

tion. We are "by nature the children of wrath," not because of any actual participation in the guilt of our great progenitors, nor because of our connection with Adam as our federal head; but because, as Doddridge expresses it, of "the original apostacy and corruption, in consequence of which men do, according to the course of nature, fall early into *personal guilt*, and so become obnoxious to the Divine displeasure." "Original sin," in any other sense than that of an innate and universal tendency to sin, is to us, with all due deference to the great masters in theology who have taught otherwise, simply original nonsense—excuse the word—without the shadow of a foundation in any passage of the Word of God rightly understood.

It appears to us, moreover, much more consistent with the tenor of the Holy Scriptures to regard the little "children," whom our Lord declares to belong to His kingdom, as being brought into that relationship, by virtue of His atonement, at the moment of their *birth* than at the moment of their *death*. To suppose them first to be condemned without personal transgression, and then to be justified without personal faith, seems to us a thing to be believed only upon the clearest and most incontestable proof from Holy Scripture, while, on the other hand to regard them as simply saved from all sinful tendency, as all other citizens of God's kingdom are, at death, is at once scriptural and consistent with the necessities of the case.

It will be objected, of course, that such a view of the condition of the race at the period of birth supposes them to "fall from grace," and to become children of wrath and of the wicked one, after having been children of God and heirs of His kingdom. It does. But so did our first parents. Their state of nature was as truly a state of *grace* as that into which we are brought in infancy by virtue of the mediation of Christ, and if they were permitted to fall into condemnation through transgression of the Divine law, why should we think it strange that our infant children, with a nature so depraved and vitiated, should be permitted to do so? The wonder would be if they should *not* fall. In both cases the condition is a probationary one, and in their case is one with the preponderating influence of a corrupt nature, all in the direction of evil, and thus it has come to pass that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Such a view is by no means inconsistent, however, with the view generally held among us, and by none more firmly than myself, of the final perseverance of all true believers unto eternal life. For that we have what we regard as the positive and unmistakable assurance of our blessed Lord Himself—"They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." They are "created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works"—"predestinated to be conformed to the image" of God's son. This Divine change has been wrought in them expressly to defeat the great adversary in his attempt to destroy them; and to permit him to *undo* the work of the Holy Spirit in their conversion appears to us altogether inconsistent with the character and ways of Him who changeth not, and of whom it is said that "whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever." But the fall of an infant from a state of grace into a state of condemnation, is essentially different in its nature, and is only such a result as in all probability is possible in the case of every intelligent creature when first brought to realize the fact of its subjection to Divine law, and one without the *possibility* of which, there could be no such thing as either virtue or vice. The cases, therefore, are not parallel, and the objection falls to the ground.

CONSISTENCY.—Let us remember that whatever unfits us for religious duties, cools the fervour of our devotions, or indisposes us to read our Bible or to pray; whatever we could not engage in with a perfectly clear conscience; wherever the thought of a suffering Saviour or a holy God, of the hour of death or of the day of judgment, falls like a cold shadow on our enjoyment; the pleasure which we cannot thank God for, and on which we cannot ask His blessing—these are not for us.