

A REPLY TO THE PAPER BY MR. HAMILTON ENTITLED "THE
EFFECT OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY AND REGENERATION ON THE
INTELLECT"

The aim of this reply is not to magnify the differences between us and Mr. Hamilton, but primarily to state precisely the exact point at issue, in the hope of making progress in the resolution of the question. The issue concerning regeneration and the intellect is briefly this: Mr. Hamilton says that an unregenerate man may have exactly the same understanding of the words, "Christ died for sinners", as a regenerate man; and that regeneration does not necessarily change at all the understanding of spiritual truth. We reply that although an unregenerate man may have an understanding of the truth, this understanding is never the same as that possessed by the regenerate man; and that regeneration always so enlightens the darkened mind that the understanding of the things of God is changed.

We reply further that Mr. Hamilton, in holding that an unregenerate man may have exactly the same understanding of the words "Christ died for sinners" as a regenerate man, thereby singles out the act of understanding on the part of this unregenerate man as immune from the disabling effect of sin, and thus denies that the depravity of the unregenerate soul is total.

Mr. Hamilton has kindly consented to hold personal conferences with the signers of this reply, and has discussed this issue at length in sincere and courteous fashion. The continuing divergence of viewpoint, however, makes necessary the circulation of this reply, in the interest of the purity of the church. The position we defend is nothing new. It is, we believe, the doctrine of Scripture and of our standards, and the uniform witness of the Reformed theology. Were it not for the fact that this doctrine is opposed in our church, we would not think it necessary, having stated the issue, to debate it.

Before examining the evidence of Mr. Hamilton's position it is well to give careful attention to terminology. The meaning of certain words has perplexed the issue, not only in the matter of regeneration and the intellect but also in the matter of the incomprehensibility of God. We refer to the terms object of knowledge, content of knowledge, meaning, and understanding.

For man, the proper object of knowledge is God, and the created universe. As man knows God and the creation, man knows truth. The truth concerning God as he is in himself is eternally known to God; it is prior to human thought and its validity is external to human consciousness. This truth is made known to man by revelation. All of man's knowledge, whether of God or of the created universe, is given through revelation. That is, God's revelation of himself and his works, and this revelation considered as a product rather than as a process, is given to man; and as man is aware of this revelation, it is the object of knowledge to him.

The object of knowledge for God presents a great problem. God is truth, and without his eternal activity in knowing there would be no truth. However God makes his own existence, his own being, his own glory and his own conscious-

ness the object of his eternal contemplation; so in this sense God is the object of knowledge to himself. In addition, when God reveals himself to man, the revelation, viewed as a product, is an object of knowledge to God.

Revelation as a product, then, is the object of knowledge when a knowing mind is aware of it. God is always aware of all of it; man, in any particular case, may be aware of some of it. But that of which man is aware is the same in its objective import for God and for man. It is the same for the regenerate man and for the unregenerate man. God's revealed truth is one, as an object, for all knowing minds.

The proper content of knowledge, on the other hand, is the representation, in a mind, of the object of knowledge. It is a mind's possession of, or grasp of, that object.

The divine mind has a possession, or grasp, of all truth. The human mind may have a possession or grasp of that which is revealed. It is only with regard to revelation, as an object of knowledge, that God and man may each have a grasp of the same object. Thus, when a human mind becomes aware of revealed truth as an object of knowledge, there is formed in the mind a representation or grasp of that object, and this representation or grasp is the content of knowledge. And there is in the divine mind a representation of the same revealed truth, which representation is the content of the divine knowledge. In this situation the identity of the object, for the knowing minds concerned, is clear. But to assert the identity of the object is not to assert the identity of the content of knowledge; it is not to assert the identity of God's grasp with man's grasp. (Parenthetically, it may be added here that the mode of knowledge is also distinct from the content of knowledge. In the case of God, the mode is the manner in which the grasp is formed in his mind; and in the case of man the mode is the manner in which the grasp comes to be formed in his mind.)

Between the content of the divine knowledge and the content of true creaturely knowledge there obtains a correspondence, inasmuch as man is made in God's image. But this correspondence cannot amount to identity because of the whole difference between God and man: since there are two levels as to being, and two levels as to the knowing minds, so there are two levels of the content of knowledge. The character of the knowing mind itself fixes the character of the content of knowledge. God's grasp of truth is all-penetrating at every point, man's grasp is not all-penetrating at any point.

The object of knowledge, then, is revelation as a product; and the content of knowledge is the representation, in the mind, of that object. It is the content of knowledge with which the complainants have been concerned, both as to God's incomprehensibility and as to the effect of regeneration on the intellect.

This distinction between the content and the object of knowledge has not always been clearly understood in the debate. Neither side is altogether without blame in this regard. It is to be feared that some, failing to see the distinction between content and object, have misunderstood the complainants' insistence that the content of knowledge is different for God and man, and that the content of knowledge is different for the regenerate and the unregenerate; and have supposed that by this insistence the complainants have somehow been

denying the identity for all minds of the object of knowledge, and thus denying the objective unity of truth. This misunderstanding accounts for the charge that the complainants have fallen into skepticism.

The word "meaning" has also caused difficulty, because it has been used with reference both to the object of knowledge and to the content of knowledge. There is meaning, or import, or sense, in the objective truth — an import that is the same for all minds. There is also in the grasp, or content of knowledge, that which corresponds to the import of the objective truth. It is in this latter sense that the word "meaning" was employed in one place in the Complaint. By way of objecting to Dr. Clark's view that man's knowledge of any proposition, if it is really knowledge, is identical with God's knowledge of the same proposition, the Complaint says: "If knowledge is a matter of propositions divorced from the knowing subject, that is, of self-contained, independent statements, a proposition would have to have the same meaning for man as for God". In this sentence the word "meaning" and also the word "knowledge" refer to the content, not the object of knowledge; and the intent of the Complaint may be suggested by the following paraphrase: "If the content of knowledge consists of an assortment of propositions which, as far as the content of knowledge is concerned, are in no way altered by the knowing mind but are considered as not being influenced by it; then, in that case, a proposition known by both God and man would be represented by the same identical grasp, or content of knowledge, for both God and man; inasmuch as on this hypothesis there would be no real difference between the content and the object of knowledge". We trust that this explanation will be helpful. The Complaint is, we feel, insufficiently guarded in its language in this sentence, although we also think that the reference to the content of knowledge is evident in view of the thrust of this entire section of the Complaint.

