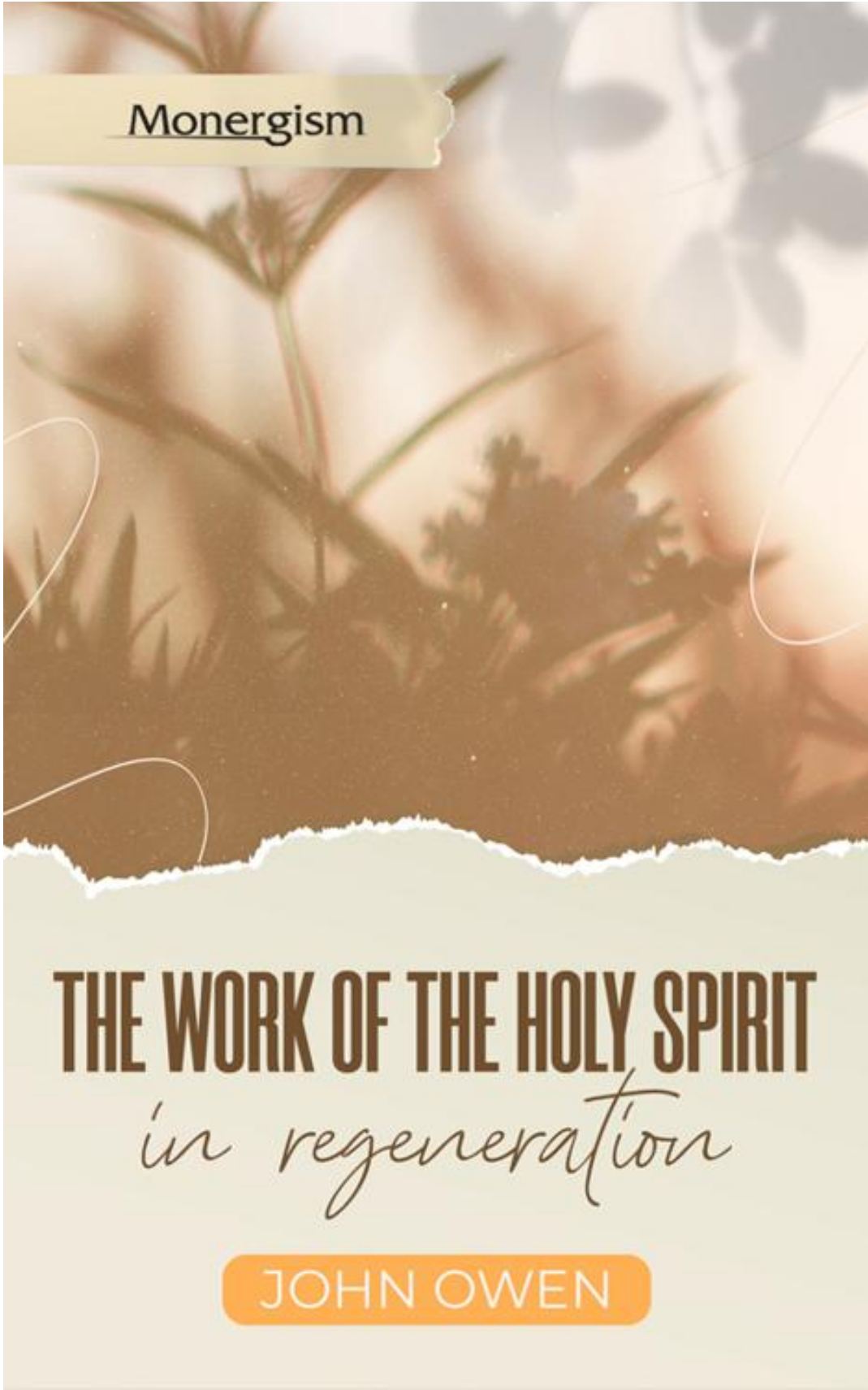


Monergism

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
in regeneration

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The Work of the Holy Spirit in Regeneration

by John Owen

FROM BOOK III OF OWEN'S WORKS

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CHAPTER I:

WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW CREATION BY REGENERATION

The new creation completed—Regeneration the especial work of the Holy Spirit—Wrought under the Old Testament, but clearly revealed in the New; and is of the same kind in all that are regenerate, the causes and way of it being the same in all—It consisteth not in baptism alone, nor in a moral reformation of life; but a new creature is formed in it, whose nature is declared, and farther explained—Denial of the original depravation of nature the cause of many noxious opinions—Regeneration consisteth not in enthusiastic raptures; their nature and danger—The whole doctrine necessary, despised, corrupted, vindicated.

WE have formerly declared the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing and forming the natural body of Christ. This was the beginning of the new creation, the foundation of the gospel state and church. But this was not the whole of the work he had to do. As he had provided and prepared the natural body of Christ, so he was to prepare his mystical body also. And hereby the work of the new creation was to be completed and perfected. And as it was with respect unto him and his work in the old creation, so was it also in the new. All things in their first production had darkness and death upon them; for "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep," Gen. 1:2. Neither was there any thing that had either life in it, or principle of life, or any disposition thereunto. In this condition he moved on the prepared matter, preserving and cherishing of it, and communicating unto all things a principle of life, whereby they were animated, as we have declared. It was no otherwise in the new creation. There was a spiritual darkness and death came by sin on all mankind; neither was there in any man living the least principle of spiritual life, or any disposition thereunto. In this state of things, the Holy Spirit undertaketh to create a new world, new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness should dwell. And this, in the first place, was by his effectual communication of a new principle of

spiritual life unto the souls of God's elect, who were the matter designed of God for this work to be wrought upon. This he doth in their regeneration, as we shall now manifest.

First, Regeneration in Scripture is everywhere assigned to be the proper and peculiar work of the Holy Spirit: John 3:3–6, "Jesus answered and said unto Nicodemus, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It was an ancient knowing teacher of the church of the Jews, a "master in Israel," whom our blessed Saviour here discourseth withal and instructs; for on the consideration of his miracles he concluded that "God was with him," and came to inquire of him about the kingdom of God. Our Saviour knowing how all our faith and obedience to God, and all our acceptance with him, depend on our regeneration, or being born again, acquaints him with the necessity of it; wherewith he is at first surprised. Wherefore he proceeds to instruct him in the nature of the work whose necessity he had declared; and this he describes both by the cause and the effect of it. For the cause of it, he tells him it is wrought by "water and the Spirit;"—by the Spirit, as the principal efficient cause; and by water, as the pledge, sign, and token of it, in the initial seal of the covenant, the doctrine whereof was then preached amongst them by John the Baptist: or, the same thing is intended in a redoubled expression, the Spirit being signified by the water also, under which notion he is often promised.

Hereof, then, or of this work, the Holy Spirit is the principal efficient cause; whence he in whom it is wrought is said to be "born of the Spirit:" Verse 8, "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." And this is the same with what is delivered, chap. 1:13, "Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The natural and carnal means of blood, flesh, and the will of man, are rejected wholly in this matter, and the whole efficiency of the new birth is ascribed unto God alone. His work answers whatever contribution there is unto natural generation from the will and nature of man; for these things are here compared, and from its analogy unto natural generation is this work of the Spirit called "regeneration." So in this place is the allusion and opposition between these things expressed by our Saviour: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," chap. 3:6. And herein also we have a farther description of this work of the Holy Spirit by its effects, or the product of it; it is "spirit,"—a new spiritual being, creature, nature, life, as shall be declared. And because there is in it a communication of a new spiritual life, it is called a "vivification" or "quickenings," with respect unto the state wherein all men are before this work is wrought in them and on them, Eph. 2:1, 5; which is the work of the Spirit alone, for "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing," John 6:63. See Rom. 8:9, 10; Titus 3:4–6, where the same truth is declared and asserted: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

What we have frequently mentioned occurreth here expressly,—namely, the whole blessed Trinity, and each person therein, acting distinctly in the work of our salvation. The spring or fountain of the whole lieth in the kindness and love of God, even the Father. Thereunto it is everywhere ascribed in the Scripture. See John 3:16; Eph. 1:3–6. Whatever is done in the accomplishment of this work, it is so in the pursuit of his will, purpose, and counsel, and is an effect of his love and grace. The procuring cause of the application of the love and kindness of God unto us is Jesus Christ our Saviour, in the whole work of his mediation, verse 6. And the immediate efficient cause in the communication of the love and kindness of the Father, through the mediation of the Son, unto us, is the Holy Spirit. And

this he doth in the renovation of our natures, by the washing of regeneration, wherein we are purged from our sins, and sanctified unto God.

More testimonies unto this purpose need not be insisted on. This truth, of the Holy Spirit being the author of our regeneration, which the ancients esteemed a cogent argument to prove his deity, even from the greatness and dignity of the work, is, in words at least, so far as I know, granted by all who pretend to sobriety in Christianity. That by some others it hath been derided and exploded is the occasion of this vindication of it. It must not be expected that I should here handle the whole doctrine of regeneration practically, as it may be educed by inferences from the Scripture, according to the analogy of faith and the experiences of them that believe; it hath been done already by others. My present aim is only to confirm the fundamental principles of truth concerning those operations of the Holy Spirit, which at this day are opposed with violence and virulence. And what I shall offer on the present subject may be reduced unto the ensuing heads:—

First, Although the work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit was wrought under the Old Testament, even from the foundation of the world, and the doctrine of it was recorded in the Scriptures, yet the revelation of it was but obscure in comparison, of that light and evidence which it is brought forth into by the gospel. This is evident from the discourse which our blessed Saviour had with Nicodemus on this subject; for when he acquainted him clearly with the doctrine of it, he was surprised, and fell into that inquiry, which argued some amazement, "How can these things be?" But yet the reply of our Saviour manifests that he might have attained a better acquaintance with it out of the Scripture than he had done: "Art thou," saith he, "a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"—"Dost thou take upon thee to teach others what is their state and condition, and what is their duty towards God, and art ignorant thyself of so great and fundamental a doctrine, which thou mightst have learned from the Scripture?" For if he might not so have done, there would have been

no just cause of the reproof given him by our Saviour; for it was neither crime nor negligence in him to be ignorant of what God had not revealed. This doctrine, therefore,—namely, that every one who will enter into the kingdom of God must be born again of the Holy Spirit,—was contained in the writings of the Old Testament. It was so in the promises, that God would circumcise the hearts of his people,—that he would take away their heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh, with his law written in it, and other ways, as shall be afterward proved.

But yet we see that it was so obscurely declared that the principal masters and teachers of the people knew little or nothing of it. Some, indeed, would have this regeneration, if they knew what they would have, or as to what may be gathered of their minds out of their "great swelling words of vanity," to be nothing but reformation of life, according to the rules of the Scripture. But Nicodemus knew the necessity of reformation of life well enough, if he had ever read either Moses or the Prophets; and to suppose that our Lord Jesus Christ proposed unto him the thing which he knew perfectly well, only under a new name or notion, which he had never heard of before, so to take an advantage of charging him of being ignorant of what indeed he full well knew and understood, is a blasphemous imagination. How they can free themselves from the guilt hereof who look on "regeneration" as no more but a metaphorical expression of amendment of life, I know not. And if it be so, if there be no more in it but, as they love to speak, becoming a new moral man,—a thing which all the world, Jews and Gentiles, understood,—our Lord Jesus was so far from bringing it forth into more light and giving it more perspicuity, by what he teacheth concerning regeneration, the nature, manner, causes, and effects of it, that he cast it thereby into more darkness and obscurity than ever it was delivered in, either by Jewish masters or Gentile philosophy; for although the gospel do really teach all duties of morality with more exactness and clearness, and press unto the observance of them on motives incomparably more cogent, than any thing that otherwise ever befell the mind of man to think or apprehend, yet if it must be supposed to intend

nothing else in its doctrine of the new birth or regeneration but those moral duties and their observance, it is dark and unintelligible. I say, if there be not a secret, mysterious work of the Spirit of God in and upon the souls of men intended in the writings of the New Testament, but only a reformation of life, and the improvement of men's natural abilities in the exercise of moral virtue, through the application of outward means unto their minds and understandings, conducting and persuading thereunto, they must be granted to be obscure beyond those of any other writers whatsoever, as some have not feared already to publish unto the world concerning the epistles of Paul. But so long as we can obtain an acknowledgment from men that they are true, and in any sense the word of God, we doubt not but to evince that the things intended in them are clearly and properly expressed, so as they ought to be, and so as they are capable to be expressed; the difficulties which seem to be in them arising from the mysterious nature of the things themselves contained in them, and the weakness of our minds in apprehending such things, and not from any obscurity or intricacy in the declaration of them. And herein, indeed, consists the main contest whereinto things with the most are reduced. Some judge that all things are so expressed in the Scripture, with a condescension unto our capacity, as that there is still to be conceived an inexpressible grandeur in many of them, beyond our comprehension; others judge, on the other hand, that under a grandeur of words and hyperbolical expressions, things of a meaner and a lower sense are intended and to be understood. Some judge the things of the gospel to be deep and mysterious, the words and expressions of it to be plain and proper; others think the words and expressions of it to be mystical and figurative, but the things intended to be ordinary and obvious to the natural reason of every man. But to return.

Both regeneration and the doctrine of it were under the Old Testament. All the elect of God, in their several generations, were regenerate by the Spirit of God. But in that ampliation and enlargement of truth and grace under the gospel which came by Jesus Christ, who brought life and immortality to light, as more

persons than of old were to be made partakers of the mercy of it, so the nature of the work itself is for more clearly, evidently, and distinctly revealed and declared. And because this is the principal and internal remedy of that disease which the Lord Christ came to cure and take away, one of the first things that he preached was the doctrine of it. All things of this nature before, even "from the beginning of the world, lay hid in God," Eph. 3:9. Some intimations were given of them, in "parables" and "dark sayings," הַיְדוּת מִן־קֶדֶם, Ps. 78:2, in types, shadows, and ceremonies, so as the nature of the grace in them was not clearly to be discerned. But now, when the great Physician of our souls came, who was to heal the wound of our natures, whence we "were dead in trespasses and sins," he lays naked the disease itself, declares the greatness of it, the ruin we were under from it; that we might know and be thankful for its reparation. Hence, no doctrine is more fully and plainly declared in the gospel than this of our regeneration by the effectual and ineffable operation of the Holy Spirit; and it is a consequent and fruit of the depravation of our nature, that, against the full light and evidence of truth, now clearly manifested, this great and holy work is opposed and despised.

Few, indeed, have yet the confidence in plain and intelligible words to deny it absolutely; but many tread in the steps of him who first in the church of God undertook to undermine it. This was Pelagius, whose principal artifice, which he used in the introduction of his heresy, was in the clouding of his intentions with general and ambiguous expressions, as some would by making use of his very words and phrases. Hence, for a long time, when he was justly charged with his sacrilegious errors, he made no defence of them, but reviled his adversaries as corrupting his mind, and not understanding his expressions. And by this means, as he got himself acquitted in the judgment of some, less experienced in the sleights and cunning craftiness of them who live in wait to deceive, and juridically freed in an assembly of bishops; so in all probability he had suddenly infected the whole church with the poison of those opinions, which the proud and corrupted nature of man is so apt to receive and embrace, if God had not stirred up some few holy and

learned persons, Austin especially, to discover his frauds, to refute his calumnies, and to confute his sophisms; which they did with indefatigable industry and good success. But yet these tares, being once sown by the envious one, found such a suitable and fruitful soil in the darkened minds and proud hearts of men, that from that day to this they could never be fully extirpated; but the same bitter root hath still sprung up, unto the defiling of many, though various new colours have been put upon its leaves and fruit. And although those who at present amongst us have undertaken the same cause with Pelagius do not equal him either in learning or diligence, or an appearance of piety and devotion, yet do they exactly imitate him in declaring their minds in cloudy, ambiguous expressions, capable of various constructions until they are fully examined, and thereon reproaching (as he did) those that oppose them as not aright representing their sentiments, when they judge it their advantage so to do; as the scurrilous, clamorous writings of S. P.2 do sufficiently manifest.

Secondly, Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is the same work, for the kind of it, and wrought by the same power of the Spirit in all that are regenerate, or ever were, or shall be so, from the beginning of the world unto the end thereof. Great variety there is in the application of the outward means which the Holy Spirit is pleased to use and make effectual towards the accomplishment of this great work; nor can the ways and manner hereof be reduced unto any certain order, for the Spirit worketh how and when he pleaseth, following the sole rule of his own will and wisdom. Mostly, God makes use of the preaching of the word; thence called "the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls," James 1:21; and the "incorruptible seed," by which we are "born again," 1 Pet. 1:23. Sometimes it is wrought without it; as in all those who are regenerate before they come to the use of reason, or in their infancy. Sometimes men are called, and so regenerate, in an extraordinary manner; as was Paul. But mostly they are so in and by the use of ordinary means, instituted, blessed, and sanctified of God to that end and purpose. And great variety there is, also, in the perception and understanding of the work itself in them

in whom it is wrought, for in itself it is secret and hidden, and is no other ways discoverable but in its causes and effects; for as "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit," John 3:8.

In the minds and consciences of some, this is made known by infallible signs and tokens. Paul knew that Christ was formed and revealed in himself, Gal. 1:15, 16. So he declared that whoever is in Christ Jesus "is a new creature," 2 Cor. 5:17,—that is, is born again,—whether they know themselves so to be or no. And many are in the dark as to their own condition in this matter all their days; for they "fear the LORD, and obey the voice of his servant" (Christ Jesus), and yet "walk in darkness, and have no light," Isa. 50:10. They are "children of light," Luke 16:8, John 12:36, Eph. 5:8, 1 Thess. 5:5; and yet "walk in darkness, and have no light:" which expressions have been well used and improved by some, and by others of late derided and blasphemed.

And there is great variety in the carrying on of this work towards perfection,—in the growth of the new creature, or the increase of grace implanted in our natures by it: for some, through the supplies of the Spirit, make a great and speedy progress towards perfection, others thrive slowly and bring forth little fruit; the causes and occasions whereof are not here to be enumerated. But notwithstanding all differences in previous dispositions, in the application of outward means, in the manner of it, ordinary or extraordinary, in the consequents of much or less fruit, the work itself in its own nature is of the same kind, one and the same. The elect of God were not regenerate one way, by one kind of operation of the Holy Spirit, under the Old Testament, and those under the New Testament [by] another. They who were miraculously converted, as Paul, or who upon their conversion had miraculous gifts bestowed on them, as had multitudes of the primitive Christians, were no otherwise regenerate, nor by any other internal efficiency of the Holy Spirit, than every one is at this day who is really made partaker of

this grace and privilege. Neither were those miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit which were visible unto others any part of the work of regeneration, nor did they belong necessarily unto it; for many were the subjects of them, and received miraculous gifts by them, who were never regenerate, and many were regenerate who were never partakers of them. And it is a fruit of the highest ignorance and unacquaintedness imaginable with these things, to affirm that in the work of regeneration the Holy Spirit wrought of old miraculously, in and by outwardly visible operations, but now only in a human and rational way, leading our understanding by the rules of reason, unless the mere external mode and sign of his operation be intended: for all ever were, and ever shall be, regenerate by the same kind of operation, and the same effect of the Holy Spirit on the faculties of their souls; which will be farther manifest if we consider,—

1. That the condition of all men, as unregenerate, is absolutely the same. One is not by nature more unregenerate than another. All men since the fall, and the corruption of our nature by sin, are in the same state and condition towards God. They are all alike alienated from him, and all alike under his curse, Ps. 51:5; John 3:5, 36; Rom. 3:19, 5:15–18; Eph. 2:3; Tit. 3:3, 4. There are degrees of wickedness in them that are unregenerate, but there is no difference as to state and condition between them,—all are unregenerate alike; as amongst those who are regenerate there are different degrees of holiness and righteousness, one, it may be, far exceeding another, yet there is between them no difference of state and condition,—they are all equally regenerate. Yea, some may be in a greater forwardness and preparation for the work itself, and thereby in a greater nearness to the state of it than others; but the state itself is incapable of such degrees. Now, it must be the same work, for the kind and nature of it, which relieves and translates men out of the same state and condition. That which gives the formal reason of the change of their state, of their translation from death to life, is and must be the same in all. If you can fix on any man, from the foundation of the world, who was not equally born in sin, and by nature dead in trespasses and sins, with all other men, the man Christ Jesus only excepted, I

would grant that he might have another kind of regeneration than others have, but that I know he would stand in need of none at all.

2. The state whereinto men are brought by regeneration is the same. Nor is it, in its essence or nature, capable of degrees, so that one should be more regenerate than another. Every one that is born of God is equally so, though one may be more beautiful than another, as having the image of his heavenly Father more evidently impressed on him, though not more truly. Men may be more or less holy, more or less sanctified, but they cannot be more or less regenerate. All children that are born into the world are equally born, though some quickly outstrip others in the perfections and accomplishments of nature; and all born of God are equally so, though some speedily outgo others in the accomplishments and perfections of grace. There was, then, never but one kind of regeneration in this world, the essential form of it being specifically the same in all.

3. That the efficient cause of this work, the grace and power whereby it is wrought, with the internal manner of the communication of that grace, are the same, shall be afterward declared. To this standard, then, all must come. Men may bear themselves high, and despise this whole work of the Spirit of God, or set up an imagination of their own in the room thereof; but whether they will or no, they must be tried by it, and no less depends on their interest in it than their admission into the kingdom of God. And let them pretend what they please, the true reason why any despise the new birth is, because they hate a new life. He that cannot endure to live to God will as little endure to hear of being born of God. But we shall by the Scripture inquire what we are taught concerning it, and declare both what it is not, of things which falsely pretend thereunto, and then what it is indeed.

First, Regeneration doth not consist in a participation of the ordinance of baptism and a profession of the doctrine of repentance. This is all that some will allow unto it, to the utter rejection and overthrow of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: for the dispute in

this matter is not, whether the ordinances of the gospel, as baptism, do really communicate internal grace unto them that are, as to the outward manner of their administration, duly made partakers of them, whether *ex opere operato*, as the Papists speak, or as a federal means of the conveyance and communication of that grace which they betoken and are the pledges of; but, whether the outward susception of the ordinance, joined with a profession of repentance in them that are adult, be not the whole of what is called regeneration. The vanity of this presumptuous folly, destructive of all the grace of the gospel, invented to countenance men in their sins, and to hide from them the necessity of being born again, and therein of turning unto God, will be laid open in our declaration of the nature of the work itself. For the present, the ensuing reasons will serve to remove it out of our way:—

1. Regeneration doth not consist in these things, which are only outward signs and tokens of it, or at most instituted means of effecting it; for the nature of things is different and distinct from the means and evidences or pledges of them: but such only is baptism, with the profession of the doctrine of it, as is acknowledged by all who have treated of the nature of that sacrament. 2. The apostle really states this case, 1 Pet. 3:21, "In answer whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The outward administration of this ordinance, considered materially, reacheth no farther but to the washing away of "the filth of the flesh;" but more is signified thereby. There is denoted in it the restipulation of a "good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" from the dead, or a "conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God," Heb. 9:14, and quickened by virtue of his resurrection unto holy obedience. See Rom. 6:3–7. 3. The apostle Paul doth plainly distinguish between the outward ordinances, with what belongs unto a due participation of them, and the work of regeneration itself: Gal. 6:15, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;"—for as by "circumcision" the

whole system of Mosaical ordinances is intended, so the state of "uncircumcision," as then it was in the professing Gentiles, supposed a participation of all the ordinances of the gospel; but from them all he distinguisheth the new creation, as that which they may be without, and which being so, they are not available in Christ Jesus. 4. If this were so, then all that are duly baptized, and do thereon make profession of the doctrine of it,—that is, of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,—must of necessity be regenerate. But this we know to be otherwise. For instance, Simon the magician was rightly and duly baptized, for he was so by Philip the evangelist; which he could not be without a profession of faith and repentance. Accordingly, it is said that he "believed," Acts 8:13,—that is, made a profession of his faith in the gospel. Yet he was not regenerate; for at the same time he had "neither part nor lot in that matter," his "heart not being right in the sight of God," but was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," verses 21, 23; which is not the description of a person newly regenerate and born again. Hence the cabalistical Jews, who grope in darkness after the old notions of truth that were among their forefathers, do say, that at the same instant wherein a man is made "a proselyte of righteousness," there comes a new soul into him from heaven, his old pagan soul vanishing or being taken away. The introduction of a new spiritual principle to be that unto the soul which the soul is unto the body naturally is that which they understand; or they choose thus to express the reiterated promise of taking away the "heart of stone," and giving a "heart of flesh" in the place of it.

Secondly, Regeneration doth not consist in a moral reformation of life and conversation. Let us suppose such a reformation, to be extensive unto all known instances. Suppose a man be changed from sensuality unto temperance, from rapine to righteousness, from pride and the dominion of irregular passions unto humility and moderation, with all instances of the like nature which we can imagine, or are prescribed in the rules of the strictest moralists; suppose this change be laboured, exact, and accurate, and so of great use in the world; suppose, also, that a man hath been brought and

persuaded unto it through the preaching of the gospel, so "escaping the pollutions that are in the world through lust, even by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," or the directions of his doctrine delivered in the gospel;—yet I say, all this, and all this added unto baptism, accompanied with a profession of faith and repentance, is not regeneration, nor do they comprise it in them. And I have extended this assertion beyond what some among us, so far as I can see, do so much as pretend unto in their confused notions and sophistical expressions about morality, when they make it the same with grace. But whatever there may be of actual righteousness in these things, they do not express an inherent, habitual righteousness; which whosoever denies overthrows the gospel, and all the whole work of the Spirit of God, and of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But we must stay a while. This assertion of ours is by some not only denied but derided. Neither is that all; but whoever maintains it is exposed as an enemy to morality, righteousness, and reformation of life. All virtue, they say, is hereby excluded, to introduce I know not what imaginary godliness. But whether we oppose or exclude moral virtue or no, by the doctrine of regeneration, or any other, God and Christ will in due time judge and declare. Yea, were the confession of the truth consistent with their interests, the decision of this doubt might be referred unto their own consciences. But being not free to commit any thing to that tribunal, unless we had better security of its freedom from corrupt principles and prejudices than we have, we shall at present leave all the world to judge of our doctrine, with respect unto virtue and morality, by the fruits of it, compared with their by whom it is denied. In the meantime, we affirm that we design nothing in virtue and morality but to improve them, by fixing them on a proper foundation, or ingrafting them into that stock whereon alone they will thrive and grow, to the glory of God and the good of the souls of men. Neither shall we be moved in this design by the clamorous or calumnious outcries of ignorant or profligate persons. And for the assertion laid down, I desire that those who despise and reproach it would attempt an answer unto the ensuing

arguments whereby it is confirmed, with these others which shall be insisted on in our description of the nature of the work of regeneration itself, and that upon such grounds and principles as are not destructive of Christian religion nor introductive of atheism, before they are too confident of their success.

If there be in and required unto regeneration, the infusion of a new, real, spiritual principle into the soul and its faculties, of spiritual life, light, holiness, and righteousness, disposed unto and suited for the destruction or expulsion of a contrary, inbred, habitual principle of sin and enmity against God, enabling unto all acts of holy obedience, and so in order of nature antecedent unto them, then it doth not consist in a mere reformation of life and moral virtue, be they never so exact or accurate. Three things are to be observed for the clearing of this assertion, before we come to the proof and confirmation of it; as,—1. That this reformation of life, which we say is not regeneration, or that regeneration doth not consist therein, is a necessary duty, indispensably required of all men; for we shall take it here for the whole course of actual obedience unto God, and that according to the gospel. Those, indeed, by whom it is urged and pressed in the room of regeneration, or as that wherein regeneration doth consist, do give such an account and description of it as that it is, or at least may be, foreign unto true gospel-obedience, and so not contain in it one acceptable duty unto God, as shall afterward be declared; but here I shall take it, in our present inquiry, for that whole course of duties which, in obedience towards God, are prescribed unto us. 2. That the principle before described, wherein regeneration as passively considered, or as wrought in us, consists, doth always certainly and infallibly produce the reformation of life intended. In some it doth it more completely, in others more imperfectly, in all sincerely; for the same grace in nature and kind is communicated unto several persons in various degrees, and is by them used and improved with more or less care and diligence. In those, therefore, that are adult, these things are inseparable. Therefore, 3. The difference in this matter cometh unto this head: We say and believe that regeneration consists in *spirituali renovatione naturæ*,—"in a spiritual renovation of our

nature;" our modern Socinians, that it doth so in morali reformatione vitæ,—*"in a moral reformation of life."* Now, as we grant that this spiritual renovation of nature will infallibly produce a moral reformation of life; so if they will grant that this moral reformation of life doth proceed from a spiritual renovation of our nature, this difference will be at an end. And this is that which the ancients intend by first receiving the Holy Ghost, and then all graces with him. However, if they only design to speak ambiguously, improperly, and unscripturally, confounding effects and their causes, habits and actions, faculties or powers and occasional acts, infused principles and acquired habits, spiritual and moral, grace and nature, that they may take an opportunity to rail at others for want of better advantage, I shall not contend with them; for allow a new spiritual principle, an infused habit of grace, or gracious abilities, to be required in and unto regeneration, or to be the product or the work of the Spirit therein, that which is *"born of the Spirit being spirit,"* and this part of the nature of this work is sufficiently cleared. Now, this the Scripture abundantly testifieth unto.

