of his mercy, that when man loses all hope, he may feel safe in the grace which God has prepared for him".⁽²³⁾

Calvin goes further in explaining the mystery of mortification and vivification. It can only be understood in connection with the death and resurrection of our Lord. There is only one way which leads from death to life, the via crucis. In a sermon on Galatians II. 17-18 he exclaims: "Behold then how we shall be crucified with our Lord Jesus Christ ...It is true that this is an aspect of death: but this also is certain that such death leads us to life. The same cannot be wrought by the death which the Law brings us".⁽²⁴⁾

With the Cross and the empty tomb before our eyes, we behold the mortification of our flesh and the quickening of our soul as the perfect regeneration. Calvin therefore defines repentance as "a real conversion of our life unto God, proceeding from sincere and serious fear of God, and consisting in the

(23) Quoted from Baur. Zwingli's Theologie, p. 393 f.

(24) Calvin, Corp. Ref. L. 439.

mortification of our flesh and the old man, and the quickening
(25)
of the Spirit".

The doctrine of mortification and vivification is to be found in the Symbolical Books of both the Lutheran and Reformed Churches though it may rightly be said that the emphasis is stronger in Reformed Theology. The Question is asked in the Heidelberg Catechism "Of how many parts does the true conversion of man consist? Answer: Of two parts : of the mortification of the old and of the quickening of the new man".
(26)

But we can easily see that in the Lutheran "Apologia" faith is the immediate cause of conversion. "Paul in all his epistles, as often as he deals with our conversion, combines these two parts: mortification of the old man, that is repentance, fear of God's wrath and judgment, and on the other hand renewal through faith. For through faith are we comforted and brought back to life".
(27)

The comfort and joy of those who have died in Christ and are born again, is known to all Christians. The Heidelberg Catechism asks: "What is the quickening of the new man ?
(28)
Answer: It is a sincere joy of heart in God through Christ".

do
But this joy has nothing to/with our own consciousness. Of the Roman Catholic Saint Philip Neri the story is told that he

(25) Inst. III. III. 5

(26) Heidelberg Catechismus Question 88.

(27) Apology of the Augsburg Confession XII (V) 46.
(Mueller p. 174)

(28) Heidelberg Catechismus Question 90.

started a discussion on Joy. "Each guest had to give an opinion. 'No doubt' the Saint playfully observed, 'Baronio will tell us that Christian gladness springs from constant meditation on death' His own opinion, however, was this: "'Christian joy is a gift
(29)
flowing from a good conscience'".

Calvin would say that Baronio was nearer the truth than Philip Neri. Christian joy does not spring from our own good conscience, but from meditation on death - though not of the natural death which we shall have to face one day, but from the death of Christ with whom we are crucified.

The same error that the converted Christian enjoys a good conscience and is therefore the happiest man in the world, often occurs in writings of evangelical enthusiasts. But Calvin warns that the term "quickenings" cannot be used "for the joy which the soul feels after being calmed from perturbation and fear. { It more properly means, that desire of pious and holy living which springs from the new birth, as if it were said, that the man dies to himself that he may begin to live unto God".
(30)

The greatest joy of man is that spiritual rest which Calvin compares with the perfect Sabbath of God. It is "the truly desirable and blessed death of man which contains in it the life of God, even as Paul glories that he is dead, because Christ
(31)
liveth in him".

(29) Aloysius Roche, A Bedside Book of Saints, London 1943
p. 43.

(30) Inst. III. III. 3.

(31) Calvin's Commentary on Exodus XX, 4th commandment.

Mortification is the work of God throughout, but there are two aspects which Calvin calls the inward and the outward mortification. The one is "self-denial, when we renounce the lusts of the flesh, and are renewed unto obedience to God". The other is "affliction by which we are stirred up to meditate on the termination of the present life"⁽³²⁾.

It is obvious that in the second case, man was, is and remains passive, while in the former case man may be enabled by the grace of God to progress in his attitude of self-denial.

The power to deny himself is granted by God to his chosen ones in true penitence, but he grants them one gift more - gladness of heart.⁽³³⁾ "God loveth a cheerful giver" and self-denial without this gladness of heart is not true mortification. It sounds rather austere when a Lutheran divine of great inward piety, John Arndt, demanded nothing less than a *Herzöberg* of man: "If a man will empty himself of the love of the world and himself, with all his passions and affections for worldly things, God will infallibly fill his soul with divine grace, love, wisdom and knowledge"⁽³⁴⁾. And yet the principal work of Johannes Arndt, "Das wahre Christentum", which at one time was what the Germans called a "Hausschatz", makes a cheerful reading. If man takes particular pride in self-denial and imposes new laws not only upon himself but upon others, the result is hypocrisy and not mortification. Calvin was not afraid that man could take too much from

(32) Calvin, Corp. Ref. L. 55

(33) II. Cor. 9. 7.

(34) Arndt, op. cit. p. 311.

himself, "provided he learns that whatever he wants is to be
(35)
recovered in God". While the internal mortification produces
justice and mercy as its most beautiful fruits, the external
mortification, which God imposes upon man in form of tribulation,
"worketh patience, and patience experience; and experience hope;
and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed
(36)
abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us".

But only he who has received the gift of faith and of
penitence can bear afflictions; only he who is called, will be
renewed by the experience of hardships. The unrepentant sinner
is only hardened by suffering. The penitent and the unpenitent
thief suffer the same death of the Cross with our Lord, but he
who is penitent is with Him in Paradise.

The narrative of the two thieves is not only an illus-
tration of Christian and non-Christian suffering, but it is the
experience of penitence itself. There is no higher viewpoint
from which we can look at the doctrine of repentance, penitence
and mortification, than the hill of Calvary. It may appear as a
fault of Reformed doctrine that we are told much more about
mortification than about vivification. Is there anything lost ?
We find the answer when we look at the doctrine of the Atonement,
forⁱⁿ this doctrine Christology and Anthropology meet. Canon
(37)
Quick showed us in his last book in regard to the doctrine of

(35) Inst. II. IV. 10.

(36) Rom. 5. 3-5.

(37) Oliver C. Quick, The Gospel of the New World, London .
1944, p. 93.

the Atonement that the eschatological reference which is conspicuous in primitive Christianity has been lost. "In other words, what we need to recover is the perception that the atonement has not really been effected at all apart from the resurrection of Jesus Christ which is itself the inauguration of the new world, and by which the beginning of the life of the world to come is already communicated to faithful Christians".

But with regard to the doctrine of penitence we don't need to go back to the primitive Church, we find in Calvin, mortification closely linked with the view of the future life.

In his commentary on II Cor. 4.16, Calvin indicates to us the link between mortification and the future life. "For as we are too much taken up with the present life ...the Lord... by taking away from us, by little and little, the things that we are engrossed with, calls us back to meditate on a better life. Thus, therefore it is necessary, that the condition of the present life should decay, in order that the inward man may be in a flourishing state; because in proportion as the earthly life declines, does the heavenly life advance, at least in believers".

We may then conclude that repentance as means of conversion leads to sanctification in this life and to perfect holiness in the life to come.

C. THE BENDING OF THE WILL.

"O Lord our God, teach us, we beseech Thee, to ask Thee aright for the right blessings. Steer thou the vessel of our life toward Thyself, Thou tranquil Haven of all storm-tossed souls. Show us the course wherein we should go. Renew a willing spirit within us ..."

From a prayer of Basil the Great.

Faith and repentance are spiritual means of conversion. The function of the will takes place not only in the spiritual but also in the natural sphere of personality. Luther and Calvin who laid the emphasis on faith and repentance, stressed the spiritual side of conversion. The ancient theologians, especially the Greek Fathers, among whom the great Cappadocians, Origen and even Athanasius may be mentioned, attributed the most prominent place in the work of regeneration to the renewal of the will, because they conceived the new birth as a change of the whole
(1)
nature of man.

The same tendency is found later in scholastic theology. Luther's protest against Duns Scotus and the rest of the schoolmen is evoked by their semi-pelagianism. In his controversy with Erasmus, Luther denies the freedom of the will, declaring that sinful men "have nothing of liberty or 'Free-will' left, but
(2)
that all things depend upon the will of God alone".

(1) D. C. Luthardt, *Der freie Wille*, Leipzig 1863, chaps 3 and 5.

(2) Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, Michigan 1931, p. 24C.

There is no intermediate state between doing the will of God and doing the will of Satan. "For if God be in us, Satan is from us, and it is present with us to will nothing but good. But if God be not in us, Satan is in us, and it is present with us to will evil only"⁽³⁾. Luther's intention is to give glory to God and to exalt his sovereign grace, but he does not consider the question at all (in that tract at least) whether God may create a new will in man, just as he creates faith and repentance as the means of conversion. By excluding the will from the process of conversion Luther is bound to restrict the new birth to a change in the soul of man. But soon the question had to be asked, whether the change is wrought in the whole personality of man or only in his soul, and if in the whole personality, then God certainly uses the will as well as faith and repentance as a means of conversion, to change man's ethical behaviour as well as his belief. Luther seems in some of his sermons to suggest that the concupiscence of the old man is substituted by the will of the new man⁽⁴⁾. "Gratia facit velle et spontaneum esse".

But the desires of the old man and the will of the new man are two different things. Luther does not consider that God renews the will but that he implants an entirely new thing in man, the only will which can be called by this name, the will of the new man. "The thought of the new life as a break through of

(3) Ibid. p. 138.

(4) Weimarer Ausgabe IV. 324.

natural forces is far from Luther. It is a creation of God, which takes place in one moment, while man behaves quite passively.⁽⁵⁾

The infusio gratiae is a wondrous mystical process in the human soul; the moral change and even the love which is kindled in the heart of the believer are later signs of regeneration; but the willing heart which God forms in man, is the channel by which the water of life flows into the system of the human personality.

Melanchthon who at first followed Luther closely in accepting his doctrine of the servum arbitrium is drawn to a revision of his former view regarding the relationship of will and regeneration. He frequently speaks of "affectus" instead of "voluntas". Though both terms are sometimes used side by side,⁽⁶⁾ Melanchthon seems almost to identify the one with the other.

The new desire is created in the heart of man, and thus the renewal of the will becomes in Melanchthon's teaching the prominent means of conversion. "It is necessary that some contrary desire" (i.e. contrary to the desires of the unredeemed man) be created⁽⁷⁾ in our hearts, by which we must be drawn willingly to the good".

Therefore a twofold process takes place in conversion. God creates the new desire and the new desire drives out the old one; for which Melanchthon uses a special formula, "affectus affectu⁽⁸⁾ vincitur".

(5) Seeberg, Die Lehren Luthers, p. 99

(6) ref. Fischer, Melanchthon's Lehre von der Bekehrung, p. 20.

(7) Melanchthon, Corpus Reformatorum XXI. 53 f.

(8) Ibid. XXI. 15.

But there is still after conversion a constant struggle between the old and the new desire, between the affectus aut veteris aut novi hominis. The human will is absorbed by these positive and negative desires. Did Melanchthon abandon the doctrine of the "Bondage of the will" ? At first - that is to say just before and after Luther's controversy with Erasmus - Melanchthon merely maintains that the bondage of the will is related to the transformation of the spiritual life, but not to external works. In the "Visitations-artikel" which were published in Latin in 1527 and in German in 1528 Melanchthon seems to guard evangelical doctrine against certain Manichaeian errors which were the undesirable by-products of the dispute between the Reformers and Erasmus. Against these ultra-Augustinians he writes, that "the human will has a certain civic liberty which is the effect of the Law and of coercion, and is therefore not righteousness before God and yet is demanded by Him, while the power to satisfy this demand is granted by Him...Regarding the fundamental relationship to God in faith, love etc. we have no freedom..⁽⁹⁾" The German edition of the "Visitationsartikel" received Luther's blessing, who wrote the preface. The same distinction between external and internal freedom is to be found in the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, which is chiefly Melanchthon's work. He violently attacks the opponents of

(9) Quoted from Luthardt, op. cit. p. 159.

Protestantism who like the Pelagians teach that man can love God without the Holy Spirit. But he states on the other hand that "in the things which can be comprehended by reason, we have a free will".⁽¹⁰⁾ It may be assumed that in every orthodox doctrine (Melanchthon's doctrine of the will, as contained in the Apologia is certainly orthodox) lies the germ of a later heresy. Luther's "sola fide" was apt to be misinterpreted by some of his followers and changed into some form of Manichaeism as it is found in the writings of Matthias Flacius Illyricus whom Melanchthon rather unkindly on one occasion described as the "Slovene swine". Calvin's emphasis on repentance was perhaps the source of the perfectionism in Arminianism. Melanchthon's doctrine of the will opened the road to Synergism. But while Luther and Calvin had no direct connection with the heresies that sprang up later, Melanchthon went himself part of the way which led to the synergist error.

Several reasons may be adduced for Melanchthon's later development.⁽¹¹⁾ It may be said with Luthardt that he wanted to avoid both the Pelagian heresy and the error of the Enthusiasts. "Enthusiasm and Stoicism bypass the moral mediation necessary for obtaining salvation, which is demanded because of man's personality as a moral nature". It may be argued in favour of this theory, that almost unwittingly Melanchthon switched over from external works to the internal activity of the will. Another

(10) Apology XVIII. 70 (Mueller p. 218)

(11) Luthardt op. cit. p. 181.

(12)
point of view is taken by Fischer who rejects Luthardt's thesis and assumes a "formal-psychological synergism" in Melanchthon. He asserts that even natural man is considered as a rational creature; and so the formally supreme capacity of the will may decide whether the spiritus should dominate the caro or not.

But is there not a much simpler explanation than this for Melanchthon's "synergism" ? In contrast to Luther he believed that conversion does not take place in one moment. After the new desires are set into motion, they begin to work to conquer the old desires; and when the conversion is at last completed, the will of the Christian man triumphs over the evil lusts of the old man. Melanchthon once said that the will could never remain idle. The nature of the affectus consists in their activity, always moving towards some end. If certain affectus are brought to life at an early stage of conversion, they are bound to play their part in the later stages, though the regeneration itself is a monergistic event. So Melanchthon finds three causes of conversion; (13)
The Word, the Spirit, and the will assisted by God.

Against the conversion doctrine of Melanchthon and his followers Flacius sharply reacts. "The human will is only a subjectum convertendum which nihil operatur sed tantum patitur, (14)
mere passive se habet".

Chemnitz, Melanchthon's commentator who became the most

(12) Fischer op. cit. p. 127.

(13) ref. Melanchthon, Corp. Ref. XXI. p. 376 ff.

(14) Quoted from Seeberg, Article in R E F T Vol. II p. 543

prominent champion of the Philipists developed their viewpoint.

In the spirit of his teacher, he links together the two facts of progressive conversion and of the co-operation of the will.

"Conversion or renovation is not a change which takes place in one moment and in all parts .. it has its beginning and its progress, by which it is completed though in great imperfection. It must not be assumed that I may wait with a secure and idle will till the renovation or conversion by the Holy Spirit is completed without any motion of my own; for it cannot be demonstrated to a mathematical point, where the will made free begins to operate ... But as soon as the grace of preparation, that is to say, the first beginning of faith and conversion, is granted to man, immediately the struggle of flesh and spirit begins, and it is evident that that struggle cannot take place without some motion of our will. After the motion made through divine influence, the human will does not react in sheer passivity, but moved and supported by the Holy Spirit becomes *συνεργός* with
(15)
God.

We have quoted this long passage from Chemnitz' ² writings because it is the classical statement of synergism. In the controversy following the division becomes quite obvious. Those dogmatists who believe in a progress of conversion and at the same time consider the will as one of the causes, are bound to accept synergism; the others who maintain that conversion takes place in a moment and that the will is an object of

(15) Chemnitz Loci I. 184 quoted from Luthardt, Compendium p. 39C.

conversion but not its cause, are bound to Monergism. Has then the pure Monergist no right at all to allot any place in the scheme of conversion to the will? The answer which as far as we can see was never given during the whole synergist controversy should be that God as the only author of conversion uses the will as a means of conversion just as he uses faith and repentance. We do not say that faith or repentance is the cause of conversion, neither can we pretend that the will is an efficient cause of conversion over and above the Word and Spirit.

Both sides were concerned to found their viewpoint not only on the authority of Scripture but also on the authority of Luther. So Selnecker, who maintains that Luther never wished to be understood as denying the power of the human will to accept God's mercy; but he did deny its merits and worthiness and ascribed all to the mercy of God. "That man behaves in conversion merely passively must be understood of his worthiness, efficacy and right action. But the ordinary reason which God himself has instituted and which he requires is not abolished, so that man does apprehend (16) and receive the mercy that is offered to him".