Since the word "meaning" has caused confusion, we would prefer in this reply either to avoid it or to restrict it to the object of knowledge, except for the necessity of considering Mr. Hamilton's use of it. We feel that in at least one very important passage Mr. Hamilton uses it to refer to the content of knowledge. He says on page 5 of his paper, "If a natural understanding is not an intellectual understanding of the meaning of (the) words 'Christ died for sinners', just what is it? We insist that an unregenerated man may put exactly the same meaning on the words 'Christ died for sinners' as the regenerated man." The word "meaning" occurs in each of these two sentences. In the first sentence it no doubt refers to the object of knowledge; in the second we consider that it refers to the content of knowledge, since "meaning" there is something that a man "puts" on certain words. Inasmuch as the object of knowledge is valid regardless of man's awareness of it, any meaning which a human mind may put upon a truth must pertain to the content of knowledge. Thus "meaning" in the second sentence agrees with "understanding" in the first sentence, both referring to the content of knowledge. In another place on page 5, Mr. Hamilton says, "ordinary human logic, even apart from regeneration, can be trusted to ascertain the meaning of the words of Scripture". Here "meaning" clearly refers to the object of knowledge; and yet by the preceding words, "can be trusted to ascertain", Mr. Hamilton is making a judgment as to the content of knowledge.

The word "understanding", in such a phrase as "have an understanding of the gospel", refers to the content of knowledge rather than the object of knowledge.

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Mr. Hamilton's Position

The written evidence of Mr. Hamilton's position appears first in the proposed Answer to the Complaint brought against the Presbytery of Philadelphia in the matter of the licensure and ordination of Dr. Gordon H. Clark. The Complaint held that Dr. Clark "makes no absolute qualitative distinction between the knowledge of the unregenerate man and the knowledge of the regenerate man". It further described Dr. Clark's view: "with the same ease, the same 'common sense', the unregenerate and the regenerate man can understand propositions revealed to man" (10:2). To this the proposed Answer, signed both by Dr. Clark and by Mr. Hamilton, responded as follows: "Both the regenerate and the unregenerate can with the same ease understand the proposition, Christ died for sinners. Regeneration, in spite of the theory of the Complaint, is not a change in the understanding of these words. The difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate lies in the fact that the former believes the proposition and the latter does not. The regenerate acknowledges Christ as Lord; the other does not. The one is a willing subject; the other is a rebel. Regeneration is not necessarily a change in understanding propositions. An unregenerate man may understand the proposition 'Christ died for sinners', but far from knowing it to be true, he thinks it to be false. Strictly speaking he knows only that 'the Scriptures teach Christ died for sinners'. When he is regenerated, his understanding of the proposition may undergo no change at all; what happens is that he now accepts as true what previously he merely understood. He no longer knows merely 'the Scriptures teach Christ died for sinners'; he now knows 'Christ died for sinners'" (pages 32 - 33).

In quoting the passage above we have underscored six places where the erroneous view is stated, because it has been supposed that the latter part of the passage modifies the former part. It will be seen that on the contrary the error is pervasive. To be sure regeneration is said to bring the belief that the gospel is true; but, the understanding of the gospel remains unchanged. For the unregenerate man may already have as correct and easy an understanding as the regenerate, but he rebels against that which he correctly understands and which he knows is taught in the Bible; then when regeneration takes place his understanding undergoes no change at all, but he becomes a willing subject and no longer rebels against the truth. The last sentence in the quotation appears to be out of harmony with that which has gone before. If it is a withdrawal of the position taken in the immediately preceding context, then why was that position repeatedly asserted? We conclude that the last sentence is meant to be in harmony with the rest of the quotation, and particularly with the sentence immediately preceding it, and is therefore intended as a description of a different attitude of will toward a proposition, the understanding of which has undergone no change at all. Thus the last two sentences would teach the following: his understanding of the proposition is not changed at all by regeneration; however, he no longer opposes the teaching of the Bible, but accepts it as true. So it is taught in the passage as a whole, that regeneration changes the will but not the understanding.

In this passage from the Answer it will be noted that certain reservations are introduced by the words not necessarily and by two cases of the word may: "Regeneration is not necessarily a change in understanding propositions. An unregenerate man may understand the proposition . . . his understanding of the proposition may undergo no change at all." If Mr. Hamilton meant to imply

these distinctions throughout the passage, and if he meant thereby to indicate that while most men who are regenerated do have a different understanding after regeneration, but that there may yet be some certain persons who because of superior opportunities in a Christian environment have such a good understanding of the gospel before regeneration that regeneration makes no difference in their understanding, in their particular case --- we reply, that if such is his meaning, the issue is still the same. Mr. Hamilton is still saying that there may be no change at all in the understanding when certain men are born again, and thus apparently denying that in their case depravity extended to all the powers of the soul, or, that depravity was total. He still neglects the fact that all who are regenerated have their blind eyes opened so that they clearly understand the gospel for the first time. But especially, on this interpretation he continues to hold no qualitative difference between the understanding of the unregenerate and of the regenerate; only a quantitative difference would be in operation. An understanding of a different kind, a qualitative change due to regeneration, is not recognized.

This position is reaffirmed in the paper circulated by Mr. Hamilton in August, 1946. He says: "If a 'natural understanding' is not an intellectual understanding of the meaning of (the) words, 'Christ died for sinners', just what is it? We insist that an unregenerated man may put exactly the same meaning on the words, 'Christ died for sinners' as the regenerated man. The difference is that the unregenerated man does not love the truth which he understands, and does not apply that blessed truth to his own soul for salvation. He does not 'spiritually apprehend' what he intellectually understands" (page 5).