2 Cor. 5:17, *"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature."* This new creature is that which is intended, that which was before described, which being born of the Spirit is spirit. This is produced in the souls of men by a creating act of the power of God, or it is not a creature. And it is superinduced into the essential faculties of our souls, or it is not a new creature; for whatever is in the soul of power, disposition, ability, or inclination unto God, or for any moral actions, by nature, it belongs unto the old creation, it is no new creature. And it must be somewhat that hath a being and subsistence of its own in the soul, or it can be neither new nor a creature. And by our apostle it is opposed to all outward privileges, Gal. 5:6, 6:15. That the production of it also is by a creating act of almighty power the Scripture testifieth, Ps. 51:10; Eph. 2:10; and this can denote nothing but a new spiritual principle or nature wrought in us by the Spirit of God. *"No,"* say some; *"a new creature is no more but a changed man."* It is true; but then this change is internal also. *"Yes, in the purposes, designs, and inclinations of the mind."* But is it by a real infusion of a new

principle of spiritual life and holiness? "No; it denotes no more but a new course of conversation, only the expression is metaphorical. A new creature is a moral man that hath changed his course and way; for if he were always a moral man, that he was never in any vicious way or course, as it was with him, Matt. 19:16–22, then he was always a new creature." This is good gospel, at once overthrowing original sin and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! This doctrine, I am sure, was not learned from the fathers, whereof some used to boast; nay, it is much more fulsome than any thing ever taught by Pelagius himself, who, indeed, ascribed more unto grace than these men do, although he denied this creation of a new principle of grace in us antecedent unto acts of obedience. And this turning all Scripture expressions of spiritual things into metaphors is but a way to turn the whole into a fable, or at least to render the gospel the most obscure and improper way of teaching the truth of things that ever was made use of in the world.

This new creature, therefore, doth not consist in a new course of actions, but in renewed faculties, with new dispositions, power, or ability to them and for them. Hence it is called the "divine nature:" 2 Pet. 1:4, "He hath given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." This *θεία φύσις*, this "divine nature," is not the nature of God, whereof in our own persons we are not subjectively partakers; and yet a nature it is which is a principle of operation, and that divine or spiritual,—namely, an habitual holy principle, wrought in us by God, and bearing his image. By the "promises," therefore, we are made partakers of a divine, supernatural principle of spiritual actions and operations; which is what we contend for. So the whole of what we intend is declared, Eph. 4:22–24, "Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is the work of regeneration, with respect both to its foundation and progress, that is here described. 1. The foundation of the whole is laid in our being "renewed in the spirit of our mind;" which the same

apostle elsewhere calls being "transformed in the renovation of our minds," Rom. 12:2. That this consists in the participation of a new, saving, supernatural light, to enable the mind unto spiritual actings, and to guide it therein, shall be afterward declared. Herein consists our "renovation in knowledge, after the image of him who created us," Col. 3:10. And, 2. The principle itself infused into us, created in us, is called the "new man," Eph. 4:24,—that is, the new creature before mentioned; and it is called the "new man," because it consists in the universal change of the whole soul, as it is the principle of all spiritual and moral action. And, (1.) It is opposed unto the "old man," "Put off the old man, and put on the new man," verses 22, 24. Now, this "old man" is the corruption of our nature, as that nature is the principle of all religious, spiritual, and moral actions, as is evident, Rom. 6:6. It is not a corrupt conversation, but the principle and root of it; for it is distinguished both from the conversation of men, and those corrupt lusts which are exercised therein, as to that exercise. And, (2.) It is called the "new man," because it is the effect and product of God's creating power, and that in a way of "a new creation," see Eph. 1:19; Col. 2:12, 13; 2 Thess. 1:11; and it is here said to be "created after God," Eph. 4:24. Now, the object of a creating act is an instantaneous production. Whatever preparations there may be for it and dispositions unto it, the bringing forth of a new form and being by creation is in an instant. This, therefore, cannot consist in a mere reformation of life. So are we said herein to be the "workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," chap. 2:10. There is a work of God in us preceding all our good works towards him; for before we can work any of them, in order of nature, we must be the workmanship of God, created unto them, or enabled spiritually for the performance of them.

Again: This new man, whereby we are born again, is said to be created in righteousness and true holiness. That there is a respect unto man created in innocency, wherein he was made in the image of God, I suppose will not be denied. It is also expressed Col. 3:10, "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Look, then, what was, or wherein

consisted, the image of God in the first man, thereunto answers this new man which is created of God. Now, this did not consist in reformation of life, no, nor in a course of virtuous actions; for he was created in the image of God before he had done any one good thing at all, or was capable of so doing. But this image of God consisted principally, as we have evinced elsewhere, in the uprightness, rectitude, and ability of his whole soul, his mind, will, and affections, in, unto, and for the obedience that God required of him. This he was endowed withal antecedently unto all voluntary actions whereby he was to live to God. Such, therefore, must be our regeneration, or the creation of this new man in us. It is the begetting, infusing, creating, of a new saving principle of spiritual life, light, and power in the soul, antecedent unto true evangelical reformation of life, in [the] order of nature, [and] enabling men thereunto, according unto the mind of God.

Hereunto accords that of our Saviour, Luke 6:43, "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit, neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit;" compared with Matt. 7:18. The fruit followeth the nature of the tree; and there is no way to change the nature of the fruit, but by changing the nature of the tree which brings it forth. Now, all amendment of life in reformation is but fruit, chap. 3:10; but the changing of our nature is antecedent hereunto. This is the constant course and tenor of the Scripture, to distinguish between the grace of regeneration, which it declares to be an immediate supernatural work of God in us and upon us, and all that obedience, holiness, righteousness, virtue, or whatever is good in us, which is the consequent, product, and effect of it. Yea, God hath declared this expressly in his covenant, Ezek. 36:25–27; Jer. 31:33, 32:39, 40. The method of God's proceeding with us in his covenant is, that he first washeth and cleanseth our natures, takes away the heart of stone, gives a heart of flesh, writes his law in our hearts, puts his Spirit in us; wherein, as shall be evidenced, the grace of regeneration doth consist. The effect and consequent hereof is, that we shall walk in his statutes, keep his judgments and do them,—that is, reform our lives, and yield all holy obedience unto God. Wherefore these things are

distinguished as causes and effects. See to the same purpose, Rom. 6:3–6; Col. 3:1–5; Eph. 2:10, 4:23–25. This I insist upon still, on supposition that by "reformation of life" all actual obedience is intended; for as to that kind of life which is properly called a moral course of life, in opposition to open debaucheries and unrighteousness, which doth not proceed from an internal principle of saving grace, it is so far from being regeneration or grace, as that it is a thing of no acceptation with God absolutely, whatever use or reputation it may be of in the world.

And yet farther: This work is described to consist in the sanctification of the whole spirit, soul, and body, 1 Thess. 5:23. And if this be that which some men intend by "reformation of life" and "moral virtue," they must needs win much esteem for their clearness and perspicuity in teaching spiritual things; for who would not admire them for such a definition of morality,—namely, that it is the principal sanctification of the whole spirit, soul, and body, of a believer, by the Holy Ghost? But not to dwell longer on this subject, there is no description of the work of regeneration in the Scripture, in its nature, causes, or effects, no name given unto it, no promise made of it, nothing spoken of the ways, means, or power, by which it is wrought, but is inconsistent with this bold Pelagian figment, which is destructive of the grace of Jesus Christ.

The ground of this imagination, that regeneration consists in a moral reformation of life, ariseth from a denial of original sin, or an inherent, habitual corruption of nature; for the masters unto the men of this persuasion tell us that whatever is of vice or defilement in us, it is contracted by a custom of sinning only. And their conceptions hereof do regulate their opinions about regeneration; for if man be not originally corrupted and polluted, if his nature be not depraved, if it be not possessed by, and under the power of, evil dispositions and inclinations, it is certain that he stands in no need of an inward spiritual renovation of it. It is enough for such an one that, by change of life, he renounce a custom of sinning, and reform his conversation according to the gospel; which in himself he hath power to do. But as

it hath been in part already manifested, and will fully, God assisting, be evinced afterward, that in our regeneration the native ignorance, darkness, and blindness of our minds are dispelled, saving and spiritual light being introduced by the power of God's grace into them; that the pravity and stubbornness of our wills are removed and taken away, a new principle of spiritual life and righteousness being bestowed on them; and that the disorder and rebellion of our affections are cured by the infusion of the love of God into our souls: so the corrupt imagination of the contrary opinion, directly opposite to the doctrine of the Scriptures, the faith of the ancient church, and the experience of all sincere believers, hath amongst us of late nothing but ignorance and ready confidence produced to give countenance unto it.

Thirdly, The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration doth not consist in enthusiastical raptures, ecstasies, voices, or any thing of the like kind. It may be some such things have been, by some deluded persons, apprehended or pretended unto; but the countenancing of any such imaginations is falsely and injuriously charged on them who maintain the powerful and effectual work of the Holy Spirit in our regeneration. And this some are prone to do; wherein whether they discover more of their ignorance or of their malice I know not, but nothing is more common with them. All whom in this matter they dissent from, so far as they know what they say or whereof they affirm, do teach men to look after enthusiastic inspirations or unaccountable raptures, and to esteem them for conversion unto God, although, in the meantime, they live in a neglect of holiness and righteousness of conversation. I answer, If there be those who do so, we doubt not but that, without their repentance, the wrath of God will come upon them, as upon other children of disobedience. And yet, in the meantime, we cannot but call aloud that others would discover their diligence in attendance unto these things, who, as far as I can discern, do cry up the names of virtue and righteousness in opposition to the grace of Jesus Christ, and that holiness which is a fruit thereof. But for the reproach now under consideration, it is, as applied, no other but a calumny and false accusation; and that it is

so, the writings and preachings of those who have most diligently laboured in the declaration of the work of the Holy Spirit in our regeneration will bear testimony at the great day of the Lord. We may, therefore, as unto this negative principle, observe three things:—1. That the Holy Spirit in this work doth ordinarily put forth his power in and by the use of means. He worketh also on men suitably unto their natures, even as the faculties of their souls, their minds, wills, and affections, are meet to be affected and wrought upon. He doth not come upon them with involuntary raptures, using their faculties and powers as the evil spirit wrests the bodies of them whom he possesseth. His whole work, therefore, is rationally to be accounted for by and unto them who believe the Scripture, and have received the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. The formal efficiency of the Spirit, indeed, in the putting forth the exceeding greatness of his power in our quickening,—which the ancient church constantly calleth his "inspiration of grace," both in private writing and canons of councils,—is no otherwise to be comprehended by us than any other creating act of divine power; for as we hear the wind, but know not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Yet these two things are certain herein:—(1.) That he worketh nothing, nor any other way, nor by any other means, than what are determined and declared in the word. By that, therefore, may and must every thing really belonging, or pretended to belong, unto this work of regeneration, be tried and examined. (2.) That he acts nothing contrary unto, puts no force upon, any of the faculties of our souls, but works in them and by them suitably to their natures; and being more intimate unto them, as Austin speaks, than they are unto themselves, by an almighty facility he produceth the effect which he intendeth.

This great work, therefore, neither in part nor whole consists in raptures, ecstasies, visions, enthusiastic inspirations, but in the effect of the power of the Spirit of God on the souls of men, by and according to his word, both of the law and the gospel. And those who charge these things on them who have asserted, declared, and preached it according to the Scriptures, do it, probably, to

countenance themselves in their hatred of them and of the work itself. Wherefore,—

2. Where, by reason of distempers of mind, disorder of fancy, or long continuance of distressing fears and sorrows, in and under such preparatory works of the Spirit, which sometimes cut men to their hearts in the sense of their sin, and sinful, lost condition, any do fall into apprehensions or imaginations of any thing extraordinary in the ways before mentioned, if it be not quickly and strictly brought unto the rule, and discarded thereby, it may be of great danger unto their souls, and is never of any solid use or advantage. Such apprehensions, for the most part, are either conceptions of distempered minds and discomposed fancies, or delusions of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light, which the doctrine of regeneration ought not to be accountable for. Yet I must say,—

3. That so it is come to pass, that many of those who have been really made partakers of this gracious work of the Holy Spirit have been looked on in the world, which knows them not, as mad, enthusiastic, and fanatical. So the captains of the host esteemed the prophet that came to anoint Jehu, 2 Kings 9:11. And the kindred of our Saviour, when he began to preach the gospel, said he was "beside himself," or ecstasical, Mark 3:21, and "they went out to lay hold on him." So Festus judged of Paul, Acts 26:24, 25. And the author of the Book of Wisdom gives us an account what acknowledgments some will make when it shall be too late, as to their own advantage: Chap. 5:3–5, "They shall say, crying out, because of the trouble of their minds, This is he whom we accounted a scorn, and a common reproach. We fools esteemed his life madness, and his latter end to have been shameful, but how is he reckoned among the sons of God, and his lot is among the holy ones!" From what hath been spoken it appears,—

Fourthly, That the work of the Spirit of God in regenerating the souls of men is diligently to be inquired into by the preachers of the gospel, and all to whom the word is dispensed. For the former sort, there is a peculiar reason for their attendance unto this duty; for they are used

and employed in the work itself by the Spirit of God, and are by him made instrumental for the effecting of this new birth and life. So the apostle Paul styles himself the father of them who were converted to God or regenerated through the word of his ministry: 1 Cor. 4:15, "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." He was used in the ministry of the word for their regeneration, and therefore was their spiritual father, and he only, though the work was afterward carried on by others. And if men are fathers in the gospel to no more than are converted unto God by their personal ministry, it will be no advantage unto any one day to have assumed that title, when it hath had no foundation in that work as to its effectual success. So, speaking of Onesimus, who was converted by him in prison, he calls him "his son, whom he had begotten in his bonds," Philem. 10. And this he declared to have been prescribed unto him as the principal end of his ministry, in the commission he had for preaching the gospel, Acts 26:17, 18. Christ said unto him, "I send thee unto the Gentiles, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;" which is a description of the work under consideration. And this is the principal end of our ministry also. Now, certainly it is the duty of ministers to understand the work about which they are employed, as far as they are able, that they may not work in the dark and fight uncertainly, as men beating the air. What the Scripture hath revealed concerning it, as to its nature and the manner of its operation, as to its causes, effects, fruits, evidences, they ought diligently to inquire into. To be spiritually skilled therein is one of the principal furnishings of any for the work of the ministry, without which they will never be able to divide the word aright, nor show themselves workmen that need not be ashamed. Yet it is scarcely imaginable with what rage and perversity of spirit, with what scornful expressions, this whole work is traduced and exposed to contempt. Those who have laboured herein are said "to prescribe long and tedious trains of conversion, to set down nice and subtile processes of regeneration, to fill people's heads with innumerable swarms of superstitious fears and scruples about the due degrees of godly sorrow, and the certain symptoms of

a thorough humiliation," pp. 306, 307. Could any mistake be charged on particular persons in these things, or the prescribing of rules about conversion to God and regeneration that are not warranted by the word of truth, it were not amiss to reflect upon them and refute them; but the intention of these expressions is evident, and the reproach in them is cast upon the work of God itself: and I must profess that I believe the degeneracy from the truth and power of Christian religion, the ignorance of the principal doctrines of the gospel, and that scorn which is cast, in these and the like expressions, on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, by such as not only profess themselves to be ministers, but of a higher degree than ordinary, will be sadly ominous unto the whole state of the reformed church amongst us, if not timely repressed and corrected. But what at present I affirm in this matter is,—1. That it is a duty indispensably incumbent on all ministers of the gospel to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the nature of this work, that they may be able to comply with the will of God and grace of the Spirit in the effecting and accomplishment of it upon the souls of them unto whom they dispense the word. Neither, without some competent knowledge hereof, can they discharge any one part of their duty and office in a right manner. If all that hear them are born dead in trespasses and sins, if they are appointed of God to be the instruments of their regeneration, it is a madness, which must one day be accounted for, to neglect a sedulous inquiry into the nature of this work, and the means whereby it is wrought. And the ignorance hereof or negligence herein, with the want of an experience of the power of this work in their own souls, is one great cause of that lifeless and unprofitable ministry which is among us.

2. It is likewise the duty of all to whom the word is preached to inquire also into it. It is unto such to whom the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 13:5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" It is the concernment of all individual Christians, or professors of Christian religion, to try and examine themselves what work of the Spirit of God there hath been upon their

hearts; and none will deter them from it but those who have a design to hoodwink them to perdition. And,—(1.) The doctrine of it is revealed and taught us; for "secret things belong unto the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of the law," Deut. 29:29. And we speak not of curious inquiries into or after hidden things, or the secret, veiled actions of the Holy Spirit; but only of an upright endeavour to search into and comprehend the doctrine concerning this work, to this very end, that we might understand it. (2.) It is of such importance unto all our duties and all our comforts to have a due apprehension of the nature of this work, and of our own concernment therein, that an inquiry into the one and the other cannot be neglected without the greatest folly and madness. Whereunto we may add, (3.) The danger that there is of men being deceived in this matter, which is the hinge whereon their eternal state and condition doth absolutely turn and depend. And certain it is that very many in the world do deceive themselves herein: for they evidently live under one of these pernicious mistakes,—namely, either, [1.] That men may go to heaven, or "enter into the kingdom of God," and not be "born again," contrary to that of our Saviour, John 3:5; or, [2.] That men may be "born again," and yet live in sin, contrary to 1 John 3:9.

CHAPTER II:

WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT PREPARATORY UNTO REGENERATION

Sundry things preparatory to the work of conversion—Material and formal dispositions, with their difference—Things in the power of our

natural abilities required of us in a way of duty—Internal, spiritual effects wrought in the souls of men by the word—Illumination—Conviction of sin—Consequents thereof—These things variously taught—Power of the word and energy of the Spirit distinct—Subject of this work; mind, affections, and conscience—Nature of this whole work, and difference from saving conversion farther declared.

FIRST, in reference unto the work of regeneration itself, positively considered, we may observe, that ordinarily there are certain previous and preparatory works, or workings in and upon the souls of men, that are antecedent and dispositive unto it. But yet regeneration doth not consist in them, nor can it be educed out of them. This is, for the substance of it, the position of the divines of the church of England at the synod of Dort, two whereof died bishops, and others of them were dignified in the hierarchy. I mention it, that those by whom these things are despised may a little consider whose ashes they trample on and scorn. Lawful, doubtless, it is for any man, on just grounds, to dissent from their judgments and determinations; but to do it with an imputation of folly, with derision, contempt, scorn, and scoffing, at what they believed and taught, becometh only a generation of new divines amongst us. But to return; I speak in this position only of them that are adult, and not converted until they have made use of the means of grace in and by their own reasons and understandings; and the dispositions I intend are only materially so, not such as contain grace of the same nature as is regeneration itself. A material disposition is that which disposeth and some way maketh a subject fit for the reception of that which shall be communicated, added, or infused into it as its form. So wood by dryness and a due composure is made fit and ready to admit of firing, or continual fire. A formal disposition is where one degree of the same kind disposeth the subject unto farther degrees of it; as the morning light, which is of the same kind, disposeth the air to the reception of the full light of the sun. The former we allow here, not the latter. Thus, in natural generation there are sundry dispositions of the matter before the form is introduced. So the body of Adam was formed before the rational soul was breathed into it;

and Ezekiel's bones came together with a noise and shaking before the breath of life entered into them.

I shall in this place give only a summary account of this preparatory work, because in the close of these discourses I shall handle it practically and more at large. Wherefore what I have here to offer concerning it shall be reduced unto the ensuing observations:—

First, There are some things required of us in a way of duty in order unto our regeneration, which are so in the power of our own natural abilities as that nothing but corrupt prejudices and stubbornness in sinning do keep or hinder men from the performance of them. And these we may reduce unto two heads:—1. An outward attendance unto the dispensation of the word of God, with those other external means of grace which accompany it or are appointed therein. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. 10:17; that is, it is hearing the word of God which is the ordinary means of ingenerating faith in the souls of men. This is required of all to whom the gospel doth come; and this they are able of themselves to do, as well as any other natural or civil action. And where men do it not, where they despise the word at a distance, yea, where they do it not with diligence and choice, it is merely from supine negligence of spiritual things, carnal security, and contempt of God; which they must answer for. 2. A diligent intension of mind, in attendance on the means of grace, to understand and receive the things revealed and declared as the mind and will of God. For this end hath God given men their reasons and understandings, that they may use and exercise them about their duty towards him, according to the revelation of his mind and will. To this purpose he calls upon them to remember that they are men, and to turn unto him. And there is nothing herein but what is in the liberty and power of the rational faculties of our souls, assisted with those common aids which God affords unto all men in general. And great advantages both may be and are daily attained hereby. Persons, I say, who diligently apply their rational abilities in and about spiritual things, as externally revealed in the word and the preaching of it, do usually attain great

advantages by it, and excel their equals in other things; as Paul did when he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Would men be but as intent and diligent in their endeavours after knowledge in spiritual things, as revealed in a way suited unto our capacities and understandings, as they are to get skill in crafts, sciences, and other mysteries of life, it would be much otherwise with many than it is. A neglect herein also is the fruit of sensuality, spiritual sloth, love of sin, and contempt of God; all which are the voluntary frames and actings of the minds of men.

These things are required of us in order unto our regeneration, and it is in the power of our own wills to comply with them. And we may observe concerning them that,—1. The omission of them, the neglect of men in them, is the principal occasion and cause of the eternal ruin of the souls of the generality of them to whom or amongst whom the gospel is preached: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," John 3:19. The generality of men know full well that they do in this matter no more what they are able than what they should. All pleadable pretences of inability and weakness are far from them. They cannot but know here, and they shall be forced to confess hereafter, that it was merely from their own cursed sloth, with love of the world and sin, that they were diverted from a diligent attendance on the means of conversion and the sedulous exercise of their minds about them. Complaints hereof against themselves will make up a great part of their last dreadful cry. 2. In the most diligent use of outward means, men are not able of themselves to attain unto regeneration, or complete conversion to God, without an especial, effectual, internal work of the Holy Spirit of grace on their whole souls. This containing the substance of what is principally proposed unto confirmation in the ensuing discourses, need not here be insisted on. 3. Ordinarily, God, in the effectual dispensation of his grace, meeteth with them who attend with diligence on the outward administration of the means of it. He doth so, I say, ordinarily, in comparison of them who are despisers and neglecters of them. Sometimes, indeed, he goeth, as it were, out of the way to meet with

and bring home unto himself a persecuting Saul, taking of him in, and taking him off from, a course of open sin and rebellion; but ordinarily he dispenseth his peculiar especial grace among them who attend unto the common means of it: for he will both glorify his word thereby, and give out pledges of his approbation of our obedience unto his commands and institutions.

Secondly, There are certain internal spiritual effects wrought in and upon the souls of men, whereof the word preached is the immediate instrumental cause, which ordinarily do precede the work of regeneration, or real conversion unto God. And they are reducible unto three heads:—1. Illumination; 2. Conviction; 3. Reformation. The first of these respects the mind only; the second, the mind, conscience, and affections; and the third, the life and conversation:—

1. The first is illumination, of whose nature and causes we must afterward treat distinctly. At present, I shall only consider it as it is ordinarily previous unto regeneration, and materially disposing the mind thereunto. Now, all the light which by any means we attain unto, or knowledge that we have in or about spiritual things, things of supernatural revelation, come under this denomination of illumination. And hereof there are three degrees:—(1.) That which ariseth merely from an industrious application of the rational faculties of our souls to know, perceive, and understand the doctrines of truth as revealed unto us; for hereby much knowledge of divine truth may be obtained, which others, through their negligence, sloth, and pride, are unacquainted with. And this knowledge I refer unto illumination,—that is, a light superadded to the innate conceptions of men's minds, and beyond what of themselves they can extend unto,—because it is concerning such things as the heart of man could never of itself conceive, but the very knowledge of them is communicated by their revelation, 1 Cor. 2:9, 11. And the reason why so very few do exercise themselves to the attaining of this knowledge, according to their abilities, is because of the enmity which is in the carnal minds of all men by nature unto the things themselves that are revealed. And within the compass of this

degree I comprise all knowledge of spiritual things that is merely natural. (2.) There is an illumination which is an especial effect of the Holy Ghost by the word on the minds of men. With respect hereunto, some who fall totally from God and perish eternally are said to have been "once enlightened," Heb. 6:4. This light variously affects the mind, and makes a great addition unto what is purely natural, or attainable by the mere exercise of our natural abilities.

For, [1.] It adds perspicuity unto it, making the things discerned in it more clear and perspicuous to the mind. Hence men endowed with it are said to "know the way of righteousness," 2 Pet. 2:21,—clearly and distinctly to apprehend the doctrine of the gospel as the way of righteousness. They know it not only or merely as true, but as a way of righteousness,—namely, the way of God's righteousness, which is therein "revealed from faith to faith," Rom. 1:17, and the way of righteousness for sinners in the sight of God, chap. 10:3, 4. [2.] It adds a greater assent unto the truth of the things revealed than mere natural reason can rise up unto. Hence those thus illuminated are frequently said to "believe," their faith being only the naked assent of their minds unto the truth revealed to them. So it is said of Simon the magician, Acts 8:13, and of sundry of the Jews, John 2:23, 12:42. [3.] It adds unto them some kind of evanid joy. These "receive the word with joy," and yet have "no root in themselves," Luke 8:13. They "rejoice in the light" of it, at least "for a season," John 5:35. Persons that are thus enlightened will be variously affected with the word, so as they are not whose natural faculties are not spiritually excited. [4.] It adds oftentimes gifts also, whereof this spiritual light is, as it were, the common matter, which in exercise is formed and fashioned in great variety. I say, this kind of spiritual light, the effect of this illumination, is the subject-matter, and contains in it the substance, of all spiritual gifts. One sort of gift it is when put forth and exercised in one way, or one kind of duty, and another as in another. And where it is improved into gifts, which principally it is by exercise, there it wonderfully affects the mind, and raiseth its apprehensions in and of spiritual things. Now, concerning this degree of illumination, I say, first, That it is not regeneration, nor

doth it consist therein, nor doth necessarily or infallibly ensue upon it. A third degree is required thereunto, which we shall afterward explain. Many, therefore, may be thus enlightened, and yet never be converted. Secondly, That in order of nature it is previous unto a full and real conversion to God, and is materially preparatory and dispositive thereunto; for saving grace enters into the soul by light. As it is therefore a gift of God, so it is the duty of all men to labour after a participation of it, however by many it be abused.

2. Conviction of sin is another effect of the preaching of the word antecedaneous unto real conversion to God. This in general the apostle describes, 1 Cor. 14:24, 25, "If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, he is convinced of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God." And sundry things are included herein, or do accompany it; as,—(1.) A disquieting sense of the guilt of sin with respect unto the law of God, with his threatenings and future judgment. Things that before were slighted and made a mock of do now become the soul's burden and constant disquietment. "Fools make a mock of sin;" they traverse their ways, and snuff up the wind like the wild ass; but in their month, when conviction hath burdened them, you may find them. And hereby are the minds of men variously affected with fears and anguish, in various degrees, according as impressions are made upon them by the word. And these degrees are not prescribed as necessary duties unto persons under their convictions, but only described as they usually fall out, to the relief and direction of such as are concerned in them;—as a man going to give directions unto another how to guide his course in a voyage at sea, he tells him that in such a place he will meet with rocks and shelves, storms and cross winds, so that if he steer not very heedfully he will be in danger to miscarry and to be cast away; he doth not prescribe it unto him as his duty to go among such rocks and into such storms, but only directs him how to guide himself in them where he doth meet with them, as assuredly he will, if he miss not his proper course. (2.) Sorrow or grief for sin committed, because past and irrecoverable; which is the formal reason of this

condemning sorrow. This the Scripture calls "sorrow of the world," 2 Cor. 7:10; divines, usually, legal sorrow, as that which, in conjunction with the sense of the guilt of sin mentioned, brings men into bondage under fear, Rom. 8:15. (3.) Humiliation for sin, which is the exercise or working of sorrow and fear in outward acts of confession, fasting, praying, and the like. This is the true nature of legal humiliation, 1 Kings 21:29. (4.) Unless by these things the soul be swallowed up in despair, it cannot be but that it will be filled with thoughts, desires, inquiries, and contrivances about a deliverance out of that state and condition wherein it is; as Acts 2:37, 16:30.

3. Oftentimes a great reformation of life and change in affections doth ensue hereon; as Matt. 13:20; 2 Pet. 2:20; Matt. 12:44.

All these things may be wrought in the minds of men by the dispensation of the word, and yet the work of regeneration be never perfected in them. Yea, although they are good in themselves, and fruits of the kindness of God towards us, they may not only be lost as unto any spiritual advantage, but also be abused unto our great disadvantage. And this comes not to pass but by our own sin, whereby we contract a new guilt upon our souls. And it commonly so falls out one of these three ways; for,—1. Some are no way careful or wise to improve this light and conviction unto the end whereunto they tend and are designed. Their message is, to turn the minds of men, and to take them off from their self-confidence, and to direct them unto Christ. Where this is not attended unto, where they are not used and improved unto the pursuit of this end, they insensibly wither, decay, and come to nothing. 2. In some they are overborne by the power and violence of their lusts, the love of sin, and efficacy of temptation. They are sinned away every day, and leave the soul in ten times a worse condition than they found it. 3. Some rest in these things, as though they comprised the whole work of God towards them, and guided them in all the duties required of them. This is the state of many where they extend their power, in the last instance, unto any considerable reformation of life, and attendance unto duties of religious worship. But this, as was said, falls out through

the abuse which the carnal minds of men, retaining their enmity against God, do put these things unto. In their own nature they are good, useful, and material preparations unto regeneration, disposing the mind unto the reception of the grace of God.