The Philippists had now to substitute for Melancthon's original distinction between the external and internal will the assumption of a difference between the substance and the efficacy of the will. Chemnitz taught "that man must accept the operatio spiritus sancti, if he is to be converted to God". (This is the change of the substance of the will.) "But of course the vis and

(16) Selnecker Inst. II. p. 85, quoted from Heppe, Dogmatik des deutschen Protestantismus II Vol. p. 349.

efficacia of the will by which man is enabled to act as a
(17)
Christian comes as a gift of grace from God". (Here the appli-
cation of the will takes place).

It is on the ground of that strange scholastic distinction between the substance and the efficacy of the will that Philippists and Flacists, Synergists and "Semi-Manichaeans" met. The real substance of man, declares Flacius, is his evil will the imago diaboli. If he is converted, he suffers conversion with resistance. Flacists and Philippists attribute some activity to the will; the former hold that man is converted against his will, the latter with his will. Midway between stands Lutheran orthodoxy, which takes an impersonal view of the conversion experiences. Man suffers conversion. His will has no part in it at all. In order to reconcile the various views and to re-establish unity in the Lutheran Church the Formula of Concord was drawn up in the year 1580. When we compare the controversy within the Lutheran Church with that within the Reformed Church of the Netherlands which led to the Synod of Dort, it is noteworthy that in the Lutheran Church a real concord was achieved, and that some of the Philippists afterwards changed their views.

The following table illustrates the viewpoints of the three parties along with the conclusion drawn in the Formula of
(18)
Concord.

(17) Quoted Ibid. p. 352.

(18) Ref. Ibid. 354 f.

1. Philippists: Homo in conversione patitur volens } (personal
2. Placians : Homo in conversione patitur nolens } views.)
3. Orthodox E Homo in Conversione patitur (impersonal view)
4. Formula of Concord : Deus ex nolentibus volentes
facit (objective view).

The Formula of Concord reaffirmed that the will in
(19)
conversion is merely passive and it disposed of Melancthon's
"three causes" theory. "Before conversion only two real causes
exist...the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God as the instrument of
(20)
the Holy Spirit, by which He effects conversion". The first
compendium of Christian doctrine to be founded on the Formula of
Concord, by Heerbrand, stated that the will instead of being the
tertia causa is only the object on which the grace operates. Thus
the objective view of the Formula soon degenerates into an im-
personal view of conversion.

But the F. o. C. also rejected the error of the "Stoics and Manichaeans" who teach that "man does all things under compulsion, that the will of man even in external works has no freedom or ability to exercise external justice and honest discipline and to avoid the external sins and vices".

Generally speaking the Formula took the view of Melancthon in his earlier writings and even admitted that "when the work of the new birth and renewal has begun in us, by the

(19) Formula of Concord I. II. 18 (Mueller p. 526)

(20) Ibid. I. II. 19 (p. 526)

(21) Ibid. II. II. 74 (p. 606)

power of the Holy Spirit we can and must co-operate, though still in great weakness, not by our carnal and natural powers but by the new powers and gifts which the Holy Spirit started in us through conversion ...⁽²²⁾ But by going back to Melancthon's first standpoint, the problem of the place which the will holds in the scheme of conversion was not solved. The synergists left off where the pietists made a new beginning, seeing the need for a personal, subjective relationship between God and man in conversion instead of the impersonal, objective relationship, visualized by Lutheran orthodoxy and the Formula of Concord. They of course went much further than the synergists who were at heart still Augustinians, but steered right into the sea of Pelagianism. Johannes Arndt in all his earnest piety represents the link between Orthodoxy and Pietism. From the renewed will "proceeds the whole Christian life, and all the commandments as a stream from its fountain, not by compulsion, but from love and freedom of spirit.....Thus then every man has it in his power to change with freedom and ease into a being more noble than himself."⁽²³⁾ We notice distinctly how in the first half of our quotation Arndt's conception of mystical union with Christ is still expressed in terms of synergism, while the second half is at least Semi-Pelagianism. Pietism rendered a definite service to the Lutheran Church. Since the Formula of Concord was unable to

(22) Ibid. II. II. 65 (p. 604)

(23) Arndt, op. cit. p. 308.

offer a satisfactory interpretation of the function of the will in conversion, the Pietists did it; unfortunately their interpretation was based not on the evangelical doctrine of conversion but on their own emotional experience.

At the beginning of modern Lutheran theology stands Schleiermacher whose line of thought regarding the function of the will in conversion is linked to the doctrine of Melanchthon and the Synergists, rather than to the Formula of Concord. He rejects the (Flacian) idea that the attitude of man during conversion is that of active or passive resistance. But he also argues that since the whole life of the Redeemer is activity, fellowship with Him cannot be purely passive. The spontaneous activity in living fellowship with Christ begins in the moment of being received into this Fellowship.⁽²⁴⁾ Conversion is thus "the evocation of this spontaneous activity in union with Christ".⁽²⁵⁾ Like Melanchthon and the Synergists Schleiermacher believed in progressive conversion. He goes even so far as to assume "an ineradicable residuum in human nature", which is a desire for God. Of course "mere desire is not an act, it is but the anticipatory feeling of an act that may possibly happen if a certain impulse occurs later". This desire is heightened in conversion when Christ communicates Himself to us, till it becomes a spontaneous activity. With Schleiermacher Lutheran theology returned to the Philippist conception of the will as the "tertia causa".

(24) Ref. Schleiermacher, op. cit. p. 494.

(25) Ibid. p. 495.

In comparing the parallel development of Reformed and Lutheran theology, we find that roughly speaking the statements made in the Lutheran Formula of Concord are in close agreement with the teaching of John Calvin. The human will is treated by Calvin as an object of God's grace. The grace of God "is the rule of the Spirit in directing and governing the human will. Govern he cannot without correcting, reforming, renovating.... moving, impelling, urging and restraining. Accordingly all the actions which are afterwards done are truly said to be wholly his".⁽²⁶⁾ Calvin also seems to distinguish between the substance and the efficacy of the will, though he does not use these terms; for he agrees with Augustine's doctrine, "that the will is not destroyed, but rather repaired by grace ... viz, that the human will may be said to be renewed when, its vitiosity and perverseness being corrected, it is conformed to the true standard of righteousness". It is obvious that Calvin does not interpret Augustine's doctrine as referring to a residuum of holy desire in fallen man, but to the existence of a formal will, which is not only in itself ineffective, but also void of holy desires. It rather appears as an empty shell which God fills with the new content of a reformed and lively will.

In the later development of reformed theology the function of the will is further defined. Reformed like Lutheran orthodoxy maintains that there are only two causes of conversion, the Word and the Spirit, but besides faith and repentance the

(26) Inst. II. 5. 15.

bending of the will appears as third means of conversion. While faith and repentance are used by God simultaneously, the bending of the will comes last even in the chronological order of events. "Wherefore God through His Word and Spirit illuminates the understanding so that man will be convinced and will acknowledge the truth and the saving grace of the gospel to which he has given heed (Faith and Repentance); at last, he bends and determines the said will, so that we love the true and good word to which we have given heed and which we have acknowledged"⁽²⁷⁾. (Heidegger). The value of Heidegger's statement lies in the fact that it reflects the experience of the man who is converted in the flash of one great experience as well as of that person whose regeneration takes place in progressive stages. While faith and repentance are the first means by which God imparts the new birth to man, the renewal of the will serves to the fuller apprehension of the new life. This holds true for one who like Paul on the road to Damascus cries out: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do"; and holds for the other experiences by which, with increasing faith and the deepened sense of penitence, his will also is more and more brought into accord with the Divine Will. From the viewpoint of practical theology we may say that the bending of the will as a third means of conversion can be preached in plain and simple language. Nevertheless the Evangelical Doctrine of conversion which should be the rallying point for all Evangelical Christians, became the subject of heated controversies in the Reformed Churches

(27) Heppe, Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche.
p. 417

as much as in the Lutheran Church because of the disputed place that the will occupies in this doctrine. But the parallelism between the Arminian and the Synergist controversy, and between the Synod of Dort and the Formula of Concord, is not quite exact. The treatment of the Remonstrants by Church and State in the Netherlands was much harsher than the treatment of the Synergists by Lutheran orthodoxy. The Synod of Dort drew up doctrinal statements which were never accepted by the other side. A concord was never achieved and the split became inevitable. But the principal difference between the controversy in the Lutheran and in the Reformed Churches was the fact that the starting point was not the same. We have observed that since the time of Melancthon the function of the will played an important part in Lutheran theology. Though the interpretation of this function was bound to affect the doctrine of predestination, there was only a secondary interest in the whole problem of election. In the Arminian controversy on the other hand the doctrine of predestination was the real bone of contention. The five articles of the Remonstrants which were published in the year 1610 rejected both the supra- and the sublapsarian view of election, but were not unorthodox as far as the bondage of the will was concerned. They agreed "that man could not obtain saving faith of himself or by strength of his own free will, but stood in need of God's grace through Christ to be renewed in thought and will".⁽²⁸⁾

Arminianism is thus clearly distinguished from Pelagianism because by Christ's merit alone is saving grace achieved. But if saving grace is applied not on account of God's eternal decree, it must be applied by some sort of decision on the part of man. Therefore ten years after the publication of the five articles at the time of the Synod of Dort, in 1620, the Remonstrants insisted on "free assent"; and there seems little difference between "free assent" and "free will". One of their propositions was "The operation of grace in the beginning of conversion is indifferent and might be resisted, so that man can be converted by it or not: and the conversion does not necessarily follow unless man has by his free consent (libero assensu) decided for it, and wants to be converted".⁽²⁹⁾ The Synod of Dort insists not only on the unability of unconverted man to save himself, but also on his unwillingness to do so. "All men are conceived in sin ... incapable of any saving goodness .. they neither want to nor can return to God, correct their perverted nature or bring themselves to its correction except through the grace of the Spirit of regeneration".⁽³⁰⁾

It seems that the opposing parties at the Synod of Dort were much more at variance than the Synergists and the Orthodox were in the Lutheran Church. The Synod of Dort also lacked the corrective which the rejection of the Flacian error offered to the Lutheran Church. While the Formula of Concord attempted to

(29) Ref. Charles Hodge, op. cit. Vol. II. p. 681.

(30) Ibid.

find the golden mean between two opponents, the Synod of Dort fought a one-sided battle against heresy. It is hard to say which is more advantageous to the development of doctrine. The findings of Dort, one-sided as they are, have the advantage of being in some points clearer than the Formula of Concord, which represents a doctrinal compromise.

According to the Canons of Dort, God works conversion in his elect in such a way that he "infuses new qualities into his will", makes that which had been dead alive, that which was evil good, that which had been unwilling willing (ref. "Ex nolentibus volentes" in the Formula of Concord) and from being refractory, obedient, and leads and strengthens it, that as a good tree it may be able to bring forth the fruit of good works". (31)

The new man appears here as a tree which the divine gardener chose to ingraft with a new branch from a choice fruit tree. After the old branches are cut off and the grafting has taken place, the sap of the new branch begins to pervade the whole tree, which from now onwards brings forth delicious fruit in which the heart rejoices.

Bishop Hall, who tries to mediate between the Orthodox and the Remonstrants, distinguishes between transitive and intransitive conversion, though he does not use these terms. Transitive conversion is by grace alone (this should satisfy the orthodox), while in the immediately following intransitive conversion man's co-operation is called for. "Upon this conversion

(31) Canons of Dort III/IV. II (Scott p. 210).

which God works in the heart, follows instantly our actual conversion to God; while from our new changed will God fetches the act of our believing and turning to him. He gives that power which the will exercises: so as it is at once both our's and God's: our's in that we do work: God's in that he works in us." (32)

Many theologians have tried to make a similar distinction between the conversion wrought entirely by God and the following turning of man to God. The first part is often called "regeneration" and the second "conversion". Principal Cunningham stated that "regeneration means the first implantation of spiritual life ... while conversion describes the process by which men, now quickened and renewed - no longer passive, but active - do willingly turn to God, and embrace Jesus Christ as all their salvation and all their desire..". (33)

The bending and renewal of the will is then according to general Evangelical Doctrine the means by which God after He has mortified and quickened the sinner by repentance and faith enables him to become an active Christian, a willing disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(32) Bishop Hall, Works Vol. IX. "Via Media" p. 495.

(33) Cunningham, Hist. Theology p. 411.

VII.

BAPTISM - A PROMISE AND A PLEDGE.

"Repent and be baptized'
This call to repentance and faith in
Jesus Christ, and to confession thereof
in this Sacrament, is addressed to you."

From the Order for the Administra-
tion of the Sacrament of Baptism to
Adults in the Church of Scotland.

Before entering upon the controversial subject of the relationship between Regeneration and Baptism, I may be allowed to reflect on my own personal experience of conversion and baptism.

I was born a Jew and grew up a free thinker, though there was at the back of my mind a constant quest for the eternal truth. In the utter homelessness of exile, I felt the shadow of death near me. There was nothing uncommon in the fact that a man who was spiritually and materially uprooted should long for death. One autumn night I was walking along the broad river Danube. I saw the mist moving upon the dark face of the water. Great fear fell upon me. I was afraid of the future, afraid of man, afraid of the water beneath the embankment, afraid of myself ...In this moment I noticed the form of a cross shining clearly through the night. There was an aura of blue light around it; the source being the illuminated cross above a chapel built on the rock on a nearby hill. Suddenly I knew that the way of the Cross leads from death to life, from homelessness to the Father's

House, from the terror of sin to repentance, from scepticism to faith. I still hesitated but I began to read the Bible. With heart beating I entered a book shop and asked for the New Testament. With joy and awe I attended divine Service, till on Good Friday of the following year I asked the Minister of the Scottish Mission to instruct me in the Christian Faith. I did not say that I wished to be baptized. I just said that I wished to know something about the Christian Faith. As one who has starved for a long time devours the first meal which is set before him, I swallowed the Word of God. At the end of my preparation I felt an urge to confess to my instructor those doubts which had long been besetting me. It was now my greatest desire to be baptized. It was the only possible outcome of my conversion experience that I should receive the outward visible sign of the inward grace which God had wrought in me. Once more I stood beside a broad river. This was not the river of death, but the river of life. Yet I could not see what lay beyond. I was unable to comprehend clearly what it would mean to live the Christian life. Would my life come to a spiritual standstill, or would it go on in just the same manner as before ? Or - ?

The minister who had led me so far, gave the answer: "This is not an end, but a beginning". When towards the end of the Sabbath Service after the Word of God had been proclaimed, I stepped forward and answered the questions which were put before me with a threefold "I do", I was lifted up into a new sphere of life. I felt the water on my head burning like fire while I was

borne up by the Benediction in which the congregation joined "The Lord bless thee and keep thee..".

Years later I realised that this experience is the ordinary Christian experience of conversion. Before regeneration we stand in the shadow of death. The Cross casts it radiant light on our way, the way from death to life. We begin to read the Word of God, to pray, to repent and are drawn into the Fellowship of the Church. Here we seek instruction and as soon as Faith has taken root in our hearts, we long for the sign and outward manifestation of God's grace. In Baptism we experience new death and new life. The convert who stands before the baptismal font does not throw himself into the water of regeneration, but the water comes to him. Jews talking about one of themselves who has become a Christian often say : "He got himself baptized". But it would be spiritual suicide for anyone "to get himself baptized". We are drowned in Christ by the sign of Baptism, but we do not drown ourselves. Karl Barth reminds us of Luther's interpretation ⁽¹⁾ that the Greek word βαπτίζω and the German word "taufen" (from "Taufe") originally and essentially describe the event, in which a man or a thing for some time is wholly immersed in some water and is then drawn out again. Baptism as originally administered in this sense of the word had, like circumcision in the Old Testament, the character of an immediate threat to life, followed instantaneously by the corresponding act of saving and preserving, the "aus der Taufe heben". (As lifting out of Baptism).

(1) Karl Barth, Die Kirchliche Lehre von der Taufe, Zuerich 1943 p. 3.

In the German language this expression is commonly used in infant baptism. It is said of the godparent that he or she lifts the child out of Baptism; But the phrase according to Barth's interpretation refers to the original rite of immersion.

We are therefore confronted with the certain fact that both the common Christian experience and the common rite of the Church have followed the teaching of Scripture "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"⁽²⁾.

The testimony to the intimate relationship between Baptism and New Birth is overwhelming. It is denied by hardly any branch of Christianity in which the Sacrament is administered; But differences of opinion arise as far as effect of the one upon the other is concerned. It may be said that in the Roman Church and in High Anglicanism the Sacrament itself is identified with regeneration, while in the sectarian branches of Christianity conversion itself is a sacrament. In some of the sects (Pentecostal Church, Churches of Christ etc.) the person who claims to have a conversion experience receives a certificate in which the date of his "new birth" is stated. This document is valued by members of those denominations at least as highly as a Baptismal

(2) Romans 6. 3-4.

Certificate. "Believer's Baptism" has more the character of a confirmation than of a real Sacrament, for faith, repentance and sanctification are granted with that "Sacramental" conversion experience. The rite of Baptism serves to confirm this fact on man's part rather than on God's part.