This quotation agrees with the passage from the Answer in what we believe to be the essential point, that the regenerate and the unregenerate may have exactly the same understanding of the words "Christ died for sinners". It is still taught that regeneration may affect no change in the understanding. There is however a new emphasis concerning those powers or activities of the soul that are changed by regeneration. The Answer spoke of the unregenerate as not believing that truth which he understands. But in his recent paper Mr. Hamilton allows that the unregenerate, in historical faith, may not only understand the truth but also believe it. The difference between the unregenerate and the regenerate now appears to consist solely in the fact that the former does not love, and does not apply to the needs of his soul, that truth which he understands and which he may believe. It is in this sense that we think the last sentence, in the passage quoted above from page 5 of Mr. Hamilton's paper, is to be understood. When Mr. Hamilton says that the unregenerate man "does not spiritually apprehend what he intellectually understands", he appears at first to concede the whole point of debate. The question, however, is as to the use of the word "apprehend". Unless Mr. Hamilton is contradicting himself, he means that the unregenerate man does not appropriate the truth to himself. This interpretation is supported by the distinction which Mr. Hamilton makes on page 6 as to the meaning of ginosko: "that the knowledge mentioned is not purely intellectual knowledge, but that the natural man cannot understand experientially, that is, appropriate and accept the truths of Scripture as applied to his own soul". Thus by "apprehend", Mr. Hamilton must mean "appropriate and accept", rather than to understand intellectually. Moreover, on page 3 of Mr. Hamilton's paper, in explaining what happens when regeneration takes place, he says: "instead of mere intellectual understanding of the meaning of spiritual truths, or perhaps even belief that

they are true, there is joyous appropriation of those truths for one's own self, and active acceptance of all the benefits of the gospel for the salvation of one's own soul."

We agree with Mr. Hamilton that those positive changes which he does ascribe to regeneration actually take place. We hope that this will be clearly understood. We approve of the many statements he makes in his paper concerning the positive changes brought by regeneration -- in the will, in the appropriation and acceptance of the truth, in love and joy and obedience. But we hold that there is also such a radical, creative change in the darkened soul that it receives a new power of sight and that the understanding of spiritual things thereby becomes qualitatively different. We take issue then with Mr. Hamilton's position as he has given it in these four sentences, already quoted: "Both the regenerate and the unregenerate can with the same ease understand the proposition, Christ died for sinners. Regeneration, in spite of the theory of the Complaint, is not a change in the understanding of these words . . . When he (the unregenerate man) is regenerated, his understanding of the proposition may undergo no change at all . . . We insist that an unregenerated man may put exactly the same meaning on the words 'Christ died for sinners', as the regenerated man."

In Mr. Hamilton's paper there are two charges against the complainants. One is that they hold that the fall destroyed man's power to think and reason, and that they thus deny the fact of historical faith. "In this claim that the unregenerated cannot understand Scriptural truth because they are totally depraved, the complainants are really teaching a view akin to the view of Luther that the fall destroyed the image of God in man" (page 2). (Incidentally Luther did not hold that the fall destroyed man's ability to think and reason. He held that the fall destroyed God's image in man but he did not think that man's rationality belonged to that image.) The other charge is that the complainants separate the intellect from the rest of the soul; Mr. Hamilton speaks of "the fact that the complainants are regarding the intellect as almost an independent function of the soul, which must therefore be totally depraved in itself and unable to understand Scriptural truth" (page 2). Inasmuch as Mr. Hamilton cites no proof of these charges their validity might well be questioned by a reader of his paper. In matter of fact the complainants have not held and do not hold the positions ascribed to them by Mr. Hamilton. And yet his paper may perhaps give the impression that his proof for these two charges can be found in a set of documents circulated by the complainants shortly before the last General Assembly; see his mention of these documents in the first three paragraphs at the top of page 1. But we know of nothing in these or any other documents of the complainants to support these charges. We agree with Mr. Hamilton in asserting the unregenerate man's ability to think and reason, in recognizing the fact of historical faith, and in insisting on the unity of the soul as against a faculty psychology. Moreover we feel that another approach to the real point at issue may conveniently be made through an assertion of these matters in which we and Mr. Hamilton agree.

The Difference Between the Regenerate and the Unregenerate in Understanding

As to the ability of unregenerate men to think and to reason, the Bible is clear. "And the scribes and Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?" (Luke 5:21-22). The word reason in this passage means to bring together different reasons, to revolve in one's mind, to deliberate. The Athenians, who spent their time in speculation and "in nothing else but to hear and to tell of some new thing" (Acts 17:21), not only reasoned but reasoned with much logic. Unbelievers often have very great powers of reason and logic. But in the ultimate sense --- and here is the issue, "spiritual truths" and "the proposition 'Christ died for sinners'", in the words of Mr. Hamilton --- the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them. Thus, although unregenerate men can reason, the more precise question concerns their reasoning on spiritual matters; why the gospel is foolishness to them, and in what way their understanding of spiritual matters differs from that of the regenerate. When unregenerate men reason on spiritual matters, they may have some understanding of God's revelation and of the truth of the gospel. The ability to have some understanding has been present since the fall, and this ability is one factor in rendering them inexcusable in God's sight. And if in God's providence an unregenerate man comes into contact with the gospel he may exercise this ability and come to an intellectual grasp of the meaning of the gospel, and even regard it as true. He may go even farther, and receive the word with joy, and continue for a while in a profession and a persuasion of the truth; having not only an understanding of the truth but also an emotional reaction to it. But (Matthew 13:20-21) he has no root in himself; the principle of life has not been implanted in him; and by and by he falls away. It may be impossible to distinguish such a person from a true believer. But the practical impossibility of distinguishing his understanding from that of a true believer is not ground for saying, as Mr. Hamilton does, that his understanding may be "exactly the same".

It is necessary, then, to show that there is a difference, and to suggest wherein the difference lies. Here it is helpful to observe that Paul speaks of the unconverted in Romans 1:21 as knowing God, and in I Cor. 1:21 as not knowing God; Buchanan says of this, "the apostle, in one place, declares, that when 'men knew God, they glorified him not as God;' and, regarding this as a proof that there was some radical defect in their knowledge of him, he speaks of it elsewhere as if it were no knowledge at all; for, says he, 'the world by wisdom knew not God'" (The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit, page 75). Accordingly in one sense the unconverted know God and in another sense they do not know God. On the one hand they can have an intellectual understanding of the truth; but on the other hand that very understanding is so far different from the understanding of the regenerate, that in comparison it is ignorance. On page 4 of his paper Mr. Hamilton has a quotation from Buchanan of which we approve entirely. (In fact we agree with all his quotations but not always with his interpretation of them.) Part of this particular quotation is as follows: "When it is affirmed that a natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, it is not implied that the Bible is unintelligibly written, or that he cannot understand the sense and meaning of Scriptural propositions, so as to be able to give a rational account of them; for he may investigate the literal meaning of Scripture, and, in doing so, may attach a definite idea to

It was "knew" not "knew not" as Hamilton says.

many of its statements --may be able to see their mutual relations -- to reason upon them and even to expound them; and yet in the Scriptural sense, he may be in darkness notwithstanding". No doubt this quotation was meant to show that the natural man has an intellectual understanding of the gospel, and this we do not deny. He has a kind of knowledge; but it is a different kind of knowledge from that of the regenerate man. He cannot have the same knowledge as a regenerate man because of the blinding and hardening effect of sin: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (John 12:39-40). But by regeneration the eyes of the heart are enlightened (Ephesians 1:18); the result is seeing, understanding, conversion and healing.