And the doctrine concerning these things hath been variously handled, distinguished, and applied, by many learned divines and faithful ministers of the gospel. Unto that light which they received into them from the infallible word of truth, they joined those experiences which they had observed in their own hearts and the consciences of others with whom they had to do, which were suitable thereunto; and in the dispensation of this truth, according to the "measure of the gift of the grace of Christ," which they severally received, they had a useful and fruitful ministry in the world, to the converting of many unto God. But we have lived to see all these things decried and rejected. And the way which some have taken therein is as strange and uncouth as the thing itself; for they go not about once to disprove by Scripture or reason what hath been taught or delivered by any sober persons to this purpose, nor do they endeavour themselves to declare from or by the Scriptures what is the work of regeneration, what are the causes and effects of it, in opposition thereunto. These and such like ways, made use of by all that have treated of spiritual things from the foundation of Christianity, are despised and rejected; but horrible and contemptuous reproaches are cast upon the things themselves, in words heaped together on purpose to expose them unto scorn among persons ignorant of the gospel and themselves. Those that teach them are "ecstatical and illiterate;" and those that receive them are "superstitious, giddy, and fanatical." All conviction, sense of and sorrow for sin; all fear of the curse and wrath due unto sin; all troubles and distresses of mind by reason of these things,—are "foolish imaginations, the effects of bodily diseases and distempers, enthusiastic notions, arising from the disorders of men's brains," and I know not what untoward "humours in their complexions and constitutions." The same or the like account is also given concerning all spiritual desertions, or joys and refreshments; and the whole

doctrine concerning these things is branded with novelty, and hopes expressed of its sudden vanishing out of the world. This contempt and scorn of the gospel have we lived to see, whereof, it may be, other ages and places have not had experience; for as all these things are plentifully taught by some of the ancients in their expositions of the scriptures wherein they are expressed, especially by Austin, who had occasion particularly to inquire into them, so the doctrine concerning them is in a great measure retained in the church of Rome itself. Only some amongst ourselves are weary of them; who, being no way able to oppose the principles and foundations whereon they are built, nor to disprove them by Scripture or reason, betake themselves to these revilings and reproaches; and, as if it were not enough for them to proclaim their own ignorance and personal unacquaintance with those things which inseparably accompany that conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment which our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised to send the Holy Spirit to work in all that should believe, they make the reproaching of it in others a principal effect of that religion which they profess. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, The Lord knoweth them that are his." But we must return to our purpose.

Thirdly, All the things mentioned as wrought instrumentally by the word are effects of the power of the Spirit of God. The word itself, under a bare proposal to the minds of men, will not so affect them. We need go no farther for the confirmation hereof than merely to consider the preaching (with the effects which it had towards many) of the prophets of old, Isa. 49:4, Jer. 15:20, Ezek. 33:31, 32; of Jesus Christ himself, John 8:59; and of the apostles, Acts 13:41, 45, 46. Hence to this day, the Jews, who enjoy the letter of the Old Testament, without the administration of the Spirit, are as full of blindness, hardness, and obstinacy, as any in the world who are utterly deprived of it. Many amongst ourselves sit all their days under the preaching of the word, and yet have none of the effects mentioned wrought upon them, when others, their associates in hearing, are really affected, convinced, and converted. It is, therefore, the ministration of the Spirit, in and by the word, which

produceth all or any of these effects on the minds of men; he is the fountain of all illumination. Hence, they that are "enlightened" are said to be made "partakers of the Holy Spirit," Heb. 6:4. And he is promised by our Saviour "to convince the world of sin," John 16:8; which, although in that place it respects only one kind, of sin, yet it is sufficient to establish a general rule, that all conviction of sin is from and by him. And no wonder if men live securely in their sins, to whom the light which he gives and the convictions which he worketh are a scorn and reproach.

There is, indeed, an objection of some moment against the ascription of this work unto the energy of the Holy Spirit; for "whereas it is granted that all these things may be wrought in the minds and souls of men, and yet they may come short of the saving grace of God, how can he be thought to be the author of such a work? Shall we say that he designs only a weak and imperfect work upon the hearts of men? or that he deserts and gives over the work of grace which he hath undertaken towards them, as not able to accomplish it?"

Ans. 1. In many persons, it may be in the most, who are thus affected, real conversion unto God doth ensue, the Holy Spirit by these preparatory actings making way for the introduction of the new spiritual life into the soul: so they belong unto a work that is perfect in its kind. 2. Wherever they fail and come short of what in their own nature they have a tendency unto, it is not from any weakness and imperfection in themselves, but from the sins of them in whom they are wrought. For instance, even common illumination and conviction of sin have, in their own nature, a tendency unto sincere conversion. They have so in the same kind as the law hath to bring us unto Christ. Where this end is not attained, it is always from the interposition of an act of wilfulness and stubbornness in those enlightened and convicted. They do not sincerely improve what they have received, and faint not merely for want of strength to proceed, but, by a free act of their own wills, they refuse the grace which is farther tendered unto them in the gospel. This will, and its actual resistance unto the work of the Spirit, God is pleased in some to take

away. It is, therefore, of sovereign grace when and where it is removed. But the sin of men and their guilt is in it where it is continued; for no more is required hereunto but that it be voluntary. It is will, and not power, that gives rectitude or obliquity unto moral actions. 3. As we observed before, the Holy Spirit in his whole work is a voluntary agent. He worketh what, when, and how he pleaseth. No more is required unto his operations, that they may be such as become him, but these two things:—First, That in themselves they be good and holy. Secondly, That they be effectual as unto the ends whereunto by him they are designed. That he should always design them to the utmost length of what they have a moral tendency towards, though no real efficiency for, is not required. And these things are found in these operations of the Holy Spirit. They are in their own nature good and holy. Illumination is so; so is conviction and sorrow for sin, with a subsequent change of affections and amendment of life.

Again: What he worketh in any of these effectually and infallibly accomplished the end aimed at; which is no more but that men be enlightened, convinced, humbled, and reformed, wherein he faileth not. In these things he is pleased to take on him the management of the law, so to bring the soul into bondage thereby, that it may be stirred up to seek after deliverance; and he is thence actively called the "Spirit of bondage unto fear," Rom. 8:15. And this work is that which constitutes the third ground in our Saviour's parable of the sower. It receives the seed and springs up hopefully, until, by cares of the world, temptations, and occasions of life, it is choked and lost, Matt. 13:22. Now, because it oftentimes maketh a great appearance and resemblance of regeneration itself, or of real conversion to God, so that neither the world nor the church is able to distinguish between them, it is of great concernment unto all professors of the gospel to inquire diligently whether they have in their own souls been made partakers of any other work of the Spirit of God or no; for although this be a good work, and doth lie in a good subserviency unto regeneration, yet if men attain no more, if they proceed no farther, they will perish, and that eternally. And multitudes do herein

actually deceive themselves, speaking peace unto their souls on the effects of this work; whereby it is not only insufficient to save them, as it is to all persons at all times, but also becomes a means of their present security and future destruction. I shall, therefore, give some few instances of what this work, in the conjunction of all the parts of it, and in its utmost improvement, cannot effect; whereby men may make a judgment how things stand in their own souls in respect unto it:—

1. It may be observed, that we have placed all the effects of this work in the mind, conscience, affections, and conversation. Hence it follows, notwithstanding all that is or may be spoken of it, that the will is neither really changed nor internally renewed by it. Now, the will is the ruling, governing faculty of the soul, as the mind is the guiding and leading. Whilst this abides unchanged, unrenewed, the power and reign of sin continue in the soul, though not undisturbed yet unruined. It is true, there are many checks and controls, from the light of the mind and reflections of conscience, cast in this state upon the actings of the will, so that it cannot put itself forth in and towards sin with that freedom, security, and licentiousness as it was wont to do. Its fierceness and rage, rushing into sin as the horse into the battle, running on God and the thick bosses of his buckler, may be broken and abated by those hedges of thorns which it finds set in its way, and those buffetings it meets withal from light and convictions; its delight and greediness in sinning may be calmed and quieted by those frequent representations of the terror of the Lord on the one hand, and the pleasure of eternal rest on the other, which are made unto it: but yet still, setting aside all considerations foreign unto its own principle, the bent and inclination of the will itself is to sin and evil always and continually. The will of sinning may be restrained upon a thousand considerations, which light and convictions will administer, but it is not taken away. And this discovers itself when the very first motions of the soul towards sinful objects have a sensible complacency, until they are controlled by light and fear. This argues an unrenewed will, if it be constant and universal.

2. The effects of this work on the mind, which is the first subject affected with it, proceeds not so far as to give it delight, complacency, and satisfaction in the lively spiritual nature and excellencies of the things revealed unto it. The true nature of saving illumination consists in this, that it gives the mind such a direct intuitive insight and prospect into spiritual things as that, in their own spiritual nature, they suit, please, and satisfy it, so that it is transformed into them, cast into the mould of them, and rests in them, Rom. 6:17, 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:13–15; 2 Cor. 3:18, 4:6. This the work we have insisted on reacheth not unto; for, notwithstanding any discovery that is made therein of spiritual things unto the mind, it finds not an immediate, direct, spiritual excellency in them, but only with respect unto some benefit or advantage which is to be attained by means thereof. It will not give such a spiritual insight into the mystery of God's grace by Jesus Christ, called "his glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. 4:6, as that the soul, in its first direct view of it, should, for what it is in itself, admire it, delight in it, approve it, and find spiritual solace with refreshment in it. But such a light, such a knowledge it communicates, as that a man may like it well in its effects, as a way of mercy and salvation.

3. This work extends itself to the conscience also; but yet it doth not purge the conscience from dead works, that we should serve the living God. This is the effect of a real application of the blood of Christ by faith unto our souls, Heb. 9:14. Two things it effects upon the conscience:—(1.) It renders it more ready, quick, and sharp in the reprovng and condemning of all sin than it was be fore. To condemn sin, according unto its light and guidance, is natural unto and inseparable from the conscience of man; but its readiness and ability to exercise this condemning power may, by custom and course of sinning in the world, be variously weakened and impeded. But when conscience is brought under the power of this work, having its directing light augmented, whereby it sees more of the evil of sin than formerly, and having its self-reflections sharpened and multiplied, it is more ready and quick in putting forth its judging and condemning power than it was. (2.) Conscience is assisted and

directed hereby to condemn many things in sin which before it approved of; for its judging power is still commensurate unto its light, and many things are thereby now discovered to be sinful which were not so by the mere natural guidance under which before it was. But yet, notwithstanding all this, it doth not purge the conscience from dead works; that is, conscience is not hereby wrought unto such an abhorrency of sin for itself as continually to direct the soul unto an application to the blood of Christ for the cleansing of itself and the purging of it out. It contents itself to keep all things in a tumult, disorder, and confusion, by its constant condemning both sin and sinners.

4. This work operates greatly on the affections. We have given instances in the fear, sorrow, joy, and delight about spiritual things that are stirred up and acted thereby. But yet it comes short in two things of a thorough work upon the affections themselves: for, (1.) it doth not fix them; and, (2.) it doth not fill them. (1.) It is required that our affections be fixed on heavenly and spiritual things, and true grace will effect it: Col. 3:1, 2, "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above." The joys, the fears, the hopes, the sorrows, with reference unto spiritual and eternal things, which the work before mentioned doth produce, are evanid, uncertain, unstable, not only as to the degrees, but as to the very being of them. Sometimes they are as a river ready to overflow its banks,—men cannot but be pouring them out on all occasions; and sometimes as waters that fail,—no drop comes from them. Sometimes they are hot, and sometimes cold; sometimes up, and sometimes down; sometimes all heaven, and sometimes all world; without equality, without stability. But true grace fixeth the affections on spiritual things. As to the degrees of their exercise, there may be and is in them great variety, according as they may be excited, aided, assisted, by grace and the means of it, or obstructed and impeded by the interposition of temptations and diversions. But the constant bent and inclination of renewed affections is unto spiritual things, as the Scripture everywhere testifieth and experience

doth confirm. (2.) The forementioned work doth not fill the affections, however it may serve to take them up and pacify them. It comes like many strangers to an inn to lodge, which take up a great deal of room, and make an appearance as if none were in the house but themselves; and yet they turn not out the family which dwelleth there, but there they make their abode still. Light and conviction, with all their train and attendants, come into the mind and affections as if they would fill them, and possess them for themselves alone; but yet, when they have done all, they leave the quiet places of the house for the world, and sin, and self. They do not thrust them out of the affections, and fill up their places with spiritual things. But saving grace fills up the affections with spiritual things, fills the soul with spiritual love, joy, and delight, and exerciseth all other affections about their proper objects. It denies not a room to any other things, relations, possessions, enjoyments, merely as they are natural, and are content to be subordinate unto God and spiritual things; but if they would be carnal, disorderly, or predominant, it casts them out.

5. This work is oftentimes carried on very far in reformation of life and conversation, so that it will express the whole form of godliness therein. But herein, also, it is subject unto a threefold defect and imperfection; for,—(1.) It will consist with and allow of raging and reigning sins of ignorance. The conducting light in this work not leading unto the abhorrency of all sin as sin, nor into a pursuit of holiness out of a design to be universally conformable unto Christ, but being gathered up from this and that particular command, it oftentimes leaves behind it great sins unregarded. So it left persecution in Paul before his conversion; and so it leaves hatred and a desire of persecution in many at this day. And other sins of the like nature may escape its utmost search, to the ruin of the soul. (2.) Its reformation of the conversation is seldom universal as to all known sins, unless it be for a season, whilst the soul is under a flagrant pursuit of self-righteousness. Paul in that condition had preserved himself so as that, according to the law, he was blameless; and the young man thought he had kept all the commandments from his youth. But setting aside this consideration, notwithstanding the

utmost that this work can attain unto, after the efficacy of its first impressions begin to abate, lust will reserve some peculiar way of venting and discovering itself; which is much spoken unto. (3.) The conversations of persons who live and abide under the power of this work only is assuredly fading and decaying. Coldness, sloth, negligence, love of the world, carnal wisdom, and security, do every day get ground upon them. Hence, although by a long course of abstinence from open sensual sins, and stating of a contrary interest, they are not given up unto them, yet, by the decays of the power of their convictions, and the ground that sin gets upon them, they become walking and talking skeletons in religion,—dry, sapless, useless, worldlings. But where the soul is inlaid with real saving grace, it is in a state of thriving continually. Such an one will go on from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from glory to glory, and will be fat and flourishing in old age. By these things may we learn to distinguish in ourselves between the preparatory work mentioned, and that of real saving conversion unto God. And these are some of the heads of those operations of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, which oftentimes are preparatory unto a real conversion unto God; and sometimes, [by] their contempt and rejection, a great aggravation of the sin and misery of them in whom they were wrought.

And these things, as they are clearly laid down in the Scripture and exemplified in sundry instances, so, for the substance of them, they have been acknowledged (till of late) by all Christians; only some of the Papists have carried them so far as to make them formally dispositive unto justification, and to have a congruous merit thereof. But this the ancients denied, who would not allow that either any such preparation or any moral virtues did capacitate men for real conversion, observing that others were often called before those who were so qualified. And in them there are goads and nails, which have been fastened by wise and experienced masters of the assemblies, to the great advantage of the souls of men; for, observing the usual ways and means whereby these effects are wrought in the minds of the hearers of the word, with their consequences, in sorrow, troubles,

fear, and humiliations, and the courses which they take to improve them, or to extricate themselves from the perplexity of them, they have managed the rules of Scripture with their own and others' experience suitable thereunto, to the great benefit of the church of God. That these things are now despised and laughed to scorn is no part of the happiness of the age wherein we live, as the event will manifest.

And in the meantime, if any suppose that we will forego these truths and doctrines, which are so plainly revealed in the Scripture, the knowledge whereof is so useful unto the souls of men, and whose publication in preaching hath been of so great advantage to the church of God, merely because they understand them not, and therefore reproach them, they will be greatly mistaken. Let them lay aside that unchristian way of treating about these things which they have engaged in, and plainly prove that men need not be convinced of sin, that they ought not to be humbled for it, nor affected with sorrow with respect unto it; that they ought not to seek for a remedy or deliverance from it; that all men are not born in a state of sin; that our nature is not depraved by the fall; that we are able to do all that is required of us, without the internal aids and assistances of the Spirit of God,—and they shall be diligently attended unto.

CHAPTER III:

CORRUPTION OR DEPRAVATION OF THE MIND BY SIN

Contempt and corruption of the doctrine of regeneration—All men in the world regenerate or unregenerate—General description of corrupted nature—Depravation of the mind—Darkness upon it—The nature of spiritual darkness—Reduced unto two heads—Of darkness objective; how removed—Of darkness subjective; its nature and power proved—Eph. 4:17, 18, opened and applied—The mind "alienated from the life of God"—The "life of God," what it is—The power of the mind with respect unto spiritual things examined—1 Cor. 2:14 opened— the "natural man," who—Spiritual things, what they are—How the natural man cannot know or receive spiritual things—Difference between understanding doctrines and receiving of things—A twofold power and ability of mind with respect unto spiritual things explained—Reasons why a natural man cannot discern spiritual things—How and wherefore spiritual things are foolishness to natural men—Why natural men cannot receive the things of God—A double impotency in the mind of man by nature—1 Cor. 2:14 farther vindicated—Power of darkness in persons unregenerate—The mind filled with wills or lusts, and enmity thereby—The power and efficacy of spiritual darkness at large declared.

WE have, I hope, made our way plain for the due consideration of the great work of the Spirit in the regeneration of the souls of God's elect. This is that whereby he forms the members of the mystical body of Christ, and prepares living stones for the building of a temple wherein the living God will dwell. Now, that we may not only declare the truth in this matter, but also vindicate it from those corruptions wherewith some have endeavoured to debauch it, I shall premise a

description lately given of it, with confidence enough, and it may be not without too much authority; and it is in these words: "What is it to be born again, and to have a new spiritual life in Christ, but to become sincere proselytes to the gospel, to renounce all vicious customs and practices, and to give an upright and uniform obedience to all the laws of Christ. And, therefore, if they are all but precepts of moral virtue, to be born again, and to have a new spiritual life, is only to become a new moral man. But their account" (speaking of Nonconformist ministers) "of this article is so wild and fantastic, that had I nothing else to make good my charge against them, that alone would be more than enough to expose the prodigious folly of their spiritual divinity," pp. 343, 344. I confess these are the words of one who seems not much to consider what he says, so as that it may serve his present turn in reviling and reproaching other men; for he considers not that, by this description of it, he utterly excludes the baptismal regeneration of infants, which is so plainly professed by the church wherein he is dignified. But this is publicly declared, avowed, and vended, as allowed doctrine amongst us, and therefore deserves to be noticed, though the person that gives it out be at irreconcilable feuds with himself and his church. Of morality and grace an account shall be given elsewhere. At present, the work of regeneration is that which is under our consideration. And concerning this, those so severely treated teach no other doctrine but what, for the substance of it, is received in all the reformed churches in Europe, and which so many learned divines of the church of England confirmed with their suffrage at the synod of Dort. Whether this deserve all the scorn which this haughty person pours upon it by his swelling words of vanity will, to indifferent persons, be made appear in the ensuing discourse; as also what is to be thought of the description of it given by that author, which, whether it savour more of ignorance and folly, or of pride and fulsome errors, is hard to determine. I know some words in it are used with the old Pelagian trick of ambiguity, so as to be capable of having another sense and interpretation put upon them than their present use and design will admit of; but that artifice will be immediately rendered useless.

There is a twofold state of men with respect unto God, which is comprehensive of all individuals in the world; for all men are either unregenerate or regenerate. There being an affirmation and a negation concerning the state of regeneration in the Scripture, one of them may be used concerning every capable subject; every man living is so, or he is not so. And herein, as I suppose, there is a general consent of Christians. Again, it is evident in the Scripture, and we have proved it in our way, that all men are born in an unregenerate condition. This is so positively declared by our Saviour that there is no rising up against it, John 3:3–8. Now, regeneration being the delivery of men (or the means of it) from that state and condition wherein they are born or are by nature, we cannot discover wherein it doth consist without a declaration of that state which it gives us deliverance from. And this, in the first place, we shall insist upon at large, giving an account of the state of lapsed nature under a loss of the original grace of God. And these things I shall handle practically, for the edification of all sorts of believers, and not in the way and method of the schools; which yet shall be done elsewhere.

In the declaration of the state of corrupted nature after the fall, and before the reparation of it by the grace of Jesus Christ,—that is, the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit,—the Scripture principally insists on three things:—1. The corruption and depravation of the mind; which it calls by the name of darkness and blindness, with the consequents of vanity, ignorance, and folly. 2. The depravation of the will and affections; which it expreseth several ways, as by weakness or impotency, and stubbornness or obstinacy. 3. By the general name of death, extended to the condition of the whole soul. And these have various effects and consequences, as in our explanation of them will appear.

All men by nature, not enlightened, not renewed in their minds by the saving, effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, are in a state of darkness and blindness with respect unto God and spiritual things, with the way of pleasing him and living unto him. Be men otherwise and in other things never so wise, knowing, learned, and skilful, in

spiritual things they are dark, blind, ignorant, unless they are renewed in the spirit of their minds by the Holy Ghost. This is a matter which the world cannot endure to hear of, and it is ready to fall into a tumult upon its mention. They think it but an artifice which some weak men have got up, to reflect on and condemn them who are wiser than themselves. On the like occasion did the Pharisees ask of our Saviour that question with pride and scorn, "Are we blind also?" John 9:40. But as he lets them know that their presumption of light and knowledge would serve only to aggravate their sin and condemnation, verse 41; so he plainly tells them, that notwithstanding all their boasting, "they had neither heard the voice of God at any time, nor seen his shape," chap. 5:37.

Some at present talk much about the power of the intellectual faculties of our souls, as though they were neither debased, corrupted, impaired, nor depraved. All that disadvantage which is befallen our nature by the entrance of sin is but in "the disorder of the affections and the inferior sensitive parts of the soul, which are apt to tumultuate and rebel against that pure untainted light which is in the mind!" And this they speak of it without respect unto its renovation by the Holy Spirit; for if they include that also, they are in their discourses most notorious confused triflers. Indeed, some of them write as if they had never deigned once to consult with the Scriptures, and others are plainly gone over into the tents of the Pelagians. But, setting aside their modern artifices of confident boasting, contemptuous reproaches, and scurrilous railings, it is no difficult undertaking so to demonstrate the depravation of the minds of men by nature, and their impotency thence to discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, without a saving, effectual work of the Holy Spirit in their renovation, as that the proudest and most petulant of them shall not be able to return any thing of a solid answer thereunto. And herein we plead for nothing but the known doctrine of the ancient catholic church, declared in the writings of the most learned fathers and determinations of councils against the Pelagians, whose errors and heresies are again revived among us by a crew of Socinianized Arminians.

We may to this purpose first consider the testimonies given in the Scripture unto the assertion as laid down in general: Matt. 4:16, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Of what kind this darkness was in particular shall be afterward declared. For the present it answers what is proposed,—that before the illumination given them by the preaching of the gospel, the people mentioned "sat in darkness," or lived under the power of it. And such as was the light whereby they were relieved, of the same kind was the darkness under which they were detained. And in the same sense, when Christ preached the gospel, "the light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not," John 1:5,—gave not place to the light of the truth declared by him, that it might be received in the souls of men. The commission which he gave to Paul the apostle, when he sent him to preach the gospel, was, "To open the eyes of men, and to turn them from darkness to light," Acts 26:18;—not to a light within them; for internal light is the eye or seeing of the soul, but the darkness was such as consisted in their blindness, in not having their eyes open: "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness." Eph. 5:8, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." What is the change and alteration made in the minds of men intended in this expression will afterward appear; but that a great change is proposed none can doubt. Col. 1:13, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness;" as also 1 Pet. 2:9, "Who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." And the darkness which is in these testimonies ascribed unto persons in an unregenerate condition is by Paul compared to that which was at the beginning, before the creation of light: Gen. 1:2, "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." There was no creature that had a visive faculty; there was darkness subjectively in all; and there was no light to see by, but all was objectively wrapped up in darkness. In this state of things, God by an almighty act of his power created light: Verse 3, "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." And no otherwise is it in this new creation: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in the hearts of men, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. 4:6. Spiritual darkness is in and

upon all men, until God, by an almighty and effectual work of the Spirit, shine into them, or create light in them. And this darkness is that light within which some boast to be in themselves and others!

To clear our way in this matter, we must consider,—first, the nature of this spiritual darkness, what it is, and wherein it doth consist; and then, secondly, show its efficacy and power in and on the minds of men, and how they are corrupted by it.

FIRST, The term "darkness" in this case is metaphorical, and borrowed from that which is natural. What natural darkness is, and wherein it consists, all men know; if they know it not in its cause and reason, yet they know it by its effects. They know it is that which hinders men from all regular operations which are to be guided by the outward senses. And it is twofold:—1. When men have not light to see by, or when the usual light, the only external medium for the discovery of distant objects, is taken from them. So was it with the Egyptians during the three days' darkness that was on their land. They could not see for want of light; they had their visive faculty continued unto them, yet having "no light," they "saw not one another, neither arose any from his place," Exod. 10:23: for God, probably, to augment the terror of his judgment, restrained the virtue of artificial light, as well as he did that which was natural. 2. There is darkness unto men when they are blind, either born so or made so: Ps 69:23, "Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not." So the angels smote the Sodomites with blindness, Gen. 19:11; and Paul the sorcerer, Acts 13:11. However the sun shineth, it is all one perpetual night unto them that are blind.

Answerable hereunto, spiritual darkness may be referred unto two heads; for there is an objective darkness, a darkness that is on men, and a subjective darkness, a darkness that is in them. The first consists in the want of those means whereby alone they may be enlightened in the knowledge of God and spiritual things. This is intended, Matt. 4:16. This means is the word of God, and the preaching of it. Hence it is called a "light," Ps. 119:105, and is said to

"enlighten," Ps. 19:8, or to be "a light shining in a dark place," 2 Pet. 1:19; and it is so termed, because it is the outward means of communicating the light of the knowledge of God unto the minds of men. What the sun is unto the world as unto things natural, that is the word and the preaching of it unto men as to things spiritual; and hence our apostle applies what is said of the sun in the firmament, as to the enlightening of the world, Ps. 19:1–4, unto the gospel and the preaching of it, Rom. 10:15, 18.

And this darkness is upon many in the world, even all unto whom the gospel is not declared, or by whom it is not received, where it is or hath been so. Some, I know, have entertained a vain imagination about a saving revelation of the knowledge of God by the works of creation and providence, objected to the rational faculties of the minds of men. It is not my purpose here to divert unto the confutation of that fancy. Were it so, it were easy to demonstrate that there is no saving revelation of the knowledge of God unto sinners, but as he is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; and that so he is not made known but by the word of reconciliation committed unto the dispensers of the gospel. Whatever knowledge, therefore, of God may be attained by the means mentioned, as he is the God of nature ruling over men, and requiring obedience from them according to the covenant and law of their creation, yet the knowledge of him as a God in Christ pardoning sin and saving sinners is attainable by the gospel only. But this I have proved and confirmed elsewhere.²

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to remove and take away this darkness; which until it is done no man can see the kingdom of God, or enter into it. And this he doth by sending the word of the gospel into any nation, country, place, or city, as he pleaseth. The gospel does not get ground in any place, nor is restrained from any place or people, by accident, or by the endeavours of men; but it is sent and disposed of according to the sovereign will and pleasure of the Spirit of God. He gifteth, calls, and sends men unto the work of preaching it, Acts 13:2, 4, and disposeth them unto the places where they shall

declare it, either by express revelation, as of old, chap. 16:6–10, or guides them by the secret operations of his providence. Thus the dispensation of the "light of the gospel," as to times, places, and persons, depends on his sovereign pleasure, Ps. 147:19, 20. Wherefore, although we are to take care and pray much about the continuance of the dispensation of the gospel in any place, and its propagation in others, yet need we not to be over-solicitous about it. This work and care the Holy Ghost hath taken on himself, and will carry it on according to the counsel of God and his purposes concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ in this world. And thus far the dispensation of the gospel is only a *causa sine quâ non* of the regeneration of men, and the granting of it depends solely on the will of the Spirit of God.

It is subjective darkness which is of more direct and immediate consideration in this matter, the nature whereof, with what it doth respect, and the influence of it on the minds of men, must be declared, before we can rightly apprehend the work of the Holy Spirit in its removal by regeneration.

This is that whereby the Scripture expresseth the natural depravation and corruption of the minds of men, with respect unto spiritual things and the duty that we owe to God, according to the tenor of the covenant. And two things must be premised to our consideration of it; as,—

1. That I shall not treat of the depravation or corruption of the mind of man by the fall, with respect unto things natural, civil, political, or moral, but merely with regard to things spiritual, heavenly, and evangelical. It were easy to evince, not only by testimonies of the Scripture, but by the experience of all mankind, built on reason and the observation of instances innumerable, that the whole rational soul of man since the fall, and by the entrance of sin, is weakened, impaired, vitiated, in all its faculties and all their operations about their proper and natural objects. Neither is there any relief against these evils, with all those unavoidable perturbations wherewith it is

possessed and actually disordered in all its workings, but by some secret and hidden operation of the Spirit of God, such as he continually exerts in the rule and government of the world. But it is concerning the impotency, defect, depravation, and perversity of the mind with respect unto spiritual things alone, that we shall treat at present. I say, then,—

2. That, by reason of that vice, corruption, or depravation of the minds of all unregenerate men, which the Scripture calls darkness and blindness, they are not able of themselves, by their own reasons and understandings, however exercised and improved, to discern, receive, understand, or believe savingly, spiritual things, or the mystery of the gospel, when and as they are outwardly revealed unto them, without an effectual, powerful work of the Holy Spirit, creating, or by his almighty power inducing, a new saving light into them. Let it be supposed that the mind of a man be no way hurt or impaired by any natural defect, such as doth not attend the whole race of mankind, but is personal only and accidental; suppose it free from contracted habits of vice or voluntary prejudices,—yet upon the proposal of the doctrine and mysteries of the gospel, let it be done by the most skilful masters of the assemblies, with the greatest evidence and demonstration of the truth, it is not able of itself, spiritually and savingly, to receive, understand, and assent unto them, without the especial aid and assistance and operation of the Holy Spirit.

To evince this truth, we may consider, in one instance, the description given us in the Scripture of the mind itself, and its operations with respect unto spiritual things. This we have, Eph. 4:17, 18, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." It is of the Gentiles that the apostle speaks, but the apostle speaks of them on the account of that which is common unto all men by nature; for he treats of their condition with respect unto the faculties of their minds and souls, wherein there is,

as unto the life of God, or spiritual things, no difference naturally among men. And their operations and effects are, for the substance of them, the same.