In the Roman Catholic Church on the other hand the grace conferred on man by Baptism makes conversion for the ordinary layman superfluous though faith is required in the case of adults who receive Baptism. If we exclude the Roman practice from our further consideration it is not because of their belief in baptismal regeneration (Luther believed in it too), but because of the identification of regeneration and justification. If a man is not only regenerated but also justified by Baptism, no room is left for conversion. The cause of justification is according to the Council of Trent "the Sacrament of Baptism which is the sacrament of faith, without which no one's justification
(3)
can ever be attained".

While the Sectarian has a high regard for conversion, but an imperfect conception of Baptism, the Roman Church has a high regard for Baptism, but no conception of conversion in the evangelical sense. We are here concerned solely with the implications of the Evangelical Doctrine of conversion on the Sacrament of Baptism, and therefore restrict ourselves to the Evangelical

(3) Council of Trent, Session VI. chpt. 7 (Various editions)

interpretation. Luther's principal doctrine of Baptism is contained in the "Sermon von dem Heiligen hochwuerdigen Sakrament der Taufe" (4) Luther distinguishes between three aspects of Baptism; the external sign, its significance ("Bedeutung" in the sense of "impart") and the faith involved. "The sign consists in this, that we are thrust into the water in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; but we are not left there, for we are drawn out again" (5). This external sign reveals the thing which it signifies, the "Bedeutung" of Baptism. This is "a blessed dying unto sin and a resurrection in the grace of God, so that the old man who is conceived and born in sin, is there drowned, and a new man born in grace, comes forth and rises" (6). The sacrament or sign is quickly over "but the thing it signifies, viz., the spiritual baptism, the drowning of sin, lasts so long as we live, and is completed only on death" (7). Martin Luther regards the whole life as "a spiritual baptism". The act of water-baptism is therefore only a beginning. It is the death sentence pronounced over the old man - but the Sacrament is perfect only after this life's end and at the resurrection from the dead. By baptism man becomes "sacramentally" pure and (8) guiltless; that is to say, he has the sign of purity and innocence and the drowning of his sinful desires has begun. But they are not dead yet, as long as we live. In Baptism a covenant is

(4) Luther, Works, Philadelphia, Vol. I. p. 56-71.

(5) Ibid. p. 56

(6) Ibid. p. 57

(7) Ibid.

(8) Ibid. p. 60.

concluded between God and man. Man is pledged to die with his sins and to be made new at the Last Day and meanwhile to continue in slaying his sins as long as he lives. God accepts this pledge. From the hour of Baptism, He begins to make a new man, infuses His grace and the Holy Spirit and later trains and tries him all his life long. (9) God on His part pledges Himself not to count the sins which remain in man's nature after baptism. "No one who believes in Christ is condemned by the evil, sinful inclination of his nature, if only he does not follow it and consent to it". (10) The clause in the last sentence "who believes in Christ" indicates that faith is the means by which the grace of the sacrament is not only set forth and signified, but also appropriated. Faith is the third part of the sacrament. Without this faith the sign and its meaning are of no avail. "This faith is of all things the most necessary, for it is the ground of all comfort". (11) In spite (or just because) of his high view of baptism, Luther demands that Christians must "live according to their baptism and covenant" and must not "hinder the work which God and their baptism has begun". (12)

Since - as pointed out in a previous chapter - the embracing of faith is conversion according to Luther, his treatise on Baptism implies that a baptized adult who is not

(9) Ibid. p. 61
(10) Ibid. p. 62
(11) Ibid. p. 63
(12) Ibid. p. 64

converted, is not in the true sense a Christian. But he finds in his baptism all the grace he needs to become a new man. Luther warns us against the error that the sinner can blot out and put away his sin by making some sort of satisfaction, but "if anyone has fallen into sin, he should the more remember his baptism, and how God has there made a covenant with him to forgive all his sins, if only he has the will to fight against them even until death".⁽¹³⁾

How high a view Luther holds of this Sacrament is apparent from his statement that "sins are forgiven only to those who are baptized, i.e., to those whose sins God has promised to forgive". This promise is hindered by sin, and the only way to remove the obstacle is by faith. Man should thank God at all times with joyful heart for the grace of baptism. On the other hand he must avoid the danger of false confidence, as if "everything is right, by virtue of baptism".⁽¹⁴⁾ He cannot meanwhile do his own will, till in the face of death he might remember his baptism and remind God of his covenant.

"Let us therefore walk with carefulness and fear, that with a firm faith we may hold fast the riches of God's grace, and joyfully give thanks to His mercy for ever and ever".⁽¹⁵⁾ For Luther, the greatest conversion experience of all is to remember the grace God has bestowed in Baptism. Whenever in later writings

(13) Ibid. p. 65

(14) Ibid. p. 71

(15) Ibid.

he refers to this sacrament, he breaks forth into the most fervent eulogy which taken by itself may sound like mere sacramentalism. In the Larger Catechism, Baptism is said to be "not merely ordinary water, but water embedded in the Word and commandment of God and thereby sanctified. It is a most precious thing, this "Gotteswasser". Yet it is not precious in itself, but it obtains its worth from the Word and commandment of God. (16)

(17) And if again we substitute conversion (or renewal) for faith we gather from the following passage in his series of sermons on the first and second chapter of St. John, that the sacrament itself is valid whether conversion follows or not, but that on the other hand its benefit is made void except where man is converted. "If I believe, Baptism profits me, but if I have no faith, Baptism is in all eternity of no profit at all, for thus Christ said : 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned'. (Mark 16, 16)" (18)

The new life is a permanent baptism. This is beautifully expressed in these words: "Thou hast been baptized sacramentally once, but thou needest aye to be baptized by faith, needest aye to die and aye to live". (Semel es baptisatus sacramentaliter sed semper baptisandus fide, semper moriendum semperque vivendum). (19)

Luther's whole conception of the new life is therefore related to his doctrine of baptism. Behind his high view of baptism lies the evangelical view of conversion. He does not

(16) Weimarer Ausgabe Vol. XXX, 1st part p. 213.

(17) I feel entitled to do so in strict reliance on Luther's words that dying and being born again "takes place in baptism if we believe, for faith is the renewal". Erl. Ausg. VII. 170

(18) Weimarer Ausgabe Vol. XLVI p. 688 (19) Weimarer Ausgabe Vol. VI p. 535.

glory in his conversion experience, but in his baptism, not "conversus sum" but "baptisatus sum" is his testimony to the new birth.

Yet it is the same spirit of God which is at work in Baptismal regeneration as in the creation and preservation of faith. (20) "My faith does not produce baptism, but receives it". This can only mean that baptismal regeneration and faith are created simultaneously, the one for the other. In the case of the infant, time will come when he will consciously embrace this faith and ask God to preserve it. This then is conversion. "After God has made the beginning through His Holy Spirit in baptism, and has kindled and wrought the right knowledge of God and faith, we must ask Him without ceasing, that He will, by the same Spirit (through the daily exercise of reading and practising God's Word) graciously preserve and keep faith and its heavenly gifts in us to the end". (21)

Lutheran theology as a whole seems to build its doctrine of Baptism upon the assumption that infant baptism is the normal form while adult baptism is the exception. Leonhard Hutter, whose compendium of doctrine was the orthodox Lutheran standard for centuries, stipulated in the case of heathen : "Those adults who believe with their heart, as they profess with their mouth, receive salutary baptism unto regeneration as much as children..." (22)

(20) Catechismus Maior, 545 (Mueller p. 493)

(21) Form. of Concord II.II. 16 (Mueller p. 592)

(22) Leonhard Hutter, Compendium Locorum Theologicorum, Wittenberg 1693, p. 338.

The argument for adult baptism is here derived from that of infants. This may have been a practical procedure, because very few Pastors ever administered adult baptism during the course of their ministry. But historically and logically the argument should be conducted in the opposite direction.

It ought to be observed that here lies the fundamental difference between the Lutheran and the Reformed treatment of this doctrine. Reading the 15th chapter of Book IV. of Calvin's Institutes, in which the Sacrament of Baptism is explained, we find hardly any hint at all, whether the author is going to defend paedobaptism or not. But when he approaches this subject in the 16th Chapter in an entirely unprejudiced manner, the reader is assured beyond doubt that the children of the faithful are heirs of the covenant with their elders.

This is not only historically the proper way of working out the argument, because the first people to be baptized were adults, but also logically, for children are brought into the fellowship of the Church by their parents, and not the parents by their children. This also is the practice of our own missions. When a non-Christian family seeks admission to the Church, the Minister of any Presbyterian Mission baptizes first the parents, who take the baptismal vows for themselves. Only then are they able to take the vows on behalf of their children to whose baptism there is no further hindrance. Thus historically, logically and practically adult baptism precedes infant baptism. Calvin

mentions as one of the characteristics of baptism that it serves for our confession before man. "It is a mark by which we openly profess our desire to be numbered among the people of God, by which we testify our agreement with all Christians in the worship of one God and in one religion, and by which we make a public declaration of our faith; that the praises of God may not only be breathed in the secret aspirations of our hearts, but may also be loudly proclaimed by our tongues, and by all the members of our body, in the different modes in which they are capable of expressing them."⁽²³⁾

It is obvious that this mark of baptism refers primarily to adults, though, as we shall see later, it may in the way of inference be applied to children. Calvin, like Luther, found that the remembrance of baptism is a source of new strength and consolation to those who are distressed because of the consciousness of their sins. "It is evident, that the faithful, whenever in any part of their lives they are distressed with a consciousness of their sins, may justly have recourse to the remembrance of their baptism, in order to confirm themselves in the confidence of their interest in that one perpetual ablution which⁽²⁴⁾ is enjoyed in the blood of Christ".

This remembrance is then for Calvin a new confirmation of God's saving grace, but it is not necessarily the conversion

(23) Inst. IV. XV. 13.

(24) Ibid. 4.

experience par excellence as Luther felt it to be.

Calvin enumerates three principal benefits which our faith derives from baptism.

1. "It is a symbol and token of our purification." (25)
2. "It shows us our mortification and our new life in him". (26)
3. "It affords in us the certain testimony, that we are not only ingrafted into the life and death of Christ, but are so united as to be partakers of all his benefits". (27)

The first benefit is an act of God's grace which is obtained by the blood of Christ alone. The third benefit is the admission of the regenerate man to full communion with Christ, as the ultimate end of his new life. But as soon as man becomes aware of the benefit of purification and before he obtains the benefit of full communion he passes through the experience of dying and rising from the dead. It is through this second benefit that he experiences his conversion to God. "Thus we are promised, FIRST, the gratuitous remission of sins, and imputation of righteousness; and SECONDLY, the grace of the Holy Spirit to REFORM US to newness of life". (28)

The question may be asked: "Was Paul converted on the road to Damascus or in the house where baptism was administered unto him." The answer is simply this : "God converted him on the Damascus Road, but Paul himself became fully aware of that which happened to him only when the Holy Spirit enlightened his mind and he was baptized. Can we imagine any non-Christian who

(25) Ibid. 1.
(26) Ibid. 5.
(27) Ibid. 6.
(28) Ibid. 5.

is suddenly arrested by the power of God, crying out : "I am converted, Hallelujah."? Only later when his eyes are opened and when in baptism his old man dies and the new man is born, he becomes aware of God's wondrous ways and begins consciously to experience conversion. It is here that the reformation of our life starts. But the old man is not quite destroyed. We are called and enabled (that is to say effectually called) to fight the remnants of Satan's host and to press forward towards the mark of final victory. "We conclude therefore that we are baptized into the mortification of the flesh, which commences in us at baptism, which we pursue from day to day, and which will be perfected when we shall pass out of this life to the Lord".⁽²⁹⁾

Calvin and the Westminster Standards, which closely follow him, guard the doctrine of Baptism against two main errors: that regeneration as such is conferred by the rite of baptism and that the sacrament is a mere symbol not signifying the reality of grace. It is not only "a mark or sign by which we profess our religion before men, as soldiers wear the insignia of their sovereign as a mark of their profession".⁽³⁰⁾ That is to say, it is not only a rite of initiation, but it is also "a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in the newness of life".⁽³¹⁾

(29) Ibid. 11.

(30) Ibid. 1.

(31) Westminster Conf. of Faith XXVIII. 1.

In other words, baptism is not only a sign of our coming to Christ, but also of Christ's coming to us; we do not only join Christ, but we are joined to him.

Yet the Presbyterian ordinances make it quite clear that the administration of the Sacrament calls for a decision to be made by those who are baptized and also by all those who are present at the Baptismal Service. A closer study of Question 167 in the Larger Catechism ("How is our baptism to be improved by us") reveals the close relationship between the Sacrament and man's conversion to God. In order to "improve" the value of the Sacrament for us, we have to consider "the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed" by baptism and "our solemn vow made therein". These improvements should be practised throughout the whole of life but "especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration (of the Sacrament) to others". The last clause is very significant for the doctrine and practice in the Reformed Churches. The occasion of a Church baptism is often the cause of the renewal of the Christian allegiance by others, even actual conversions may take place among those who witness the initiation of a new member into the fellowship of Christ. It is therefore expedient that baptism should be administered "in the place of publick worship, and in the face of the congregation, where the people may most conveniently see and hear".

(32) Westminster "Directory of Publick Worship"

Even the two little words "I do" clearly and firmly pronounced by a catechumen or by the parents of an infant, the minister's actions and the words of the baptismal formula, have often melted the hearts of strangers who happened to be present in the congregation. Thus the efficacy of God's grace of regeneration is not limited to the person baptized, but may be extended to parents, godparents and any member of the congregation. Even the conversion of a non-Christian is sometimes wrought when such a person attends a public service of Baptism.

The question may now be asked how far infant baptism is related to conversion. We are not concerned in this treatise with the justification of infant baptism as such, but merely with the relationship of baptism to conversion. The main argument of the Reformers for infant baptism was that in baptism God has given a promise to all believers and to their children. The catechumen comes to the font with as much earnest faith as he has received through the beginning of his conversion and through the instruction of the Church. God strengthens and increases his faith through baptism till he himself may be enabled to improve upon it. The infant is brought to the font by the faith of the parents and is sustained by the faith of the whole congregation. As the child is received into the membership of the Church and ingrafted into Christ, personal faith is kindled in the heart of the new child member. This truth is very beautifully expressed by a writer who though a Roman Catholic by birth and upbringing was at heart a real Evangelical. Peter

Rosegger, the Austrian writer of popular stories, begins his "Credo" with these sentences: "I believe ! Those were the first words I said on this earth. But I said them at a time when I could not speak, and at a time when I could not believe - as a newborn infant. I then took upon myself a serious vow to resist the devil and to believe in God as the Almighty Creator and Redeemer. By this vow I received baptism and became a Christian". (33)

Certainly the faith of an infant is not the same as that of an adult, but the seed is sown. "They are baptized into future repentance and faith; for .. though these graces have not yet been formed in them, ..the seeds of both are nevertheless implanted in their hearts by the secret operation of the Spirit". (34)

With the seeds of faith and repentance, the seed of conversion is also sown in the little child. Conversion in its Old Testament meaning is the turning back of the sinner to God. Conversion in later life is therefore the turning back to the first experience of God's grace in baptism. In some cases this turning back may be a sudden one. The sinner realizes how far he has strayed from the grace of God, how ungrateful he has shown himself to the promise made to him in baptism and how faithlessly he has broken the vows which were made on his behalf, when he was first numbered among the members of Christ's Church. Others may from their childhood be accustomed to look back upon their union

(33) Peter Rosegger, My Kingdom of Heaven. London 1907 p. 1

(34) Inst. IV. XVI. 21.

with Christ in simple piety without knowing when this conversion began. But the protest against those who hold that "the laver of regeneration" as offered in the Sacrament, makes conversion superfluous, is justified by evangelical doctrine. John Wesley who defended his call for conversion by pointing out the error of mere sacramentalism, stands therefore in the true evangelical tradition. "The question is not what you were made in baptism... but what you are now ? Is the Spirit of adoption now in your heart ? I ask not whether you were born of water and of the Spirit; but are you now the temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you ?" and he challenges his hearers with these words of burning zeal for the Kingdom of God. "Who denies that ye were then made children of God, and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven ? But notwithstanding this, ye are now children of the devil .. And if you have been baptized, your only hope is this - that those who were made the children of God by baptism but are now the children of the devil, may yet again receive power to become the sons of God..." (35) From both the Larger Catechism and the Catechism of the Church of England, Wesley infers that Baptism is not the new birth. "Here it is manifest, baptism, the sign, is spoken (36) of as distinct from regeneration, the thing signified".

But it seems that Wesley in his righteous indignation against a form of opus operatum as found in the Anglicanism of his

(35) Wesley, op. cit. Vol. V. p. 221 ff.