In this discussion of the understanding of the gospel, it is the content of knowledge which is in view. Here it is very important to observe that much of the content of knowledge, or much of the representation, or grasp, which the human mind possesses, flows from the knowing mind itself. It is the unbeliever's darkened state of mind that determines the grasp that he has of the gospel. It is the new creature's illuminated state of mind that determines his new grasp of the gospel; at every point his grasp is now open to the penetration and permeation of his new insight. Thus, the content of knowledge is influenced by the mind itself, according to the character of the knowing mind concerned. As the mind of the new creature differs from the mind of the old, so the understanding of the one differs from the understanding of the other. This influence of the knowing mind upon its own understanding is explained by Charles Hodge as follows: "We must not suppose, however, that knowledge and learning are synonymous terms, or that all knowledge is derived from without, through the medium of the understanding. Very far from it. A large part of our knowledge is derived from our own consciousness or inward experience. The same external revelation may be presented to two equally intelligent men: if one is made, by the Spirit of God, to feel in accordance with the truth, and the other is destitute of such feelings, the former will possess a knowledge of which the latter has no conception. He will have an insight into the nature of the things revealed, and into their truth and value, which is due entirely to what passes within his own bosom. These men, although they may be equal in learning, will differ greatly in knowledge. We accordingly find that the ignorant, among God's people, have often far more knowledge of religious truth, than many learned men. They have more correct views of its nature; and the words by which it is expressed excite in their minds far more definite conceptions of the real objects of the religious affections." (Charles Hodge, Way of Life, Philadelphia, 1906, p. 280).

Here Hodge signifies feeling (emotion?) with knowledge. We connect know. only and know.

A passage that teaches very plainly not only why there is a difference in the understanding of spiritual things but also in what the difference lies is II Corinthians 4:3-4,6: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them . . . For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". So it is blindness of mind that prevents some from seeing the gospel of Christ; but God by his creative power has illuminated others, with the intended purpose

(Greek, pros) that they might see. And they not only see, but see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The true divine excellence and moral beauty of Jesus Christ cannot be seen by the blind but only by those in whose hearts God hath shined. Here is a distinguishing mark between the regenerate and the unregenerate, in their understanding. It is a common experience in conversion:

Once I was blind, but now I can see:
The light of the world is Jesus.

This new sense of the spiritual excellence of Christ is given as a distinguishing sign of true faith, by Jonathan Edwards: "There is such a thing, if the Scriptures are of any use to teach us anything, as a spiritual, supernatural understanding of divine things, that is peculiar to the saints, and which those who are not saints have nothing of . . . The immediate object of it is the supreme beauty and excellency of the nature of divine things, as they are in themselves. And this is agreeable to the Scripture; the apostle very plainly teaches, that the great thing discovered by spiritual light, and understood by spiritual knowledge, is the glory of divine things, II Corinthians 4:3,4, together with verse 6 . . . There is a distinction to be made between a mere notional understanding, wherein the mind only beholds things in the exercise of a speculative faculty; and the sense of the heart, wherein the mind does not only speculate and behold, but relishes and feels . . . Spiritual understanding primarily consists in this sense, of taste of the moral beauty of divine things; so that no knowledge can be called spiritual, any further than it arises from this, and has this in it. But secondarily it includes all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, which depend upon and flow from such a sense . . . It is only by the discovery of the beauty of the moral perfection of Christ, that the believer is let into the knowledge of the excellency of his person, so as to know anything more of it than the devils do. By this sight of the moral beauty of divine things, is seen the beauty of the way of salvation by Christ; for that consists in the beauty of the moral perfections of God, which wonderfully shines forth in every step of this method of salvation, from beginning to end . . . By this is seen the excellency of the word of God. Take away all the moral beauty and sweetness in the word, and the Bible is left wholly a dead letter, a dry, lifeless, tasteless thing . . . He that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good, sees the greatest and most important thing in the world . . . Unless this is seen, nothing is seen that is worth the seeing; for there is no other true excellency or beauty. Unless this be understood, nothing is understood that is worthy of the exercise of the noble faculty of understanding . . . He therefore in effect knows nothing, that knows not this; his knowledge is but the shadow of knowledge, or the form of knowledge, as the apostle calls it. Well therefore may the Scriptures represent those who are destitute of that spiritual sense by which is perceived the beauty of holiness, as totally blind, deaf, and senseless, yea, dead. And well may regeneration, in which this divine sense is given to the soul by its Creator, be represented as opening the blind eyes, and raising the dead, and bringing a person into a new world. For if what has been said be considered, it will be manifest, that when a person has this sense and knowledge given him, he will view nothing as he did before; though before he knew all things 'after the flesh, yet henceforth he will know them so no more; and he is become a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new;' agreeable to II Cor. 5:16,17" (Jonathan Edwards, Works, 1843, vol. III, A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, pp. 111-114).

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Thus a sense of the spiritual excellence of divine things is a distinguishing mark of spiritual knowledge. This may be supplemented by the analysis of Shedd: "The distinguishing peculiarity of the knowledge produced by regeneration is, that it is experimental. By this is meant, that the cognition is that of immediate consciousness. This is the highest and clearest form of cognition. When, for example, the truth that God is merciful is stated in language, the natural man understands the language grammatically and logically, but nothing more. He has no accompanying consciousness of God's mercy. In common phrase, he does not feel that God is merciful. But a knowledge that is destitute of inward consciousness is an inferior species. It is a blind man's knowledge of color. The blind man understands the phraseology by which the color is described. It conveys logical and self-consistent notions to his understanding; but it is unattended with sensation. Such a knowledge of color is inadequate, in reality is ignorance, compared with that of a man possessed of vision. It is the knowledge of a sensuous object without any sensation. It is quasi-knowledge; such as Christ refers to, when he says of the natural man; 'Seeing he sees not; and hearing he hears not.' Illumination, or instruction by the Holy Spirit, implies then the production of an experimental consciousness of religious truth... Vital and conscious knowledge of religious truth is the effect of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the human understanding" (W. G. T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, vol. II, pages 495-496).

