

two are John Calvin and James Arminius. Now it must be confessed that such preachers were not the apostles. Such means as these the Spirit of God never did employ in the conversion of Jews and Gentiles, in the age of primitive simplicity. And the reason is obvious, for there is no moral fitness or suitableness in those means to the end proposed. For what fitness is there to produce faith in telling a man that he cannot believe? or what fitness is there in telling a man that until he is quickened or regenerated by the Spirit of God, he cannot become a disciple of Christ in truth? Can such dogmas, however solemnly declared, or however often repeated, cause the Spirit to descend or to regenerate the man? But he must say these things in order to be, or to appear to be, orthodox! Again, what fitness is there to produce faith in telling a man that he is able to believe? Did ever a discourse upon what is called "the freedom of the human will," or men's natural powers, incline a man to choose what is good, or cause him to exert his displayed powers to believe? As rationally might one man attempt to persuade another to go to Spain or the Cape of Good Hope, by telling him his will was free to choose or to refuse, and that his natural abilities were sufficient. All such preaching is as absurd as it is unprecedented in the New Testament.

I enter not into the merits or abstract truth of the above systems. This would be to run the same old metaphysical race again. Some of those dogmas may be metaphysically true, but they are distilled truths. They have come from the Calvinistic or Arminian distillery. That is, in other words, certain parts of the bible, mingled with philosophy, and put through a Calvinistic or Arminian process of distillation, issue in these abstract notions. The men who deal in those distilled truths, and those who drink those distilled doctrines, are generally intoxicated. For even here there is a certain analogy between the revelation of God, and the corn and wheat of God. — When the whole wheat or corn of God are used for food in their undistilled state, or when eaten with all their component parts, those who eat them are healthy and enjoy life; but when the component parts of those grains are separated by a chemical process, and the distilled spirit presented to human lips men cannot live upon these spirits, but become intoxicated, and in process of time, sicken and die. This analogy is complete. They who believe and obey the New Testament, as God has presented it, live upon it, and enjoy life and spiritual health; but they who attempt to live on theories sicken and die. Those who feed themselves upon their free will and sufficient strength, often take care not to will to obey the apostle's doctrine; and those who complain that the will is not free often appear "freely willing" to neglect the great salvation.

But some of the orthodox contend that it is not safe to permit a man to preach, or to speak to men on religion, who will not expressly and publicly declare that his theory is that men cannot believe unless they are first regenerated by the spirit of God. This is the consummation of absurdity on their own principles. For surely they do not think that the Spirit of God will suspend or change the order of its operations according to the opinion of the speaker. On their theory, the Spirit of God will operate in its own way, whatever be the private theory of the speaker; and whether a man think or do not think that men can believe only as the Spirit of God works faith in them, the result on their own principles must be the same.