(36) Ibid: VI. p. 73

time, does not realize the benefit which the baptized person receives from baptism even for his future conversion. The Reformed standards always maintain that the Sacrament is not a mere sign of God's grace, but that it also exhibits and confers this grace. Without this assurance man cannot receive the strength for conversion by looking back to his baptism. In Wesley's conception the new birth is an event in human life which has no other beginning than the actual conversion. According to Reformed Doctrine the seed of conversion is sown in Baptism and may break through the hard soil of unbelief at any period of human life, although some seeds die or wither on the wayside. The visible Church is the divine institution to which the promises are made, but not the exclusive company of converted men and women. The difference between the Wesleyan and the Puritan protest against the common practice of baptism is this : Wesley maintained the catholicity of the Sacrament, but saw in it merely a sign and symbol, while Puritans, Baptists, Pentecostal sects and others take a high view of Baptism but reserve it for the administration of those who have given definite proof of their faith or even their conversion.

The Baptist protest has found support in very recent years from two of the greatest Reformed theologians, Barth and Brunner. (37) But the reason for their protest is not the same as

(37) Acknowledgment is hereby made to Prof. John Baillie's lecture on Karl Barth's and Emil Brunner's view of Baptism, delivered at a meeting of New College Union in October 1945.

the doctrine of the Baptists. The Baptist holds that Paedobaptism is invalid, because the infant is unable to give proof of his faith and repentance, while Barth and Brunner merely hold that the present state of the world does not justify the baptism of children, the majority of whom will later be indifferent or even hostile to the Church.

Emil Brunner in his "Divine Imperative" rejected the (38) "magical" view of Baptism which he found in Lutheranism. But he did not deny "baptismal grace". He states the case more radically in "The Divine Human Encounter" where he alleges that Calvin himself defended the interpretation of the presence of faith in infant baptism rather hesitantly. Calvin therefore "moved another idea into the foreground in accordance with the precedent of Zwingli; the idea of the Covenant. It is not so much the individual faith of the infant, as, above all, the faith of the 'household', by means of which the baptized infant is (39) qualified to be received into the Covenant of God".

Brunner raises his objections against the practice of paedobaptism on the following grounds:

1. He cannot see what faith can mean if we attribute knowledge, assent and trust to an infant. (This of course was never done by Calvin).
2. A distinction must be made between the household of God and the body of Christ. Brunner maintains that a child may as a member of a Christian family belong to the Church, but it belongs to the body of Christ by faith alone.

(38) Brunner, Divine Imperative p. 159

(39) Brunner, Wahrheit als Begegnung, p. 137.

Nevertheless he approves of infant baptism, as administered in the mission field, where the faith of the parents is examined beforehand. "Heathen children are not baptised, only Christian children; that is to say, the rule is observed; (40) Nullum Sacramentum sine fide" This shows very distinctly the difference between Brunner's view and the Baptist doctrine. Karl Barth recognizes the potent strength of baptism as "the free word and work of Jesus Christ". (41) The Roman Church would be right if she called it an opus operatum of Jesus Christ, "the power of his work of reconciliation which happened once for all and which becomes effective over and over again by the free power of the Holy Spirit. But unfortunately she does not say so, but speaks of an opus operatum as meaning the correctly administered baptismal (42) action".

Barth agrees with Luther up to the point where the Reformer insisted "that God's Word and commandment" is the "essence in the water" (Kern im Wasser) But he finds that Luther and the Lutherans went too far in their enthusiasm for Baptism in calling the water itself "heavenly, holy and blessed water" or (43) "precious sugar water, aromaticum, aqua vitae".

Barth's real objections begin when he speaks about the second principal person in baptism, the person who is to be baptized. He rejects Luther's idea of "a primitive, but true

(40) Ibid. p. 139

(41) Barth, Die Kirchliche Lehre von der Taufe p.12.

(42) Ibid p. 13.

(43) Ibid.

and 'real faith' of infants who are about to be baptized. He also finds it strange that Calvin speaks of the seeds of future faith and repentance implanted in an infant.⁽⁴⁴⁾ He misses in paedobaptism "the possibility of a profession and of the desire for baptism". If the children have later to prove their real faith and if baptism itself cannot mean a decision and a profession,⁽⁴⁵⁾ then is this act only "half a baptism".

Barth seems to be more sceptical of infant baptism than Brunner, even for dogmatic reasons. But the cause of Barth's as well as of Brunner's objections to infant baptism is undoubtedly the state of Christianity to-day. Brunner expresses it bluntly in these words : "The practice of infant baptism can hardly be called anything else but scandalous".⁽⁴⁶⁾

But what is the reason for this "Scandal" ? Is the Reformed Doctrine of Baptism responsible for it, or the laxity of the present day practice ? According to Reformed doctrine and order the faith of the Church and the faith of the parents is necessary so that the Sacrament be rightfully administered. German Nazis and Russian Communists may have shown by their lives that they have been unworthy of the sign which was given to them. But was the state of the Church in which they were baptized strong enough to take charge of the faith of these men in their infancy ? Did the parents and godparents of the Belsen murderers

(44) Ibid, p. 33

(45) Ibid. p. 34

(46) Bruner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung* p. 140.

take the pledge to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord seriously enough? Is this not the crux of the whole matter, that the Church and her members are punished for their faithlessness in their children? The same situation exists in other countries besides Germany and Russia. Even in this country we find a frequent laxity in the administration of the Sacrament to infants. Ministers who take a "liberal" view of Baptism are asked by mothers who consider the Sacrament as an opus operatum in its crudest form that the child "should be done!" These children are then baptized in private houses because the parents refuse to make a profession of faith in the Church. The gracious sign of promise is given by a minister who does not believe in its efficacy and the vows are taken from parents who are not instructed in the Christian faith. Such a practice is surely a scandal, but it calls for a revival of Reformed teaching and for the preaching of conversion rather than for the abolition of child Baptism. Calvin advised John Knox in the case of "the children of idolaters and excommunicated persons" that "the promise should not be withheld from them, for it comprehends not only the offspring of one generation but is extended to a thousand generations. If the faith of the parents leaves serious reason for doubt, sponsors should be appointed. But whatever infant is presented on the ground of a legitimate sponsorship, we see not why he should be rejected." At the same time parents should be admonished from now onward to devote themselves to God. Calvin's

(47) John Knox Works, Edinburgh 1864, Vol. XI, p. 94 ff.

advice shows his insight into human nature and should be acceptable to all those who wish to protect this sacred mystery against profanation in our own time.

There are cases - though few in number - where the seed planted in baptism at last breaks through the hardest soil and brings forth wondrous fruits. A few years ago the experience of a German air ace in Russia caused a real spiritual revival in large parts of the German population. A Nazi pilot saw in a moment of greatest danger and distress the hand of God over him. He realized that he had broken away from the faith of his fathers, he recollected his Christian upbringing in the village Church in Mecklenburg. He was saved, and wrote a letter to the aged pastor who had baptized and confirmed him. But openly he confessed Christ and preached conversion to others. He died soon afterwards in a mysterious way. His letter, however, was circulated clandestinely in thousands of copies throughout Germany and had a stirring influence on the faith of others. The heavenly sower has sown his word though not every seed springs up, but some bring forth fruit a hundredfold. Baptism which is, in Barth's terminology "the free word and work" of Christ is a seed which when sown on fertile ground brings forth wondrous fruit. It is the task of the Christian Church and the Christian family to prepare the ground, but we must trust in the grace of God that He will shower His blessing upon the tender plants. By producing faith the ordinance of Baptism is a means of conversion, instituted by God. It is God's promise of regeneration to those who believe, and man's pledge to return to the new life with Him.

VIII.

THE MARKS OF THE NEW BIRTH

Thou must believe God, ask every good from him and refer to him that which thou has received, just as if all might exist without thee through Him alone: and thou must do thy duty with as much zeal and understanding as if all things depended on thee and nothing on Him (Ursin).

It has been disputed whether the Marks of the New Birth belong to the discipline of Christian doctrine or the discipline of Ethics. But it is certain that they are the visible signs of the change which takes place in converted man; so that we cannot avoid dealing with them in a treatise on the "Doctrine of Conversion". The pattern of the Christian life may be compared with a plant. I have observed some visitors to the Botanic Gardens who first read the little plate which is affixed to each plant, and when they have found to which species it belongs, then they look at the plant itself. Their interest is a botanical one. Even so we may first look for the category in the plan of salvation to which the Marks of the New Birth belong, and after having found that they are the visible fruits of sanctification, we may look at the pattern of the new life itself. This is the strictly dogmatic way of study. But we also see visitors of the Botanic Gardens who view the design of the leaves, the colour of the blossoms and the wonderful proportions of the whole. Their interest is aesthetic. Similarly those who observe first the various ways in which the new life expresses itself, its qualities, its

obligations and utterances study the new life from an ethical point of view. Lastly there are those people who just look at a lovely flower and enjoy it. Even so, many who are students neither of dogmatics nor of ethics behold the marks of the new birth and rejoice in the wonder which Christ has wrought in the children of God.

Among those who have written on conversion and those who have just met with converted men and women, are representatives of each of these three groups. It seems to us neither necessary nor desirable to draw a dividing line between these three viewpoints, for many have seen the New Birth both as a phase in the plan of salvation and as an ethical pattern of life, and all of them have met converted men and women, have heard them speaking, have watched them at their work, have visited them in their homes, have worshipped with them and have taken notice that they have been with Jesus. Professor Paterson, referring to the "New Pattern", as designed by our Lord himself, has a short but pregnant definition of the marks of the New Birth. "The Marks of the New man are that he is knit to God by filial devotion, to his fellow creatures by brotherly love, and that he accepts for himself the obligation, which is likewise the privilege, of being in the world as the servant of God and man".⁽¹⁾ There exist according to Professor Paterson's comprehensive statement of the new birth:

1. A new relationship to God and to fellowmen,

(1) W.P. Paterson, Conversion, London 1959, p.40

2. A new call of duty, freely accepted,
3. A new privilege which this obligation of service represents.

We must lay emphasis on the word "new". Considering the Christian virtues, as marks of the new birth, we ought to distinguish between those natural or acquired virtues which are renewed by regeneration, and others which are "brand new". Luther speaking of the former ones, said: "God does not cause the destruction of human nature but its restoration, The Holy Spirit does not make trunks and dumb creatures, when he infuses faith, but he conserves and increases whatsoever is best in nature, the paternal and filial affections..."⁽²⁾

But there also those marks, the stigmata of the Cross, which are burnt with a hot iron into the flesh of the natural man.⁽³⁾ Dr. Garvie mentions the case of "a Presbyterian minister of the last generation who was converted from a life of debauchery and who for many years exercised a widespread evangelizing ministry in writing as well as in preaching". This man was often described as "a brand plucked from the burning" and one member of his Church added "The smell of the fire was on him to the end of his life". In Dr. Garvie's own words "the old things are passed away, but to the observer, however sympathetic, the old character and convictions die often a long, lingering death..."

Only against the background of the former life are these

(2) Weimarer Ausgabe, XLIV, 117.

(3) Alfred E. Garvie, Christian Moral Conduct, London 1938 p.69

marks of the new birth visible. Let us consider a few typical Christian virtues.

Chastity. There are those who have never felt the lust of the flesh, while Augustine's asceticism was a true mark of his new birth, for before his conversion he was a sensual man.

Charity. Some people are apt to spend money easily and some have little interest in material possessions. But in the case of the wealthy man who had many possessions it is a definite mark of his new birth if he gives all his possessions to the poor.

Humility. The kind of "humbleness" which Dickens describes in the character of Uriah Heep is certainly no sign of conversion, but of perversion. Even the genuine humility of a person who has no ambitions in life, may not count as a mark of his new birth. But if a proud man whose gifts and achievements seem to promise him splendid prospects in life, humbles himself, the marks of the new birth appear. "We are not born Christians, but we become Christians" said St. Augustine.

Saints are not born but made. Sanctificati are those whom God has converted by His Holy Spirit. "By this sign (of sanctification) God knows them who are his". (Calvin)⁽⁴⁾

Those who are sanctified can perform great works in the name of the Lord, their Christian acts bear the mark of Christian faith. Nevertheless they have no right to boast of their Christian virtues. "The confidence which the saints

(4) Calvin, Corp. Ref. XLIX, 147

have in their works is not such as...ascribes anything to merit on their part, since they view them only as the gifts of God in which they acknowledge His goodness, and as marks⁽⁵⁾ of their calling whence they infer their election..."

The whole activity of the new life is not only started by God, but constantly supervised, checked and stimulated by Him. Sanctification is the expression of man's love for God, for his neighbour and for himself. "The true love towards the neighbour will never thrive, except the love towards God reigns...Again it is impossible that the love of God reigns unless it creates love among men"⁽⁶⁾.

This is, as Calvin clearly indicated, the juxtaposition between loving God and loving one's neighbour. It may be added that the man who is born again loves himself in a new fashion. Shortly after the first world war, the French writer Madeleine Marse wrote a book whose title was "Mon corps c'est a moi". The burden of that book was that men and women have the right to do with their own body what they please. If they wish to have children, they can do so, and if they prefer to destroy the fruit of the womb, they should not be prevented from doing so. The Christian teaching is on the other hand that "ye are the temple of God...If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy; which temple ye are". (I. Cor. 3.16-17)

(5) Inst. III.XIV.20

(6) Corp. Ref. XLV 612

Though the right love of ourself and the love of our neighbour are really part of our love to God, it is justifiable to make this division, for when we consider the marks of the new birth, we can easily detect that some (piety, steadfastness in the faith) are special signs of our love to God, others (charity, righteousness) are typical for our relationship with our fellowman, while chastity and moderation in eating and drinking are characteristic for the manner in which we should love ourselves.

All marks of the new birth are manifestation of love. Dr. Haering whose orthodoxy is beyond doubt, stated that "there is no personal virtue separate from the virtue which manifests itself in love".⁽⁷⁾

This statement can be exemplified in many instances. Heroism is a virtue only in as far as it manifests itself in the love for those whom the hero defends. It may become a Christian virtue in the true sense of the word, a mark of the new birth, when a man who is fearful at heart, asks God to grant him courage in the struggle for a righteous cause, and for the Kingdom of God.

All the activities of the new life are dictated by love. It is noticeable that a person who is born again, acts, speaks, thinks and even looks like one who is in love. These outward signs of the life in Christ may be most

(7) Theodor Haering; The Ethics of the Christian Life, New York 1909 p.247

conspicuous in the beginning of our union with the Saviour, but they often appear again very distinctly at the end of the earthly pilgrimage. Love is according to Brunner "the eschatological possibility, the final meaning, the final realization"⁽⁸⁾ of life in Christ. It is to us the certain proof of our calling. "The examination of our life cannot lie".⁽⁹⁾ (Calvin)

Certainly this examination involves some danger. If it is undertaken by others, they may be deceived. Only the credulous will take a "Tartuffe" for a sanctified man; but there are many variations between a saint and a hypocrite which are not visible even to the most scrutinizing human eye. A man should himself know the marks of the new birth, if he earnestly examines himself. But ultimately God alone knows whether the visible qualities of the human character are the marks of the new birth or not.

The charge has often been brought against the theology of the Reformation that sanctification has not received its proper place in the plan of salvation. This charge is repeated in protests against that school of theological thought which is usually known under the name of Neo-Calvinism. As for Calvin himself this charge can hardly be sustained. The following sentences which are contained in the Institutes could be accepted by any Wesleyan Methodist. "Since faith embraces Christ as he is offered by the Father,

(8) Brunner, Divine Imperative p.321

(9) Corp. Ref LI. 53

and he is offered not only for justification, for forgiveness of sins and peace, but also for sanctification, as the fountain of living waters, it is certain that no man will ever know him aright without at the same time receiving the sanctification of the Spirit; or, to express it more plainly, faith consists in the knowledge of Christ; Christ cannot be known without the sanctification of his Spirit; therefore faith cannot possibly be disjoined from pious affection".⁽¹⁰⁾

The acknowledgement that Christ cannot be known without sanctification is nevertheless missing in the writings of some Reformed Theologians of a later period. Mastricht claims that the Reformers considered the plan of salvation in three stages. "1. The elect are restored to the spiritual life by regeneration. 2. This life is stirred and moved to action in so far as it apprehends God and the Mediator by true faith and makes earnest resolutions to give up sins and to endeavour in good works, and this is done through conversion, 3. At last good habits or virtues are imparted to the converted man's will, and these are further increased to good works by sanctification".⁽¹¹⁾

This dry analysis of the plan of salvation in which sanctification, that wondrous work of the Spirit, plays only a minor part, sounds quite differently from Calvin's ringing conviction that Christ cannot be known without sanctification.

(10) Inst. III.II.8

(11) Heppe, Dogmatik der ev-ref. Kirche p. 416 (Footnote)

Most surprising ⁱⁿ is Mastricht's interpretation of the ordo salutis is the fact that he can conceive of Christian virtues before sanctification has taken place. Sanctification not only increases the good habits and virtues so that they can yield good works, but endows man with his new character. Before sanctification there are no marks of the new birth, no Christian virtues; for by sanctification the marks of the new birth are applied to the man who is converted.