Shedd actually contrasts feel sense in itself

A third way of describing the difference in the understanding between the natural and the spiritual man is given by Thornwell: "The cognitions of a holy and an unholy being are radically different; they look at the same objects, but they see them in a different light. One perceives only the relations to himself; the other perceives the marks and traces of God. One sees only the things; the other sees God in the things. To one the objective reality is all; to the other, the objective reality is only the dress in which Deity makes Himself visible" (James Henley Thornwell, Collected Writings, vol. I, page 321).

Thus the ability to see God in all his works, and to see everything in its relation to God, is another identifying mark of a regenerate man. The unbeliever sees neither God nor the Mediator, Jesus Christ; but of the believer our Lord says, "He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me" (John 12:45).

The distinguishing signs that have been given show something of that difference which exists in the understanding, so that "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (I Corinthians 1:18). Can it nevertheless be said that regeneration may effect no change at all in the understanding of the words "Christ died for sinners"? Let us take the word "sinners": an unregenerate man, although in possession of all the attributes of moral agency and able to do relative good, is morally blind; he does not love the beauty of holiness and he does love sin. His understanding of the word "sinners" is bound to be changed by regeneration when love for sin gives way to love for holiness. Or, take the word "Christ": shall we say that the word "Christ" can be understood correctly without reference to the fact that Christ is holy? And what of true divine holiness is known by the morally blind?

Thornwell's a single word. s-s he s-s.

In support of his position that regeneration does not necessarily change the understanding, Mr. Hamilton says on page 5, "If an unregenerated man cannot intellectually understand what we are talking about when we preach

the gospel to him, why waste time talking to him? If an individual cannot understand the gospel intellectually until he is regenerated, there would be no point to personal work with the unsaved!" We certainly agree with Mr. Hamilton that the preaching of the gospel presupposes a capacity, in those to whom we preach, for an intellectual cognition of the gospel. But we reply that while an unregenerate individual may have an understanding of the gospel, he cannot have such an intellectual understanding as is necessary to salvation, until the Holy Spirit may sovereignly constitute him a new creature, bestowing that spiritual enlightenment that will enable him to have an adequate understanding of the truth. Accordingly the Calvinist evangelist, as by testimony and by reasoning he sows the gospel seed, acknowledges that his testimony and his reasoning will bear fruit only as the Lord of the harvest provides; and that they will surely bear fruit in every one who is mysteriously born of the Spirit of God.

The Unity of the Soul

Mr. Hamilton's view that regeneration may bring "no change at all" in the understanding of the words "Christ died for sinners" is easily refuted by one simple consideration. It is this: since the entire soul is corrupted by sin, and since the entire soul is renewed by regeneration, then regeneration must bring a change in the understanding of the words "Christ died for sinners".

Here we feel that Mr. Hamilton is regrettably inconsistent. On the one hand he says: "It is the soul of man that thinks and reasons. And it is the soul of man that wills to disobey God. It is the whole soul of man as an entity that is totally depraved in the sense of complete and helpless alienation from God". This is sound teaching and ought certainly to mean that depravity and helplessness extend to all the powers and activities of the soul. But on the other hand Mr. Hamilton insists that no change at all in the understanding necessarily follows regeneration and that the understanding may be exactly the same before and after regeneration. Thus, within the soul, Mr. Hamilton makes an exception both to total depravity and to regeneration, and rejects the totality of depravity and of regeneration.

In speaking of total depravity the word "total" should be clearly understood. The evil in the human heart is of unspeakable enormity. Although it may not have developed into all possible hideous forms, it is total in that corruption pervades the whole soul in all its life, powers and activities. Such is of course the recognized meaning of total depravity. It is this very meaning that is endangered by Mr. Hamilton's refusal to acknowledge any necessary change in the understanding due to regeneration. At best Mr. Hamilton, if he perseveres in this refusal, can hold to only partial depravity. He does not think that the intellect is altogether free in all cases from the effects of sin; according to the Answer, "Dr. Clark said specifically that sin often causes logical fallacies" (page 32); and according to Mr. Hamilton's paper, "logical fallacies, wilful ignorance, and wrong premises may and often do" keep man from understanding the truth (page 2). But at the same time Dr. Clark and Mr. Hamilton hold that the intellect may be free enough from sin so that the unregenerate man is able to understand the words "Christ died for sinners" with the same ease as the regenerate man. This is of course the very point at

issue; they teach that the soul does not need regeneration in order to have this understanding and that in this respect the intellect does not need to undergo renewal like the rest of the human personality. It is a doctrine of partial depravity.

In defending the natural man's power to understand spiritual truth Mr. Hamilton emphasizes the depravity of the will as explaining why the natural man does not turn to God: "It is wrong then to say one does not believe in the total depravity of the intellect because one holds that the unregenerate man can understand the meaning of spiritual truth. The soul is totally depraved, and when that soul is thinking, reasoning, or understanding, its depravity consists in thinking rebelliously of God, in disbelieving the propositions about Christianity or in refusing to obey them and God, when one understands and even believes them to be true. The depravity of the intellect (if we insist on speaking of the intellect separately) does not consist in a necessary inability to understand the truth which one refuses to obey". We reply that it is quite true that the unregenerate wilfully and rebelliously refuse to understand the gospel. But it is equally true that they cannot understand the gospel with the same ease as if they were born again, because of the blindness of their minds (II Corinthians 4: 4). Sin has polluted both their will and their intellect; not only are they unable to do, but also they are incapable of thinking, that which is pleasing in God's sight. The Bible has no hesitation in ascribing this incapacity to the intellect: "But their minds (noemata) were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament: which veil is done away in Christ" (II Corinthians 3:14). "But even their mind (nous) and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15). "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds (nous), and destitute of the truth" (I Timothy 6:5).

If the soul is depraved at all it must be depraved in all its powers, for all its powers are interdependent. Mr. Hamilton holds that the will is depraved; then necessarily the intellect must be also. If the will is polluted, and if the soul is a unit with all its powers in interdependence, then the will in its connection with the intellect must render that intellect at least somewhat incapable of grasping the truth. The unregenerate man reacts against the gospel message with his intellect, will and affections, with his entire heart. But Mr. Hamilton treats the intellect as though it could be completely blocked off from contamination, and effectively isolated from the corruption of all the rest of the soul.

