

that regenerates us; but the grace of God acting with the Word as the instrument.

But it may be objected that the direct action of the Spirit upon the soul involves the principle of irresistible grace,—that it is not compatible with the freedom of our moral agency. If it could be proved that God could not act directly upon the mind without bringing the whole of his omnipotence to bear upon it, or by an “overwhelming power of saving grace,” so that man’s will was compelled to submit, the objection would have weight; but in that case man would be degraded to an irresponsible being. Moral responsibility and moral trial would be excluded. The moral nature which God has implanted within us is sacred in his eyes; He cannot infringe laws which His own wisdom has arranged and His own goodness approved; therefore, in all the operations of His grace His power will be tempered and regulated with the perfections of His nature and the principles of our own. There are mysteries in grace as well as in nature and the Bible; but the mysteries of nature do not invalidate the truth that God is the Author of nature, or the mysteries of the Bible that He is the Author of the Bible, nor yet the mysteries of grace that God is the Author of grace. We may not always understand the mode of His operations. “The wind bloweth where it listeth; thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth.”

This was the most prominent, the most impressive, doctrine of our Lord’s ministry. In preparing his disciples for his approaching departure, and for the dispensation of glory that should follow, He fixed and concentrated all their attention and hopes on this great gift. He set it before them as the provision on which the interests of his kingdom entirely depended, and on which they were to rely for maintenance and success. He taught them that in the gift of the Spirit resided the one power that could enlighten, and renew, and save the world. “Nevertheless,” he said to His sorrowing servants, “I tell you the truth,”—the sober unexaggerated truth,—“it is expedient for you that I go away.” It is not only inevitable but “expedient” also; it is even desirable, it is profitable for you: “for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. If ye loved me, ye would not only be reconciled to my removal from you, but ye would rejoice because I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I,” and He will supply my place with one whose presence shall be more abundantly beneficial and effectual. In what way could Jesus have given to his disciples loftier impressions of the transcendent greatness and preciousness of the gift of his Holy Spirit? With all the privileges and weight of blessedness, with all the presence and glory that had marked his own presence and glory, he assured them that the presence and power of the Holy Spirit would be much more abundant. In conformity with this teaching he commanded his disciples, after his resurrection, “that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which,” saith he, “ye have heard of me; for John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” The commission