John Wesley may be quoted as upholding the proper evangelical doctrine, in so far as he thus maintains: "When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness begins".⁽¹²⁾

But he differs from Reformed theology in regarding regeneration as "a part of sanctification, not the whole; it is the gate to it, the entrance into it".⁽¹³⁾

Reformed theologians would of course agree with Wesley that sanctification follows regeneration, but they would disagree with the view that regeneration is part of sanctification, that is to say that regeneration, the embracing of faith, repentance unto salvation and the bending of the will, are only preparatory stages while sanctification is the decisive change of life.

According to both Reformed and Methodist doctrine

(12) Wesley, op.cit. Vol. VI p.74

(13) Ibid.

the image of God in man is restored by God's saving grace. In Calvin's view the restoration takes place in the New Birth: the man thus regenerated by the Holy Spirit and bearing the image of God in Him, will now gradually be sanctified by the grace of God. Wesley on the other hand holds that man receives the image of God with his sanctification.

Calvin

"The regeneration of the pious is nothing else but the restoration of the image of God in them". (14)

Wesley

Gospel holiness is no less than the image of God stamped upon the heart". (15)

In the Westminster Standards a slight development can be observed from strict Calvinistic doctrine to its practical application for pious living. In the Confession of Faith we read in complete accordance with Calvin:

"They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified really and personally through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his word and Spirit dwelling in them..." (16)

In the Larger Catechism Sanctification is described as a renewal after the image of God when conversion has taken place.

"Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby

(14) Corp. Ref. LI. 208

(15) Wesley, op.cit. VI.71

(16) Westm. Conf. of Faith XIII. 1

they whom God hath, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy are in time through the powerful operation of this Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God, having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces put into their hearts...." (17)

In the Shorter Catechism the definition is further simplified, the mention of "repentance unto life" is omitted, and the whole statement reads very much like that of Wesley, though "renewal after the image of God" is not quite as strong an expression as "the image of God stamped upon the heart".

"Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness". (18)

Dr. Haering in trying to outline the different views of the new life in theological thought, comes to the following conclusion which may not do full justice to Methodism, but nevertheless helps one to understand the characteristic distinction between Methodism, Rationalism and Evangelical doctrine.

"Methodism sees previously to conversion nothing but darkness, and after conversion nothing but light, and no real sin afterwards. Ordinary rationalism sees in the word

(17) Larger Catechism Question 75

(18) Shorter Catechism Question 35

conversion or regeneration only an unsuitably conceived expression for the really purely gradual development of 'Good'. The New Testament and the great witnesses of Christian morality give another solution. Life now exists under a new rule. The change is not a quantitative one, it does not concern the whole compass of the moral life in like proportion and in a like way, but it is qualitative".⁽¹⁹⁾

Certainly the change of heart as presented in the gospel is primarily qualitative. We are urged to be "trans-⁽²⁰⁾formed by the renewing of the mind", "to put on the new man"⁽²¹⁾, and above all to obey Christ's call: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me".⁽²²⁾

Self-denial as the counterpart of love is the quality of the new life, the number and varieties of acts of love and denial is of subordinate value. One single denial and one single act of love which bears the mark of Christ may be more significant for the Christian life than a multitude of sacrifices and charitable acts. Yet for the purpose of practical teaching and preaching as well as for self-examination, it may be necessary to enumerate the various marks of the new birth. St. Paul sets forth a whole catalogue of

(19) Haering, op.cit. p.202

(20) Rom. 12.2

(21) Rom. 13.4

(22) Mt. 16.24

vices and virtues in his Epistle to the Galatians, for he wants those simple highland folk to know what the marks of the old and of the new man are. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance..."⁽²³⁾

In Christian doctrine the emphasis is sometimes laid on the quality of the new life and sometimes on the quantity of the signs. Luther tended to emphasise the quality of the new life, the transformation of the whole man, almost to the exclusion of the detailed marks of the new birth. Paraphrasing our Lord's teaching in the 3rd chapter of St. John, he said: "My teaching is not concerned with what you should do and what you should not do but with what you should become"⁽²⁴⁾.

Calvin lays equal stress on the transformation of the whole being, but he is more conscious than Luther of the visible fruits which regeneration yields. "In the conversion of the life to God, we require a transformation not only in external works, but in the soul itself, which is able only after it has put off its old habits to bring forth fruits conformable to its renovation"⁽²⁵⁾.

Thus we may take the Marks of the New Birth as certain signs of regeneration. Their presence is the positive

(23) Gal. 5.22f

(24) Erlanger Ausgabe XII. 399

(25) Inst. III.III.6

token that man is converted, their absence the negative indication that true regeneration has not taken place. Lutheran doctrine under the influence of Melanchthon corroborates Reformed teaching in this respect. The Apologia insists upon the "good fruits" as the necessary consequence of genuine conversion.

...."when right penitence and renewal by the Holy Spirit are in the heart of man, the good fruits and good works will certainly follow; it is impossible that a man should be converted to God, practice right contrition and penitence of heart without good fruits to follow....." (26)

In the later development of the doctrine the Marks of the New Birth were sometimes enumerated at great length. The reason was either a particular interest in the life of the redeemed, as we find it in Pietism and Arminianism, or simply the application of the Christian faith to the needs of daily life which must be felt in any pastoral ministry.

Spener for instance counts not less than 18 definite Marks of the New Birth: Love of God, Fear of God, Obedience to God, Prayer without ceasing, Regard of spiritual and disregard of earthly matters, Desire of divine grace, Patience, Longing for a blessed end, Diligence in the continual cleansing from sins, Diligence in good works, Self-denial, Neighbourly love, Edifying of brethren, Taking

(26) Apology VI.34 (Mueller p.191).

one's neighbour's dangers upon oneself, Charity towards the
needy, Humility and Brotherly love.⁽²⁷⁾

Though these Marks of the New Birth are elaborated with innumerable Bible quotations on more than 400 pages, we are conscious of the fact that such a catalogue of virtues can never be complete. The Puritan would like to add temperance and similar qualities, the militant Churchman would mention courage in the Christian witness, and the defender of pure doctrine may look for steadfastness of faith as the sign of the new man. Any quantitative valuation of the "Marks" is difficult, because the new man is not one who has accumulated a large number of virtues, but one who by faith is brought into communion with Christ, so that his outlook and behaviour in any given situation reflects - though imperfectly - the mind of the Saviour.

Two fallacies in dealing with the Marks of the New Birth must be avoided; stipulating certain moral laws and prohibitions as the Marks or commending sanctification in general terms, without giving moral guidance to those who are converted. The former fallacy leads to hypocrisy and the latter, sometimes, to libertinism and more often to a complete bewilderment of the recent convert, who does not find the answer to the question: "Conversion - what now?".

Luther warned believers not to fall into the error of false sanctity; "Scheinheiligkeit" is a worse abomination

(27) Spener, op.cit. pp 242-654

to him than debauchery. He interprets the meaning of Christ's prayer "Sanctify them through thy truth" in these words: "I see how the whole world struggles for great holiness and everybody so behaves that he may appear as the holiest. But Thou, dear Father, wouldst preserve and keep them from such outward show and glittering holiness and sanctify them (28) rightly".

At present there is little danger of the world striving for too much holiness. The question is not whether holiness is needed, but how we can be "rightly" sanctified. The singling out of certain moral habits as Christian and others as un-Christian, is certainly not the right way. Where can we get guidance?

Calvin in outlining the Christian life, realises the difficulty. He confesses that he is unable to discuss the individual virtues extensively and leaves this business to the writers of Homilies. But his intention is "to point out the method by which a pious man may be taught how to frame his life aright, and briefly to lay down some universal rule by which he may not improperly regulate his conduct" (29).

Calvin does not impose hard and fast rules in his treatment of the Christian life in the Institutes. In actual practice he introduced regulations of conduct in Geneva as strict as they could be, which were adopted by those Churches

(28) Weimarer Ausgabe XXVIII. 165

(29) Inst. III.VI. 1

who look to Geneva as their mother. But Church policy rather than doctrine was the motive of the Genevan order of life. From the viewpoint of the doctrine of conversion it was sufficient to declare that "doctrine is not an affair of the tongue, but of the life" and that "it is not apprehended by the intellect and memory merely...but is received only when it possesses the whole soul". Doctrine comes first, because it is the beginning of salvation "but it must be transfused into the breast, and pass into conduct, and so transform us into itself, as not to prove unfruitful".⁽³⁰⁾

We do not hesitate to quote the remarkable 18th century divine, John Brown of Haddington, again. In his explication of the Westminster Confession he answers the question, that is still so urgent, "What in the convert is made new?"⁽³¹⁾ Here are some of his points, in which he explains the "Marks" of conversion as new qualities of life rather than a number of moral quantities.

1. Newness of mind
 - a. New apprehension of beauty, loveliness and honour of the advantage of things spiritual and of the ugliness and danger of sin.
 - b. New judgement by accepting truth and by dissenting from sin.
 - c. New estimation by counting all things loss to win Christ.

(30) Inst. III.VI.4

(31) John Brown op.cit. p. 161 ff

- d. New thoughts by meditation on God's law.
- e. New devices by enquiring what to do about salvation.
- 2. Newness of will.
 - a. Free, powerful and constant inclination towards God.
 - b. Chief aim to be like God and to be with Him.
 - c. Delight in fellowship with God.
 - d. Choosing the reality rather than the show of religion.
 - e. Purpose to leave all cherished and secret sins and to cleave to all duty.
- 3. Newness of affections.
 - a. Loving God and hating sin.
 - b. Loving creatures out of love to God.
- 4. Conscience softened by Christ's blood, enlightened by His Spirit, and stirred up against spiritual sins and the pursuit of spiritual duties.
- 5. Memory weakened in respect of worthless things, and strengthened in respect of the words and works of God.
- 6. Body dedicated to the service of God.
- 7. Conversation with the fearers of God, concern for the Church of Christ and study of holy practices.

This broad outline has the advantage that it leaves room for any godly thing which our minds may apprehend, our renewed wills may desire, towards which our affections may be directed or which our consciences may judge.

The main object of the Christian life, as purposed by God, is the duty which is imposed on us and the desire to

fulfil it, which is planted in our hearts. The order in which duty and love occur is not essential for the working out of sanctification. Calvin takes the love of righteousness first and then the rule which is given to the Christian. He mentions as the first object "that the love of righteousness, to which we are by no means naturally inclined, may be instilled and implanted into us" and as the second subject "to prescribe a rule which will prevent us while in the pursuit of righteousness from going astray".⁽³²⁾

More important than the order is the wonderful union between duty and love. The same God who has given the commandments to man, has enabled him who is born again to love His holy ordinances. The Old Testament beatitude "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart"⁽³³⁾ contains both objects of the Christian life.

Thanks to this union our duties are no longer burdensome, and by our temptations which once seemed insuperable, are conquered by Christ Himself. "If we have entered a true Christian life in the strength of our new birth" says⁽³⁴⁾ Spener, "so that we live our life no longer unto ourself but unto God, we shall find that such a life even according to ordinary reason is much happier than that of a worldly man who is carnally minded". This happiness pervades the whole

(32) Inst. III.VI.2

(33) Ps. 119.2

(34) Spener op.cit. p.14

life of a Christian, and gives him the mark of piety, beauty and love which not even death can extinguish. "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments: and his (35) commandments are not grievous".

Luther uses the beautiful, naive illustration of the poor servant maid who has joy in her heart and can sing: "I cook, I make beds, I sweep the house. Who has bidden me? My master and my mistress have bidden me. But who has given them such authority over me? God has done this. Ah, then so it must be true that I not only serve them but God in heaven. How then can I be more blest? It is just as if I were cooking (36) for God Himself in heaven".

It is the outstanding Mark of the New Birth that our work is integrated in our worship, that our duties towards our neighbour, our family, our masters and our dependants are considered as divine service, and that Christ makes our burden easy, helps us "to cook for the God in Heaven".

The converted man is thus allowed to be a fellow worker in the Kingdom of God. But he still depends on divine grace; for the converted man can do good only so far and so (37) long as God rules him with His Holy Spirit.

(35) I John 5.3

(36) quoted by Haering op.cit. p.213

(37) ref. Formula of Concord II.II. 65

IX.

The life long struggle:

"That I Thy mercy may proclaim,
That all mankind Thy truth may see,
Hallow thy great and glorious name
And perfect holiness in me."
Charles Wesley.

Those who bear the Marks of the New Birth are different from the rest of the world. Are they perfect? The main proof text for the idea of perfection is our Lord's own saying "Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect".⁽¹⁾

We shall not enter into the critical discussion as to whether Matthew's rendering is the genuine saying of our Lord or whether the Lukan version "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful"⁽²⁾ ought to be preferred. Our Lord may have used both phrases, and the ipsissima verba of our Lord which Matthew and Luke quoted from Q may have contained these variations. His command "be ye perfect" shows us the ultimate goal at which we must aim. The hymn writer who is quoted under the head of this chapter offers his prayer in accordance with Jesus' own words; the converted man who is still conscious of his own shortcomings prays God: "Perfect holiness in me".

We confess that we still fall short of Christ's perfect holiness. Nevertheless the merciful Father accepts us as his children for His Son's sake. In the Evangelical

(1) Mt. 5.48

(2) Luke 6.36

doctrine of conversion the life of a Christian is greatly exalted, though consciously is far from being perfect.

John Calvin in his commentary on Romans expounds Paul's words "For in that he died, he died into sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" in this sense. "But that he liveth...shows that Christ lives a life subject to no mortality in the immortal and incorruptible Kingdom of God; a type which ought to appear in the regeneration of the godly...He says not that we shall now live in heaven, as Christ lives there, but he makes the new life, which after regeneration we live on earth, similar to his celestial life"⁽³⁾.

The Lutheran and Reformed symbols agree on this point. The Formula of Concord asserts that, though the New Birth is often identified with sanctification, it is an error⁽⁴⁾ to believe that after renewal there is no evil in us. But what is this imperfection, this evil, which is still present in the heart of the regenerate? The doctrine of the Reformed holds that it is sin. "The imperfection of sanctification in believers ariseth from the remnants of sin abiding in every part of them and the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit; whereby they are often foiled with temptations, and fall into many sins, are hindered in all their spiritual services, and their works are imperfect and defiled in the⁽⁵⁾ sight of God".

(3) Calvin's Comm. on Rom. 6.10

(4) ref. Form. of Conc. II.III.22

(5) Westminster Larger Cat. Question 78

In this respect the "Augustinians" apparently go beyond Augustine himself. Calvin mentions that Augustine, while admitting "that believers so long as they are in the body, are so liable to concupiscence that they cannot but feel it, does not venture to give this disease the name of sin. He is contented with giving it the name of infirmity, and says that it only becomes sin when either external act or consent are added to conception or apprehension; that is when the will yields to the first desire. We again regard it as sin whenever man is influenced in any degree by any desire contrary to the law of God; nay, we maintain that the very pravity which begets such desires in us is sin".⁽⁶⁾

Luther affirms quite clearly: "There cannot be but sin as long as we live; this life is not the habitation of righteousness".⁽⁷⁾ And yet while the claim of monks and Anabaptists to have reached perfection in their way of life is strongly repudiated, both in the writings of Luther himself and in the symbolic Books of the Lutheran Church, a relative perfection of the Christian man is sometimes assumed. But this assumption is not an independant doctrine of perfection; it is almost exclusively used as an argument against the false doctrines of the Romanists.

Luther in his treatise about the vows of the monks declares: "The state of perfection is to have a lively faith, to be a despiser of death, life, glory and all the world, and

(6) Inst. III.III.10

(7) Quoted from R.N. Flew, The Idea of Perfection, London 1934, p.244

to live in glowing love as the servant of all men".⁽⁸⁾

The two main parts of this relative perfection are to believe and to follow one's vocation. Faith is - as we have seen in a previous chapter - the principal means of conversion in Luther's doctrine, and following one's vocation is the chief aspect of sanctification. That is to say, a converted man who is in the process of sanctification, has already set out on the road to perfection.