Some, indeed, give such an account of this text as if the apostle had said, "Do not ye live after the manner of the heathens, in the vileness of those practices, and in their idol-worship. That long course of sin having blinded their understandings, so that they see not that which by the light of nature they are enabled to see, and, by that gross ignorance and obduration of heart, run into all impiety, [they] are far removed from that life which God and nature require of them." It is supposed in this exposition,—(1.) That the apostle hath respect, in the first place, to the practice of the Gentiles, not to their state and condition. (2.) That this practice concerns only their idolatry and idol-worship. (3.) That what is here ascribed unto them came upon them by a long course of sinning. (4.) That the darkness mentioned consists in a not discerning of what might be seen by the light of nature. (5.) That their alienation from the life of God consisted in running into that impiety which was distant or removed from the life that God and nature require. But all these sentiments are so far from being contained in the text as that they are expressly contrary unto it; for,—(1.) Although the apostle doth carry on his description of this state of the Gentiles unto the vile practices that ensued thereon, verse 19, yet it is their state by nature, with respect unto the "life of God," which is first intended by him. This is apparent from what he prescribes unto Christians in opposition thereunto,—namely, "The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," verse 24. (2.) The "vanity" mentioned is subjective in their minds, and so hath no respect to idol-worship, but as it was an effect thereof. The "vanity of their minds" is the principle whereof this walking, be what it will, was the effect and consequent. (3.) Here is no mention nor intimation of any long course of sinning, much less that it should be the cause of the other things ascribed to the Gentiles; whereof, indeed, it was the effect. The description given is that of the state of all men by nature, as is plain from chap. 2:1–3. (4.) The "darkness" here mentioned is opposed unto being "light in

the Lord," chap. 5:8; which is not mere natural light, nor can any by that light alone discern spiritual things, or the things that belong to the life of God. (5.) The life of God here is not that life which God and nature require, but that life which God reveals in, requires, and communicates by, the gospel, through Jesus Christ, as all learned expositors acknowledge. Wherefore the apostle treateth here of the state of men by nature with respect unto spiritual and supernatural things. And three heads he reduceth all things in man unto:—1. He mentions τὸν νοῦν, the "mind;" 2. Τὴν διάνοιαν, the "understanding;" and, 3. Τὴν καρδίαν, the "heart." And all these are one entire principle of all our moral and spiritual operations, and are all affected with the darkness and ignorance whereof we treat.

1. There is the "mind." This is the leading and ruling faculty of the soul. It is that in us which looketh out after proper objects for the will and affections to receive and embrace. Hereby we have our first apprehensions of all things, whence deductions are made to our practice. And hereunto is ascribed ματαιότης, "vanity:" "They walk in the vanity of their mind." Things in the Scripture are said to be vain which are useless and fruitless. Μάταιος, "vain," is from μάτην, "to no purpose," Matt. 15:9. Hence the apostle calls the idols of the Gentiles, and the rites used in their worship, μάταια, "vain things," Acts 14:15. So he expresseth the Hebrew, אַשְׁרֵי-הַבְּלִיָּה, Jonah 2:8, "lying vanities," or אֵין; which is as much as ἀνωφελές, a thing altogether useless and unprofitable, according to the description given of them, 1 Sam. 12:21, הַתְּהוּ אֵין לֹא יִצִּילוּ וְלֹא יִשְׁעוּ יְצִילוּ כִּי-תִהְיֶה הַמָּה,—"Vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain." There is no profit in nor use of that which is vain. As the mind is said to be vain, or under the power of vanity, two things are intended:—(1.) Its natural inclination unto things that are vain,—that is, such as are not a proper nor useful object unto the soul and its affections. It seeks about to lead the soul to rest and satisfaction, but always unto vain things, and that in great variety. Sin, the world, pleasures, the satisfaction of the flesh, with pride of life, are the things which it naturally pursues. And in actings of this nature a vain mind abounds; it multiplies vain imaginations, like the sand on the sea-shore. These

are called "The figments of the hearts of men," Gen. 6:5, which are found to be only "evil continually." These it feigns and frames, abundantly bringing them forth, as the earth doth grass, or as a cloud pours out drops of water. And herein, (2.) It is unstable; for that which is vain is various, inconstant, unfixed, light, as a natural mind is, so that it is like hell itself for confusion and disorder, or the whorish woman described by Solomon, Prov. 7:11, 12. And this hath befallen it by the loss of that fixed regularity which it was created in. There was the same cogitative or imaginative faculty in us in the state of innocency as there remains under the power of sin; but then all the actings of it were orderly and regular,—the mind was able to direct them all unto the end for which we were made. God was, and would have been, the principal object of them, and all other things in order unto him. But now, being turned off from him, the mind in them engageth in all manner of confusion; and they all end in vanity or disappointment. They offer, as it were, their service unto the soul, to bring it in satisfaction. And although they are rejected one after another, as not answering what they pretend unto, yet they constantly arise under the same notion, and keep the whole soul under everlasting disappointments. And from hence it is that the mind cannot assent unto the common principles of religion in a due manner, which yet it cannot deny. This will be farther cleared afterward. Hereon in conversion unto God, we are said to have our minds renewed, Rom. 12:2, and to be "renewed in the spirit of our mind," Eph. 4:23. By the "mind" the faculty itself is intended, the rational principle in us of apprehension, of thinking, discoursing, and assenting. This is renewed by grace, or brought into another habitude and frame, by the implantation of a ruling, guiding, spiritual light in it. The "spirit" of the mind, is the inclination and disposition in the actings of it; these also must be regulated by grace.

2. There is the δᾶνοια, the "understanding." This is the τὸ διακριτικόν, the directive, discerning, judging faculty of the soul, that leads it unto practice. It guides the soul in the choice of the notions which it receives by the mind. And this is more corrupt than the mind itself; for the nearer things come to practice, the more

prevalent in them is the power of sin. This, therefore, is said to be "darkened;" and being so, it is wholly in vain to pretend a sufficiency in it to discern spiritual things without a supernatural illumination. Light, in the dispensation of the gospel, shines, or casts out some rays of itself, into this darkened understanding of men, but that receives it not, John 1:5.

3. There is καρδία, the "heart." This in Scripture is in the soul, the practical principle of operation, and so includes the will also. It is the actual compliance of the will and affections with the mind and understanding, with respect unto the objects proposed by them. Light is received by the mind, applied by the understanding, used by the heart. Upon this, saith the apostle, there is πώρωσις, "blindness." It is not a mere ignorance or incomprehensiveness of the notions of truth that is intended, but a stubborn resistance of light and conviction. An obstinate and obdurate hardness is upon the heart, whence it rejects all the impressions that come upon it from notions of truth. And on these considerations men themselves before conversion are said to be "darkness," Eph. 5:8. There may be degrees in a moral privation, but when it is expressed in the abstract, it is a sign that it is at its height, that it is total and absolute. And this is spoken with respect unto spiritual and saving light only, or a saving apprehension of spiritual truths. There is not in such persons so much as any disposition remaining to receive saving knowledge, any more than there is a disposition in darkness itself to receive light. The mind, indeed, remains a capable subject to receive it, but hath no active power nor disposition in itself towards it; and, therefore, when God is pleased to give us a new ability to understand and perceive spiritual things in a due manner, he is said to give us a new faculty, because of the utter disability of our minds naturally to receive them, 1 John 5:20. Let vain men boast whilst they please of the perfection and ability of their rational faculties with respect unto religion and the things of God, this is the state of them by nature, upon His judgment that must stand for ever.

And, by the way, it may not be amiss to divert here a little unto the consideration of that exposition which the whole world and all things in it give unto this text and testimony concerning the minds of natural men being under the power of vanity, for this is the spring and inexhaustible fountain of all that vanity which the world is filled with. There is, indeed, a vanity which is penal,—namely, that vexation and disappointment which men finally meet withal in the pursuit of perishing things, whereof the wise man treats at large in his Ecclesiastes; but I intend that sinful vanity which the mind itself produces, and that in all sorts of persons, ages, sexes, and conditions in the world. This some of the heathens saw, complained of, reproved, and derided, but yet could never reach to the cause of it, nor free themselves from being under the power of the same vanity, though in a way peculiar and distinct from the common sort, as might easily be demonstrated. But the thing is apparent; almost all that our eyes see or our ears hear of in the world is altogether vain. All that which makes such a noise, such a business, such an appearance and show among men, may be reduced unto two heads:—(1.) The vanity that they bring into the things that are, and that are either good in themselves and of some use, or at least indifferent. So men do variously corrupt their buildings and habitations, their trading, their conversation, their power, their wealth, their relations. They join innumerable vanities with them, which render them loathsome and contemptible, and the meanest condition to be the most suitable to rational satisfaction. (2.) Men find out, and as it were create, things to be mere supporters, countenancers, and nourishers of vanity. Such, in religion, are carnal, pompous ceremonies, like those of the church of Rome, which have no end but to bring in some kind of provision for the satisfaction of vain minds; stage-players, mimics, with innumerable other things of the same nature, which are nothing but theatres for vanity to act itself upon. It were endless but to mention the common effects of vanity in the world. And men are mightily divided about these things. Those engaged in them think it strange that others run not out into the "same compass of excess and riot with themselves, speaking evil of them," 1 Pet. 4:4. They wonder at the perverse, stubborn, and

froward humour which befalls some men, that they delight not in, that they approve not of, those things and ways wherein they find so great a suitableness unto their own minds. Others, again, are ready to admire whence it is that the world is mad on such vain and foolish things as it is almost wholly given up unto. The consideration we have insisted on gives us a satisfactory account of the grounds and reasons hereof. The mind of man by nature is wholly vain, under the power of vanity, and is an endless, fruitful womb of all monstrous births. The world is now growing towards six thousand years old, and yet is no nearer the bottom of the springs of its vanity, or the drawing out of its supplies, than it was the first day that sin entered into it. New sins, new vices, new vanities, break forth continually; and all is from hence, that the mind of man by nature is altogether vain. Nor is there any way or means for putting a stop hereunto in persons, families, cities, nations, but so far as the minds of men are cured and renewed by the Holy Ghost. The world may alter its shape and the outward appearances of things, it may change its scenes, and act its part in new habits and dresses, but it will still be altogether vain so long as natural uncured vanity is predominant in the minds of men; and this will sufficiently secure them from attaining any saving acquaintance with spiritual things.

Again: It is one of the principal duties incumbent on us, to be acquainted with, and diligently to watch over, the remainders of this vanity in our own minds. The sinful distempers of our natures are not presently cured at once, but the healing and removing of them is carried on by degrees unto the consummation of the course of our obedience in this world. And there are three effects of this natural vanity of the mind in its depraved condition to be found among believers themselves:—(1.) An instability in holy duties, as meditation, prayer, and hearing of the word. How ready is the mind to wander in them, and to give entertainment unto vain and fond imaginations, at least unto thoughts and apprehensions of things unsuited to the duties wherein we are engaged! How difficult is it to keep it up unto an even, fixed, stable frame of acting spiritually in spiritual things! How is it ready at every breath to unbend and let

down its intension! All we experience or complain of in this kind is from the uncured relics of this vanity. (2.) This is that which inclines and leads men towards a conformity with and unto a vain world, in its customs, habits, and ordinary converse; which are all vain and foolish. And so prevalent is it herein, and such arguments hath it possessed itself withal to give it countenance, that in many instances of vanity it is hard to give a distinction between them and the whole world that lies under the power of it. Professors, it may be, will not comply with the world in the things before mentioned, that have no other use nor end but merely to support, act, and nourish vanity; but from other things, which, being indifferent in themselves, are yet filled with vanity in their use, how ready are many for a compliance with the course of the world, which lieth in evil and passeth away! (3.) It acts itself in fond and foolish imaginations, whereby it secretly makes provision for the flesh and the lusts thereof; for they all generally lead unto self-exaltation and satisfaction. And these, if not carefully checked, will proceed to such an excess as greatly to taint the whole soul. And in these things lie the principal cause and occasion of all other sins and miscarriages. We have, therefore, no more important duty incumbent on us than mightily to oppose this radical distemper. It is so, also, to attend diligently unto the remedy of it; and this consists, (1.) In a holy fixedness of mind, and an habitual inclination unto things spiritual; which is communicated unto us by the Holy Ghost, as shall be afterward declared, Eph. 4:23, 24. (2.) In the due and constant improvement of that gracious principle,—[1.] By constant watchfulness against the mind's acting itself in vain, foolish, unprofitable imaginations, so far at least [as] that vain thoughts may not lodge in us; [2.] By exercising it continually unto holy spiritual meditations, "minding always the things that are above," Col. 3:2; [3.] By a constant, conscientious humbling of our souls, for all the vain actings of our minds that we do observe;—all which might be usefully enlarged on, but that we must return.

[SECONDLY], The minds of men unregenerate being thus depraved and corrupted, being thus affected with darkness, and thereby being

brought under the power of vanity, we may yet farther consider what other effects and consequents are on the same account ascribed unto it. And the mind of man in this state may be considered, either,—1. As to its dispositions and inclinations; [or], 2. As to its power and actings, with respect unto spiritual, supernatural things:—

1. As to its dispositions, it is (from the darkness described) perverse and depraved, whereby men are "alienated from the life of God," Eph. 4:18; for this alienation of men from the divine life is from the depravation of their minds. Hence are they said to be "alienated and enemies in their mind by wicked works," or by their mind in wicked works, being fixed on them and under the power of them, Col. 1:21. And that we may the better understand what is intended hereby, we may consider both what is this "life of God," and how the unregenerate mind is alienated from it:—

(1.) All life is from God. The life which we have in common with all other living creatures is from him, Acts 17:28; Ps. 104:30. And, (2.) That peculiar vital life which we have by the union of the rational soul with the body is from God also, and that in an especial manner, Gen. 2:7; Job 10:12. But neither of these is anywhere called the "life of God." But it is an especial life unto God which is intended; and sundry things belong thereunto, or sundry things are applied unto the description of it:—(1.) It is the life which God requireth of us, that we may please him here and come to the enjoyment of him hereafter; the life of faith and spiritual obedience by Jesus Christ, Rom. 1:17; Gal. 2:20, "I live by the faith of the Son of God;" Rom. 6., 7. (2.) It is that life which God worketh in us, not naturally by his power, but spiritually by his grace; and that both as to the principle and all the vital acts of it, Eph. 2:1, 5; Phil. 2:13. (3.) It is that life whereby God liveth in us, that is, in and by his Spirit through Jesus Christ: Gal. 2:20, "Christ liveth in me." And where the Son is, there is the Father; whence, also, this life is said to be "hid with him in God," Col. 3:3. (4.) It is the life whereby we live to God, Rom. 6., 7., whereof God is the supreme and absolute end, as he is the principal efficient cause of it. And two things are contained herein:—[1.] That we do all things to

his glory. This is the proper end of all the acts and actings of this life, Rom. 14:7, 8. [2.] That we design in and by it to come unto the eternal enjoyment of him as our blessedness and reward, Gen. 15:1. (5.) It is the life whereof the gospel is the law and rule, John 6:68; Acts 5:20. (6.) A life all whose fruits are holiness and spiritual, evangelical obedience, Rom. 6:22; Phil. 1:11. Lastly, It is a life that dieth not, that is not obnoxious unto death, "eternal life," John 17:3. These things contain the chief concerns of that peculiar spiritual, heavenly life, which is called the "life of God."

The carnal mind is alienated from this life. It hath no liking of it, no inclination to it, but carrieth away the whole soul with an aversation from it. And this alienation or aversation appears in two things:—(1.) In its unreadiness and unaptness to receive instruction in and about the concernments of it. Hence are men dull and "slow of heart to believe," Luke 24:25; Heb. 5:11, 12, "heavy in hearing;" and slow in the apprehension of what they hear. So are all men towards what they do not like, but have an aversation from. This God complains of in his people of old: "My people are foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge," Jer. 4:22. (2.) In the choice and preferring of any other life before it. The first choice a natural mind makes is of a life in sin and pleasure; which is but a death, a death to God, 1 Tim. 5:6, James 5:5,—a life without the law, and before it comes, Rom. 7:9. This is the life which is suited to the carnal mind, which it desires, delights in, and which willingly it would never depart from. Again, if, by afflictions or convictions, it be in part or wholly forced to forsake and give up this life, it will choose, magnify, and extol a moral life, a life in, by, and under the law; though at the last it will stand it in no more stead than the life of sin and pleasure which it hath been forced to forego, Rom. 9:32, 10:3. The thoughts of this spiritual life, this "life of God," it cannot away with. The notions of it are uncouth, the description of it is unintelligible, and the practice of it either odious folly or needless superstition. This is the disposition and inclination of the mind towards spiritual things, as it is corrupt and depraved.

2. The power also of the mind with respect unto its actings towards spiritual things may be considered; and this, in short, is none at all, in the sense which shall be explained immediately, Rom. 5:6. For this is that which we shall prove concerning the mind of a natural man, or of a man in the state of nature: However it may be excited and improved under those advantages of education and parts which it may have received, yet [it] is not able, hath not a power of its own, spiritually and savingly, or in a due manner, to receive, embrace, and assent unto spiritual things, when proposed unto it in the dispensation and preaching of the gospel, unless it be renewed, enlightened, and acted by the Holy Ghost.

This the apostle plainly asserts, 1 Cor. 2:14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

(1.) The subject spoken of is "animalis homo," the "natural man," he who is a natural man. This epithet is in the Scripture opposed unto πνευματικός, "spiritual," 1 Cor. 15:44, Jude 19, where ψυχικοί are described by such as have not the Spirit of God. The foundation of this distinction, and the distribution of men into these two sorts thereby, is laid in that of our apostle, 1 Cor. 15:45, —"The first Adam was made a living soul." Hence every man who hath no more but what is traduced from him is called ψυχικός,—he is a "living soul," as was the first Adam. And, "The last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Hence he that is of him, partaker of his nature, that derives from him, is πνευματικός, a "spiritual man." The person, therefore, here spoken of, or ψυχικός, is one that hath all that is or can be derived from the first Adam, one endowed with a "rational soul," and who hath the use and exercise of all its rational faculties.

Some who look upon themselves almost so near to advancements as to countenance them in magisterial dictates and scornful reflections upon others, tell us that by this "natural man," "a man given up to his pleasures, and guided by brutish affections," and no other, is

intended,—"one that gives himself up to the government of his inferior faculties;" but no rational man, no one that will attend unto the dictates of reason, is at all concerned in this assertion. But how is this proved? If we are not content with bare affirmations, we must at length be satisfied with railing and lying, and all sorts of reproaches. But the apostle in this chapter distributes all men living into πνευματικοί and ψυχικοί, "spiritual" and "natural." He who is not a spiritual man, be he who and what he will, be he as rational as some either presume themselves to be or would beg of the world to believe that they are, is a natural man. The supposition of a middle state of men is absolutely destructive of the whole discourse of the apostle as to its proper design. Besides, this of ψυχικός ἄνθρωπος is the best and softest term that is given in the Scripture to unregenerate men, with respect unto the things of God; and there is no reason why it should be thought only to express the worst sort of them thereby. The Scripture terms not men peculiarly captivated unto brutish affections, ἄνθρωπους ψυχικούς, "natural men," but rather ἄλογα ζῶα φυσικά, 2 Pet. 2:12, "natural brute beasts." And Austin gives us a better account of this expression, Tractat. 98, in Johan:—"Animalis homo, i. e., qui secundum hominem sapit, animalis dictus ab anima, carnalis a carne, quia ex anima et carne constat omnis homo, non percipit ea quæ sunt Spiritus Dei, i. e., quid gratiæ credentibus conferat crux Christi." And another: "Carnales dicimur, quando totos nos voluptatibus damus; spirituales, quando Spiritum Sanctum prævium sequimur; id est, cum ipso sapimus instruente, ipso ducimur auctore. Animales reor esse philosophos qui proprios cogitatus putant esse sapientiam, de quibus recte dicitur, animalis autem homo non recipit ea quæ sunt Spiritus, stultitia quippe est ei," Hieronym. Comment, in Epist. ad Gal. cap. v. And another: in 1 Cor. 2:15;—"The natural man is he who ascribes all things to the power of the reasonings of the mind, and doth not think that he stands in need of aid from above: which is madness; for God hath given the soul that it should learn and receive what he bestows, what is from him, and not suppose that it is sufficient of itself or to itself. Eyes are beautiful and profitable; but if they would see without light, this beauty and power will not profit but hurt them. And the mind, if it would see"

(spiritual things) "without the Spirit of God, it doth but ensnare itself." And it is a sottish supposition, that there is a sort of unregenerate, rational men who are not under the power of corrupt affections in and about spiritual things, seeing the "carnal mind is enmity against God." This, therefore, is the subject of the apostle's proposition,—namely, "a natural man," every one that is so, that is no more but so, that is, every one who is not "a spiritual man," is one who hath not received the Spirit of God, verses 11, 12, one that hath [only] the spirit of a man, enabling him to search and know the things of a man, or to attain wisdom in things natural, civil, or political.

(2.) There is in the words a supposition of the proposal of some things unto the mind of this "natural man;" for the apostle speaks with respect unto the dispensation and preaching of the gospel, whereby that proposal is made, verses 4–7. And these things are "the things of the Spirit of God;" which are variously expressed in this chapter. Verse 2, they are called "Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" verse 7, the "wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God hath ordained;" verse 12, "the things that are freely given to us of God;" verse 16, "the mind of Christ;" and sundry other ways to the same purpose. There are in the gospel, and belong to the preaching of it, precepts innumerable concerning moral duties to be observed towards God, ourselves, and other men; and all these have a coincidence with and a suitableness unto the inbred light of nature, because the principles of them all are indelibly ingrafted therein. These things being in some sense the "things of a man," may be known by the "spirit of a man that is in him," verse 11: howbeit they cannot be observed and practised according to the mind of God without the aid and assistance of the Holy Ghost. But these are not the things peculiarly here intended, but the mysteries, which depend on mere sovereign supernatural revelation, and that wholly; things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" to conceive, verse 9; things of God's sovereign counsel, whereof there were no impressions in the mind of man in his first creation: see Eph. 3:8–11.

(3.) That which is affirmed of the natural man with respect unto these spiritual things is doubly expressed:—[1.] By —"He receiveth them not;" [2.] By —"He cannot know them." In this double assertion,—1st. A power of receiving spiritual things is denied: "He cannot know them; he cannot receive them;" as Rom. 8:7, "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And the reason hereof is subjoined: "Because they are spiritually discerned;" a thing which such a person hath no power to effect. 2dly. A will of rejecting them is implied: "He receiveth them not;" and the reason hereof is, "For they are foolishness unto him." They are represented unto him under such a notion as that he will have nothing to do with them. 3dly. Actually (and that both because he cannot and because he will not), he receives them not. The natural man neither can, nor will, nor doth, receive the things of the Spirit of God;—is altogether incapable of giving them admission in the sense to be explained.

To clear and free this assertion from objections, it must be observed,
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(1.) That it is not the mere literal sense of doctrines or propositions of truth that is intended. For instance, "That Jesus Christ was crucified," mentioned by the apostle, 1 Cor. 2:2, is a proposition whose sense and importance any natural man may understand, and assent unto its truth, and so be said to receive it. And all the doctrines of the gospel may be taught and declared in propositions and discourses, the sense and meaning whereof a natural man may understand. And in the due investigation of this sense, and judging thereon concerning truth and falsehood, lies that use of reason in religious things which some would ignorantly confound with an ability of discerning spiritual things in themselves and their own proper nature. This, therefore, is granted; but it is denied that a natural man can receive the things themselves. There is a wide difference between the mind's receiving doctrines notionally, and its receiving the things taught in them really. The first a natural man can do. It is done by all who, by the use of outward means, do know

the doctrine of the Scripture, in distinction from ignorance, falsehood, and error. Hence, men unregenerate are said to "know the way of righteousness," 2 Pet. 2:21,—that is, notionally and doctrinally; for really, saith our apostle, they cannot. Hereon "they profess that they know God,"—that is, the things which they are taught concerning him and his will,—whilst "in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient," Tit 1:16; Rom. 2:23, 24. In the latter way they only receive spiritual things in whose minds they are so implanted as to produce their real and proper effects, Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22–24. And there are two things required unto the receiving of spiritual things really and as they are in themselves:—

[1.] That we discern, assent unto them, and receive them, under an apprehension of their conformity and agreeableness to the wisdom, holiness, and righteousness of God, 1 Cor. 1:23, 24. The reason why men receive not Christ crucified, as preached in the gospel, is because they see not a consonancy in it unto the divine perfections of the nature of God. Neither can any receive it until they see in it an expression of divine power and wisdom. This, therefore, is required unto our receiving the things of the Spirit of God in a due manner,—namely, that we spiritually see and discern their answerableness unto the wisdom, goodness, and holiness of God; wherein lies the principal rest and satisfaction of them that really believe. This a natural man cannot do.

[2.] That we discern their suitability unto the great ends for which they are proposed as the means of accomplishing. Unless we see this clearly and distinctly, we cannot but judge them weakness and foolishness. These ends being the glory of God in Christ, with our deliverance from a state of sin and misery, with a translation into a state of grace and glory, unless we are acquainted with these things, and the aptness, and fitness, and power of the things of the Spirit of God to effect them, we cannot receive them as we ought; and this a natural man cannot do. And from these considerations, unto which sundry others of the like nature might be added, it appears how and

whence it is that a natural man is not capable of receiving the things of the Spirit of God.

(2.) It must be observed that there is, or may be, a twofold capacity or ability of receiving, knowing, or understanding spiritual things in the mind of a man:—

[1.] There is a natural power, consisting in the suitability and proportionableness of the faculties of the soul to receive spiritual things in the way that they are proposed unto us. This is supposed in all the exhortations, promises, precepts, and threatenings of the gospel; for in vain would they be proposed unto us had we not rational minds and understandings to apprehend their sense, use, and importance, and [were we not] also meet subjects for the faith, grace, and obedience which are required of us. None pretend that men are, in their conversion to God, like stocks and stones, or brute beasts, that have no understanding; for although the work of our conversion is called a "turning of stones into children of Abraham," because of the greatness of the change, and because of ourselves we contribute nothing thereunto, yet if we were every way as such as to the capacity of our natures, it would not become the wisdom of God to apply the means mentioned for effecting of that work. God is said, indeed, herein to "give us an understanding," 1 John 5:20; but the natural faculty of the understanding is not thereby intended, but only the renovation of it by grace, and the actual exercise of that grace in apprehending spiritual things. There are two adjuncts of the commands of God:—1st. That they are equal; 2dly. That they are easy, or not grievous. The former they have from the nature of the things commanded, and the fitness of our minds to receive such commands, Ezek. 18:25; the latter they have from the dispensation of the Spirit and grace of Christ, which renders them not only possible unto us, but easy for us.

Some pretend that whatever is required of us or prescribed unto us in a way of duty, we have a power in and of ourselves to perform. If by this power they intend no more but that our minds, and the other

rational faculties of our souls, are fit and meet, as to their natural capacity, for and unto such acts as wherein those duties do consist, it is freely granted; for God requires nothing of us but what must be acted in our minds and wills, and which they are naturally meet and suited for. But if they intend such an active power and ability as, being excited by the motives proposed unto us, can of itself answer the commands of God in a due manner, they deny the corruption of our nature by the entrance of sin, and render the grace of Christ useless, as shall be demonstrated.

[2.] There is, or may be, a power in the mind to discern spiritual things, whereby it is so able to do it as that it can immediately exercise that power in the spiritual discerning of them upon their due proposal unto it, that is, spiritually; as a man that hath the visive faculty sound and entire, upon the due proposal of visible objects unto him can discern and see them. This power must be spiritual and supernatural; for whereas to receive spiritual things spiritually is so to receive them as really to believe them with faith divine and supernatural, to love them with divine love, to conform the whole soul and affections unto them, Rom. 6:17, 2 Cor. 3:18, no natural man hath power so to do: this is that which is denied in this place by the apostle. Wherefore, between the natural capacity of the mind and the act of spiritual discerning there must be an interposition of an effectual work of the Holy Ghost enabling it thereunto, 1 John 5:20; 2 Cor. 4:6.

Of the assertion thus laid down and explained the apostle gives a double reason: the first taken from the nature of the things to be known, with respect unto the mind and understanding of a natural man; the other from the way or manner whereby alone spiritual things may be acceptably discerned:—

(1.) The first reason, taken from the nature of the things themselves, with respect unto the mind, is, that "they are foolishness." In themselves they are the "wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 2:7;—effects of the wisdom of God, and those which have the impress of the wisdom of

God upon them. And when the dispensation of them was said to be "foolishness," the apostle contends not about it, but tells them, however, it is the "foolishness of God," chap. 1:25; which he doth to cast contempt on all the wisdom of men, whereby the gospel is despised. And they are the "hidden wisdom" of God; such an effect of divine wisdom as no creature could make any discovery of, Eph. 3:9, 10; Job 28:20–22. And they are the "wisdom of God in a mystery," or full of deep, mysterious wisdom. But to the natural man they are "foolishness," not only although they are the wisdom of God, but peculiarly because they are so, and as they are so; for "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Now, that is esteemed foolishness which is looked on either as weak and impertinent, or as that which contains or expresseth means and ends disproportionate, or as that which is undesirable in comparison of what may be set up in competition with it, or is on any other consideration not eligible or to be complied with on the terms whereon it is proposed. And for one or other or all of these reasons are spiritual things,—namely, those here intended, wherein the wisdom of God in the mystery of the gospel doth consist,—foolishness unto a natural man; which we shall demonstrate by some instances:—

[1.] That they were so unto the learned philosophers of old, both our apostle doth testify and the known experience of the first ages of the church makes evident, 1 Cor. 1:22, 23, 26–28. Had spiritual things been suited unto the minds or reasons of natural men, it could not be but that those who had most improved their minds, and were raised unto the highest exercise of their reasons, must much more readily have received and embraced the mysteries of the gospel than those who were poor, illiterate, and came many degrees behind them in the exercise and improvement thereof. So we see it is as to the reception of any thing in nature or morality which, being of any worth, is proposed unto the minds of men; it is embraced soonest by them that are wisest and know most. But here things fell out quite otherwise. They were the wise, the knowing, the rational, the learned men of the world, that made the greatest and longest opposition unto spiritual things, and that expressly and avowedly because they were

"foolishness unto them," and that on all the accounts before mentioned; and their opposition unto them they managed with pride, scorn, and contempt, as they thought "foolish things" ought to be handled.

