

and what connexion both have either with *baptism* here, or with *salvation* hereafter.

III. To draw some proper *inferences* from the whole, for preventing mistakes in these high matters, and for our better improvement in Christian knowledge and practice.

I. Regeneration, or the new birth, means the spiritual change wrought upon any person by the Holy Spirit in the use of baptism, whereby he is translated from a natural state in Adam, to a spiritual state in Christ. The name was used by the Jews to signify the admission of heathen proselytes into their church by baptism, after which they considered them dead to their former state, and born anew to the privileges of the children of Israel, and the church of God. Our Lord adopted the name, and sanctified the rite, to higher and holier purposes: he improved the notion also, by introducing the mention of the Spirit, and extended the ordinance, and made it universal, by requiring every convert to Christianity to be baptised. Every one must be born of water and the Spirit, not once born of water, and once of the Spirit, so as to make two new births; but once born of both, born of the Spirit in or by water, while the Spirit primarily or effectively, and the water secondarily or instrumentally, concur in the same birth ordinarily the result of both, in virtue of the divine appointment.

It was common with the ancient fathers to consider the Spirit and the water under the emblem of a conjugal union, as the two parents, and the new born Christian as the offspring of both. Whatever may be thought of the figure, it at least proves, what the ancients thought concerning regeneration; and Dr. Wall has proved, beyond controversy, that the Greek and Latin fathers not only used the word for baptism, but appropriated it to baptism, so as to exclude any other conversion or repentance from being signified under this name; so that regeneration was either baptism in both its parts, or the change of state wrought by the Spirit in or through baptism. There can therefore be but one regeneration, because there is but one baptism. Again: regeneration, as to the regenerating agent, is the first admission; and as to the recipient, the first entrance, into the spiritual state; and therefore, as there cannot be two first admissions, or two first entrances, neither can there be two regenerations. The analogy between the natural and spiritual life, teaches the same truth: nor are there more than three lives, or three births in which any Christian is concerned; viz. 1.