The Confession of Augsburg uses the term "Christian perfection" over against monkish Perfectionism. Its main characteristics are fear of God, sincere trust and true faith. We must believe that we have a gracious and merciful God for the sake of Christ, that we may and should ask and desire from God, what we need, and that with certainty we expect help from Him in every distress, according to our calling and state in life, and on the other hand we must diligently attend to our calling. In this consists true perfection and service of God, not in begging and in wearing black or grey caps".⁽⁹⁾

There are quite a few references to perfection in the Apologia. This may be explained by Melanchthon's tendency to stress those points of doctrine which allow converted man a certain co-operation with God. But they are also in complete accordance with Luther's own statement which we have already quoted. Some members of monastic orders were wise enough not to boast of their own perfection and merely to maintain that

(8) Weimarer Ausgabe VIII. 584

(9) Augsburg Confession, XXVII. 49-50 (Mueller p.61)

their state is a preparation for true perfection. The Evangelicals thereupon reply: "Then it is no more a state of perfection than the life of farmers and ploughmen, of tailors and bakers etc."⁽¹⁰⁾

The story of St. Anthony is told, who asked God to show him how far he had succeeded in the life of perfection. He was told of a cobbler in Alexandria whom he equalled in sanctity. The saint went to the city and asked the cobbler about his life. The man replied: "I do nothing extraordinary; in the morning I say my prayers for the whole town and then I do my work and look after my home". The writer of the Apologia reports that Anthony realised that "we are not justified by this or that way of living, but by faith alone".⁽¹¹⁾

In the last century Ritschl tried to rediscover the evangelical concept of perfection. He found that the Protestant protest against crude "Perfectionism" was not sufficient; the Reformers themselves "had to freight the expression 'Christian Perfection' with such a meaning that it could be applied to everyday performances of all Christians".⁽¹²⁾

Ritschl tries to prove that perfection, as it was taught by our Lord Jesus and by the Apostles Paul and James⁽¹³⁾

(10) Apology XXVII. 36f. (Mueller p.278)

(11) Ibid. 38 (p.279)

(12) Albrecht Ritschl, Christian Perfection, Article in Bibl. Sacra., Vol. XXXV, London 1878, p. 664

(13) ref. Mt. 5.48 compare with 5.44, Phil.3.13-15, James 1.4

means to be a full personality in the Christian sense, "a complete thing after his (the Christian's) peculiar kind,⁽¹⁴⁾ in the sphere of religious faith and moral action".

The Christian who believes that the world is one and is created by God, values the spiritual object of his own spiritual life higher than the whole world.⁽¹⁵⁾ "Since we who are Christians each distinguish our personal worth from that of the whole world, it is our task as Christians to become each in his own kind a complete whole...Therefore it is necessary to Christianity that it lay on us the task of per-⁽¹⁶⁾fection in religious and moral life...."

Ritschl has thus developed the idea of Christian Perfection, as he found it in some scattered references gleaned from the works of Martin Luther and particularly in the Confession of Augsburg and the Apologia, by adding the wholeness of man to the earlier elements of perfection - faith and vocation. To decide whether these characteristics of the converted man are signs of "Christian perfection" or "Marks of the New Birth" is a matter of terminology rather than of doctrine.

But there is a more fundamental difference between Ritschl's viewpoint and that of Calvin. Ritschl seems to suggest that the divided mind of man is the sign that he is

(14) Ritschl, op.cit. p.665

(15) ref. Mt.16.24-26

(16) Ritschl, op.cit. p.669

not yet converted. He has to struggle because like Faust he knows "zwei Seelen wohnen ach in meiner Brust", while the converted man is brought into greater spiritual harmony, he has become a unity in himself. Calvin's idea of conversion is quite different. With the new birth the struggle only begins. Commenting on Romans 7.15 ("For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I") he observes "that this conflict does not exist in man before he is renewed by the Spirit of God: for man left to his own nature is wholly borne along by his lusts without any resistance". The unconverted though tormented by his evil conscience does not love righteousness nor hate sin. "The godly on the other hand in whom the regeneration of God is begun, are so divided, that with the chief desire of the heart they aspire to God, seek celestial righteousness, hate sin, and yet they are drawn down to the earth by the
(17)
relics of their flesh".

Now it may be said of course that this text lends itself to the interpretation which Calvin gives. Yet St. Paul himself does not seem to stop at this dilemma. He breaks forth into the great praise of Christ's mercy in the eighth chapter "There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". But Calvin does not change the tune in his exegetical accompaniment of St. Paul's grand climax. It

(17) Calvin, Comm. on Rom. 7.15

almost seems as if he is trying to put the brake on the quadriga in which Paul carries the reader away from the desert to the via triumphalis of the Spirit. "Those who walk after the Spirit", Calvin warns, "are not such as have wholly put off all the emotions of the flesh, so that their whole life is redolent with nothing but celestial perfection; but they are those who sedulously labour to subdue and mortify the flesh, so that the love of true religion seems to reign in them".⁽¹⁸⁾ Is Calvin too anxious to avoid any form of perfectionism, when he says that "the love of religion seems to reign" in the regenerate? It would be more in accordance with Paul's gospel to say "the love of religion has begun to reign in us". That the life-long struggle is hard and intense in all its phases, is part of Calvin's own experience. The earlier editions of the Institutes contain the remarkable admission of this fact. It may be that the following passage that reflects John Calvin's personal experience was omitted from the edition of 1559 because of a certain bashfulness, which the great man possessed.

"Thence a conflict and very hard struggle arises, in which the pious man is sorely tried throughout the whole of life: he is raised up by the Spirit and brought down by the flesh: he beholds righteousness by the Spirit and is moved to iniquity by the flesh; he is directed towards God by the Spirit and is allowed to feel the attractions of the world by the flesh.

(18) Calvin, Comm. on Rom. 8.1

This is not an idle speculation, which could not be applied to real life; it is a dootrine based on experience, whose most certain proof we must feel, when we are sons of God".⁽¹⁹⁾

It is not that the unconverted man has a split mind, but "the sould of the faithful man is split into two parts, which are permanently opposed to one another".⁽²⁰⁾ This is of course not a Hegelian proposition, for between the "thesis" of the spirit and the "antithesis" of the flesh no synthesis is possible. The overruling power of Christ conquers the flesh at the end, so that the spirit alone reigns over the whole man.

But it ought to be noticed that not only the victory at the end is assured, (see the following chapter "Assurance of salvation") but that during every phase of the struggle God is more powerful in the converted man than the devil. "As the promise of bruising Satan's head applies alike to Christ and to all his members, I deny that believers can ever be oppressed or vanquished by him. They are often, indeed, thrown into alarm, but never so thoroughly as not to recover themselves. They fall by the violence of the blows, but they get up again; they are wounded but not mortally".⁽²¹⁾

Here the fundamental difference between Calvinism and Arminianism arises. The Bible teaches from the sin of David and the denial of Peter, what we also know by

(19) Calvin, Institutes edition 1539-54 Chap.II.61 (Corp. Ref.I p.347)

(20) Ibid.

(21) Inst. (Standard edit. of 1559) I.XIV.18

experience, that the transgressions of the converted are not less grievous than the crimes of the unconverted. The Arminian Articles ~~agree~~ with the doctrine of the Reformed "that those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith, and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against ~~San~~ sin, the world and their own flesh, and to win the victory: it being well understood that it is always through the existing grace of the Holy Ghost...." (22)

But in the same document the discussion is opened about a point which was bound to become a matter of controversy. The question whether the regenerate "are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginnings of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace" is left to further inquiries from Holy Scripture. Subsequently the Arminians went far beyond the Five Arminian Articles and the teaching of Arminius himself. They openly declared that man may lose regeneration, but that he could gain it back. The Synod of Dort replies to this strange view by rejecting the errors of those "who teach that 'it is not absurd, that the first regeneration being extinct, man should be again, yea more often regenerated'. For by this doctrine they deny the incorruptibility of the seed of God, by which we are born again, contrary to the testimony of

(22) The Five Arminian Articles, 1610, V. (various editions).

the apostle, I Peter 1.23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruption"⁽²³⁾.

The principal reason why Remonstrants, Methodists and Pietists accept the possibility that regeneration can be lost and must be repeated, is that they either identify the New Birth with sanctification or make it a part of it. If "Christian Perfection" - not in the relative sense in which it is used by Luther and Melanchthon, but in the scholastic sense in which it is applied by sectarians to the members of their own sect - is the mark of the New Birth, then those among the converted who have yielded to sin have lost regeneration indeed.

It may be argued by those who take a middle view between Calvinism and Arminianism that the whole difference is one of terminology,^{and} that the repeated regeneration which Arminians consider possible is nothing else but the mortification which the Christian must practise throughout his life. But the real difference is much more fundamental than that.

Spener who sides with the Arminians in this matter protests against the findings of the Synod of Dort which we quoted above. His main reasons for maintaining the possibility of repeated regenerations are:

1. Man can lose faith and grace
2. God in His mercy would not leave him to damnation.
3. Baptism is the first regeneration: conversion is therefore normally the second regeneration. It is not illogical to suggest that a third or fourth

(23) Synod of Dort Art.V., Rejection of Errors 8 (Scott p.231)

regeneration may follow, though there is a great danger if man does not react to God's mercy.

He also points out the difference between the former and the latter "New Birth". When the former regeneration is lost, some part of the knowledge of God is still present. This knowledge of the truth is not to be apprehended as something entirely new, but it is only to be revived. "Therefore the later regeneration is nothing else than that someone who is fallen from grace, is converted again, brought to repentance and is reinstalled in grace, thus the work of sanctification (24) has begun to work in him again".

Spener himself is aware that this statement does not necessarily refer to the New Birth at all but to such a renewal as must always take place in the lifelong struggle of a Christian. Nevertheless Spener insists that in the case of a lapsed believer nothing short of new birth can re-establish him in divine grace. The state of the converted man who is fallen from grace seems to him not like that of a sick man who can be revived by the application of a medicine, but like that of a dead man who needs to be raised from the grave.

Instead of a lifelong struggle the view reflected here is rather that of a series of Christian lives, separated from each other by spiritual death and resurrection.

The danger of such a doctrine is that it may lead either to despondency or to self-righteousness. A believer

(24) Spener, op.cit. p.950

should still trust in God's forgiveness, as long as he knows that he is a child of God - albeit a disobedient child. But if a son or daughter is turned out of the father's house every time they "fall from grace", they will lose courage to ask for re-admission. Perhaps more frequent than this mood of despondency is a certain spirit of hypocrisy among those who believe in the doctrine of perfection. Their heart tells them - quite rightly - that they are born again. But their doctrine teaches them, that the regenerate cannot sin. To them the only alternative to bewailing the loss of regeneration is to imagine that they never sin.

It is one of the most depressing features in some sectarian circles, that the "converted" rarely pray God for forgiveness. This was certainly not the intention of the Remonstrants, the Pietists and John Wesley: but it is the consequence of a popularised doctrine of perfection.

A young minister of the Church of Scotland who was congratulated on his earnest preaching about sin, which was the subject of many of his sermons, replied: "I know much about it". This man was quite conscious of his sinfulness, he was even conscious of the fact that there were members in his congregation who were less imperfect than he, but he also knew that to them as to him, the lifelong struggle was not ended. When he recalled the moral offences which he had committed before his conversion, he was shocked because of his own failings, but he was much more perturbed, because he

had made so little progress. Nevertheless in his pre-conversion days his failures did not worry him: then he was "at peace" with himself (though it was a sham peace): now he is at war, "with the Cross of Jesus going on before". Emil Brunner's portrait of a Christian reflects the same experience; it closely follows John Calvin's view of the lifelong struggle. "The Christian" he writes "is not actually a saint or a righteous man, he is as really a sinner as the criminal who is sentenced to the penitentiary. He is a saint only because and in so far as Christ covers and hides him and claims him for Himself"⁽²⁵⁾. Unfortunately continental theologians are often unable to appreciate the theological position of others. We have previously mentioned the sweeping statement on Methodism by Haering, and feel that Brunner has done even less justice than Haering to the great movement which started with John Wesley, when he declares: "The error of Methodism in its view of conversion has had more vitiating influence upon the orthodox thinking of today than is generally admitted. As if conversion were the process by which a sinful man is actually transformed into a Christian man!...In this way the Church becomes pharisaical and its message to the world disfigured and encumbered".

John Wesley himself rejected William Law's definition of perfection as a Pharisaical error because he suspected him⁽²⁶⁾ of advocating a doctrine of works: in this connection the sermon

(25) Emil Brunner, *The Theology of Crisis*, New York-London, 1929, p.21

(26) ref. Flew op.cit. p.294

on "The great privilege of those that are born of God" should be carefully considered. This sermon which is based on I John 3.9 ("Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin") is one of the 58 sermons which form the basis of Methodist doctrine.

In the introduction Wesley explains the difference between justification and the new birth. The former implies "only a relative", the latter "a real change". God in justifying us "does something for us", in begetting us again "He does the work in us".⁽²⁷⁾ Justification is taking away the guilt, new birth is taking away the power of sin. In the first main section of the sermon the even of the New Birth ("whosoever is born of God") is expounded according to Wesley's doctrine of conversion, which is not at variance with the Evangelical doctrine of conversion. In the second section the apostle's words "doth not commit sin" are freely interpreted⁽²⁸⁾ as implying that whosoever is born of God, cannot commit sin. This would mean that the "non posse peccare" of Christ is referred to the Christian man. This assumption which makes the converted man almost like Christ, goes back to Wesley's idea of the power of sin. This power is broken not only in the sense that the sins of those who are born again, are covered by the mercy of God and the atoning death of Christ, but they have entirely disappeared. Wesley answers the objection that

(27) Wesley, op.cit. Vol. V p.224

(28) Ibid. p.227

some men who were undoubtedly born of God (David, Peter and Barnabas) nevertheless committed sin, by stating: "So long as he that is born of God keepeth himself (which he is able to do by the grace of God), the wicked one toucheth him not. But if he keepeth not himself, if he abideth not in the faith, he may commit sin even as any other man".⁽²⁹⁾

This is obviously a contradiction of the former argument that he who is born of God cannot commit sin. No longer Christ's "non posse peccare" but Adam's original "posse non peccare" is referred to the Christian men.

The progress from grace to sin is described in eight stages. First the seed of faith is in man, then temptation arises, God gives warning, but man yields in some degree to the temptation, faith is weakened, the Spirit of God reproves man more sharply, but he turns away from God and at last the evil desires spread in his soul, so that he is capable of committing sin, the power of the Lord having departed from him.⁽³⁰⁾

In the third section Wesley tries to show that "the loss of faith must precede the committing of outward sin, though some sin of omission at least must necessary precede the loss of faith".⁽³¹⁾

Comparing Wesley's and Calvin's account of man's

(29) Wesley, op. cit. Vol V, p. 229

(30) Ibid. p. 231

(31) Ibid. p. 232

lifelong struggle, we are inclined to consider Wesley's view as much more pessimistic than that of Calvin. Actual sin implies loss of faith, and if the soul does not continually fall back upon God, as God reacts on the soul, loving Him as He first loved us, "He will gradually withdraw, and leave us to the darkness of our own hearts".

Wesley's perfectionism is certainly not an easy matter, which might be achieved by accepting the evangelical faith and keeping a simple rule of life, and his warning which is addressed not to the converted themselves, could - if rightly understood - scarcely lead to pharisaical self-complacency. "Let us fear sin, more than death and hell. Thou, therefore, O man of God, watch always... Watch that thou mayest; pray without ceasing... So shalt thou always believe, and always love, and never commit sin".⁽³²⁾

Sanctification was Wesley's lifelong experience, and he may take an honourable place beside the greatest saints in the history of the Church, as one whose life progressed far along the road to perfection. But the apostle whom he quotes is more realistic than he: for he said: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".⁽³³⁾

He who justifies, also sanctifies and decides the lifelong struggle of those whom he has begotten and called by his own free grace.

(32) Wesley, op.cit. Vol. V, p. 233

(33) I John 1.8f

X - A S S U R A N C E

"Assurance is the dividing line between Christianity and heathenism". (Philip Melancthon)

The Reformers are generally considered to be bad advocates of foreign missions. Their knowledge of the heathen world was restricted to their acquaintance with the pagan writers of antiquity, whose outlook on life has little in common with the beliefs of Indians or Africans. Would Luther have revised his doctrine of justification by faith if he had spent ten years among Hindus? Or would Calvin have altered his doctrine of predestination, if he had preached to the natives of West Africa? No one will be able to answer this hypothetical question with certainty. But it is beyond doubt that the doctrine of assurance, which has been considered by friend and foe, by Protestants and Romanists, as one of the most typical Reformation doctrines, would not have been abandoned. Any missionary of modern times could testify that the assurance of salvation is indeed the dividing line between Christianity and heathendom. The heathen is not faced with a life-long struggle, as the Christian is. But his whole life is overshadowed by fear of demons, of the forces of nature or of the transmigration of souls. He has this terrifying anxiety in common with many despisers of religion in "civilized" countries, who constantly suffer

under the fear of death and from that spiritual unrest which psychologists call repressions.

The great, joyful experience of the converted man is the assurance of God's forgiveness and saving grace. So closely are conversion and assurance knit together that it may be said "to deny assurance is to deny that there is such a thing as conversion"⁽¹⁾. Paul does not speculate but he knows with certainty that "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,⁽²⁾ which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me."