The profound ignorance and confidence whence it is that some of late are not ashamed to preach and print that it was the learned, rational, wise part of mankind, as they were esteemed or professed of themselves, the philosophers, and such as under their conduct pretended unto a life according to the dictates of reason, who first embraced the gospel, as being more disposed unto its reception than others, cannot be sufficiently admired or despised. Had they once considered what is spoken unto this purpose in the New Testament, or known any thing of the entrance, growth, or progress of Christian religion in the world, they would themselves be ashamed of this folly. But every day in this matter, "prodeunt oratores novi, stulti adolescentuli," who talk confidently, whilst they know neither what they say nor whereof they do affirm.

[2.] The principal mysteries of the gospel, or the spiritual things intended, are by many looked on and rejected as foolish, because false and untrue; though, indeed, they have no reason to think them false, but because they suppose them foolish. And they fix upon charging them with falsity to countenance themselves in judging them to be folly. Whatever concerns the incarnation of the Son of God, the satisfaction that he made for sin and sinners, the imputation of his righteousness unto them that believe, the effectual working of his grace in the conversion of the souls of men,—which, with what belongs unto them, comprise the greatest part of the spiritual things of the gospel,—are not received by many because they are false, as they judge; and that which induceth them so to determine is, because they look on them as foolish, and unsuited unto the rational principles of their minds.

[3.] Many plainly scoff at them, and despise them as the most contemptible notions that mankind can exercise their reasons about.

Such were of old prophesied concerning, 2 Pet. 3:3, 4; and things at this day are come to that pass. The world swarms with scoffers at spiritual things, as those which are unfit for rational, noble, generous spirits to come under a sense or power of, because they are so foolish. But these things were we foretold of, that when they came to pass we should not be troubled or shaken in our minds; yea, the atheism of some is made a means to confirm the faith of others!

[4.] It is not much otherwise with some, who yet dare not engage into an open opposition to the gospel with them before mentioned; for they profess the faith of it, and avow a subjection to the rules and laws of it. But the things declared in the gospel may be reduced unto two heads, as was before observed:—1st. Such as consist in the confirmation, direction, and improvement of the moral principles and precepts of the law of nature. 2dly. Such as flow immediately from the sovereign will and wisdom of God, being no way communicated unto us but by supernatural revelation only. Such are all the effects of the wisdom and grace of God, as he was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; the offices of Christ, his administration of them, and dispensation of the Spirit; with the especial, evangelical, supernatural graces and duties which are required in us with respect thereunto. The first sort of these things many will greatly praise and highly extol; and they will declare how consonant they are to reason, and what expressions suitable unto them may be found in the ancient philosophers. But it is evident that herein also they fall under a double inconvenience: for,—1st. Mostly, they visibly transgress what they boast of as their rule, and that above others; for where shall we meet with any, at least with many, of this sort of men, who in any measure comply with that modesty, humility, meekness, patience, self-denial, abstinence, temperance, contempt of the world, love of mankind, charity, and purity, which the gospel requires under this head of duties? Pride, ambition, insatiable desires after earthly advantages and promotions, scoffing, scorn and contempt of others, vanity of converse, envy, wrath, revenge, railing, are none of the moral duties required in the gospel. And,—2dly. No pretence of an esteem for any one part of the gospel

will shelter men from the punishment due to the rejection of the whole by whom any essential part of it is refused. And this is the condition of many. The things which most properly belong to the mysteries of the gospel, or the unsearchable riches of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, are foolishness unto them; and the preaching of them is called "canting and folly." And some of these, although they go not so far as the friar at Rome, who said that "St Paul fell into great excesses in these things," yet they have dared to accuse his writings of darkness and obscurity; for no other reason, so far as I can understand, but because he insists on the declaration of these spiritual mysteries: and it is not easy to express what contempt and reproach is cast by some preachers on them. But it is not amiss that some have proclaimed their own shame herein, and have left it on record, to the abhorrency of posterity.

[5.] The event of the dispensation of the gospel manifesteth that the spiritual things of it are foolishness to the most; for as such are they rejected by them, Isa. 53:1–3. Suppose a man of good reputation for wisdom and sobriety should go unto others, and inform them, and that with earnestness, evidence of love to them, and care for them, with all kinds of motives to beget a belief of what he proposeth, that by such ways as he prescribeth they may exceedingly increase their substance in this world, until they exceed the wealth of kings,—a thing that the minds of men in their contrivances and designs are intent upon;—if in this case they follow not his advice, it can be for no other reason but because they judge the things proposed by him to be no way suited or expedient unto the ends promised,—that is, to be foolish things. And this is the state of things with respect unto the mysteries of the gospel. Men are informed, in and by the ways of God's appointment, how great and glorious they are, and what blessed consequents there will be of a spiritual reception of them. The beauty and excellency of Christ, the inestimable privilege of divine adoption, the great and precious promises made unto them that do believe, the glory of the world to come, the necessity and excellency of holiness and gospel obedience unto the attaining of everlasting blessedness, are preached unto men, and pressed on

them with arguments and motives filled with divine authority and wisdom; yet after all this, we see how few eventually do apply themselves with any industry to receive them, or at least actually do receive them: for "many are called, but few are chosen." And the reason is, because, indeed, unto their darkened minds these things are foolishness, whatsoever they pretend unto the contrary.

(2.) As the instance foregoing compriseth the reasons why a natural man will never receive the things of the Spirit of God, so the apostle adds a reason why he cannot; and that is taken from the manner whereby alone they may be usefully and savingly received, which he cannot attain unto, "Because they are spiritually discerned." In this whole chapter he insists on an opposition between a natural and a spiritual man, natural things and spiritual things, natural light and knowledge and spiritual. The natural man, he informs us, will, by a natural light, discern natural things: "The things of a man knoweth the spirit of a man." And the spiritual man, by a spiritual light received from Jesus Christ, discerneth spiritual things; for "none knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit of God, and he to whom he will reveal them." This ability the apostle denies unto a natural man; and this he proves,—[1.] Because it is the work of the Spirit of God to endow the minds of men with that ability, which there were no need of in case men had it of themselves by nature; and, [2.] (as he shows plentifully elsewhere), The light itself whereby alone spiritual things can be spiritually discerned is wrought, effected, created in us, by an almighty act of the power of God, 2 Cor. 4:6.

From these things premised, it is evident that there is a twofold impotency in the minds of men with respect unto spiritual things:—(1.) That which immediately affects the mind, a natural impotency, whence it cannot receive them for want of light in itself. (2.) That which affects the mind by the will and affections, a moral impotency, whereby it cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, because unalterably it will not; and that because, from the unsuitableness of the objects unto its will and affections, and to the mind by them, they are foolishness unto it.

(1.) There is in unregenerate men a natural impotency, through the immediate depravation of the faculties of the mind or understanding, whereby a natural man is absolutely unable, without an especial renovation by the Holy Ghost, to discern spiritual things in a saving manner. Neither is this impotency, although absolutely and naturally insuperable, and although it have in it also the nature of a punishment, any excuse or alleviation of the sin of men when they receive not spiritual things as proposed unto them; for although it be our misery, it is our sin;—it is the misery of our persons, and the sin of our natures. As by it there is an unconformity in our minds to the mind of God, it is our sin; as it is a consequent of the corruption of our nature by the fall, it is an effect of sin; and as it exposeth us unto all the ensuing evil of sin and unbelief, it is both the punishment and cause of sin. And no man can plead his sin or fault as an excuse of another sin in any kind. This impotency is natural, because it consists in the deprivation of the light and power that were originally in the faculties of our minds or understandings, and because it can never be taken away or cured but by an immediate communication of a new spiritual power and ability unto the mind itself by the Holy Ghost in its renovation, so curing the depravation of the faculty itself. And this is consistent with what was before declared [concerning] the natural power of the mind to receive spiritual things: for that power respects the natural capacity of the faculties of our minds; this impotency, the depravation of them with respect unto spiritual things.

(2.) There is in the minds of unregenerate persons a moral impotency, which is reflected on them greatly from the will and affections, whence the mind never will receive spiritual things,—that is, it will always and unchangeably reject and refuse them,—and that because of various lusts, corruptions, and prejudices invincibly fixed in them, causing them to look on them as foolishness. Hence it will come to pass that no man shall be judged and perish at the last day merely on the account of his natural impotency. Every one to whom the gospel hath been preached, and by whom it is refused, shall be convinced of positive actings in their minds, rejecting the gospel

from the love of self, sin, and the world. Thus our Saviour tells the Jews that "no man can come unto him, except the Father draw him," John 6:44. Such is their natural impotency that they cannot. Nor is it to be cured but by an immediate divine instruction or illumination; as it is written, "They shall be all taught of God," verse 45. But this is not all; he tells them elsewhere, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," chap. 5:40. The present thing in question was not the power or impotency of their minds, but the obstinacy of their wills and affections, which men shall principally be judged upon at the last day; for "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," chap. 3:19. Hence it follows,—

That the will and affections being more corrupted than the understanding,—as is evident from their opposition unto and defeating of its manifold convictions,—no man doth actually apply his mind to the receiving of the things of the Spirit of God to the utmost of that ability which he hath; for all unregenerate men are invincibly impeded therein by the corrupt stubbornness and perverseness of their wills and affections. There is not in any of them a due improvement of the capacity of their natural faculties, in the use of means, for the discharge of their duty towards God herein. And what hath been pleaded may suffice for the vindication of this divine testimony concerning the disability of the mind of man in the state of nature to understand and receive the things of the Spirit of God in a spiritual and saving manner, however they are proposed unto it; which those who are otherwise minded may despise whilst they please, but are no way able to answer or evade.

And hence we may judge of that paraphrase and exposition of this place which one hath given of late: "But such things as these, they that are led only by the light of human reason, the learned philosophers, etc., do absolutely despise, and so hearken not after the doctrine of the gospel; for it seems folly to them. Nor can they, by any study of their own, come to the knowledge of them; for they are only to be had by understanding the prophecies of the Scripture, and

other such means, which depend on divine revelation, the voice from heaven, descent of the Holy Ghost, miracles," etc. (1.) The natural man is here allowed to be the rational man, the learned philosopher, one walking by the light of human reason; which complies not with their exception to this testimony who would have only such an one as is sensual and given up unto brutish affections to be intended. But yet neither is there any ground (though some countenance be given to it by Hierom) to fix this interpretation unto that expression. If the apostle may be allowed to declare his own mind, he tells us that he intends every one, of what sort and condition soever, "who hath not received the Spirit of Christ." (2.) Οὐ δέχεται is paraphrased by, "Doth absolutely despise;" which neither the word here, nor elsewhere, nor its disposal in the present connection, will allow of or give countenance unto. The apostle in the whole discourse gives an account why so few received the gospel, especially of those who seemed most likely so to do, being wise and learned men, and the gospel being no less than the wisdom of God; and the reason hereof he gives from their disability to receive the things of God, and their hatred of them, or opposition to them, neither of which can be cured but by the Spirit of Christ. (3.) The apostle treats not of what men could find out by any study of their own, but of what they did and would do, and could do no otherwise, when the gospel was proposed, declared, and preached unto them. They did not, they could not, receive, give assent unto, or believe, the spiritual mysteries therein revealed. (4.) This preaching of the gospel unto them was accompanied with and managed by those evidences mentioned,—namely, the testimonies of the prophecies of Scripture, miracles, and the like,—in the same way and manner, and unto the same degree, as it was towards them by whom it was received and believed. In the outward means of revelation and its proposition there was no difference. (5.) The proper meaning of οὐ δέχεται, "receiveth not," is given us in the ensuing reason and explanation of it: Οὐ δύναται γινῶναι, "He cannot know them,"—that is, unless he be spiritually enabled thereunto by the Holy Ghost. And this is farther confirmed in the reason subjoined, "Because they are spiritually discerned." And to wrest this unto the outward means of revelation, which is

directly designed to express the internal manner of the mind's reception of things revealed, is to wrest the Scripture at pleasure. How much better doth the description given by Chrysostom of a natural and spiritual man give light unto and determine the sense of this place:—"The spiritual man is he who liveth by the Spirit, having his mind enlightened by him; having not only an inbred human understanding, but rather a spiritual understanding, bestowed on him graciously, which the Holy Ghost endues the minds of believers withal." But we proceed.

3. Having cleared the impotency to discern spiritual things spiritually that is in the minds of natural men, by reason of their spiritual blindness, or that darkness which is in them, it remains that we consider what is the power and efficacy of this darkness to keep them in a constant and unconquerable aversion from God and the gospel. To this purpose, some testimonies of Scripture must be also considered; for notwithstanding all other notions and disputes in this matter, for the most part compliant with the inclinations and affections of corrupted nature, by them must our judgments be determined, and into them is our faith to be resolved. I say, then, that this spiritual darkness hath a power over the minds of men to alienate them from God; that is, this which the Scripture so calleth is not a mere privation, with an impotency in the faculty ensuing thereon, but a depraved habit, which powerfully, and, as unto them in whom it is, unavoidably, influenceth their wills and affections into an opposition unto spiritual things, the effects whereof the world is visibly filled withal at this day. And this I shall manifest, first in general, and then in particular instances. And by the whole it will be made to appear that not only the act of believing and turning unto God is the sole work and effect of grace,—which the Pelagians did not openly deny, and the semi-Pelagians did openly grant,—but also that all power and ability for it, properly so called, is from grace also.

(1.) Col. 1:13, We are said to be delivered from "the power of darkness." The word signifies such a power as consists in authority or rule, that bears sway, and commands them who are obnoxious

unto it. Hence the sins of men, especially those of a greater guilt than ordinary, are called "works of darkness," Eph. 5:11; not only such as are usually perpetrated in the dark, but such as the darkness also of men's minds doth incline them unto and naturally produce. That, also, which is here called "the power of darkness" is called "the power of Satan," Acts 26:18; for I acknowledge that it is not only or merely the internal darkness or blindness of the minds of men in the state of nature that is here intended, but the whole state of darkness, with what is contributed thereunto by Satan and the world. This the prophet speaks of, Isa. 60:2, "Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee." Such a darkness it is, as nothing can dispel but the light of the Lord arising on and in the souls of men. But all is resolved into internal darkness: for Satan hath no power in men, nor authority over them, but what he hath by means of this darkness; for by this alone doth that "prince of the power of the air" work effectually in "the children of disobedience," Eph. 2:2. Hereby doth he seduce, pervert, and corrupt them; nor hath he any way to fortify and confirm their minds against the gospel but by increasing this blindness or darkness in them, 2 Cor. 4:4.

An evidence of the power and efficacy of this darkness we may find in the devil himself. The apostle Peter tells us that the angels who sinned are "reserved unto judgment" under "chains of darkness," 2 Pet. 2:4. It is plain that there is an allusion in the words unto the dealing of men with stubborn and heinous malefactors. They do not presently execute them upon their offences, nor when they are first apprehended; they must be kept unto a solemn day of trial and judgment. But yet, to secure them that they make no escape, they are bound with chains which they cannot deliver themselves from. Thus God deals with fallen angels; for although yet they "go to and fro in the earth, and walk up and down in it," as also in the air, in a seeming liberty and at their pleasure, yet are they under such chains as shall securely hold them unto the great day of their judgment and execution. That they may not escape their appointed doom, they are held in "chains of darkness." They are always so absolutely and

universally under the power of God as that they are not capable of the vanity of a thought for the subducting themselves from under it. But whence is it that, in all their wisdom, experience, and the long-continued prospect which they have had of their future eternal misery, none of them ever have attempted, nor ever will, a mitigation of their punishment or deliverance from it, by repentance and compliance with the will of God? This is alone from their own darkness, in the chains whereof they are so bound that although they believe their own everlasting ruin, and tremble at the vengeance of God therein, yet they cannot but continue in their course of mischief, disobedience, and rebellion. And although natural men are not under the same obdurateness with them, as having a way of escape and deliverance provided for them and proposed unto them, which they have not; yet this darkness is no less effectual to bind them in a state of sin, without the powerful illumination of the Holy Ghost, than it is in the devils themselves. And this may be farther manifested by the consideration of the instances wherein it puts forth its efficacy in them:—

(1.) It fills the mind with enmity against God, and all the things of God: Col. 1:21, "Ye were enemies in your mind." Rom. 8:7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And the carnal mind there intended is that which is in every man who hath not received, who is not made partaker of, the Spirit of God, in a peculiar saving manner, as is at large declared in the whole discourse of the apostle, verses 5, 6, 9–11; so that the pretence is vain, and directly contradictory to the apostle, that it is only one sort of fleshly, sensual, unregenerate men, whom he intends. This confidence, not only in perverting, but openly opposing, the Scripture, is but of a late date, and that which few of the ancient enemies of the grace of God did rise up unto. Now God in himself is infinitely good and desirable. "How great is his goodness and how great is his beauty!" Zech. 9:17. There is nothing in him but what is suited to draw out, to answer, and fill the affections of the soul. Unto them that know him, he is the only delight, rest, and satisfaction. Whence, then, doth it come to pass that the minds of

men should be filled and possessed with enmity against him? Enmity against and hatred of him who is absolute and infinite goodness seem incompatible unto our human affections; but they arise from this darkness, which is the corruption and depravation of our nature, by the ways that shall be declared.

It is pretended and pleaded by some in these days, that upon an apprehension of the goodness of the nature of God, as manifested in the works and light of nature, men may, without any other advantages, love him above all, and be accepted with him. But as this would render Christ and the gospel, as objectively proposed, if not useless, yet not indispensably necessary, so I desire to know how this enmity against God, which the minds of all natural men are filled withal, if we may believe the apostle, comes to be removed and taken away, so as that they should love him above all, seeing these things are absolute extremes and utterly irreconcilable? This must be either by the power of the mind itself upon the proposal of God's goodness unto it, or by the effectual operation in it and upon it of the Spirit of God. Any other way is not pretended unto; and the latter is that which we contend for. And as to the former, the apostle supposeth the goodness of God, and the proposal of this goodness of God unto the minds of men, not only as revealed in the works of nature, but also in the law and gospel, and yet affirms that "the carnal mind," which is in every man, "is enmity against him;" and in enmity there is neither disposition nor inclination to love. In such persons there can be no more true love of God than is consistent with enmity to him and against him.

All discourses, therefore, about the acceptance they shall find with God who love him above all for his goodness, without any farther communications of Christ or the Holy Spirit unto them, are vain and empty, seeing there never was, nor ever will be, any one dram of such love unto God in the world; for, whatever men may fancy concerning the love of God, where this enmity arising from darkness is unremoved by the Spirit of grace and love, it is but a self-pleasing with those false notions of God which this darkness suggests unto

them. With these they either please themselves or are terrified, as they represent things to their corrupt reason and fancies. Men in this state, destitute of divine revelation, did of old seek after God, Acts 17:27, as men groping in the dark; and although they did in some measure find him and know him, so far as that from the things that were made they came to be acquainted with "his eternal power and Godhead," Rom. 1:20, yet he was still absolutely unto them "the unknown God," Acts. 17:23, whom they "ignorantly worshipped,"—that is, they directed some worship to him in the dedication of their altars, but knew him not: And that they entertained all of them false notions of God is from hence evident, that none of them either, by virtue of their knowledge of him, did free themselves from gross idolatry, which is the greatest enmity unto him, or did not countenance themselves in many impieties or sins from those notions they had received of God and his goodness, Rom. 1:20, 21. The issue of their disquisitions after the nature of God was, that "they glorified him not, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened." Upon the common principles of the first Being and the chiefest good, their fancy or imaginations raised such notions of God as pleased and delighted them, and drew out their affections; which was not, indeed, unto God and his goodness, but unto the effect and product of their own imaginations. And hence it was that those that had the most raised apprehensions concerning the nature, being, and goodness of God, with the highest expressions of a constant admiration of him and love unto him, when by any means the true God indeed was declared unto them as he hath revealed himself and as he will be known, these great admirers and lovers of divine goodness were constantly the greatest opposers of him and enemies unto him. And an uncontrollable evidence this is that the love of divine goodness, which some do fancy in persons destitute of supernatural revelation and other aids of grace, was, in the best of them, placed on the products of their own imaginations, and not on God himself.

But omitting them, we may consider the effects of this darkness working by enmity in the minds of them who have the word preached

unto them. Even in these, until effectually prevailed on by victorious grace, either closely or openly, it exerts itself. And however they may be doctrinally instructed in true notions concerning God and his attributes, yet in the application of them unto themselves, or in the consideration of their own concernment in them, they "always err in their hearts." All the practical notions they have of God tend to alienate their hearts from him, and that either by contempt or by an undue dread and terror; for some apprehend him slow and regardless of what they do, at least one that is not so severely displeased with them as that it should be necessary for them to seek a change of their state and condition. They think that God is such an one as themselves, Ps. 50:21; at least, that he doth approve them, and will accept them, although they should continue in their sins. Now, this is a fruit of the highest enmity against God, though palliated with the pretence of the most raised notions and apprehensions of his goodness; for as it is a heinous crime to imagine an outward shape of the divine nature, and that God is like to men or beasts, —the height of the sin of the most gross idolaters, Rom. 1:23, Ps. 106:20,—so it is a sin of a higher provocation to conceive him so far like unto bestial men as to approve and accept of them in their sins. 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 minds of men, whereby they are made obstinate in their sin to the uttermost. And where this fails, it will on the other hand represent God all fire and fury, inexorable and untractable. See Mic. 6:6, 7; Isa. 33:14; Gen. 4:13.

Moreover, this darkness fills the mind with enmity against all the ways of God; for as "the carnal mind is enmity against God," so "it is not subject unto his law, neither indeed can be." So the apostle informs us that men are "alienated from the life of God," or dislike the whole way and work of living unto him, by reason of the ignorance and blindness that is in them, Eph. 4:18; and it esteems the whole rule and measure of it to be "foolishness," 1 Cor. 1:18, 21. But I must not too long insist on particulars, although in these days, wherein some are so apt to boast in proud swelling words of vanity

concerning the power and sufficiency of the mind, even with respect unto religion and spiritual things, it cannot be unseasonable to declare what is the judgment of the Holy Ghost, plainly expressed in the Scriptures, in this matter; and one testimony thereof will be of more weight with the disciples of Jesus Christ than a thousand declamations to the contrary.

(2.) This darkness fills the mind with wills or perverse lusts that are directly contrary to the will of God, Eph. 2:3. There are θελήματα διανοιῶν, the wills or "lusts of the mind,"—that is, the habitual inclinations of the mind unto sensual objects; it "minds earthly things," Phil. 3:19. And hence the mind itself is said to be "fleshly," Col. 2:18. As unto spiritual things, it is "born of the flesh," and "is flesh." It likes, savours, approves of nothing but what is carnal, sensual, and vain. Nothing is suited unto it but what is either curious, or needless, or superstitious, or sensual and earthly. And therefore are men said to "walk in the vanity of their minds." In the whole course of their lives they are influenced by a predominant principle of vanity. And in this state the thoughts and imaginations of the mind are always set on work to provide sensual objects for this vain and fleshly frame; hence are they said to be "evil continually," Gen. 6:5. This is the course of a darkened mind. Its vain frame or inclination, the fleshly will of it, stirs up vain thoughts and imaginations; it "minds the things of the flesh," Rom. 8:5. These thoughts fix on and represent unto the mind objects suited unto the satisfaction of its vanity and lust. With these the mind committeth folly and lewdness, and the fleshly habit thereof is thereby heightened and confirmed, and this multiplies imaginations of its own kind, whereby men "inflamm themselves," Isa. 57:5, waxing worse and worse. And the particular bent of these imaginations doth answer the predominancy of any especial lust in the heart or mind.

It will be objected, "That although these things are so in many, especially in persons that are become profligate in sin, yet, proceeding from their wills and corrupt, sensual affections, they argue not an impotency in the mind to discern and receive spiritual

things, but, notwithstanding these enormities of some, the faculty of the mind is still endued with a power of discerning, judging, and believing spiritual things in a due manner."

Ans. 1. We do not now discourse concerning the weakness and disability of the mind in and about these things, which is as it were a natural impotency, like blindness in the eyes, which hath been both explained and confirmed before; but it is a moral disability, and that as unto all the powers of nature invincible, as unto the right receiving of spiritual things, which ensues on that corrupt depravation of the mind in the state of nature, that the Scripture calls "darkness" or "blindness," which we intend.

2. Our present testimonies have sufficiently confirmed that all the instances mentioned do proceed from the depravation of the mind. And whereas this is common unto and equal in all unregenerate men, if it produce not in all effects to the same degree of enormity, it is from some beams of light and secret convictions from the Holy Spirit, as we shall afterward declare.

3. Our only aim is, to prove the indispensable necessity of a saving work of illumination on the mind, to enable it to receive spiritual things spiritually; which appears sufficiently from the efficacy of this darkness, whence a man hath no ability to disentangle or save himself; for, also,—

(3.) It fills the mind with prejudices against spiritual things, as proposed unto it in the gospel; and from these prejudices it hath neither light nor power to extricate itself. No small part of its depravation consists in its readiness to embrace them, and pertinacious adherence unto them. Some few of these prejudices may be instanced:—

[1.] The mind, from the darkness that is in it, apprehends that spiritual things, the things of the gospel, as they are proposed, have an utter inconsistency with true contentment and satisfaction. These

are the things which all men, by various ways, do seek after. This is the scent and chase which they so eagerly pursue, in different tracks and paths innumerable. Something they would attain or arrive unto which should satisfy their minds and fill their desires; and this commonly, before they have had any great consideration of the proposals of the gospel, they suppose themselves in the way at least unto, by those little tastes of satisfaction unto their lusts which they have obtained in the ways of the world. And these hopeful beginnings they will not forego: Isa. 57:10, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved." They are ready oftentimes to faint in the pursuit of their lusts, because of the disappointments which they find in them or the evils that attend them; for, which way soever they turn themselves in their course, they cannot but see or shrewdly suspect that the end of them is, or will be, vanity and vexation of spirit. But yet they give not over the pursuit wherein they are engaged; they say not, "There is no hope." And the reason hereof is, because they "find the life their hand." Something or other comes in daily, either from the work that they do, or the company they keep, or the expectation they have, which preserves their hope alive, and makes them unwilling to forego their present condition. They find it to be none of the best, but do not think there can be a better; and, therefore, their only design is to improve or to thrive in it. If they might obtain more mirth, more wealth, more strength and health, more assurance of their lives, more power, more honour, more suitable objects unto their sensual desires, then they suppose it would be better than it is; but as for any thing which differeth from these in the whole kind, they can entertain no respect for it. In this state and condition, spiritual things, the spiritual, mysterious things of the gospel, are proposed unto them. At first view they judge that these things will not assist them in the pursuit or improvement of their carnal satisfactions. And so far they are in the right; they judge not amiss. The things of the gospel will give neither countenance nor help to the lusts of men. Nay, it is no hard matter for them to come to a discovery that the gospel, being admitted in the power of it, will crucify and mortify

those corrupt affections which hitherto they have been given up to the pursuit of; for this it plainly declares, Col. 3:1–5; Tit. 2:11, 12.

There are but two things wherein men seeking after contentment and satisfaction are concerned:—first, the objects of their lusts or desires, and then those lusts and desires themselves. The former may be considered in their own nature, as they are indifferent, or as they are capable of being abused to corrupt and sinful ends. In the first way, as the gospel condemns them not, so it adds nothing to them unto those by whom it is received. It gives not men more riches, wealth, or honour, than they had before in the world. It promises no such thing unto them that do receive it, but rather the contrary. The latter consideration of them it condemns and takes away. And for the desires of men themselves, the avowed work of the gospel is, to mortify them. And hereby the naturally corrupt relation which is between these desires and their objects is broken and dissolved. The gospel leaves men, unless upon extraordinary occasions, their names, their reputations, their wealth, their honours, if lawfully obtained and possessed; but the league that is between the mind and these things in all natural men must be broken. They must no more be looked on as the chiefest good, or in the place thereof, nor as the matter of satisfaction, but must give place to spiritual, unseen, eternal things. This secretly alienates the carnal mind, and a prejudice is raised against it, as that which would deprive the soul of all its present satisfactions, and offer nothing in the room of them that is suitable to any of its desires or affections; for, by reason of the darkness that it is under the power of, it can neither discern the excellency of the spiritual and heavenly things which are proposed unto it, nor have any affections whereunto they are proper and suited, so that the soul should go forth after them. Hereby this prejudice becomes invincible in their souls. They neither do, nor can, nor will admit of those things which are utterly inconsistent with all things wherein they hope or look for satisfaction. And men do but please themselves with dreams and fancies, who talk of such a reasonableness and excellency in gospel truths as that the mind of a natural man will discern such a suitableness in them unto itself, as

thereon to receive and embrace them; nor do any, for the most part, give a greater evidence of the prevalency of the darkness and enmity that are in carnal minds against the spiritual things of the gospel, as to their life and power, than those who most pride and please themselves in such discourses.