Regeneration, too, is total. It alters the whole soul in all its powers. But here again Mr. Hamilton introduces disunity; he looks upon the intellect as if it alone had no share in the new birth, for he says that regeneration may bring no change at all in the understanding of spiritual truth. If we begin with the fact that regeneration changes the entire soul — and thus, inevitably, the intellect — we may go on to see how plainly Mr. Hamilton rejects the necessary conclusion, that the understanding of the regenerate must differ from that of the unregenerate.

It is not acts of understanding as such, in the first instance, that are changed by regeneration; it is the prevailing disposition of the soul that is changed by the divine implantation of the principle of the new life. When the prevailing disposition of the soul has been changed, every act of the soul, by way of intellection, cognition, choice, desire, etc., is altered in the new light

wherewith the soul has been illuminated. There is no good act of the regenerate man which is not a manifestation of the new spiritual life to which his entire soul has been raised. So the act of understanding the words "Christ died for sinners", as an exercise of the renewed soul, is itself a new kind of exercise. "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:16-17).

But Mr. Hamilton considers that the old understanding of the words "Christ died for sinners" may remain unchanged. All that is new is an acceptance and appropriation of the same old intellectual understanding. He declares: "It is claimed (by the complainants) that when I Cor. 2:14 says, 'Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them for they are spiritually judged', it means that he cannot intellectually understand the meaning of the propositions themselves, and that only the regenerated man can adequately understand that meaning. The Greek word which is translated 'know' in this verse is 'ginosko'... Ginosko as used in the New Testament almost always carried with it the idea of acceptance and appropriation for oneself of the fact or truth known. It is a word which almost always does not refer to purely intellectual understanding" (page 6). Here we must raise a most vigorous objection to Mr. Hamilton's handling of the word ginosko. He treats it as if it meant "accept and appropriate" rather than "know". Ginosko does unquestionably involve volitional and emotional elements, and these are properly to be appreciated. But the principal force of ginosko is in the idea of intellectual understanding — not "purely" intellectual understanding, but intellectual understanding — and this idea cannot be suppressed, or eliminated from ginosko, yet this is just what Mr. Hamilton tries to do. He goes on: "Now the use of this word in I Cor. 2:14 indicates that the knowledge mentioned is not purely intellectual knowledge, but that the natural man cannot understand experientially, that is, appropriate and accept the truths of Scripture as applied to his own soul" (page 6).

Mr. Hamilton overlooks the fact that a new intellectual understanding must always be present in order to the new acceptance and appropriation of the truth. By the Spirit's almighty power we have our eyes opened, we obtain a new understanding of spiritual truth; "now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (I Cor. 2:12). And the new understanding of spiritual truth, given by the Spirit, is instrumental in salvation from sin: "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Additional Texts of Scripture

A. Showing that the unregenerate do not understand spiritual matters truly.

Genesis 6:5 — "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the day". "Imagination" in Hebrew (yeser) means a framing in the mind; "thoughts" (machshvoth) means thoughts, devices, inventions. Clearly the intellect is at the very least included in this description. Thus all exercises of the in-

*always evil, but not always
intellectually incorrect.
2+2=4*

tellekt are evil ("every imagination of the thoughts of his heart"); there is no good exercise of the intellect ("only evil"); and the exercise of the intellect is always evil ("all the day"). It should not be concluded from this passage that some thoughts of the wicked man may not be relatively good due to common grace; but, when contrasted with God's holiness, all his thoughts are sinful. And though it is sinful for him to think it is more sinful for him not to think.

Romans 3:11 — "There is none that understandeth". The word "understandeth" (*suniei*) means to set or bring together, to understand. Paul states this as a matter of fact: of those who are under sin (verse 9), none understand.

*Does Paul mean
if are spelled
ign. group?*

Romans 10:2-3 — "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness ..." The word "knowledge" (*epignosis*) means precise and correct knowledge; the word "being ignorant" (*agnoountes*) means to be ignorant, not to know, not to understand.

Ephesians 4:17-18 — "Not as other Gentiles walk, in perverseness of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart". Of this passage Mr. Hamilton gives the following interpretation, which we quote in full: "The Gentiles in question were darkened in their understanding because they were wilfully ignorant due to the hardness of their hearts. They did not want to understand because they wanted to live in wilful sin. The hardness of their heart had led them into lasciviousness and uncleanness with greediness. This led them to close their mind to the truth which would condemn them. The passage therefore does not teach that the Gentiles could not understand, but that they were ignorant because (they) were so hardened of heart that they would not understand. Nor does it mean that they completely misunderstood everything. It teaches that they were ignorant because of wilful sin, so that they committed logical fallacies, not that it was impossible to understand intellectually the meaning of the words of the Bible" (page 6). A pertinent reply is Charles Hodge's interpretation of the same passage in his commentary on Ephesians: "The nous, mind, therefore, in the passage before us, does not refer to the intellect to the exclusion of the feelings, nor to the feelings to the exclusion of the intellect. It includes both; the reason, the understanding, the conscience, the affections are all comprehended by the term" (page 250). "The blind cannot see, therefore they are ignorant of the beauty of creation, therefore they are destitute of delight in its glories. You cannot heal them by light. The eye must first be opened. Then comes vision, and then joy and love. This view of the passage is in accordance with the analogy of Scripture; which constantly represents regeneration as necessary to spiritual discernment, and spiritual discernment as necessary to holy affections. Therefore the apostle says of the heathen that their understanding is darkened, a film is over their eyes, and they are alienated from God because of the ignorance consequent upon their mental blindness" (page 254). In opposition to Mr. Hamilton's view, we hold that the passage teaches that the Gentiles could not understand; and that they could not understand for at least two causes — mental blindness and wilful refusal — these two causes, mutually interactive and mutually conditioning, being present in the soul at the same time.

Sophistry

*But Rom 1:19² says I ungen. know
+ understand. The authors choose
a colloquial wide meanx + try to apply
all its implications / a specific restricted meaning.*

B. Showing that the regenerate have a new understanding of spiritual matters.

Acts 26:18 — "To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness unto light and from the power of Satan unto God..." Calvin says of this verse: "We know that it is the Holy Ghost alone which doth lighten the eyes... Therefore this is the drift of the gospel, that being delivered from blindness of mind, we may be made partakers of the heavenly light; that being delivered from the thralldom of Satan, we may be turned to God..." (Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles, vol. II, pages 380-381).

