

of retributive discipline, as their career in this life seems in the eye of God to deserve and need as its just correlative.

(4.) So far as infants, including all who die before they have entered upon moral consciousness and life, are concerned [and so far, also, as imbeciles and others who are incapable of hearing the outward call of the Gospel are to be taken into the account], the evangelical doctrine maintains that, through the mediatorial work of Christ made available in their behalf, and through the accompanying influences of the Spirit in the regeneration and sanctifying of their nature, such infants and other like persons, whether born of Christian or of unbelieving or even pagan parentage, are graciously delivered at death from all corruption of heart or nature, are biassed toward holiness as our first parents originally were, and are led forth into the immortal life as sanctified souls, to be divinely trained by processes unknown to us into perfection of character like that of Christ Himself. Injustice is done at this point to the earlier Protestant creeds—eminently to the Confession of Westminster. That careful, poised, profound, spiritual symbol really affirms nothing as to infants in general; it is wisely silent respecting their condition, for the reason that its compilers were not prepared, with unanimity, to make any comprehensive or inclusive affirmation. But respecting elect infants, whether these might be limited strictly to the offspring of elect parents, or might include others chosen and set apart by the gracious wisdom of God, they were prepared to hold and teach that all such, however few or many, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, through the Spirit who worketh when and where and how He pleaseth. That many Calvinistic divines of that period, and of the century following, went farther than this, and affirmed the damnation of infants not elect, must of course be admitted. But here, as at many other points, the Confession, and those who hold to it, are not to be judged by the affirmations of every one who professes to receive it. And it is further to be said that whatever of silence or of ambiguity attaches to the language of the symbol—whatever of doubt or of diversity of opinion existed among the venerated men who framed it—Calvinists of this age hold as heartily as any other class of evangelical believers to the gracious salvation of all who die in infancy. By this teaching it is not implied that such infants pass through a distinct probation after they have entered upon a conscious life in eternity: such a conception hardly seems intelligible, in view of what is declared respecting the work of Christ for them, and of the Spirit within them, in the hour and article of death. The fact rather is that these redeemed and sanctified souls, entering into their first conscious moral existence under such conditions and in such a sphere as heaven, have no need of such further discipline as the term, probation, implies. By a process deeper than conscious volition, and antecedent to all moral