[2.] The mind by this darkness is filled with prejudices against the mystery of the gospel in a peculiar manner. The hidden spiritual wisdom of God in it, as natural men cannot receive, so they do despise it, and all the parts of its declaration they look upon as empty and unintelligible notions. And this is that prejudice whereby this darkness prevails in the minds of men, otherwise knowing and learned. It hath done so in all ages, and in none more effectually than in that which is present. But there is a sacred, mysterious, spiritual wisdom in the gospel and the doctrine of it. This is fanatical, chimerical, and foolish to the wisest in the world, whilst they are under the power of this darkness. To demonstrate the truth hereof is the design of the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 1:2,; for he directly affirms that the doctrine of the gospel is the wisdom of God in a mystery; that this wisdom cannot be discerned nor understood by the wise and learned men of the world, who have not received the Spirit of Christ, and, therefore, that the things of it are weakness and foolishness unto them. And that which is foolish is to be despised, yea, folly is the only object of contempt. And hence we see that some, with the greatest pride, scorn, and contempt imaginable, do despise the purity, simplicity, and whole mystery of the gospel, who yet profess they believe it. But to clear the whole nature of this prejudice, some few things may be distinctly observed:—

There are two sorts of things declared in the gospel:—1st. Such as are absolutely its own, that are proper and peculiar unto it,—such as have no footsteps in the law or in the light of nature, but are of pure revelation, peculiar to the gospel. Of this nature are all things concerning the love and will of God in Christ Jesus. The mystery of his incarnation, of his offices and whole mediation, of the dispensation of the Spirit, and our participation thereof, and our

union with Christ thereby, our adoption, justification, and effectual sanctification, thence proceeding, in brief, every thing that belongs unto the purchase and application of saving grace, is of this sort. These things are purely and properly evangelical, peculiar to the gospel alone. Hence the apostle Paul, unto whom the dispensation of it was committed, puts that eminency upon them, that, in comparison, he resolved to insist on nothing else in his preaching, 1 Cor. 2:2; and to that purpose doth he describe his ministry, Eph. 3:7–11. 2dly. There are such things declared and enjoined in the gospel as have their foundation in the law and light of nature. Such are all the moral duties which are taught therein. And two things may be observed concerning them:—(1st.) That they are in some measure known unto men aliunde from other principles. The inbred concreated light of nature doth, though obscurely, teach and confirm them. So the apostle, speaking of mankind in general, saith, Rom. 1:19;—"That which may be known of God is manifested in themselves." The essential properties of God, rendering our moral duty to him necessary, are known by the light of nature; and by the same light are men able to make a judgment of their actions whether they be good or evil, Rom. 2:14, 15. And this is all the light which some boast of, as they will one day find to their disappointment. (2dly.) There is on all men an obligation unto obedience answerable to their light concerning these things. The same law and light which discovereth these things doth also enjoin their observance. Thus is it with all men antecedently unto the preaching of the gospel unto them.

In this estate the gospel superadds two things unto the minds of men:—(1st.) It directs us unto a right performance of these things, from a right principle, by a right rule, and to a right end and purpose; so that they, and we in them, may obtain acceptance with God. Hereby it gives them a new nature, and turns moral duties into evangelical obedience. (2dly.) By a communication of that Spirit which is annexed unto its dispensation, it supplies us with strength for their performance in the manner it prescribes.

Hence it follows that this is the method of the gospel:—first, it proposeth and declareth things which are properly and peculiarly its own. So the apostle sets down the constant entrance of his preaching, 1 Cor. 15:3. It reveals its own mysteries, to lay them as the foundation of faith and obedience. It inlays them in the mind, and thereby conforms the whole soul unto them. See Rom. 6:17; Gal. 4:19; Tit. 2:11, 12; 1 Cor. 3:11; 2 Cor. 3:18. This foundation being laid,—without which it hath, as it were, nothing to do with the souls of men, nor will proceed unto any other thing with them by whom this its first work is refused,—it then grafts all duties of moral obedience on this stock of faith in Christ Jesus. This is the method of the gospel, which the apostle Paul observeth in all his epistles: first, he declares the mysteries of faith that are peculiar to the gospel, and then descends unto those moral duties which are regulated thereby.

But the prejudice we mentioned inverts the order of these things. Those who are under the power of it, when, on various accounts, they give admittance unto the gospel in general, yet fix their minds, firstly and principally, on the things which have their foundation in the law and light of nature. These they know and have some acquaintance with in themselves, and therefore cry them up, although not in their proper place, nor to their proper end. These they make the foundation, according to the place which they held in the law of nature and covenant of works, whereas the gospel allows them to be only necessary superstructions on the foundation. But resolving to give unto moral duties the pre-eminence in their minds, they consider afterward the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, with one or other of these effects; for, first, Some in a manner wholly despise them, reproaching those by whom they are singularly professed. What is contained in them is of no importance, in their judgment, compared with the more necessary duties of morality, which they pretend to embrace; and, to acquit themselves of the trouble of a search into them, they reject them as unintelligible or unnecessary. Or, secondly, They will, by forced interpretations, enervating the spirit and perverting the mystery of them, square and fit them to their own low and carnal apprehensions. They would reduce the

gospel and all the mysteries of it to their own light, as some; to reason, as others; to philosophy, as the rest;—and let them who comply not with their weak and carnal notions of things expect all the contemptuous reproaches which the proud pretenders unto science and wisdom of old cast upon the apostles and first preachers of the gospel. Hereby advancing morality above the mystery and grace of the gospel, they at once reject the gospel and destroy morality also; for, taking it off from its proper foundation, it falls into the dirt,—whereof the conversation of the men of this persuasion is no small evidence.

From this prejudice it is that the spiritual things of the gospel are by many despised and condemned. So God spake of Ephraim, Hos. 8:12, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." The things intended were תּוֹרָתִי [רַבִּי Keri] רַבִּי,—the "great, manifold, various things of the law." That which the law was then unto that people, such is the gospel now unto us. The "torah" was the entire means of God's communicating his mind and will unto them, as his whole counsel is revealed unto us by the gospel. These things he wrote unto them, or made them in themselves and their revelation plain and perspicuous. But when all was done, they were esteemed by them כְּמוֹ-זָר, as is also the gospel, "a thing foreign" and alien unto the minds of men, which they intend not to concern themselves in. They will heed the things that are cognate unto the principles of their nature, things morally good or evil; but for the hidden wisdom of God in the mystery of the gospel, it is esteemed by them as "a strange thing." And innumerable other prejudices of the same nature doth this darkness fill the minds of men withal, whereby they are powerfully, and, as unto any light or strength of their own, invincibly, kept off from receiving of spiritual things in a spiritual manner.

4. Again; the power and efficacy of this darkness in and upon the souls of unregenerate men will be farther evidenced by the consideration of its especial subject, or the nature and use of that faculty which is affected with it. This is the mind or understanding.

Light and knowledge are intellectual virtues or perfections of the mind, and that in every kind whatever, whether in things natural, moral, or spiritual. The darkness whereof we treat is the privation of spiritual light, or the want of it; and therefore are they opposed unto one another: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord," Eph. 5:8. It is, therefore, the mind or understanding which is affected with this darkness, which is vitiated and depraved by it.

Now, the mind may be considered two ways:—(1.) As it is theoretical or contemplative, discerning and judging of things proposed unto it So it is its office to find out, consider, discern, and apprehend the truth of things. In the case before us, it is the duty of the mind to apprehend, understand, and receive, the truths of the gospel as they are proposed unto it, in the manner of and unto the end of their proposal. This, as we have manifested, by reason of its depravation, it neither doth nor is able to do, John 1:5; 1 Cor. 2:14. (2.) It may be considered as it is practical, as to the power it hath to direct the whole soul, and determine the will unto actual operation, according to its light. I shall not inquire at present whether the will, as to the specification of its acts, do necessarily follow the determination of the mind or practical understanding. I aim at no more but that it is the directive faculty of the soul as unto all moral and spiritual operations. Hence it follows:—

(1.) That nothing in the soul, nor the will and affections, can will, desire, or cleave unto any good, but what is presented unto them by the mind, and as it is presented. That good, whatever it be, which the mind cannot discover, the will cannot choose nor the affections cleave unto. All their actings about and concerning them are not such as answer their duty. This our Saviour directs us to the consideration of, Matt. 6:22, 23, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" As the eye is naturally the light of the body, or the means thereof, so is the mind unto the soul. And if darkness be in the eye, not only the eye but the

whole body is in darkness, because in the eye alone is the light of the whole; so if the mind be under darkness, the whole soul is so also, because it hath no light but by the mind. And hence both is illumination sometimes taken for the whole work of conversion unto God, and the spiritual actings of the mind, by the renovation of the Holy Ghost, are constantly proposed as those which precede any gracious actings in the will, heart, and life; as we shall show afterward.

(2.) As the soul can no way, by any other of its faculties, receive, embrace, or adhere unto that good in a saving manner which the mind doth not savingly apprehend; so where the mind is practically deceived, or any way captivated under the power of prejudices, the will and the affections can no way free themselves from entertaining that evil which the mind hath perversely assented unto. Thus, where the mind is reprobate or void of a sound judgment, so as to call good evil, and evil good, the heart, affections, and conversation will be conformable thereunto, Rom. 1:28–32. And in the Scripture the deceit of the mind is commonly laid down as the principle of all sin whatever, 1 Tim. 2:14; Heb. 3:12, 13; 2 Cor. 11:3.

And this is a brief delineation of the state of the mind of man whilst unregenerate, with respect unto spiritual things. And from what hath been spoken, we do conclude that the mind in the state of nature is so depraved, vitiated, and corrupted, that it is not able, upon the proposal of spiritual things unto it in the dispensation and preaching of the gospel, to understand, receive, and embrace them in a spiritual and saving manner, so as to have the sanctifying power of them thereby brought into and fixed in the soul, without an internal, especial, immediate, supernatural, effectual, enlightening act of the Holy Ghost; which what it is, and wherein it doth consist, shall be declared.

CHAPTER IV:

LIFE AND DEATH, NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL, COMPARED

Of death in sin—All unregenerate men spiritually dead—Spiritual death twofold: legal; metaphorical—Life natural, what it is, and wherein it consists—Death natural, with its necessary consequents—The supernatural life of Adam in innocency, in its principle, acts, and power—Differences between it and our spiritual life in Christ—Death spiritual a privation of the life we had in Adam; a negation of the life of Christ—Privation of a principle of all life to God—Spiritual impotency therein—Differences between death natural and spiritual—The use of precepts, promises, and threatenings—No man perisheth merely for want of power—No vital acts in an state of death—The way of the communication of spiritual life—Of what nature are the best works of persons unregenerate—No disposition unto spiritual life under the power of spiritual death.

ANOTHER description that the Scripture gives of unregenerate men, as to their state and condition, is, that they are spiritually dead; and hence, in like manner, it follows that there is a necessity of an internal, powerful, effectual work of the Holy Ghost on the souls of men, to deliver them out of this state and condition by regeneration. And this principally respects their wills and affections, as the darkness and blindness before described doth their minds and understandings. There is a spiritual life whereby men live unto God; this they being strangers unto and alienated from, are spiritually dead. And this the Scripture declares concerning all unregenerate persons, partly in direct words, and partly in other assertions of the same importance. Of the first sort the testimonies are many and express: Eph. 2:1, "Ye were dead in trespasses and sins;" Verse 5, "When we were dead in sins;" Col. 2:13, "And ye being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh;" 2 Cor. 5:14, "If one died

for all, then were all dead;" Rom. 5:15, "Through the offence of one many are dead;" Verse 12, "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And the same is asserted in the second way, where the recovery and restoration of men by the grace of Christ is called their "quickenings," or the bestowing of a new life upon them: for this supposeth that they were dead, or destitute of that life which in this revivification is communicated unto them; for that alone can be said to be quickened which was dead before. See Eph. 2:5; John 5:21, 6:63.

This death that unregenerate persons are under is twofold:—

1. Legal, with reference unto the sentence of the law. The sanction of the law was, that upon sin man should die: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die the death," Gen. 2:17. Upon this sentence Adam and all his posterity became dead in law, morally dead, or obnoxious unto death penally, and adjudged unto it This death is intended in some of the places before mentioned; as Rom. 5:12, and it may be also, 2 Cor. 5:14: for as Christ died, so were all dead. He died penally under the sentence of the law, and all were obnoxious unto death, or dead on that account. But this is not the death which I intend, neither are we delivered from it by regeneration, but by justification, Rom. 8:1.

2. There is in them a spiritual death, called so metaphorically, from the analogy and proportion that it bears unto death natural. Of great importance it is to know the true nature hereof, and how by reason thereof unregenerate men are utterly disabled from doing any thing that is spiritually good, until they are quickened by the almighty power and irresistible efficacy of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore, to declare this aright, we must consider the nature of life and death natural, in allusion whereunto the spiritual estate of unregenerate men is thus described.

Life in general, or the life of a living creature, is "Actus vivificantis in vivificatum per unionem utriusque;"—"The act of a quickening

principle on a subject to be quickened, by virtue of their union." And three things are to be considered in it:—

1. The principle of life itself; and this in man is the rational, living soul, called נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים: Gen. 2:7, "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Having formed the body of man of the dust of the earth, he designed him a principle of life superior unto that of brute creatures, which is but the exurgency and spirit of their temperature and composition, though peculiarly educed by the formative virtue and power of the Holy Ghost, as hath been before declared. He creates for him, therefore, a separate, distinct, animating soul, and infuseth it into the matter prepared for its reception. And as he did thus in the beginning of the creation of the species or kind of the human race, in its first individuals, so he continueth to do the same in the ordinary course of the works of his providence for the continuation of it; for having ordained the preparation of the body by generation, he immediately infuseth into it the "living soul," the "breath of life."

2. There is the "actus primus," or the quickening act of this principle on the principle quickened, in and by virtue of union. Hereby the whole man becomes נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה,—a "living soul;" ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος,—a person quickened by a vital principle, and enabled for all naturally vital actions.

3. There are the acts of this life itself; and they are of two sorts:—(1.) Such as flow from life as life. (2.) Such as proceed from it as such a life, from the principle of a rational soul. Those of the first sort are natural and necessary, as are all the actings and energies of the senses, and of the locomotive faculty, as also what belongs unto the receiving and improving of nutriment. These are acts of life, whence the psalmist proves idols to be dead things from the want of them; so far are they from having a divine life, as that they have no life at all, Ps. 115:4–7. These are acts of life as life, inseparable from it; and their end is, to preserve the union of the whole between the quickening and quickened principles. (2.) There are such acts of life

as proceed from the especial nature of this quickening principle. Such are all the elicited and imperated acts of our understandings and wills; all actions that are voluntary, rational, and peculiarly human. These proceed from that special kind of life which is given by the especial quickening principle of a rational soul.

Hence it is evident wherein death natural doth consist; and three things may be considered in it:—1. The separation of the soul from the body. Hereby the act of infusing the living soul ceaseth unto all its ends; for as a principle of life unto the whole, it operates only by virtue of its union with the subject to be quickened by it. 2. A cessation of all vital actions in the quickened subject; for that union from whence they should proceed is dissolved. 3. As a consequent of these, there is in the body an impotency for and an ineptitude unto all vital operations. Not only do all operations of life actually cease, but the body is no more able to effect them. There remains in it, indeed, "*potentia obedientialis*," a "passive power" to receive life again, if communicated unto it by an external efficient cause,—so the body of Lazarus being dead had a receptive power of a living soul,—but an active power to dispose itself unto life or vital actions it hath not.

From these things we may, by a just analogy, collect wherein life and death spiritual do consist. And to that end some things must be previously observed; as,—1. That Adam in the state of innocency, besides his natural life, whereby he was a living soul, had likewise a supernatural life with respect unto its end, whereby he lived unto God. This is called the "*life of God*," Eph. 4:18, which men now in the state of nature are alienated from;—the life which God requires, and which hath God for its object and end. And this life was in him supernatural: for although it was concreated in and with the rational soul, as a perfection due unto it, in the state wherein and with respect unto the end for which it was made, yet it did not naturally flow from the principles of the rational soul; nor were the principles, faculties, or abilities of it, inseparable from those of the soul itself, being only accidental perfections of them, inlaid in them by especial

grace. This life was necessary unto him with respect unto the state wherein and the end for which he was made. He was made to live unto the living God, and that in a peculiar manner;—to live unto his glory in this world, by the discharge of the rational and moral obedience required of him; and to live afterward in his glory and the eternal enjoyment of him, as his chiefest good and highest reward. That whereby he was enabled hereunto was that life of God, which we are alienated from in the state of nature. 2. In this life, as in life in general, three things are to be considered:—(1.) Its principle; (2.) Its operation; (3.) Its virtue; or habit, act, and power.

(1.) There was a quickening principle belonging unto it; for every life is an act of a quickening principle. This in Adam was the image of God, or an habitual conformity unto God, his mind and will, wherein the holiness and righteousness of God himself was represented, Gen. 1:26, 27. In this image he was created, or it was concreated with him, as a perfection due to his nature in the condition wherein he was made. This gave him an habitual disposition unto all duties of that obedience that was required of him; it was the rectitude of all the faculties of his soul with respect unto his supernatural end, Eccles. 7:29.

(2.) There belonged unto it continual actings from, or by virtue of, and suitable unto, this principle. All the acts of Adam's life should have been subordinate unto his great moral end. In all that he did he should have lived unto God, according unto the law of that covenant wherein he walked before him. And an acting in all things suitably unto the light in his mind, unto the righteousness and holiness in his will and affections, that uprightness, or integrity, or order, that was in his soul, was his living unto God.

(3.) He had herewithal power or ability to continue the principle of life in suitable acts of it, with respect unto the whole obedience required of him; that is, he had a sufficiency of ability for the performance of any duty, or of all, that the covenant required.

And in these three [things] did the supernatural life of Adam in innocency consist; and it is that which the life whereunto we are restored by Christ doth answer. It answers unto it, I say, and supplies its absence with respect unto the end of living unto God according unto the new covenant that we are taken into; for neither would the life of Adam be sufficient for us to live unto God according to the terms of the new covenant, nor is the life of grace we now enjoy suited to the covenant wherein Adam stood before God. Wherefore, some differences there are between them, the principal whereof may be reduced into two heads:—

1. The principle of this life was wholly and entirely in man himself. It was the effect of another cause, of that which was without him,—namely, the good-will and power of God; but it was left to grow on no other root but what was in man himself. It was wholly implanted in his nature, and therein did its springs lie. Actual excitations, by influence of power from God, it should have had; for no principle of operation can subsist in an independence of God, nor apply itself unto operation without his concurrence. But in the life whereunto we are renewed by Jesus Christ, the fountain and principle of it is not in ourselves, but in him, as one common head unto all that are made partakers of him. He is "our life;" and our life (as to the spring and fountain of it) is hid with him in God, Col. 3:3, 4; for he quickeneth us by his Spirit, Rom. 8:11. And our spiritual life, as in us, consists in the vital actings of this Spirit of his in us; for "without him we can do nothing," John 15:5. By virtue hereof we "walk in newness of life," Rom. 6:4. We live, therefore, hereby; yet not so much we, as "Christ liveth in us," Gal. 2:20

2. There is a difference between these lives with respect unto the object of their vital acts, for the life which we now lead by the faith of the Son of God hath sundry objects of its actings which the other had not; for whereas all the actings of our faith and love,—that is, all our obedience,—doth respect the revelation that God makes of himself and his will unto us, there are now new revelations of God in Christ, and consequently new duties of obedience required of us; as will

afterward appear. And other such differences there are between them. The life which we had in Adam and that which we are renewed unto in Christ Jesus are so far of the same nature and kind, as our apostle manifests in sundry places, Eph. 4:23, 24, Col. 3:10, as that they serve to the same end and purpose.

There being, therefore, this twofold spiritual life, or ability of living unto God, that which we had in Adam and that which we have in Christ, we must inquire with reference unto which of these it is that unregenerate men are said to be spiritually dead, or dead in trespasses and sins. Now this, in the first place, hath respect unto the life we had in Adam; for the deprivation of that life was in the sanction of the law, "Thou shalt die the death." This spiritual death is comprised therein, and that in the privation of that spiritual life, or life unto God, which unregenerate men never had, neither de facto nor de jure, in any state or condition. Wherefore, with respect hereunto they are dead only negatively,—they have it not; but with respect unto the life we had in Adam, they are dead privatively,—they have lost that power of living unto God which they had.

From what hath been discoursed, we may discover the nature of this spiritual death, under the power whereof all unregenerate persons do abide: for there are three things in it: 1. A privation of a principle of spiritual life enabling us to live unto God; 2. A negation of all spiritual, vital acts,—that is, of all acts and duties of holy obedience, acceptable unto God, and tending to the enjoyment of him; 3. A total defect and want of power for any such acts whatever. All these are in that death which is a privation of life, such as this is.

FIRST, There is in it a privation of a principle of spiritual life, namely, of that which we had before the entrance of sin, or a power of living unto God according to the covenant of works; and a negation of that which we have by Christ, or a power of living unto God according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. Those, therefore, who are thus dead have no principle or first power of living unto God, or for the performance of any duty to be accepted with him, in

order to the enjoyment of him, according to either covenant. It is with them, as to all the acts and ends of life spiritual, as it is with the body, as to the acts and ends of life natural, when the soul is departed from it. Why else are they said to be dead?

It is objected "That there is a wide difference between death natural and spiritual. In death natural, the soul itself is utterly removed and taken from the body; but in death spiritual it continues. A man is still, notwithstanding this spiritual death, endowed with an understanding, will, and affections; and by these are men enabled to perform their duty unto God, and yield the obedience required of them."

Ans. 1. In life spiritual the soul is unto the principle of it as the body is unto the soul in life natural; for in life natural the soul is the quickening principle, and the body is the principle quickened. When the soul departs, it leaves the body with all its own natural properties, but utterly deprived of them which it had by virtue of its union with the soul. So in life spiritual, the soul is not, in and by its essential properties, the quickening principle of it, but it is the principle that is quickened. And when the quickening principle of spiritual life departs, it leaves the soul with all its natural properties entire as to their essence, though morally corrupted; but of all the power and abilities which it had by virtue of its union with a quickening principle of spiritual life, it is deprived. And to deny such a quickening principle of spiritual life, superadded unto us by the grace of Christ, distinct and separate from the natural faculties of the soul, is, upon the matter, to renounce the whole gospel. It is all one as to deny that Adam was created in the image of God which he lost, and that we are renewed unto the image of God by Jesus Christ. Hence, 2. Whatever the soul acts in spiritual things by its understanding, will, and affections, as deprived of or not quickened by this principle of spiritual life, it doth it naturally, not spiritually, as shall be instantly made to appear.

There is, therefore, in the first place, a disability or impotency unto all spiritual things to be performed in a spiritual manner, in all persons not born again by the Spirit; because they are spiritually dead. Whatever they can do, or however men may call what they do, unless they are endowed with a quickening principle of grace, they can perform no act spiritually vital, no act of life whereby we live to God, or that is absolutely accepted with him. Hence it is said, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. 8:7. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God," verse 8. Men may cavil whilst they please about this carnal mind, and contend that it is only the sensitive part of the soul, or the affections, as corrupted by prejudices and [by] depraved habits of vice, two things are plain in the text; first, That this carnal mind is in all mankind, whoever they be, who are not partakers of the Spirit of God and his quickening power; secondly, That where it is, there is a disability of doing any thing that should please God: which is the sum of what we contend for, and which men may with as little a disparagement of their modesty deny as reject the authority of the apostle. So our Saviour, as to one instance, tells us that "no man can come to him except the Father draw him," John 6:44. And so is it figuratively expressed where, all men being by nature compared unto evil trees, it is affirmed of them that they cannot bring forth good fruit unless their nature be changed, Matt. 7:18, 12:33. And this disability as to good is also compared by the prophet unto such effects as lie under a natural impossibility of accomplishment, Jer. 13:23. We contend not about expressions. This is that which the Scripture abundantly instructeth us in: There is no power in men by nature whereby they are of themselves,—upon the mere proposal of their duty in spiritual obedience, and exhortations from the word of God unto the performance of it, accompanied with all the motives which are meet and suited to prevail with them thereunto,—[able] to perceive, know, will, or do any thing in such a way or manner as that it should be accepted with God, with respect unto our spiritual life unto him, according to his will, and future enjoyment of him, without the efficacious infusion into them, or creation in them, of a new gracious principle or habit enabling them

thereunto; and that this is accordingly wrought in all that believe by the Holy Ghost, we shall afterward declare.

But it will be objected, and hath against this doctrine been ever so since the days of Pelagius, "That a supposition hereof renders all exhortations, commands, promises, and threatenings,—which comprise the whole way of the external communication of the will of God unto us,—vain and useless; for to what purpose is it to exhort blind men to see or dead men to live, or to promise rewards unto them upon their so doing? Should men thus deal with stones, would it not be vain and ludicrous, and that because of their impotency to comply with any such proposals of our mind unto them; and the same is here supposed in men as to any ability in spiritual things."

Ans. 1. There is nothing, in the highest wisdom, required in the application of any means to the producing of an effect, but that in their own nature they are suited thereunto, and that the subject to be wrought upon by them is capable of being affected according as their nature requires. And thus exhortations, with promises and threatenings, are in their kind, as moral instruments, suited and proper to produce the effects of faith and obedience in the minds of men. And the faculties of their souls, their understandings, wills, and affections, are meet to be wrought upon by them unto that end; for by men's rational abilities they are able to discern their nature and judge of their tendency. And because these faculties are the principle and subject of all actual obedience, it is granted that there is in man a natural, remote, passive power to yield obedience unto God, which yet can never actually put forth itself without the effectual working of the grace of God, not only enabling but working in them to will and to do.

2. Exhortations, promises, and threatenings respect not primarily our present ability, but our duty. Their end is, to declare unto us, not what we can do, but what we ought to do; and this is done fully in them. On the other hand, make a general rule, that what God commands or exhorts us unto, with promises made unto our

obedience, and threatenings annexed unto a supposition of disobedience, we have power in and of ourselves to do, or we are of ourselves able to do, and you quite evacuate the grace of God, or at least make it only useful for the more easy discharge of our duty, not necessary unto the very being of duty itself; which is the Pelagianism anathematized by so many councils of old. But in the church it hath hitherto been believed that the command directs our duty, but the promise gives strength for the performance of it.

3. God is pleased to make these exhortations and promises to be "*vehicula gratiæ*,"—the means of communicating spiritual life and strength unto men; and he hath appointed them unto this end, because, considering the moral and intellectual faculties of the minds of men, they are suited thereunto. Hence, these effects are ascribed unto the word, which really are wrought by the grace communicated thereby, James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23. And this, in their dispensation under the covenant of grace, is their proper end. God may, therefore, wisely make use of them, and command them to be used towards men, notwithstanding all their own disability savingly to comply with them, seeing he can, will, and doth himself make them effectual unto the end aimed at.

But it will be farther objected, "That if men are thus utterly devoid of a principle of spiritual life, of all power to live unto God,—that is, to repent, believe, and yield obedience,—is it righteous that they should perish eternally merely for their disability, or their not doing that which they are not able to do? This would be to require brick and to give no straw, yea, to require much where nothing is given. But the Scripture everywhere chargeth the destruction of men upon their wilful sin, not their weakness or disability."

Ans. 1. Men's disability to live to God is their sin. Whatever, therefore, ensues thereon may be justly charged on them. It is that which came on us by the sin of our nature in our first parents, all whose consequents are our sin and our misery, Rom. 5:12. Had it befallen us without a guilt truly our own, according to the law of our

creation and covenant of our obedience, the case would have been otherwise; but on this supposition (sufficiently confirmed elsewhere), those who perish do but feed on the fruit of their own ways.

2. In the transactions between God and the souls of men, with respect unto their obedience and salvation, there is none of them but hath a power in sundry things, as to some degrees and measures of them, to comply with his mind and will, which they voluntarily neglect; and this of itself is sufficient to bear the charge of their eternal ruin. But,—

3. No man is so unable to live unto God, to do any thing for him, but that withal he is able to do any thing against him. There is in all men by nature a depraved, vicious habit of mind, wherein they are alienated from the life of God; and there is no command given unto men for evangelical faith or obedience, but they can and do put forth a free positive act of their wills in the rejection of it, either directly or interpretatively, in preferring somewhat else before it. As "they cannot come to Christ except the Father draw them," so "they will not come that they may have life;" wherefore their destruction is just and of themselves.

This is the description which the Scripture giveth us concerning the power, ability, or disability, of men in the state of nature, as unto the performance of spiritual things. By some it is traduced as fanatical and senseless; which the Lord Christ must answer for, not we, for we do nothing but plainly represent what he hath expressed in his word; and if it be "foolishness" unto any, the day will determine where the blame must lie.

SECONDLY, There is in this death an actual cessation of all vital acts. From this defect of power, or the want of a principle of spiritual life, it is that men in the state of nature can perform no vital act of spiritual obedience,—nothing that is spiritually good, or saving, or

acceptable with God, according to the tenor of the new covenant; which we shall, in the second place, a little explain.

The whole course of our obedience to God in Christ is the "life of God," Eph. 4:18,—that life which is from him in a peculiar manner, whereof he is the especial author, and whereby we live unto him,—which is our end. And the gospel, which is the rule of our obedience, is called "The words of this life," Acts 5:20,—that which guides and directs us how to live to God. Hence all the duties of this life are vital acts, spiritually vital acts, acts of that life whereby we live to God.

Where, therefore, this life is not, all the works of men are dead works. Where persons are dead in sin, their works are "dead works." They are so all of them, either in their own nature, or with respect unto them by whom they are performed, Heb. 9:14. They are dead works because they proceed not from a principle of life, are unprofitable as dead things, Eph. 5:11, and end in death eternal, James 1:15.

We may, then, consider how this spiritual life, which enableth us unto these vital acts, is derived and communicated unto us:—

1. The original spring and fountain of this life is with God: Ps. 36:9, "With thee is the fountain of life." The sole spring of our spiritual life is in an especial way and manner in God. And hence our life is said to be "hid with Christ in God," Col. 3:3; that is, as to its internal producing and preserving cause. But it is thus also with respect unto all life whatever. God is the "living God." All other things are in themselves but dead things; their life, whatever it be, is in him efficiently and eminently, and in them it is purely derivative. Wherefore,—

2. Our spiritual life, as unto the especial nature of it, is specified and discerned from a life of any other kind, in that the fulness of it is communicated unto the Lord Christ as mediator, Col. 1:19; and from his fulness we do receive it, John 1:16. There is a principle of spiritual

life communicated unto us from his fulness thereof, whence he quickeneth whom he pleaseth. Hence he is said to be "our life," Col. 3:4. And in our life, it is not so much we who live, as "Christ that liveth in us," Gal. 2:20; because we act nothing but as we are acted by virtue and power from him, 1 Cor. 15:10.

3. The fountain of this life being in God, and the fulness of it being laid up in Christ for us, he communicates the power and principle of it unto us by the Holy Ghost, Rom. 8:11. That he is the immediate efficient cause hereof, we shall afterward fully evince and declare. But yet he doth it so as to derive it unto us from Jesus Christ, Eph. 4:15, 16; for he is "the life," and "without him," or power communicated from him, "we can do nothing," John 15:5.