Colossians 3:10 — "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him". This verse and Ephesians 4:24, which speaks of righteousness and holiness, are standard proof-texts for the doctrine that with the new birth man is renewed after the image of God, with respect to knowledge, righteousness and holiness. The renewal is unto (eis) knowledge; Charles Hodge observes that renovation, according to this verse, is "not in knowledge, much less by knowledge, but unto knowledge, so that he knows. Knowledge is the effect of the renovation spoken of" (Systematic Theology, II, page 99). The word "knowledge" (epignosis), or precise and accurate knowledge, must certainly include intellectual knowledge. Moreover the renewal of the image of God is in man's whole soul, not just in certain powers of the soul. Even that shadowy reflection of God's image which is found in the natural man becomes clearer when the whole man is renewed.

Ephesians 1:17-18 — "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, might grant you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in a knowledge of him; the eyes of your heart being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of your calling..." Mr. Hamilton thinks that the reading "the eyes of the understanding" is to be rejected; "this is a quotation from the King James Version, and an unfortunate one, for the word in the Greek is 'kardias', 'of the heart', a word which is a synonym for 'soul' or 'spirit' in the New Testament, and clearly teaches that it is the whole soul which is affected by regeneration and enlightened in order to receive and appropriate the truth" (page 7). But if the whole soul is enlightened, how can Mr. Hamilton exclude the intellect from that enlightenment, so that regeneration may effect no change at all in the understanding? In reply to this error which Mr. Hamilton now holds, we offer the following interpretation of Ephesians 1:18 — "In this passage in Ephesians, the picturesque phrase 'eyes of your heart' is used to indicate the intellectual perception of the mind, comparable to the physical eyes of the body... When our hearts or minds are enlightened they are enabled to perceive intellectually certain truths which call forth love for God in the individual. This must come from the Holy Spirit" (The Presbyterian Guardian, Sept. 25, 1942). The author of this sound exegesis is none other than Mr. Hamilton himself. It is only since 1942 that Dr. Clark's erroneous view of the intellect has begun to affect our ministers, and in such essential points as the doctrines of sin and of regeneration.

I Corinthians 2:14 — "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, for they are spiritually judged". There can be no doubt that this verse teaches

not only that the natural man is unwilling to receive the things of the Spirit of God, but also that his mind is so corrupted by the fall that he is unable to have an adequate intellectual understanding of them. This is clearly Calvin's view: "While, however, Paul here tacitly imputes it to the pride of the flesh, that mankind dare condemn as foolish what they do not comprehend, he at the same time shows how great is the weakness or rather bluntness of the human understanding, when he declares it to be incapable of spiritual apprehension. For he teaches, that it is not owing simply to the obstinacy of the human will, but to the impotency, also, of the understanding, that man does not attain to the things of the Spirit. Had he said that men are not willing to be wise, that indeed would have been true, but he states farther that they are not able. Hence we infer, that faith is not in one's own power, but is divinely conferred" (pages 116-117). Similarly Hodge's exposition of I Corinthians 2:14: "What, therefore, the Apostle here affirms of the natural or unrenewed man is, that he cannot discern the truth, excellence, or beauty of divine things. He cannot do it. It is not simply that he does not do it; or that he will not do it, but he cannot... The Scriptures do not say of the natural man merely that he will not discern the things of the Spirit, because the difficulty in his case is not the will alone, but in his whole inward state. He cannot know them" (pages 43-44).

this does not say he cannot JS ✓ words

I John 5:20 -- "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know him who is the true one, and we are in him who is the true one..." It is because we have been given an understanding (dianoian) that we may know the true God in Jesus Christ.

The Westminster Confession

The Confession (X, I) says that God is pleased effectually to call his people by his word and Spirit, "enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good..." It should be observed that, following the example of Scripture itself, the Confession does not hesitate to speak specifically both of the mind and of the will. Particularly, however, the words allow of no other interpretation than that the enlightenment of the mind is prerequisite to the understanding of the things of God; without the enlightenment there never could be that understanding: "enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God". This is in full accord with such passages as II Corinthians 4:6 -- "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

Nothing could be clearer than that Mr. Hamilton is opposed to the Confession of Faith at this point when he insists that with the same ease, the unregenerate and the regenerate may have exactly the same understanding of the words "Christ died for sinners". This is a matter of a denial of the plain meaning of the Confession; and, of even greater import, of the plain meaning of Scripture.

When the authors say an US, (it is ✓
US) I repeat you define it.
- 17 - (it else > an US of ✓ meaning ✓ words?)

Additional Testimonies of Reformed Theologians

It will be observed that we quote all of the five authorities who are quoted by Mr. Hamilton. This does not mean that the Hodges, Buchanan, Berkhof and Warfield contradict themselves, or first say one thing and then the opposite. What has happened is that Mr. Hamilton has chosen passages in which these theologians teach that the unregenerate man can have an understanding of the truth, and then Mr. Hamilton has interpreted them to mean that the unregenerate man can have the same understanding of the truth as the regenerate man. And these authorities, as quoted, always make the significant qualification which Mr. Hamilton neglects: Charles Hodge, for example, says that the natural man "may have an intellectual knowledge"; Berkhof says he "possesses a certain power to know the truth"; and Buchanan says he may have "some notion" of the meaning of the Word. In the first part of the quotation from Warfield, there is an assertion of the necessity of human logic in ascertaining and formulating the doctrines of the faith; but Warfield is unmistakably referring to the use of logic on the part of believers, as they study the meaning of Scripture. In the rest of the quotation Warfield says that "the amount of knowledge" to which the unregenerate may attain is "enough to render them inexcusable", and Warfield clearly distinguishes between "a knowledge" of natural men and "such a knowledge" as spiritual men have; but Mr. Hamilton nevertheless interprets the quotation from Warfield as teaching "that ordinary human logic, even apart from regeneration, can be trusted to ascertain the meaning of the words of Scripture".

Calvin, on Ephesians 4:17-18 — "...With respect to the kingdom of God, and all that relates to the spiritual life, the light of human reason differs little from darkness; for, before it has pointed out the road, it is extinguished; and its power of perception is little else then blindness, for ere it has reached the fruit, it is gone. The true principles held by the human mind resemble sparks; but these are choked by the depravity of our nature, before they have been applied to their proper use. All men know, for instance, that there is a God, and that it is our duty to worship him; but such is the power of sin and ignorance, that from this confused knowledge, we pass all at once to an idol, and worship it in the place of God... We ought to attend to the reason which is here assigned; for, as the knowledge of God is the true life of the soul, so, on the contrary, ignorance is the death of it. And lest we should adopt the opinion of philosophers, that ignorance, which leads us into mistakes, is only an incidental evil, Paul shows that it has its root in the blindness of their heart, by which he intimates that it dwells in their very nature. The first blindness, therefore, which covers the minds of men, is the punishment of original sin; because Adam, after his revolt, was deprived of the true light of God, in the absence of which there is nothing but fearful darkness" (Calvin, Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, pp. 290, 292).