The Reformers were enthusiastic in their joy about the assurance of salvation which to them must have appeared as the great discovery of the pure faith of the gospel. To them it was the first fruit of the spirit as well as the perfection of their own faith. Fiducia, trust in God, is the triumphant faith which dispels all doubts, is independent of ecclesiastical authority, and is victorious over the powers of hell. Principal Cunningham has given two main reasons for the enthusiastic, even exaggerated views and statements of the Reformers; Firstly "Their own personal experience as converted and believing men", and Secondly "The ground taken⁽³⁾ by the Romanists in arguing against them."

(1) George T. Thomson, Article on Assurance in the Evangelical Quarterly, Vol. XIV. 1. p.2.

(2) II Tim. 4.8.

(3) William Cunningham, The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation, Edinburgh 1862, p.113.

But in order to understand their starting point, it is necessary to look back upon the origin of Luther's doctrine of assurance. Dr. Karl Heim in his work "Das Gewissheitsproblem in der systematischen Theologie bis zu Schleiermacher" has shown that two tendencies prevailed in mediaeval theology, "the unilinear and the bilinear way of thinking". (4) The essence of Dr. Heim's rather involved argument is that the unilinear way of thinking has its origin in Neo-Platonism and was from there introduced to Christianity by Augustine. Religious certainty is gained by an ultimate union between the subject and the object of faith. Man knows God by becoming united with Him. The bilinear way of thinking which has its beginning in Aristotelism takes the form of faith, grounded on authority, which is typical for later mediaeval theology. Dr. Heim assumes that the bilinear idea of religious authority absorbed the unilinear idea of mystical union almost completely. Both forms of thoughts originate in non-Christian religions. The unilinear way of thinking has its origin in India, whose religious ideas aimed at the abolition of the will to exist. The bilinear way of thinking borrows its principle of authority from Judaism. It found expression in the mediaeval Church by imposing the institutions and decrees of the Pope, as the supreme

(4) Karl Heim, Das Gewissheitsproblem, Leipzig 1911, p. 220ff.

mundane authority, upon the half-barbaric Germanic nations.

Dr. Heim in stating the problem with which Luther was confronted, asserts that high as the mediaeval love of Jesus may rise, it remains - a few culminating points excepted - divided into a mystical "Christwooning" (Christusminne) an isolated unilinear relationship to Christ, and a submission to Christ as the transcendent cause of ecclesiastical authority that is to say, an isolated bilinear relationship.

On the one hand Christian mysticism lacks the connection with the concrete figure of Jesus in the New Testament; on the other hand the submission to the authority of Scripture as approved by the Church, lacks the central combination of direct isolated authoritative statements into a unity, that is the presence of Christ.⁽⁵⁾

The evangelical doctrine of assurance represents the synthesis between the unilinear and the bilinear ways of thought. The authority of the Word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit with us guarantee the certainty of our salvation. "Wherefore in thy temptation, cleave only unto Christ, and groan unto Him: He giveth the Holy Ghost, crying Abba Father. This is but a little word, yet it comprehendeth all things.." (6)

(5) Ibid. p.230.

(6) Luther, Comm. on Gal. IV. 6 (Harrison Trust ed. p.246) .

Luther holds out this assurance of saving faith over against the popish opinion "that a man ought to be uncertain, and to doubt of the grace and favour of God towards him".

In Lutheran theology the assurance of salvation is of great practical significance; it is not a speculation on the essence of the Godhead, but an essential part of faith.

The answer to the great and decisive question, how man knows that his sins are forgiven, is this: "It is God's resolution, God's commandment from the beginning of the world, that by faith our sins shall be forgiven for the sake of Christ without any merit of ours."⁽⁷⁾ We teach that this certainty of faith is required in the gospel".⁽⁸⁾

The chapter from which these two sentences are quoted, is on Penitence. The issue is a practical one and the whole question controversial. In the German text the Emperor is personally addressed and asked to consider that the opponents keep the people in doubt and affliction in order to exercise their power over them.

It cannot be denied that the Reformers exposed themselves to the accusation that they made forgiveness of sins too easy. The Council of Trent warned against the Evangelical certainty: "... Let no one promise himself anything as certain with absolute certainty; though all ought to place and repose the most firm hope in God's help..."

(7) Apol. XII (V) 88 German text (Mueller p. 183)

(8) Ibid. Latin Text.

let those who think they stand, take heed lest they fall, and with fear and trembling work out their own salvation, in labours, in watchings, in almsgiving, in prayers and oblations, in fastings and in chastity". (9)

If the doctrine of assurance could be treated without reference to the doctrine of conversion, the findings of the Council of Trent could hardly be repudiated. It is worth while to try this out, by quoting the statement of the Apologia and the statement of the Council of Trent to an intelligent atheist. If we ask this man: "Supposing you believe in the need of salvation, would you subscribe to the Lutheran or to the Roman doctrine", the answer would undoubtedly be: "To the Roman doctrine". Assurance of salvation which is the most precious possession of the converted man, remains an illogical, unprovable and even presumptuous assumption in the eyes of the unconverted sinner. James Denney coined this poignant epigram about the doctrine of assurance: "Nothing is more characteristic of Churches than their attitude to assurance, and the place they give it in their preaching and their systems of doctrine. Speaking broadly, we may say that in the Romish Church it is regarded as essentially akin to presumption; in the

(9) Council of Trent, Session VI, chpt. 13.

Protestant Churches it is a privilege or a duty; but in the New Testament religion it is simply a fact". (10)

It is self-evident why the Romanists regard "Assurance" as a presumptuous doctrine. Man must constantly work out his own salvation; he must aim at the highest good, by performing the works and ordinances which are imposed upon him by the authority of the Church. In the gospel on the other hand "Assurance" is a simple fact. The Samaritan leper, the publican Zachaeus, the woman who anointed Jesus' feet and the repentant thief had the Master's word for it. To them this certainty was neither presumptuous, nor a special privilege, nor a duty. They simply knew that they were saved.

The Reformers themselves thanks to their own experience of conversion started with a simple certainty of salvation, not unlike that of the gospel. But can the acceptance of assurance be made a duty as in the following statement of the Apologia "Whosoever wavers and doubts whether his sins are forgiven, does not trust in God and despairs of Christ, for he considers his sin as greater and stronger than the death and blood of Christ";⁽¹¹⁾ What about a man who is conscious of his own sinfulness, conscious of the fact that his sin stands between himself

(10) Quoted from Mackintosh, op. cit. p. 247.

(11) Apology III. 28 (p.113).

and his Maker? Should he feel that he is not converted at all? Calvin comes to the rescue of those who though converted are beset with anxieties of this kind. "When we say that faith must be certain and sure, we certainly speak not of an assurance which is never affected by doubt, nor of a security which anxiety never assails; we rather maintain that believers have a perpetual struggle with their own distrust, and are thus far from thinking that their consciences possess a placid quiet, uninterrupted by perturbation". (12)

There are variations in the doctrine of the Reformed concerning Assurance of Salvation. They all agree with the Lutherans in considering assurance as the fruit of faith. The Heidelberg Catechism goes as far as to assert that faith necessarily comprehends assurance. (13) Principal Cunningham seems to assume that this definition is due to the popular rather than the symbolical character of the Catechism. (14)

But this is not quite correct. Olevian, one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, in his work "De Substantia foederis gratuiti" which was certainly not intended for popular use, says that "the certainty of faith is.. its essential property." (15)

(12) Inst. III. II. 17.

(13) Heidelberg Catechismus Question 21.

(14) Cunningham, The Reformers, p. 124

(15) ref. Dogmatik der ev. ref. Kirche p. 466.

The doctrine of assurance also plays an important part in the decisions of the Synod of Dort. The doctrine has to be defended this time not only against the Roman Catholic Church, but particularly against the Arminians, "who teach that 'the doctrine of perseverance and the assurance of salvation, from its nature and tendency, is a pillow for the flesh, and injurious to piety, good conduct, prayers, and other holy exercise; but that on the contrary, to doubt concerning it, is laudable". (16)

But the Synod merely rejects these errors by proving assurance without any special revelation from Scripture and maintaining that "the saints in the Old as well as in the New Testament ..though they were certain of their own perseverance and salvation, were nevertheless assiduous in prayers and other pious exercises". It is very strange that the Christian circles of later ages which are akin to the Arminians though denying the doctrine of perseverance, strongly maintain the doctrine of assurance. This contradiction can only be explained by their view of conversion. If regeneration may be repeated, then God may be expected to renew His gracious assurance too.

(16) Synod of Dort V. Rejection of Errors 6,
(Scott p. 230).

The Westminster Confession of Faith emphasizes, like all the other symbolic products of the Reformed faith, that assurance is an effect of faith. But in full agreement with Calvin this concession is made: "This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith but that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it".⁽¹⁷⁾

This definition is much more careful than the exuberant joy of assurance which the early Reformers have shown. But it is impossible to neglect this doctrine without doing injustice to the doctrine of conversion. We mentioned at the beginning of this chapter Dr. Heim's analysis of the "einlinige" and "zweilinige" way of thinking, that led up to Luther's doctrine of certainty. The Reformers seemed to achieve a synthesis between both ways. The "zweilinige" authority of Holy Writ (instead of the authority of the Roman Church) was blended with the "einlinige" influence of the Holy Spirit. But soon the old antithesis appeared again in altered form. Fundamentalism and dead orthodoxy took up the "zweilinige" view. But the letter of Scripture alone cannot grant assurance of salvation. Enthusiasts, Pietists, Quakers and similar groups both inside and outside the Evangelical

(17)

Westm. Conf. XVIII. 3.

Churches took to the "one-way street." They sought communion with God, believed they were illumined by the Holy Spirit, without giving heed to the authority of the Word of God. But as man must be converted by the Word of God with the aid of the Holy Spirit, so the assurance of his regeneration can only be given through both the Word and the Spirit.

As we have seen in the first chapter the Word of God may suddenly confront a man. He may be converted by hearing or reading a Scripture sentence, but the same words would be meaningless to him, if they were not effectively applied by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Word of God works assurance also - but in Christians only. The hope of the Christian is made effective by the outward sign of revelation and the inward working of the Spirit. "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us".⁽¹⁸⁾

The means of our assurance is faith. "There must be certainty in our faith, this certainty cannot exist unless Jesus Christ is our Advocate and his death is the satisfaction for our sins".⁽¹⁹⁾

Assurance is therefore grounded on the work of

(18) Rom. 5.5.

(19) Calvin, Corp. Ref. XXIII. 717.

Christ, achieved by the Holy Ghost and communicated to us by faith. We know by faith that we are justified and sanctified; thence we gain the proof of our salvation.

"It is significant for Calvin that to him, sanctification as well as justification is an evidence of election".⁽²⁰⁾

But assurance through sanctification is not of the same kind as that by justification. Calvin denies that we can be justified by works. How can we then gain certainty from our sanctification? The proper answer must be: We are assured of the fact of our justification and of the possibility of our sanctification.

Though I have not found this definition in Calvin's Works, it seems to me to be the key to the Reformed doctrine of assurance. Being converted, I know that I am justified, and I trust in spite of my continued lapsing and loathsome sinfulness, that I can be sanctified, for I believe in it as the ultimate possibility of my conversion. The fact of justification and the possibility of sanctification are linked together by perseverance. It is therefore evident that the Reformed theologians cannot conceive of true assurance except it produces perseverance in the Christian life. "The assurance of salvation is the consequence of the certainty of perseverance, for without the latter the

(20) Goehler, op. cit. p. 99.

former cannot be achieved, for no one is saved except he persist" (Burmann, Synopsis theologie).⁽²¹⁾

This proposition may be reversed and still hold true. Not only is assurance the consequence of perseverance, but perseverance is also the consequence of assurance. Because we know that we are justified and that we shall be sanctified, we have the power to persevere. Though it may sound trivial, it is nevertheless evangelical truth, that through the assurance of salvation we are able to enjoy conversion on earth, as we shall enjoy the final union with Christ in the world to come. "We believe in our future existence, we believe in an eternal life in the midst of the valley of death. It is thus, in this futurity, that we have and possess it. The certainty with which we are aware of this possession is just the certainty of faith, and certainty of faith means concretely certainty of hope".⁽²²⁾

Because of this glorious hope the life of the regenerate is full of joy. The renewed experience of our certainty in Christ (God grants His assurance once for all, but we become conscious of it as often as we remember His mercies) is in some way a renewal of our conversion experience. It is perhaps for this reason that John Wesley and others have thought that conversion itself may

(21) Heppe, Dogmatik der ev. ref. Kirche p. 465.

(22) Karl Barth, Doctrine of the Word of God, Engl. Transl. I.1. 530.

be repeated. The state of mind in which a converted man finds himself when he emerges from the fight against sin and doubt with the renewed assurance of sins forgiven, is very similar to that of the first conversion experience.

The last question which has to be put before we leave this subject, is: "How can a man be assured of his assurance?" Evangelical doctrine contains two forms of evidence for the assurance of salvation. They are sometimes called direct and indirect, and sometimes objective and subjective or transcendent and immanent. They correspond roughly to the "zweilnige" and "einlinige" way of thought which we observed in mediaeval theology. But both types of evidence are complementary and not antithetical.

The first one which has been called direct, objective and transcendent ("zweilinig") is the evidence of revelation. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God". (23) From the "truths of salvation" which are confirmed by the Holy Spirit "arises the direct knowledge of salvation" (Wytttenbach) and it is manifest "in the first fruits of the Spirit, which are communicated to the faithful for their consolation and encouragement" (Friedrich Adolph Lampe) (24)

(23) Rom. 8.16.

(24) Heppe, Dogmatik der ev.ref. Kirche, p. 466.

This evidence is objective; for we become aware of it not by any subjective consciousness of our state of salvation, but because Christ is quite certain that He has satisfied God. We are assured that we are under grace through Him and for His sake.

Thus the Holy Spirit working in the regenerate implants a direct assurance in the believer's heart which transcends the dynamic will of God and produces faith and trust in man. But there is nothing in Christian faith and life which remains transcendent; the eternal descends upon the Christian and moulds him; the transformed or regenerate man then shows forth the immanent or subjective evidence of assurance. As it is impossible to fasten on the transcendent and not to realise the immanent signs of assurance in our life, so it would be "in contradiction with the very nature of Christian experience itself, if we stopped short at the subjective proceeding and not recognize the efficient energy ..as existing beyond the province of all human subjects, of all finite causes ... On the one hand the higher world sinks down upon the Christian (Rom.10.6ff) ...on the other hand, the light and

life produced in the subject rises on high to the world whence it originates. (Heb. XII. 18ff) "(25)

To this height of communion with God the converted man now rises fortified by the assurance of salvation. The greatest experience of the faithful is not that regeneration would make him immune to temptations, but that God uses all his afflictions to teach and to sanctify him, that He assures him of his constant love and that He lifts him up into communion with the Father and the Son. In the overflowing joy of his conversion experience, Pascal cries out:

"Dieu d'Abraham, Dieu d'Isaac, Dieu de Jacob

Non des philosophes et des scavants;

Certitude, certitude, sentiment;

Joye, Paix.

Dieu de Jesus Christ."

(25) H. R. Frank, System of Christian Certainty, Edinburgh 1886 p.300 f. (Dr. Frank of Erlangen occupied a position in the 19th century theology which not only brought him into conflict with the prevailing theology of Ritschl, but also with the traditional doctrine of the Evangelical Churches. He held that Christian certainty formed the first part of systematic theology, but he denied the doctrine of perseverance. He is nevertheless quoted with approval above for relating the transcendent and the immanent objects of faith to each other.

XI.

U N I O N with C H R I S T.

"He wants no friends who hath Thy love
And may converse and walk with Thee,
And with Thy saints, here and above
With whom forever I must be".

Richard Baxter.

Union with Christ is the greatest and most intimate experience of the Christian life. It forms part of the doctrine of conversion only so far as we hear about it in Scripture. But of all Christian doctrines, it is the least controversial. In Scripture itself the fact rather than the manner of that union is emphasized. "If Creeds and Catechisms seem to do otherwise, it is still to be remembered that their chief concern is to establish the fact that God⁽¹⁾ was in Christ"

We may read with benefit the devotional writings of Roman Catholic saints like Ignatius Loyola, John of the Cross, Francis of Sales; we may be edified by the works of the Anglican bishop Jeremy Taylor, and the Puritan Richard Baxter; we find inspiration in the example of the Cure d'Ars, of John Wesley and his Holy Club. We may meditate on the addresses and sermons which not many years ago were delivered by the Methodist Minister A.E. Witham;

1. T. Gregory, Article on Union in Hastings Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Edinburgh 1908, Vol. II. p. 779.

We may use in our daily prayers " Kyrie Eleison"
by the Scottish divine of recent times, Henry
Wotherspoon; and in sickness we may be helped by
the exercises of the Irish Presbyterian Minister,
J.S. Rutherford, "Learning through Suffering".
Union with Christ achieves the only true unity among
Christians.