4. This spiritual life is communicated unto us by the Holy Ghost, according unto and in order for the ends of the new covenant: for this is the promise of it, That God will first write his law in our hearts, and then we shall walk in his statutes; that is, the principle of life must precede all vital acts. From this principle of life, thus derived and conveyed unto us, are all those vital acts whereby we live to God. Where this is not,—as it is not in any that are "dead in sins," for from the want hereof are they denominated "dead,"—no act of obedience unto God can so be performed as that it should be an act of the "life of God;" and this is the way whereby the Scripture doth express it. The same thing is intended when we say in other words, that without an infused habit of internal inherent grace, received from Christ by an efficacious work of the Spirit, no man can believe or obey God, or perform any duty in a saving manner, so as it should be accepted with him. And if we abide not in this principle, we let in the whole poisonous flood of Pelagianism into the church. To say that we have a sufficiency in ourselves so much as to think a good thought, or to do any thing as we ought, any power, any ability that is our own, or in us by nature, however externally excited and guided by motives, directions, reasons, encouragements, of what sort soever, to believe or obey the gospel savingly in any one instance, is to overthrow the gospel and the faith of the catholic church in all ages.

But it may be objected, "That whereas many unregenerate persons may and do perform many duties of religious obedience, if there be nothing of spiritual life in them then are they all sins, and so differ not from the worst things they do in this world, which are but sins; and if so, unto what end should they take pains about them? Were it not as good for them to indulge unto their lusts and pleasures, seeing all comes to one end? It is all sin, and nothing else. Why do the dispensers of the gospel press any duties on such as they know to be in that estate? What advantage shall they have by a compliance with them? Were it not better to leave them to themselves, and wait for their conversion, than to spend time and labour about them to no purpose?"

Ans. 1. It must be granted that all the duties of such persons are in some sense sins. It was the saying of Austin, that the virtues of unbelievers are *splendida peccata*. This some are now displeased with; but it is easier to censure him than to confute him. Two things attend in every duty that is properly so:—(1.) That it is accepted with God; and, (2.) That it is sanctified in them that do it. But neither of these is in the duties of unregenerate men; for they have not faith, and "without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. 11:6. And the apostle also assures us that unto the defiled and unbelieving,—that is, all unsanctified persons, not purified by the Spirit of grace,—all things are unclean, because their consciences and minds are defiled, Tit. 1:15. So their praying is said to be an "abomination," and their ploughing "sin." It doth not, therefore, appear what is otherwise in them or to them. But as there are good duties which have sin adhering to them, Isa. 64:6, so there are sins which have good in them; for *bonum oritur ex integris, malum ex quocunque defectu*. Such are the duties of men unregenerate. Formally, and unto them, they are sin; materially, and in themselves, they are good. This gives them a difference from, and a preference above, such sins as are every way sinful. As they are duties, they are good; as they are the duties of such persons, they are evil, because necessarily defective in what should preserve them from being so. And on this ground they ought to attend unto them, and may be pressed thereunto.

2. That which is good materially and in itself, though vitiated from the relation which it hath to the person by whom it is performed, is approved, and hath its acceptation in its proper place; for duties may be performed two ways:—(1.) In hypocrisy and pretence. So they are utterly abhorred of God, in matter and manner. That is such a poisonous ingredient as vitiates the whole, Isa. 1:11–15; Hos. 1:4. (2.) In integrity, according unto present light and conviction; which, for the substance of them, are approved. And no man is to be exhorted to do any thing in hypocrisy: see Matt. 10:26. And on this account also, that the duties themselves are acceptable, men may be pressed to them. But,—

3. It must be granted that the same duty, for the substance of it in general, and performed according to the same rule as to the outward manner of it, may be accepted in or from one and rejected in or from another. So was it with the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. And not only so, but the same rejected duty may have degrees of evil for which it is rejected, and be more sinful in and unto one than unto another. But we must observe, that the difference doth not relate merely unto the different states of the persons by whom such are performed,—as, because one is in the state of grace, whose duties are accepted, and another in the state of nature, whose duties are rejected, as their persons are: for although the acceptation of our persons be a necessary condition for the acceptation of our duties, as God first had respect unto Abel, and then unto his offering, yet there is always a real specifical difference between the duties themselves whereof one is accepted and the other rejected, although, it may be, unto us it be every way imperceptible; as in the offerings, of Cain and Abel, that of Abel was offered in faith, the defect whereof in the other caused it to be refused. Suppose duties, therefore, to be every way the same, as to the principles, rule, and ends, or whatever is necessary to render them good in their kind, and they would be all equally accepted with God, by whomsoever they are performed, for he is "no respecter of persons." But this cannot be but where those that perform them are partakers of the same grace. It is, therefore, the wills of men only that vitiate their duties, which are required of them as good; and if

so, they may justly be required of them. The defect is not immediately in their state, but in their wills and their perversity.

4. The will of God is the rule of all men's obedience. This they are all bound to attend unto; and if what they do, through their own defect, prove eventually sin unto them, yet the commandment is just and holy, and the observance of it justly prescribed unto them. The law is the moral cause of the performance of the duties it requires, but not of the sinful manner of their performance; and God hath not lost his right of commanding men, because they by their sin have lost their power to fulfil his command. And if the equity of the command doth arise from the proportioning of strength that men have to answer it, he that contracts the highest moral disability that depraved habits of mind can introduce or a course of sinning produce in him, is freed from owing obedience unto any of God's commands, seeing all confess that such a habit of sin may be contracted as will deprive them in whom it is of all power of obedience! Wherefore,—

5. Preachers of the gospel and others have sufficient warrant to press upon all men the duties of faith, repentance, and obedience, although they know that in themselves they have not a sufficiency of ability for their due performance; for,—(1.) It is the will and command of God that so they should do, and that is the rule of all our duties. They are not to consider what man can do or will do, but what God requires. To make a judgment of men's ability, and to accommodate the commands of God unto them accordingly, is not committed unto any of the sons of men. (2.) They have a double end in pressing on men the observance of duties, with a supposition of the state of impotency described:—[1.] To prevent them from such courses of sin as would harden them, and so render their conversion more difficult, if not desperate. [2.] To exercise a means appointed of God for their conversion, or the communication of saving grace unto them. Such are God's commands, and such are the duties required in them. In and by them God doth use to communicate of his grace unto the souls of men; not with respect unto them as their duties, but as they are ways appointed and sanctified by him unto such ends. And hence

it follows that even such duties as are vitiated in their performance, yet are of advantage unto them by whom they are performed; for,—
1st. By attendance unto them they are preserved from many sins. 2d. In an especial manner from the great sin of despising God, which ends commonly in that which is unpardonable. 3d. They are hereby made useful unto others, and many ends of God's glory in the world. 4th. They are kept in God's way, wherein they may gradually be brought over unto a real conversion unto him.

THIRDLY, In this state of spiritual death there is not, in them who are under the power of it, any disposition active and inclining unto life spiritual. There is not so in a dead carcase unto life natural. It is a subject meet for an external power to introduce a living principle into. So the dead body of Lazarus was quickened and animated again by the introduction of his soul; but in itself it had not the least active disposition nor inclination thereunto. And no otherwise is it with a soul dead in trespasses and sins. There is in it potentia obedientialis, a power rendering it meet to receive the communications of grace and spiritual life; but a disposition thereunto of its own it hath not. There is in it a remote power, in the nature of its faculties, meet to be wrought upon by the Spirit and grace of God; but an immediate power, disposing and enabling it unto spiritual acts, it hath not. And the reason is, because natural corruption cleaves unto it as an invincible, unmovable habit, constantly inducing unto evil, wherewith the least disposition unto spiritual good is not consistent. There is in the soul, in the Scripture language (which some call "canting"), "the body of the sins of the flesh," Col. 2:11; which unless it be taken away by spiritual circumcision, through the virtue of the death of Christ, it will lie dead in to eternity. There is, therefore, in us that which may be quickened and saved; and this is all we have to boast of by nature. Though man by sin be made like the beasts that perish, being brutish and foolish in his mind and affections, yet he is not so absolutely; he retains that living soul, those intellectual faculties, which were the subject of original righteousness, and are meet to receive again the renovation of the image of God by Jesus Christ.

But this also seems obnoxious to an objection from the instances that are given in the Scripture, and whereof we have experience, concerning sundry good duties performed by men unregenerate, and that in a tendency unto living unto God, which argues a disposition to spiritual good. So Balaam desired to "die the death of the righteous;" and Herod "heard John the Baptist gladly, doing many things willingly;" and great endeavours after conversion unto God we find in many who never attain thereunto. So that to say there is no disposition unto spiritual life in any unregenerate person is to make them all equal, which is contrary to experience.

Ans. 1. There is no doubt but that unregenerate men may perform many external duties which are good in themselves, and lie in the order of the outward disposal of the means of conversion; nor is it questioned but they may have real designs, desires, and endeavours after that which is presented unto them as their chiefest good;—but so far as these desires or actings are merely natural, there is no disposition in them unto spiritual life, or that which is spiritually good. So far as they are supernatural, they are not of themselves; for,
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2. Although there are no preparatory inclinations in men, yet there are preparatory works upon them. Those who have not the word, yet may have convictions of good and evil, from the authority of God in their consciences, Rom. 2:14, 15. And the law, in the dispensation of it, may work men unto many duties of obedience, much more may the gospel so do; but whatever effects are hereby produced, they are wrought by the power of God, exerted in the dispensation of the word. They are not educed out of the natural faculties of the minds of men, but are effects of the power of God in them and upon them, for we know that "in the flesh there dwelleth no good thing;" and all unregenerate men are no more, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh."

3. The actings thus effected and produced in men unregenerate are neither fruits of, nor dispositions unto spiritual life. Men that are

spiritually dead may have designs and desires to free themselves from dying eternally, but such a desire to be saved is no saving disposition unto life.

CHAPTER V:

THE NATURE, CAUSES, AND MEANS OF REGENERATION

Description of the state of nature necessary unto a right understanding of the work of the Spirit in regeneration—No possibility of salvation unto persons living and dying in a state of sin—Deliverance from it by regeneration only—The Holy Ghost the peculiar author of this work—Differences about the manner and nature of it—Way of the ancients in explaining the doctrine of grace—The present method proposed—Conversion not wrought by moral suasion only—The nature and efficacy of moral suasion, wherein they consist—Illumination preparatory unto conversion—The nature of grace morally effective only, opened; not sufficient for conversion—The first argument, disproving the working of grace in conversion to be by moral suasion only—The second—The third—The fourth—Wherein the work of the Spirit in regeneration positively doth consist—The use and end of outward means—Real internal efficiency of the Spirit in this work—Grace victorious and irresistible—The nature of it explained; proved—The manner of God's working by grace on our wills farther explained—Testimonies concerning the actual collation of faith by the power of God—Victorious efficacy of internal grace proved by sundry testimonies of Scripture—From the nature of the work wrought by it, in vivification and regeneration—Regeneration considered with respect unto the distinct faculties of the soul; the mind, the will, the affections.

UNTO the description we are to give of the work of regeneration, the precedent account of the subject of it, or the state and condition of them that are to be regenerated, was necessarily to be premised; for upon the knowledge thereof doth a due apprehension of the nature of that work depend. And the occasion of all the mistakes and errors

that have been about it, either of old or of late, hath been a misunderstanding of the true state of men in their lapsed condition, or of nature as depraved. Yea, and those by whom this whole work is derided do now countenance themselves therein by their ignorance of that state, which they will not learn either from the Scripture or experience; for, "*natura sic apparet vitiata ut hoc majoris vitii sit non videre,*" as Austin speaks. It is an evidence of the corruption of nature, that it disenables the minds of men to discern their own corruption. We have previously discharged this work so far as it is necessary unto our present purpose. Many other things might be added in the explication of it, were that our direct design. Particularly, having confined myself to treat only concerning the depravation of the mind and will, I have not insisted on that of the affections, which yet is effectual to retain unregenerate men under the power of sin; though it be far enough from truth that the whole corruption of nature consists therein, as some weakly and atheologically have imagined. Much less have I treated concerning that increase and heightening of the depravation of nature which is contracted by a custom of sinning, as unto all the perverse ends of it. Yet this also the Scripture much insists upon, as that which naturally and necessarily ensues in all in whom it is not prevented by the effectual transforming grace of the Spirit of God; and it is that which seals up the impossibility of their turning themselves to God, Jer. 13:23; Rom. 3:10–19. But that the whole difficulty of conversion should arise from men's contracting a habit or custom of sinning is false, and openly contradictory to the Scripture. These things are personal evils, and befall individuals, through their own default, in various degrees. And we see that amongst men, under the same use of means, some are converted unto God who have been deeply immersed in an habitual course of open sins, whilst others, kept from them by the influence of their education upon their inclinations and affections, remain unconverted. So was it of old between the publicans and harlots on the one hand, and the Pharisees on the other. But my design was only to mention that which is common unto all, or wherein all men universally are equally concerned, who are partakers of the same human nature in its lapsed condition. And

what we have herein declared from the Scriptures will guide us in our inquiry after the work of the Holy Spirit of grace in our deliverance from it.

It is evident, and needs no farther confirmation, that persons living and dying in this estate cannot be saved. This hitherto hath been allowed by all that are called Christians; nor are we to be moved that some who call themselves so do begin to laugh at the disease, and despise the remedy of our nature. Among those who lay any serious and real claim unto Christianity, there is nothing more certain nor more acknowledged than that there is no deliverance from a state of misery for those who are not delivered from a state of sin. And he who denies the necessary perishing of all that live and die in the state of corrupted nature, denies all the use of the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God: for if we may be saved without the renovation of our natures, there was no need nor use of the new creation of all things by Jesus Christ, which principally consists therein; and if men may be saved under all the evils that came upon us by the fall, then did Christ die in vain. Besides, it is frequently expressed that men in that state are "enemies to God," "alienated from him," "children of wrath," "under the curse;" and if such may be saved, so may devils also. In brief, it is not consistent with the nature of God, his holiness, righteousness, or truth, with the law or gospel, nor possible in the nature of the thing itself, that such persons should enter into or be made possessors of glory and rest with God. A deliverance, therefore, out of and from this condition is indispensably necessary to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

This deliverance must be and is by regeneration. The determination of our Saviour is positive, both in this and the necessity of it, before asserted: John 3:3, "Except a man be born again," or from above, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." Whatever sense the "kingdom of God." is taken in, either for that of grace here or of glory hereafter, it is all the same as unto our present purpose. There is no interest in it to be obtained, no participation of the benefits of it, unless a man be

born again, unless he be regenerate. And this determination of our Saviour, as it is absolute and decretory, so it is applicable unto and equally compriseth every individual of mankind. And the work intended by their regeneration, or in being born again, which is the spiritual conversion and quickening of the souls of men, is everywhere ascribed unto them that shall be saved. And although men may have, through their ignorance and prejudices, false apprehensions about regeneration and the nature of it, or wherein it doth consist, yet, so far as I know, all Christians are agreed that it is the way and means of our deliverance from the state of sin or corrupted nature, or rather our deliverance itself; for this both express testimonies of Scripture and the nature of the thing itself put beyond contradiction, Tit. 3:3–5. And those by whom it is exposed unto scorn, who esteem it a ridiculous thing for any one to inquire whether he be regenerate or no, will one day understand the necessity of it, although, it may be, not before it is too late to obtain any advantage thereby.

The Holy Ghost is the immediate author and cause of this work of regeneration. And herein again, as I suppose, we have in general the consent of all. Nothing is more in words acknowledged than that all the elect of God are sanctified by the Holy Ghost. And this regeneration is the head, fountain, or beginning of our sanctification, virtually comprising the whole in itself, as will afterward appear. However, that it is a part thereof is not to be denied. Besides, as I suppose, it is equally confessed to be an effect or work of grace, the actual dispensation whereof is solely in the hand of the Holy Spirit. This, I say, is in words acknowledged by all, although I know not how some can reconcile this profession unto other notions and sentiments which they declare concerning it; for setting aside what men do herein themselves, and others do towards them in the ministry of the word, I cannot see what remains, as they express their loose imaginations, to be ascribed unto the Spirit of God. But at present we shall make use of this general concession, that regeneration is the work of the Holy Ghost, or an effect of his grace. Not that we have any need so to do, but that we may avoid contesting

about those things wherein men may shroud their false opinions under general, ambiguous expressions; which was the constant practice of Pelagius and those who followed him of old. But the Scripture is express in testimonies to our purpose. What our Saviour calls being "born again," John 3:3, he calls being "born of the Spirit," verses 5, 6, because he is the sole, principal, efficient cause of this new birth; for "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," John 6:63; Rom. 8:11. And God saveth us "according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. 3:5. Whereas, therefore, we are said to be "born of God," or to be "begotten again of his own will," John 1:13, James 1:18, 1 John 3:9, it is with respect unto the especial and peculiar operation of the Holy Spirit.

These things are thus far confessed, even by the Pelagians themselves, both those of old and those at present, at least in general; nor hath any as yet been so hardy as to deny regeneration to be the work of the Holy Spirit in us, unless we must except those deluded souls who deny both him and his work. Our sole inquiry, therefore, must be after the manner and nature of this work; for the nature of it depends on the manner of the working of the Spirit of God herein. This, I acknowledge, was variously contended about of old; and the truth concerning it hath scarce escaped an open opposition in any ago of the church. And at present this is the great ball of contention between the Jesuits and the Jansenists; the latter keeping close to the doctrine of the principal ancient writers of the church; the former, under new notions, expressions, and distinctions, endeavouring the re-enforcement of Pelagianism, whereunto some of the elder schoolmen led the way, of whom our Bradwardine so long ago complained. But never was it with so much impudence and ignorance traduced and reviled as it is by some among ourselves; for a sort of men we have who, by stories of wandering Jews, rhetorical declamations, pert cavillings, and proud revilings of those who dissent from them, think to scorn and banish truth out of the world, though they never yet durst attempt to deal openly and plainly with any one argument that is pleaded in its defence and confirmation.

The ancient writers of the church, who looked into these things with most diligence, and laboured in them with most success, as Austin, Hilary, Prosper, and Fulgentius, do represent the whole work of the Spirit of God towards the souls of men under certain heads or distinctions of grace; and herein were they followed by many of the more sober schoolmen, and others of late without number. Frequent mention we find in them of grace, as "preparing, preventing, working, co-working, and confirming." Under these heads do they handle the whole work of our regeneration or conversion unto God. And although there may be some alteration in method and ways of expression,—which may be varied as they are found to be of advantage unto them that are to be instructed,—yet, for the substance of the doctrine, they taught the same which hath been preached amongst us since the Reformation, which some have ignorantly traduced as novel. And the whole of it is nobly and elegantly exemplified by Austin in his Confessions; wherein he gives us the experience of the truth he had taught in his own soul. And I might follow their footsteps herein, and perhaps should for some reasons have chosen so to have done, but that there have been so many differences raised about the explication and application of these terms and distinctions, and the declaration of the nature of the acts and effects of the Spirit of grace intended in them, as that to carry the truth through the intricate perplexities which under these notions have been cast upon it, would be a longer work than I shall here engage into, and too much divert me from my principal intention. I shall, therefore, in general, refer the whole work of the Spirit of God with respect unto the regeneration of sinners unto two heads:—First, That which is preparatory for it; and, secondly, That which is effective of it. That which is preparatory for it is the conviction of sin; this is the work of the Holy Spirit, John 16:8. And this also may be distinctly referred unto three heads:—1. A discovery of the true nature of sin by the ministry of the law, Rom. 7:7. 2. An application of that discovery made in the mind or understanding unto the conscience of the sinner. 3. The excitation of affections suitable unto that discovery and application, Acts 2:37. But these things, so far as they belong unto our present design, have been

before insisted on. Our principal inquiry at present is after the work itself, or the nature and manner of the working of the Spirit of God in and on the souls of men in their regeneration; and this must be both negatively and positively declared:—

FIRST, The work of the Spirit of God in the regeneration of sinners, or the quickening of them who are dead in trespasses and sins, or in their first saving conversion to God, doth not consist in a moral suasion only. By suasion we intend such a persuasion as may or may not be effectual; so absolutely we call that only persuasion whereby a man is actually persuaded. Concerning this we must consider,—1. What it is that is intended by that expression, and wherein its efficacy doth consist; and, 2. Prove that the whole work of the Spirit of God in the conversion of sinners doth not consist therein. And I shall handle this matter under this notion, as that which is known unto those who are conversant in these things from the writings of the ancient and modern divines; for it is to no purpose to endeavour the reducing of the extravagant, confused discourses of some present writers unto a certain and determinate stating of the things in difference among us. That which they seem to aim at and conclude may be reduced unto these heads:—(1.) That God administers grace unto all in the declaration of the doctrine of the law and gospel. (2.) That the reception of this doctrine, the belief and practice of it, is enforced by promises and threatenings. (3.) That the things revealed, taught, and commanded, are not only good in themselves, but so suited unto the reason and interest of mankind as that the mind cannot but be disposed and inclined to receive and obey them, unless overpowered by prejudices and a course of sin. (4.) That the consideration of the promises and threatenings of the gospel is sufficient to remove these prejudices and reform that course. (5.) That upon a compliance with the doctrine of the gospel and obedience thereunto, men are made partakers of the Spirit, with other privileges of the New Testament, and have a right unto all the promises of the present and future life. Now, this being a perfect system of Pelagianism, condemned in the ancient church as absolutely exclusive of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be

fully removed out of our way in our present discourse, though the loose, confused expressions of some be not considered in particular; for if the work of our regeneration do not consist in a moral suasion, —which, as we shall see, contains all that these men will allow to grace,—their whole fabric falls to the ground of its own accord:—

1. As to the nature of this moral suasion, two things may be considered:—(1.) The means, instrument, and matter of it, and this is the word of God; the word of God, or the Scripture, in the doctrinal instructions, precepts, promises, and threatenings of it. This is that, and this is that alone, whereby we are commanded, pressed, persuaded, to turn ourselves and live to God. And herein we comprise the whole, both the law and the gospel, with all the divine truths contained in them, as severally respecting the especial ends whereunto unto they are designed; for although they are distinctly and peculiarly suited to produce distinct effects on the minds of men, yet they all jointly tend unto the general end of guiding men how to live unto God, and to obtain the enjoyment of him. As for those documents and instructions which men have concerning the will of God, and the obedience which he requires of them from the light of nature, with the works of creation and providence, I shall not here take them into consideration: for either they are solitary, or without any superaddition of instructive light by revelation, and then I utterly deny them to be a sufficient outward means of the conversion of any one soul; or they may be considered as improved by the written word as dispensed unto men, and so they are comprised under it, and need not to be considered apart. We will, therefore, suppose that those unto whom the word is declared have antecedaneously thereunto all the help which the light of nature will afford.

(2.) The principal way of the application of this means to produce its effect on the souls of men is the ministry of the church. God hath appointed the ministry for the application of the word unto the minds and consciences of men for their instruction and conversion. And concerning this we may observe two things:—[1.] That the word of God, thus dispensed by the ministry of the church, is the only

ordinary outward means which the Holy Ghost maketh use of in the regeneration of the adult unto whom it is preached. [2.] That it is every way sufficient in its own kind,—that is, as an outward means; for the revelation which is made of God and his mind thereby is sufficient to teach men all that is needful for them to believe and do that they may be converted unto God, and yield him the obedience that he requires. Hence two things do ensue:—

1st. That the use of those means unto men in the state of sin, if they are not complied withal, is sufficient, on the grounds before laid down, to leave them by whom they are rejected inexcusable: so Isa. 5:3–5; Prov. 29:1; 2 Chron. 36:14–16.

2d. That the effect of regeneration or conversion unto God is assigned unto the preaching of the word, because of its efficacy thereunto in its own kind and way, as the outward means thereof, 1 Cor. 4:15; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23.

2. We may consider what is the nature and wherein the efficacy of this moral work doth consist. To which purpose we may observe,—

(1.) That in the use of this means for the conversion of men, there is, preparatory unto that wherein this moral persuasion doth consist, an instruction of the mind in the knowledge of the will of God and its duty towards him. The first regard unto men in the dispensation of the word unto them is their darkness and ignorance, whereby they are alienated from the life of God. This, therefore, is the first end of divine revelation,—namely, to make known the counsel and will of God unto us: see Matt. 4:15, 16; Luke 4:18, 19; Acts 26:16–18, 20:20, 21, 26, 27. By the preaching of the law and the gospel, men are instructed in the whole counsel of God and what he requires of them; and in their apprehension hereof doth the illumination of their minds consist, whereof we must treat distinctly afterward. Without a supposition of this illumination there is no use of the persuasive power of the word; for it consists in affecting the mind with its concernment in the things that it knows, or wherein it is instructed.

Wherefore we suppose in this case that a man is taught by the word both the necessity of regeneration, and what is required of himself thereunto.

(2.) On this supposition, that a man is instructed in the knowledge of the will of God, as revealed in the law and the gospel, there is accompanying the word of God, in the dispensation of it, a powerful persuasive efficacy unto a compliance with it and observance of it. For instance, suppose a man to be convinced by the word of God of the nature of sin; of his own sinful condition, of his danger from thence with respect unto the sin of nature, on which account he is a child of wrath; and of his actual sin, which farther renders him obnoxious unto the curse of the law and the indignation of God; of his duty hereon to turn unto God, and the way whereby he may so do,—there are in the precepts, exhortations, expostulations, promises, and threatenings of the word, especially as dispensed in the ministry of the church, powerful motives to affect, and arguments to prevail with, the mind and will of such a man to endeavour his own regeneration or conversion unto God, rational and cogent above all that can be objected unto the contrary. On some it is acknowledged that these things have no effect; they are not moved by them, they care not for them, they do despise them, and live and die in rebellion against the light of them, "having their eyes blinded by the god of this world." But this is no argument that they are not powerful in themselves, although, indeed, it is that they are not so towards us of themselves, but only as the Holy Spirit is pleased to act them towards us. But in these motives, reasons, and arguments, whereby men are, in and from the word and the ministry of it, urged and pressed unto conversion to God, doth this moral persuasion whereof we speak consist. And the efficacy of it unto the end proposed ariseth from the things ensuing, which are all resolved into God himself:—

[1.] From an evidence of the truth of the things from whence these motives and arguments were taken. The foundation of all the efficacy of the dispensation of the gospel lies in an evidence that the things

proposed in it are not "cunningly-devised fables," 2 Pet. 1:16. Where this is not admitted, where it is not firmly assented unto, there can be no persuasive efficacy in it; but where there is, namely, a prevalent persuasion of the truth of the things proposed, there the mind is under a disposition unto the things whereunto it is persuaded. And hereon the whole efficacy of the word in and upon the souls of men is resolved into the truth and veracity of God; for the things contained in the Scripture are not proposed unto us merely as true, but as divine truths, as immediate revelations from God, which require not only a rational but a sacred religious respect unto them. They are things that the "mouth of the LORD hath spoken."

[2.] There is a proposal unto the wills and affections of men in the things so assented unto, on the one hand as good, amiable, and excellent, wherein the chiefest good, happiness, and utmost end of our natures are comprised, to be pursued and attained; and on the other of things evil and terrible, the utmost evil that our nature is obnoxious unto, to be avoided: for this is urged on them, that to comply with the will of God in the proposals of the gospel, to conform thereunto, to do what he requires, to turn from sin unto him, is good unto men, best for them,—assuredly attended with present satisfaction and future glory. And therein is also proposed the most noble object for our affections, even God himself, as a friend, as reconciled unto us in Christ; and that in a way suited unto his holiness, righteousness, wisdom, and goodness, which we have nothing to oppose unto nor to lay in the balance against. The way, also, of the reconciliation of sinners unto God by Jesus Christ is set out as that which hath such an impress of divine wisdom and goodness upon it, as that it can be refused by none but out of a direct enmity against God himself. Unto the enforcing of these things on the minds of men, the Scripture abounds with reasons, motives, and arguments; the rendering whereof effectual is the principal end of the ministry. On the other hand, it is declared and evidenced that sin is the great debasement of our natures,—the ruin of our souls, the only evil in the world, in its guilt and punishment; and that a

continuance in a state of it, with a rejection of the invitation of the gospel unto conversion to God, is a thing foolish, unworthy of a rational creature, and that which will be everlastingly pernicious. Whereas, therefore, in the judgment of every rational creature, spiritual things are to be preferred before natural, eternal things before temporal, and these things are thus disposed of in infinite goodness, love, and wisdom, they must needs be apt to affect the wills and take the affections of men. And herein the efficacy of the word on the minds and consciences of men is resolved into the authority of God. These precepts, these promises, these threatenings are his, who hath right to give them and power to execute them. And with his authority, his glorious greatness and his infinite power come under consideration; so also doth his goodness and love in an especial manner, with many other things, even all the known properties of his holy nature;—all which concur in giving weight, power, and efficacy unto these motives and arguments.

(3.) Great power and efficacy is added hereunto from the management of these motives in the preaching of the word. Herein with some the rhetorical faculty of them by whom it is dispensed is of great consideration; for hereby are they able to prevail very much on the minds of men. Being acquainted with the inclinations and dispositions of all sorts of persons, the nature of their affections and prejudices, with the topics or kinds and heads of arguments meet to affect them and prevail with them, as also the ways of insinuating persuasive motives into their minds, they express the whole in words elegant, proper, expressive, and suited to allure, draw, and engage them unto the ways and duties proposed unto them. Herein do some place the principal use and efficacy of the ministry in the dispensation of the word; with me it is of no consideration, for our apostle rejects it utterly from any place in his ministry: 1 Cor. 2:4. "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Some of late have put in faint and weak exceptions unto the latter clause, as though not an evidence of the powerful presence of the Spirit of God in the dispensation of the gospel were intended therein, but the

power of working miracles, contrary to the whole scope of the place and consent of the best expositors; but that, by the first clause, the persuasive art of human oratory is excluded from use and efficacy in the preaching of the gospel, none as yet hath had the impudence to deny. But let this also be esteemed to be as useful and efficacious in this work, as to the end of preaching in the conversion of the souls of men, as any can imagine, it shall be granted; only I shall take leave to resolve the efficacy of preaching into two other causes:—

[1.] The institution of God. He hath appointed the preaching of the word to be the means, the only outward ordinary means, for the conversion of the souls of men, 1 Cor. 1:17–20; Mark 16:15, 16; Rom. 1:16. And the power or efficacy of any thing that is used unto an end in spiritual matters depends solely on its divine appointment unto that end.