*Is darkness
synonym
with
ignorance
This is applicable
it is blindness
men know
do
worship*

Calvin, on Ephesians 1:18 — "Till the Lord opens them, the eyes of our heart are blind. Till the Spirit has become our instructor, all that we know is folly and ignorance" (Calvin, Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, p. 212).

Owen — "Yet this false notion of God, even when his nature and will are objectively revealed in the word, this darkness doth and will maintain in the

expounding the writings of Moses, they did not really know God, nor understand the writings of Moses" (pp. 82f.).

Shedd -- "...The word and truth of God is a means of conversion, because regeneration has preceded, and has imparted spiritual life to the soul. There is now a spiritual vitality that can respond to the truth. The understanding having been enlightened by regeneration, when the particular truth that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin is presented, it is apprehended. This truth is now spiritually understood and is no longer "foolishness" to the mind... The unenlightened understanding is unable to apprehend, and the unregenerate will is unable to believe. Vital force is lacking in these two principal faculties. What is needed at this point is, life and force itself. Consequently, the Author of spiritual life himself must operate directly, without the use of means or instruments, and outright give spiritual life and power from the dead: that is, ex nihilo. The new life is not implanted because man perceives the truth, but he perceives the truth because the new life is implanted." (W. G. T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, Vol. II, pp. 507-509).

Charles Hodge -- "His (the natural man's) understanding is darkness, so that he does not know or receive the things of God. He is not susceptible of impression from the realities of the spiritual world" (Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Volume II, p. 244).

Charles Hodge -- "Knowledge is said to be the effect of regeneration. Men are renewed so as to know. They are brought to the knowledge of the truth; and they are sanctified by the truth. From all these considerations it is evident that the whole man is the subject of original sin; that our cognitive, as well as our emotional nature is involved in the depravity consequent on our apostasy from God; that in knowing as well as in loving or in willing, we are under the influence and dominion of sin" (Hodge, Volume II, p. 256).

Charles Hodge -- "The inability of sinners...is not mere disinclination or aversion to what is good. This disinclination exists, but it is not the ultimate fact ... According to the Scriptures and to the standards of doctrine above quoted, it consists in the want of power rightly to discern spiritual things, and the consequent want of all right affections toward them. And this want of power of spiritual discernment arises from the corruption of our whole nature, by which the reason or understanding is blinded, and the taste and feelings are perverted... We must know God in order to love Him. This is distinctly asserted by the Apostle in I Cor. II:14. He there says, (1) That the natural or unrenewed man does not receive the things of the Spirit. (2) The reason why he does not receive them is declared to be that they are foolishness unto him, or that he cannot know them. (3) And the reason why he cannot know them is that they are spiritually discerned. It is ignorance, the want of discernment of the beauty, excellence, and suitableness of the things of the Spirit (i.e., of the truths which the Spirit has revealed), that is the reason or cause of unbelief... Those who perish are lost because the god of this world has blinded their eyes so that they fail to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ... It is therefore the clear doctrine of the Bible that the inability of men does not consist in mere disinclination or opposition of feeling to the things of God, but that this disinclination or alienation, as the Apostle calls it, arises from the blindness of their minds" (Hodge, Volume II, pp. 261ff.). Compare also

Can you work
a man may
be blind
& think

III, p. 34, and pp. 15f.

A. A. Hodge — "The Scriptures teach ... that the understanding of the 'natural man' is depraved as well as his affections... that regeneration involves illumination as well as renewal of the heart... The first effect of regeneration, or a radical change of moral disposition, in the order of nature, therefore, is to open the eyes of our understandings to the excellency of divine truth, and the second effect is the going forth of the renewed affections toward that excellency so perceived" (A. A. Hodge, Outlines of Theology, new ed., 1896, pages 328 and 462).

Berkhof — "General revelation rests on the basis of creation, is addressed to all intelligent creatures as such, and is therefore accessible to all men, though as a result of sin they are no more able to read and interpret it aright. Special revelation, on the other hand, rests on the basis of re-creation, is addressed to men as sinners with a view to their redemption, and can be properly understood only by the spiritual man... The Word of God presupposes the darkness and error of the natural man, and would therefore contradict itself, if it submitted itself to the judgment of that man" (L. Berkhof, Reformed Dogmatics, Introduction, pages 133-134 and 183).

Warfield — In setting forth Calvin's doctrine of "the noetic effects" of sin and regeneration, Warfield says: "The function of Scripture... is to serve as spiritual spectacles to enable those of dulled spiritual sight to see God... The question forcibly presents itself, however, whether 'spectacles' will serve the purpose here. Has not Calvin painted the sin-bred blindness of man too blackly to encourage us to think it can be corrected by such an aid to any remainders of natural vision which may be accredited to them? The answer must be in the affirmative... Special revelation, or Scripture as its documented form, provides in point of fact, in the view of Calvin, only the objective side of the cure he finds has been provided by God. The subjective side is provided by the testimonium Spiritus Sancti. The spectacles are provided by the Scriptures: the eyes are opened that they may see even through these spectacles, only by the witness of the Spirit in the heart... In the light of the splendid revelation of Himself which God has displayed in the theatre of nature, man with his native endowment of instinctive knowledge of God would have bloomed out into a full and sound knowledge of Him. But with sinful man, the matter is wholly different. He needs more light and he needs something more than light — he needs the power of sight" (B. B. Warfield, Calvin and Calvinism, pages 68-70).

Machen — "The blinding effects of sin are removed by the Spirit of God; and the Spirit chooses to do that only for those whom He brings by the new birth into the Kingdom of God. Regeneration, or the new birth, therefore, does not stand in opposition to a truly scientific attitude toward the evidence, but on the contrary it is necessary in order that that truly scientific attitude may be attained; it is not a substitute for the intellect, but on the contrary by it the intellect is made to be a trustworthy instrument for apprehending truth" (J. Gresham Machen, What Is Faith? p. 135).

*Doesn't mean
can't
mean
words*

Arthur Kuschke

Eugene Bradford