In demanding this unity among believers,
which is based on the "fellowship of the Spirit",
St. Paul sets before us the example of "Christ Jesus,
who being in the form of God, counted it not a prize
to be on equality with God, but emptied himself..."⁽²⁾

By his Kenosis, Jesus Christ made himself
one with us. From his birth in the stable at
Bethlehem to the pouring of water and blood out of
His wound, the Son of God emptied Himself. When
the Tempter came to Him, He stripped Himself of all
the powers over which He had command. In a literal
sense his body was empty for forty days and he starved
for us, so that we might be fed not with Devil's
Bread but with the Bread of Life.

2. Phil. 2.6f. (R.V.)

He performed his miracles of healing not without feeling the strain of His work, taking a great deal out of Himself.

"I feel that power has passed from me" Jesus said when the woman with an issue of blood touched His garment. The intensity of the prayer in Gethsamene took so much out of Him that drops of blood stood on his brow. On the day of his trial and crucifixion the little remaining human dignity which any man claims for himself, his raiment, was taken from him and the soldiers appropriated his robe. Life departed slowly from his tormented body, as it was foretold in the 22nd Psalm " I am poured out like water.." The human body of Christ which had served the Son of God as habitation for 33 years was used with hard economy. But even then he had not emptied himself to the last. Out of the pierced side poured water and blood. Only then was Christ's Kenosis complete.

The Christian man who is united with his Lord undergoes a similar experience. He too must empty himself of his human ambitions, his prejudices, his self-seeking, his fears and his desires. What he seeks is not a Buddhist Nirvana, not a state of nothingness. Into the empty vessel of our humanity the blood of Christ enters.

We find this conception of the "human kenosis" among Christian mystics like Luther's contemporary Sebastian Franck. "As soon as the Word finds us void and empty, it takes possession of us and enters our nature as spiritual food, yea it boils down and mashes up our nature."⁽³⁾

This language reminds us of Luther's figure of a crystal which is melted in the fire of the Spirit. "For he who is thus liquified, is confirmed by God... He calls into being that which is not."⁽⁴⁾

The "Kenosis" differs from the dissolution of the human existence as found in Indian religion, in that here something is to take its place. The Christian loses his self only in order to gain a higher form of life. (Matthew 10.39. Mark 8.35. Luke 9.24). "Therefore", says Calvin, "man is in no danger of taking too much from himself, provided he learns that whatever he wants is to be recovered in God."⁽⁵⁾ Even in the view of the author of the Institutes who was certainly not a mystic, Kenosis is not only possible, but also expedient for any true believer, for "we are incapable of receiving Christ, unless we are emptied and come with open mouth to receive His grace."⁽⁶⁾

(3) Quoted from Seeberg, Die Lehren Luthers, p.24.

(4) Wifemarar Ausgabe III. 513

(5) Inst. II. II. 10

(6) Ibid. III. XI. 7.

This idea was enhanced in Pietism. We quoted Johannes Arndt the spiritual father of the movement, before as saying: "If man will empty himself, with all his passions and affections for wordly things, God will infallibly fill his soul with divine grace, love, wisdom and knowledge.." This is a principle of anthropology, for "nature cannot admit a vacuum". (7)

In later Pietism stark exaggerations of the evangelical teaching regarding the human 'kenosis' are found. But even in the versified teaching of the Rostock Professor Heinrich Mueller who was firmer in his Pietism than in his poetry, Luther's figure of the melting crystal can still be recognised.

"Wann mich mein Jesus hat gefuehret in die
Wuesten.
Und mir zu trinken gibt aus seiner Liebe
Bruesten,
So brennt an seiner Lieb' mein Liebeslicht-
lein an,
Dass ich an seinem Feur wie Wachs zersch-
(8)
melzen kann".

Not those strange expressions like "drinking from the breasts of Christ" which we also find in the writings of Samuel Rutherford (see the chapter, Prologue in heaven), but the "Jesus Cult" that leaves out the

7. Arndt, op. cit. p.311

8. Quoted from J. Juengst, Pietisten, Tuebingen 1906, p.40

essential basis of our union with Christ, His union with the Father, is repellent to Trinitarian Christians. This reservation regarding Christian unity in the conception of union with Christ must be made. This unity can only embrace those Christians who have remained faithful to the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity. For no other reason but because the union of the Father and the Son was maintained when Christ took human nature upon himself, humanity is through Christ united with God. Our blessed Lord said to His disciples: " Ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." ⁽⁹⁾ His promise leads the Christian believer to perfect union with the Godhead, a union which is not the achievement of man, but the work of God who visits His people. " If a man love me, He will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come ⁽¹⁰⁾ unto him, and make our abode with him."

This presence of God with the believer bears wonderful fruits. It is impossible to count all the fruits of God's mercies, but we shall try to gather some from the tree of life.

7. 18.

9. John 14. 20
10. Ibid. V. 23.

I. Christ identifies Himself with the converted sinner.

The believer is no longer a slave of sin, an outcast and a prodigal; he is met by His heavenly Father on his return. Christ, the ideal elder brother, is glad to let him participate in his own inheritance of righteousness. "Thou, Lord Jesus, art my righteousness, and I am Thine uprightness, Thou hast assumed me and hast given Thyself to me". (11)

John Brown calls this identification of Christ with the sinner the "legal union" in which the elect are united to Christ "as a surety" (12)

II. The spiritual union made by the Spirit.

The converted man is united with Christ as the branches are united with the vine. Christ's blood pulses freely in all His members, as the sap of the vine pervades all its branches. "To that union of the head and members, the residence of Christ in our hearts, in fine, the mystical union, we assign the highest rank, when Christ becomes ours, making us partners with Himself in the gifts with which he was endowed. Hence we do not view Him as at a distance

11. Quoted from Seeberg, Die Lehren Luthers
p. 97.

12. John Brown op.cit. p. 149 f.

and without us, but as though we have put Him on," and been ingrafted into His body. He deigns to make us one with Himself, and, therefore we glory in having a fellowship of righteousness with Him". (13)

Speaking in this passage of both the legal and the spiritual union, Calvin attributes the highest rank, to the mystical union; His conception of our fellowship with Christ is as high as ^{that} of Luther himself. Christ does not remain above in heaven, and we below on earth. He is really present in the believer, He lives in him, He becomes foetus (placenta), one body, one corpse with him.

Luther compares the union between Christ and the Christian believer with the union between the divine and the humane nature in the person of Christ. Though our union with Christ is not as high and great as the union of Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit, nevertheless it means " that Christ the Lord by his flesh and blood, becomes one body with us, and that I belong to Him, just as all the members of my body belong to each other." (14)

In his own homely fashion, Luther explains ^{is} how Christ/one with us for better and for worse.

13. Inst. III. XI. 10

14. Erlanger Ausgabe XLVIII. 34

"Whether I am hurting... or honouring you, I am hurting... or honouring Christ; for whatsoever befalls a Christian, befalls Christ Himself."

The theologians of the Post-Reformation period speak in similar terms of the ingrafting of the elect into Christ as a point of doctrine; but they miss Luther's and Calvin's enthusiasm. Continental and especially German theology waxed cold in the 17th century,^{and} the call to fellowship with Christ became an urgent spiritual need of Christians in those parts. Arndt and Spener began to preach Holy Living when there was "no open vision". They still believed that the mystical union is achieved through justification by faith, but gave room to the freedom of the will in a way which was alien to Luther's own teaching.

III. Love as the tie of the mystical union is the theme of most devotional books and innumerable hymns and chorales. The Christian who at his conversion "falls in love" with his Saviour, who during the Lifelong struggle fights against his own faithlessness, finds the lasting happiness of mature love which deepens in the years of service of him.

Being wedded to Christ by God's gracious covenant he during the Lifelong struggle fights against his own callousness, and discovers that the

longer the sacred union lasts, the deeper grows his love, the love of maturity and rich experience.

The same sweet odour of love breathes in Tersteegen's Choral "Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe, die sich in Jesu offenbart" as in Charles Wesley's "Love divine, all loves excelling" and in George Matheson's, the blind minister's great hymn, "O love that wilt not let me go". Our union with Christ cannot bear fruit unless it is filled with true love. But at the same time, converted man must know that the Christian life is not an endless honeymoon. Dr. Stewart in his work "The Man in Christ," has pointed out that "union with Christ does not mean the end of the Christian's striving. Rather is it a challenge to an effort as long as life itself".⁽¹⁵⁾

The love of Christ is that great power which enables man to continue the struggle with good cheer, his life-long companion exercising His gentle and yet powerful influence on him. As years go by, the human partner of the sacred union is assimilated more and more to his divine spouse, till at the end he becomes as Christlike as any living creature can be.

15. James Stewart, A Man in Christ, London 1941 p. 198

Since sanctification is the means by which those who are united to Christ, become more and more like him, Schleiermacher's proposition that "regeneration is the act of uniting, and sanctification the state of union"⁽¹⁶⁾ expresses in different terms Calvin's⁽¹⁷⁾ view that holiness is the bond of union.

IV. The fruits of union with Christ.

Those who are living in union with Christ do not remain barren. It has often been observed that men and women who had a very definite conversion experience, were anxious to beget and bring up spiritual sons and daughters. There seems to be an increased missionary zeal in those circles which preach conversion most fervently.

Those who live in close communion with their Lord feel an urge to activity. Monastic orders, pietist communities and evangelistic societies have been famous for the institutions they founded. Exaggerations in this respect may have been possible. A man may become an activist and neglect his own devotional life; he may be so absorbed in teaching piety that his own fellowship with Christ grows chilled;

16. Schleiermacher, op. cit. p. 477

17. Inst. III. VI. 2

"cold as charity" is a proverbial phrase for a social activity which remains loveless at heart. But in spite of these unavoidable failures active Christianity is the wondrous fruit of union with Christ.

Unconverted men are capable of loving their families and their neighbours as much as Christians, but this natural love is different from Christian love. " Love as a natural endowment, EROS, is transmuted under this religious tension into AGAPE",
(18)
says Prof. Niebuhr.

The difference between natural and Christian love is given in a footnote, in which Prof. Niebuhr quotes from Prof. Anders Nygren's book "Agape and Eros". "Eros must always regard the love of man as love for the good in man... Agape is the precise opposite. God's love is the ground and pattern of all love. It consists in free self-giving and it finds its continuation in His love for man; for one who has received all for nothing is constrained to pass on to others what he has received."

18. Reinhold Niebuhr An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, London 1941, p. 221.

In other words the Philanthropist tends to assume that man is essentially good. If he helps those who are in trouble, he hopes to discover some goodness in them. The Christian believes that man is essentially a sinner, he himself included. But because Christ loved sinners, we must love our fellow sinners, as He has loved us.

In our first conversion there is still the glow of Eros, and Christian people who try to prolong this stage - a frequent occurrence among pietist conventicles and certain evangelistic sects - remain in the stage of religious puberty all their life. In our relationship to Christ as to our fellowman, the Eros must be transformed into Agape.

Of this love the apostle said "ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πύττει" (19)

5. COMMUNION - a Sacrament.

Christ who instituted the Sacrament of Baptism as a memorial of our ingrafting into Him, gave the Sacrament of Holy Communion as the sign and pledge of His abiding with us. Every time "we show forth his death", we are assured of our union with Him, till this union is made perfect when he comes. "Since Christ is risen and Christ is ascended and now appears

before God for us "in the merit of His sacrifice"...
showing His wounds for us, He our peace with God;
we are united with Him in that showing". (20)

When the converted Christian is weakened by the lifelong struggle, when he is exhausted by sickness and distress, and when he is overcome by the consciousness of his own unworthiness, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper assures him anew of his communion with Christ. A soldier who was seriously wounded in battle, asked that the Padre should administer Holy Communion to him. As he told me later, he was at that time too weak to read the Bible, too weak even to offer prayer unto God; but he longed for communion with His Saviour and in partaking of the Holy Supper, he realized his oneness with Christ.

At the Lord's Table we become aware of our communion with Him. From one Communion to the next, the converted man continues his pilgrimage through life, with Christ before him and beside him.. Thus the Christian life is a road to Emmaus, the Risen Lord accompanying his disciples, till at the breaking of the bread the incognito is lifted and the

20. H.J. Wotherspoon, What happened at Pentecost, Edinburgh 1937, p. 170

eyes of them who are graced by His presence,
are opened.

"Here, o my Lord, I see Thee face to face;

.....

Here let me feast, and feasting still prolong
The brief, bright hour of FELLOWSHIP with Thee".

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XII.

E P I L O G U E .

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,
neither have entered into the heart
of man, the things which God hath
prepared for them that love him."

I.Cor. 2.9

We have reached the last stages of conversion. The evangelical Christian who has received the assurance of salvation faces death with quiet confidence. The tempter may still make a desperate attempt to shake the glorious hope of the believer. But he who walked with God, is no more, for God took him. He awakes to a better life. Protestant doctrine is cautious in describing the future life. The Roman Catholic doctrine of an intermediate state between Heaven and Hell, either in the Limbo of the children and of the Old Testament saints, or in Purgatory is rejected, but there is little to suggest what life after death is like. Luther taught in the Larger Catechism, that in the life to come "there is no more remission of sins, but there are pure and wholly sanctified men, full of piety and righteousness, freed from sin, death and all misery, in a new, immortal and
(1)
transfigured body."

Similarly the Westminster Confession informs us
that after physical death "the souls (which neither die nor

(1) Catechisms Maior 501 (Mueller p.459)

sleep) having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies ⁽²⁾ .."

But what are we to believe regarding that life of the soul between its return to God and the resurrection on the last day ? It is common Reformed doctrine that the soul "during all the intermediate state from death until the resurrection, continues conscious, active, and happy." ⁽³⁾

This "activity" of the soul after death consists mainly in glorifying God and in praying for those who are still abiding in this world. We are helped by the prayers of the saints in heaven during the whole earthly pilgrimage. There is no doubt that those who enjoy and value the highest good more than we can understand, pray for the conversion of sinners. Though our conversion is the work of God alone, the prayers of the Church triumphant are used in God's scheme of salvation. The blessed dead who from their labours rest - not in Elysian idleness but in unlaborious activity - watch our ways.

But there is a second reason why this treatise on the Evangelical Doctrine of Conversion cannot be closed without considering the life after death. The repentant thief

(2) Westminster Conf. of Faith XXXII. 1

(3) A.A. Hodge, Commentary on the Confession of Faith, London 1870 p.380

on the Cross dwells in the same abode as St. John or St. Peter. He was spared from passing through the fire of Purgatory of which the gospel knows nothing; he is justified by faith and therefore redeemed by the blood of Christ. Would God dispense with his sanctification ? The Westminster Confession in stating that the souls of the righteous are "made perfect in holiness" seems to assume that with the entry into heaven, the state of perfection is reached and no further advancement is possible till the day of the resurrection.

But this is not the view of John Calvin, which is founded on St. Paul's words : "Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The apostle does not say "until the day of your death" but "until the day of Jesus Christ." Calvin therefore in his commentary on Philippians writes : "The conflict is terminated by death. As, however the Spirit is accustomed to speak in this manner in reference to the last coming of Christ, it were better to extend the increase of the grace of Christ to the resurrection of the flesh. For although those who have been freed from the mortal body no longer contend with the lusts of the flesh, and are, as the expression is, beyond the reach of a single dart, yet there will be no absurdity in speaking of them as in the way of advancement, inasmuch as they have not yet reached the point to which they aspire .. the day has not

yet shined which is to discover the treasures lying hid in
(4)
hope."

In one of his early works, the "Psychopannychia" Calvin described the progress of the soul, beginning with baptism and ending with the resurrection of the dead. In this work too the advancement of the soul after death is taken for granted. He compares the pilgrimage of man with the wanderings of the children of Israel. In Baptism "our old Pharaoh is drowned." Then follows the desert wandering of the Christian through dry places. He comes through "a land arid and poor, unless the Lord rain manna from heaven, and cause water to gush forth from the rock," At the end of these wanderings we reach Jordan and "pass into the land of promise, under the guidance of Joshua." In spite of the joy and happiness which awaits us in the land flowing with milk and honey, that land which we enter after death, "Jerusalem, the capital and seat of the kingdom, has not yet been erected ... But when the heavenly Jerusalem shall have risen in its glory, and Christ, the true Solomon, the Prince of Peace, shall be seated aloft on his tribunal, the true Israelites will reign with their king ... This is our aim,
(5)
this is our goal."

In describing, accepting, criticising and sometimes
rejecting the view which Evangelical divines held regarding

(4) Calvin's Comm. on Phil. 1.6

(5) Calvin's Tracts (Calvin Society edit.)
Vol. III. p.467.

the Doctrine of Conversion, we have followed the upward path of the soul from the land of bondage to the land of promise. Both our teachers and our opponents, the host of Christian men and women who through conversion enter into communion with Christ, and the preachers of the Word who after being converted, preach the glad tidings of salvation to converted and unconverted, have the same goal before them. It is the task of Christian doctrine to establish the truth of conversion, and the aim of the Evangelical ministry to proclaim the urgency of the New Birth, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

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