[2.] The especial gifts that the Spirit of God doth furnish the preachers of the gospel withal, to enable them unto an effectual discharge of their work, Eph. 4:11–13, whereof we shall treat afterward. All the power, therefore, that these things are accompanied withal is resolved into the sovereignty of God; for he hath chosen this way of preaching for this end, and he bestows these gifts on whom he pleaseth. From these things it is that the persuasive motives which the word abounds withal unto conversion, or turning to God from sin, have that peculiar efficacy on the minds of men which is proper unto them.

(4.) We do not therefore, in this case, suppose that the motives of the word are left unto a mere natural operation, with respect unto the ability of them by whom it is dispensed, but, moreover, that it is blessed of God, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit, for the producing of its effect and end upon the souls of men. Only, the operation of the Holy Ghost on the minds and wills of men in and by these means is supposed to extend no farther but unto motives, arguments, reasons, and considerations, proposed unto the mind, so

to influence the will and the affections. Hence his operation is herein moral, and so metaphorical, not real, proper, and physical.

Now, concerning this whole work I affirm these two things:—

1. That the Holy Spirit doth make use of it in the regeneration or conversion of all that are adult, and that either immediately in and by the preaching of it, or by some other application of light and truth unto the mind derived from the word; for by the reasons, motives, and persuasive arguments which the word affords are our minds affected, and our souls wrought upon in our conversion unto God, whence it becomes our reasonable obedience. And there are none ordinarily converted, but they are able to give some account by what considerations they were prevailed on thereunto. But,—

2. We say that the whole work, or the whole of the work of the Holy Ghost in our conversion, doth not consist herein; but there is a real physical work, whereby he infuseth a gracious principle of spiritual life into all that are effectually converted and really regenerated, and without which there is no deliverance from the state of sin and death which we have described; which, among others, may be proved by the ensuing arguments.

The principal arguments in this case will ensue in our proofs from the Scriptures that there is a real physical work of the Spirit on the souls of men in their regeneration. That all he doth consisteth not in this moral suasion, the ensuing reasons do sufficiently evince:—

First, If the Holy Spirit work no otherwise on men, in their regeneration or conversion, but by proposing unto them and urging upon them reasons, arguments, and motives to that purpose, then after his whole work, and notwithstanding it, the will of man remains absolutely indifferent whether it will admit of them or no, or whether it will convert itself unto God upon them or no; for the whole of this work consists in proposing objects unto the will, with respect whereunto it is left undetermined whether it will choose and close

with them or no. And, indeed, this is that which some plead for: for they say that "in all men, at least all unto whom the gospel is preached, there is that grace present or with them that they are able to comply with the word if they please, and so believe, repent, or do any act of obedience unto God according to his will; and if they will, they can refuse to make use of this assistance, aid, power, or grace, and so continue in their sins." What this grace is, or whence men have this power and ability, by some is not declared. Neither is it much to be doubted but that many do imagine that it is purely natural; only they will allow it to be called grace, because it is from God who made us. Others acknowledge it to be the work or effect of grace internal, wherein part of the difference lay between the Pelagians and semi-Pelagians of old. But they all agree that it is absolutely in the power of the will of man to make use of it or not,—that is, of the whole effect on them, or product in them, of this, grace communicated in the way described; for notwithstanding any thing wrought in us or upon us thereby, the will is still left various, flexible, and undetermined. It is true, that notwithstanding the grace thus administered, the will hath power to refuse it and to abide in sin; but that there is no more grace wrought in us but what may be so refused, or that the will can make use of that grace for conversion which it can refuse, is false.

For,—1. This ascribes the whole glory of our regeneration and conversion unto ourselves, and not to the grace of God; for that act of our wills, on this supposition, whereby we convert unto God, is merely an act of our own, and not of the grace of God. This is evident; for if the act itself were of grace, then would it not be in the power of the will to hinder it. 2. This would leave it absolutely uncertain, notwithstanding the purpose of God and the purchase of Christ, whether ever any one in the world should be converted unto God or no; for when the whole work of grace is over, it is absolutely in the power of the will of man whether it shall be effectual or no, and so absolutely uncertain: which is contrary to the covenant, promise, and oath of God unto and with Jesus Christ. 3. It is contrary to express testimonies of Scripture innumerable, wherein actual

conversion unto God is ascribed unto his grace, as the immediate effect thereof. This will farther appear afterward. "God worketh in us both to will and to do," Phil. 2:13. The act, therefore, itself of willing in our conversion is of God's operation; and although we will ourselves, yet it is he who causeth us to will, by working in us to will and to do. And if the act of our will, in believing and obedience, in our conversion to God, be not the effect of his grace in us, he doth not "work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Secondly, This moral persuasion, however advanced or improved, and supposed to be effectual, yet confers no new real supernatural strength unto the soul; for whereas it worketh, yea, the Spirit or grace of God therein and thereby, by reasons, motives, arguments, and objective considerations, and no otherwise, it is able only to excite and draw out the strength which we have, delivering the mind and affections from prejudices and other moral impediments. Real aid, and internal spiritual strength, neither are nor can be conferred thereby. And he who will acknowledge that there is any such internal spiritual strength communicated unto us must also acknowledge that there is another work of the Spirit of God in us and upon us than can be effected by these persuasions. But thus it is in this case, as some suppose: "The mind of man is affected with much ignorance, and usually under the power of many prejudices, which, by the corrupt course of things in the world, possess it from its first actings in the state of infancy. The will and the affections likewise are vitiated with depraved habits, which by the same means are contracted. But when the gospel is proposed and preached unto them, the things contained in it, the duties it requires, the promises it gives, are so rational, or so suited unto the principles of our reason, and the subject-matter of them is so good, desirable, and beautiful, unto an intellectual appetite, that, being well conveyed unto the mind, they are able to discard all the prejudices and disadvantages of a corrupt course under which it hath suffered, and prevail with the soul to desist from sin,—that is, a course of sinning,—and to become a new man in all virtuous conversation." And that this is in the liberty and power of the will is "irrefragably proved" by that sophism of Biel² out of

Scotus and Occam, which contains the substance of what they plead in this cause. Yea, "thus to do is so suitable unto the rational principles of a well-disposed mind, that to do otherwise is the greatest folly and madness in the world." "Especially will this work of conversion be unquestionably wrought if the application of these means of it be so disposed, in the providence of God, as that they may be seasonable with respect unto the frame and condition of the mind whereunto they are applied. And as sundry things are necessary to render the means of grace thus seasonable and congruous unto the present frame, temper, and disposition of the mind, so in such a congruity much of its efficacy doth consist. And this," as it is said, "is the work of the Holy Ghost, and an effect of the grace of God; for if the Spirit of God did not by the word prevent, excite, stir up, and provoke the minds of men, did he not help and assist them, when endeavouring to turn to God, in the removal of prejudices and all sorts of moral impediments, men would continue and abide, as it were, dead in trespasses and sins, at least their endeavours after deliverance would be weak and fruitless."

This is all the grace, all the work of the Spirit of God, in our regeneration and conversion, which some will acknowledge, so far as I can learn from their writings and discourses. But that there is more required thereunto I have before declared; as also, it hath been manifested what is the true and proper use and efficacy of these means in this work. But to place the whole of it herein is that which Pelagius contended for of old; yea, he granted a greater use and efficacy of grace than I can find to be allowed in the present confused discourses of some on this subject.² Wherefore it is somewhat preposterous to endeavour an imposition of such rotten errors upon the minds of men, and that by crude assertions, without any pretence of proof, as is the way of many. And that the sole foundation, of all their harangues,—namely, the suitability of gospel principles and promises unto our wisdom and reason, antecedently unto any saving work of the Spirit on our minds,—is directly contradictory to the doctrine of our apostle, shall afterward be declared. But, it may be, it will be said that it is not so much what is Pelagian and what is not, as

what is truth and what is not, that is to be inquired after; and it is granted that this is, and ought to be, our first and principal inquiry; but it is not unuseful to know in whose steps they tread who at this day oppose the doctrine of the effectual grace of Christ, and what judgment the ancient church made of their principles and opinions.

It is pretended yet farther, that "grace in the dispensation of the word doth work really and efficiently, especially by illumination, internal excitations of the mind and affections; and if thereon the will do put forth its act, and thereby determine itself in the choice of that which is good, in believing and repenting, then the grace thus administered concurs with it, helps and aids it in the perfecting of its act; so that the whole work is of grace." So pleaded the semi-Pelagians, and so do others continue to do. But all this while the way whereby grace, or the Spirit of God, worketh this illumination, excites the affections, and aids the will, is by moral persuasion only, no real strength being communicated or infused but what the will is at perfect liberty to make use of or to refuse at pleasure. Now this, in effect, is no less than to overthrow the whole grace of Jesus Christ, and to render it useless; for it ascribes unto man the honour of his conversion, his will being the principal cause of it. It makes a man to beget himself anew, or to be born again of himself,—to make himself differ from others by that which he hath not in an especial manner received. It takes away the analogy that there is between the forming of the natural body of Christ in the womb, and the forming of his mystical body in regeneration. It makes the act of living unto God by faith and obedience to be a mere natural act, no fruit of the mediation or purchase of Christ; and allows the Spirit of God no more power or efficacy in or towards our regeneration than is in a minister who preacheth the word, or in an orator who eloquently and pathetically persuades to virtue and dehorts from vice. And all these consequences, it may be, will be granted by some amongst us, and allowed to be true; to that pass are things come in the world, through the confident pride and ignorance of men. But not only it may be, but plainly and directly, the whole gospel and grace of Christ are renounced where they are admitted.

Thirdly, This is not all that we pray for, either for ourselves or others, when we beg effectual grace for them or ourselves. There was no argument that the ancients more pressed the Pelagians withal than that the grace which they acknowledged did not answer the prayers of the church, or what we are taught in the Scripture to pray for. We are to pray only for what God hath promised, and for the communication of it unto us in that way whereby he will work it and effect it. Now, he is at a great indifferency in this matter who only prays that God would persuade him or others to believe and to obey, to be converted or to convert himself. The church of God hath always prayed that God would work these things in us; and those who have a real concernment in them do pray continually that God would effectually work them in their hearts. They pray that he would convert them; that he would create a clean heart and renew a right spirit in them; that he would give them faith for Christ's sake, and increase it in them; and that in all these things he would work in them by the exceeding greatness of his power both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. And there is not a Pelagian in the world who ever once prayed for grace, or gracious assistance against sin and temptation, with a sense of his want of it, but that his prayers contradicted his profession. To think that by all these petitions, with others innumerable dictated unto us in the Scripture, and which a spiritual sense of our wants will engage into, we desire nothing but only that God would persuade, excite, and stir us up to put forth a power and ability of our own in the performance of what we desire, is contrary unto all Christian experience. Yea, for a man to lie praying with importunity, earnestness, and fervency, for that which is in his own power, and can never be effected but by his own power, is fond and ridiculous; and they do but mock God who pray unto him to do that for them which they can do for themselves, and which God cannot do for them but only when and as they do it themselves. Suppose a man to have a power in himself to believe and repent; suppose these to be such acts of his will as God doth not, indeed cannot, by his grace work in him, but only persuade him thereunto, and show him sufficient reason why he should so do,—to what purpose should this man, or with what congruity could he, pray that

God would give him faith and repentance? This some of late, as it seems, wisely observing, do begin to scoff at and reproach the prayers of Christians; for whereas, in all their supplications for grace, they lay the foundation of them in an humble acknowledgment of their own vileness and impotency unto any thing that is spiritually good, yea, and a natural aversation from it, and a sense of the power and working of the remainder of indwelling sin in them, hereby exciting themselves unto that earnestness and importunity in their requests for grace which their condition makes necessary (which hath been the constant practice of Christians since there was one in the world), this is by them derided and exposed to contempt. In the room, therefore, of such despised prayers, I shall supply them with an ancient form that is better suited unto their principles.² The preface unto it is, "Ille ad Deum digne elevat manus, ille orationem bonâ conscientîâ effundit qui potest dicere." The prayer followeth:—"Tu nosti Domine quam sanctæ et puræ et mundæ sint ab omni malitia, et iniquitate, et rapina quas ad te extendo manus: quemadmodum justa et munda labia et ab omni mendacio libera quibus offero tibi deprecationes, ut mihi miserearis." This prayer Pelagius taught a widow to make, as it was objected unto him in the Diospolitan synod, that is at Lydda in Palestine, cap. vi.; only he taught her not to say that she had no deceit in her heart, as one among us doth wisely and humbly vaunt that he knoweth of none in his, so every way perfect is the man! Only to balance this of Pelagius, I shall give these men another prayer, but in the margin, not declaring whose it is, lest they should censure him to the gallows. Whereas, therefore, it seems to be the doctrine of some that we have no grace from Christ but only that of the gospel teaching us our duty, and proposing a reward, I know not what they have to pray for, unless it be riches, wealth, and preferments, with those things that depend thereon.

Fourthly, This kind of the operation of grace, where it is solitary,—that is, where it is asserted exclusively to an internal physical work of the Holy Spirit,—is not suited to effect and produce the work of regeneration or conversion unto God in persons who are really in

that state of nature which we have before described. The most effectual persuasions cannot prevail with such men to convert themselves, any more than arguments can prevail with a blind man to see, or with a dead man to rise from the grave, or with a lame man to walk steadily. Wherefore, the whole description before given from the Scripture of the state of lapsed nature must be disproved and removed out of the way before this grace can be thought to be sufficient for the regeneration and conversion of men in that estate. But some proceed on other principles. "Men," they say, "have by nature certain notions and principles concerning God and the obedience due unto him, which are demonstrable by the light of reason; and certain abilities of mind to make use of them unto their proper end." But they grant, at least some of them do, that "however these principles may be improved and acted by those abilities, yet they are not sufficient, or will not eventually be effectual, to bring men unto the life of God, or to enable them so to believe in him, love him, and obey him, as that they may come at length unto the enjoyment of him; at least, they will not do this safely and easily, but through much danger and confusion: wherefore God, out of his goodness and love to mankind, hath made a farther revelation of himself by Jesus Christ in the gospel, with the especial way whereby his anger against sin is averted, and peace made for sinners; which men had before only a confused apprehension and hope about. Now, the things received, proposed, and prescribed in the gospel, are so good, so rational, so every way suited unto the principles of our being, the nature of our intellectual constitutions, or the reason of men, and those fortified with such rational and powerful motives, in the promises and threatenings of it, representing unto us on the one hand the chiefest good which our nature is capable of, and on the other the highest evil to be avoided that we are obnoxious unto, that they can be refused or rejected by none but out of a brutish love of sin, or the efficacy of depraved habits, contracted by a vicious course of living. And herein consists the grace of God towards men, especially as the Holy Ghost is pleased to make use of these things in the dispensation of the gospel by the ministry of the church; for when the reason of men is by these means excited so far as to cast off

prejudices, and enabled thereby to make a right judgment of what is proposed unto it, it prevails with them to convert to God, to change their lives, and yield obedience according to the rule of the gospel, that they may be saved."

And no doubt this were a notable system of Christian doctrine, especially as it is by some rhetorically blended or theatrically represented in feigned stories and apologues, were it not defective in one or two things: for, first, it is exclusive of a supposition of the fall of man, at least as unto the depravation of our nature which ensued thereon, and, secondly, of all real effective grace dispensed by Jesus Christ; which render it a fantastic dream, alien from the design and doctrine of the gospel. But it is a fond thing to discourse with men about either regeneration or conversion unto God by whom these things are denied.

Such a work of the Holy Spirit we must, therefore, inquire after as whereby the mind is effectually renewed, the heart changed, the affections sanctified, all actually and effectually, or no deliverance will be wrought, obtained, or ensue, out of the estate described; for notwithstanding the utmost improvement of our minds and reasons that can be imagined, and the most eminent proposal of the truths of the gospel, accompanied with the most powerful enforcements of duty and obedience that the nature of the things themselves will afford, yet the mind of man in the state of nature, without a supernatural elevation by grace, is not able so to apprehend them as that its apprehension should be spiritual, saving, or proper unto the things apprehended. And notwithstanding the perception which the mind may attain unto in the truth of gospel proposals, and the conviction it may have of the necessity of obedience, yet is not the will able to apply itself unto any spiritual act thereof, without an ability wrought immediately in it by the power of the Spirit of God; or rather, unless the Spirit of God by his grace do effect the act of willing in it. Wherefore, not to multiply arguments, we conclude that the most effectual use of outward means alone is not all the grace

that is necessary unto, nor all that is actually put forth in, the regeneration of the souls of men.

Having thus evidenced wherein the work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of the souls of men doth not consist,—namely, in a supposed congruous persuasion of their minds, where it is alone,—

SECONDLY, I shall proceed to show wherein it doth consist, and what is the true nature of it. And to this purpose I say,—

1. Whatever efficacy that moral operation which accompanies, or is the effect of, the preaching of the word, as blessed and used by the Holy Spirit, is of, or may be supposed to be of, or is possible that it should be of, in and towards them that are unregenerate, we do willingly ascribe unto it. We grant that in the work of regeneration, the Holy Spirit, towards those that are adult, doth make use of the word, both the law and the gospel, and the ministry of the church in the dispensation of it, as the ordinary means thereof; yea, this is ordinarily the whole external means that is made use of in this work, and an efficacy proper unto it it is accompanied withal. Whereas, therefore, some contend that there is no more needful to the conversion of sinners but the preaching of the word unto them who are congruously disposed to receive it, and that the whole of the grace of God consists in the effectual application of it unto the minds and affections of men, whereby they are enabled to comply with it, and turn unto God by faith and repentance, they do not ascribe a greater power unto the word than we do, by whom this administration of it is denied to be the total cause of conversion; for we assign the same power to the word as they do, and more also, only we affirm that there is an effect to be wrought in this work which all this power, if alone, is insufficient for. But in its own kind it is sufficient and effectual, so far as that the effect of regeneration or conversion unto God is ascribed thereunto. This we have declared before.

2. There is not only a moral but a physical immediate operation of the Spirit, by his power and grace, or his powerful grace, upon the minds or souls of men in their regeneration. This is that which we must cleave to, or all the glory of God's grace is lost, and the grace administered by Christ neglected. So is it asserted, Eph. 1:18–20, "That ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." The power here mentioned hath an "exceeding greatness" ascribed unto it, with respect unto the effect produced by it. The power of God in itself is, as unto all acts, equally infinite,—he is omnipotent; but some effects are greater than others, and carry in them more than ordinary impressions of it. Such is that here intended, whereby God makes men to be believers, and preserves them when they are so. And unto this power of God there is an actual operation or efficiency ascribed,—the "working of his mighty power." And the nature of this operation or efficiency is declared to be of the same kind with that which was exerted in the raising of Christ from the dead; and this was by a real physical efficiency of divine power. This, therefore, is here testified, that the work of God towards believers, either to make them so or preserve them such,—for all is one as unto our present purpose,—consists in the acting of his divine power by a real internal efficiency. So God is said to "fulfil in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power," 2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Pet. 1:3. And hence the work of grace in conversion is constantly expressed by words denoting a real internal efficiency; such as creating, quickening, forming, giving a new heart, whereof afterward. Wherever this word is spoken with respect unto an active efficiency, it is ascribed unto God; he creates us anew, he quickens us, he begets us of his own will. But where it is spoken with respect unto us, there it is passively expressed; we are created in Christ Jesus, we are new creatures, we are born again, and the like; which one observation is sufficient to evert the whole hypothesis of Arminian grace. Unless a work wrought by power, and that real and immediate, be intended herein, such a work may neither be supposed possible, nor can be expressed. Wherefore, it is plain in the Scripture that the Spirit of

God works internally, immediately, efficiently, in and upon the minds of men in their regeneration. The new birth is the effect of an act of his power and grace; or, no man is born again but it is by the inward efficiency of the Spirit.

3. This internal efficiency of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, as to the event, is infallible, victorious, irresistible, or always efficacious. But in this assertion we suppose that the measure of the efficacy of grace and the end to be attained are fixed by the will of God. As to that end whereunto of God it is designed, it is always prevalent or effectual, and cannot be resisted, or it will effectually work what God designs it to work: for wherein he "will work, none shall let him;" and "who hath resisted his will?" There are many motions of grace, even in the hearts of believers, which are thus far resisted, as that they attain not that effect which in their own nature they have a tendency unto. Were it otherwise, all believers would be perfect. But it is manifest in experience that we do not always answer the inclinations of grace, at least as unto the degree which it moves towards. But yet even such motions also, if they are of and from saving grace, are effectual so far, and for all those ends which they are designed unto in the purpose of God; for his will shall not be frustrated in any instance. And where any work of grace is not effectual, God never intended it should be so, nor did put forth that power of grace which was necessary to make it so. Wherefore, in or towards whomsoever the Holy Spirit puts forth his power, or acts his grace for their regeneration, he removes all obstacles, overcomes all oppositions, and infallibly produceth the effect intended. This proposition being of great importance to the glory of God's grace, and most signally opposed by the patrons of corrupted nature and man's free-will in the state thereof, must be both explained and confirmed. We say, therefore,—

(1.) The power which the Holy Ghost puts forth in our regeneration is such, in its acting or exercise, as our minds, wills, and affections, are suited to be wrought upon, and to be affected by it, according to their natures and natural operations: "Turn thou me, and I shall be

turned; draw me, and I shall run after thee." He doth not act in them any otherwise than they themselves are meet to be moved and move, to be acted and act, according to their own nature, power, and ability. He draws us with "the cords of a man." And the work itself is expressed by persuading,— "God shall persuade Japheth;" and alluring,— "I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her:" for as it is certainly effectual, so it carries no more repugnancy unto our faculties than a prevalent persuasion doth. So that,—

(2.) He doth not, in our regeneration, possess the mind with any enthusiastical impressions, nor act absolutely upon us as he did in extraordinary prophetic inspirations of old, where the minds and organs of the bodies of men were merely passive instruments, moved by him above their own natural capacity and activity, not only as to the principle of working, but as to the manner of operation; but he works on the minds of men in and by their own natural actings, through an immediate influence and impression of his power: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." He "worketh both to will and to do."

(3.) He therefore offers no violence or compulsion unto the will. This that faculty is not naturally capable to give admission unto. If it be compelled, it is destroyed. And the mention that is made in the Scripture of compelling ("Compel them to come in") respects the certainty of the event, not the manner of the operation on them. But whereas the will, in the depraved condition of fallen nature, is not only habitually filled and possessed with an aversion from that which is good spiritually ("Alienated from the life of God"), but also continually acts an opposition unto it, as being under the power of the "carnal mind," which is "enmity against God;" and whereas this grace of the Spirit in conversion doth prevail against all this opposition, and is effectual and victorious over it,—it will be inquired how this can any otherwise be done but by a kind of violence and compulsion, seeing we have evinced already that moral persuasion and objective allurements is not sufficient thereunto? Ans. It is

acknowledged that in the work of conversion unto God, though not in the very act of it, there is a reaction between grace and the will, their acts being contrary, and that grace is therein victorious, and yet no violence or compulsion is offered unto the will; for,—

[1.] The opposition is not *ad idem*. The enmity and opposition that is acted by the will against grace is against it as objectively proposed unto it. So do men "resist the Holy Ghost,"—that is, in the external dispensation of grace by the word. And if that be alone, they may always resist it; the enmity that is in them will prevail against it: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." The will, therefore, is not forced by any power put forth in grace, in that way wherein it is capable of making opposition unto it, but the prevalency of grace is of it as it is internal, working really and physically; which is not the object of the will's opposition, for it is not proposed unto it as that which it may accept or refuse, but worketh effectually in it.

[2.] The will, in the first act of conversion (as even sundry of the schoolmen acknowledge), acts not but as it is acted, moves not but as it is moved; and therefore is passive therein, in the sense immediately to be explained. And if this be not so, it cannot be avoided but that the act of our turning unto God is a mere natural act, and not spiritual or gracious; for it is an act of the will, not enabled thereunto antecedently by grace. Wherefore it must be granted, and it shall be proved, that, in order of nature, the acting of grace in the will in our conversion is antecedent unto its own acting; though in the same instant of time wherein the will is moved it moves, and when it is acted it acts itself, and preserves its own liberty in its exercise. There is, therefore, herein an inward almighty secret act of the power of the Holy Ghost, producing or effecting in us the will of conversion unto God, so acting our wills as that they also act themselves, and that freely. So Austin, cont. *Duas Epistol. Pelag. lib. i. cap. 19*: "*Trahitur [homo] miris modis ut velit, ab illo qui novit intus in ipsis cordibus hominum operari; non ut homines, quod fieri non potest, nolentes credant, sed ut volentes ex nolentibus fiant.*" The Holy Spirit, who in his power and operation is more intimate, as

it were, unto the principles of our souls than they are to themselves, doth, with the preservation and in the exercise of the liberty of our wills, effectually work our regeneration and conversion unto God.

This is the substance of what we plead for in this cause, and which declares the nature of this work of regeneration, as it is an inward spiritual work. I shall, therefore, confirm the truth proposed with evident testimonies of Scripture, and reasons contained in them or deduced from them.

First, The work of conversion itself, and in especial the act of believing, or faith itself, is expressly said to be of God, to be wrought in us by him, to be given unto us from him. The Scripture says not that God gives us ability or power to believe only,—namely, such a power as we may make use of if we will, or do otherwise; but faith, repentance, and conversion themselves are said to be the work and effect of God. Indeed, there is nothing mentioned in the Scriptures concerning the communicating of power, remote or next unto the mind of man, to enable him to believe antecedently unto actual believing. A "remote power," if it may be so called, in the capacities of the faculties of the soul, the reason of the mind, and liberty of the will, we have given an account concerning; but for that which some call a "next power," or an ability to believe in order of nature antecedent unto believing itself, wrought in us by the grace of God, the Scripture is silent. The apostle Paul saith of himself, Πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με Χριστῷ, Phil. 4:13,—"I can do all things," or prevail in all things, "through Christ who enableth me;" where a power or ability seems to be spoken of antecedent unto acting: but this is not a power for the first act of faith, but a power in them that believe. Such a power I acknowledge, which is acted in the co-operation of the Spirit and grace of Christ with the grace which believers have received, unto the performance of all acts of holy obedience; whereof I must treat elsewhere. Believers have a stock of habitual grace; which may be called indwelling grace in the same sense wherein original corruption is called indwelling sin. And this grace, as it is necessary unto every act of spiritual obedience, so of

itself, without the renewed co-working of the Spirit of Christ, it is not able or sufficient to produce any spiritual act. This working of Christ upon and with the grace we have received is called enabling of us; but with persons unregenerate, and as to the first act of faith, it is not so.

But it will be objected, "That every thing which is actually accomplished was in potentia before; there must, therefore, be in us a power to believe before we do so actually." Ans. The act of God working faith in us is a creating act: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus," Eph. 2:10; and he that is in Christ Jesus "is a new creature," 2 Cor. 5:17. Now, the effects of creating acts are not in potentia anywhere but in the active power of God; so was the world itself before its actual existence. This is termed potentia logica, which is no more but a negation of any contradiction to existence; not potentia physica, which includes a disposition unto actual existence. Notwithstanding, therefore, all these preparatory works of the Spirit of God which we allow in this matter, there is not by them wrought in the minds and wills of men such a next power, as they call it, as should enable them to believe without farther actual grace working faith itself. Wherefore, with respect to believing, the first act of God is to work in us "to will:" Phil. 2:13, "He worketh in us to will." Now, to will to believe is to believe. This God works in us by that grace which Austin and the schoolmen call gratia operans, because it worketh in us without us, the will being merely moved and passive therein. That there is a power or faculty of believing given unto all men unto whom the gospel is preached, or who are called by the outward dispensation of it, some do pretend; and that "because those unto whom the word is so preached, if they do not actually believe, shall perish eternally, as is positively declared in the gospel, Mark 16:16; but this they could not justly do if they had not received a power or faculty of believing."

Ans. 1. Those who believe not upon the proposal of Christ in the gospel are left without remedy in the guilt of those other sins, for

which they must perish eternally. "If ye believe not," saith Christ, "that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," John 8:24.

2. The impotency that is in men, as to the act of believing, is contracted by their own fault, both as it ariseth from the original depravation of nature, and as it is increased by corrupt prejudices and contracted habits of sin: wherefore, they justly perished of whom yet it is said that "they could not believe," John 12:39.

3. There is none by whom the gospel is refused, but they put forth an act of the will in its rejection, which all men are free unto and able for: "I would have gathered you, but ye would not," Matt. 23:37. "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life," [John 5:40.]

But the Scripture positively affirms of some to whom the gospel was preached that "they could not believe," John 12:39; and of all natural men, that "they cannot receive the things of God," 1 Cor. 2:14. Neither is it "given" unto all to "know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," but to some only, Matt. 11:25, 13:11; and those to whom it is not so given have not the power intended. Besides, faith is not of all, or "all have not faith," 2 Thess. 3:2, but it is peculiar to the "elect of God," Tit. 1:1; Acts 13:48; and these elect are but some of those that are called, Matt. 20:16.

Yet farther to clear this, it may be observed, that this first act of willing may be considered two ways:—1. As it is wrought in the will subjectively, and so it is formally only in that faculty; and in this sense the will is merely passive, and only the subject moved or acted. And in this respect the act of God's grace in the will is an act of the will. But, 2. It may be considered as it is efficiently also in the will, as, being acted, it acts itself. So it is from the will as its principle, and is a vital act thereof, which gives it the nature of obedience. Thus the will in its own nature is mobilis, fit and meet to be wrought upon by the grace of the Spirit to faith and obedience; with respect unto the creating act of grace working faith in us, it is mota, moved and acted

thereby; and in respect of its own elicited act, as it so acted and moved, it is movens, the next efficient cause thereof.

These things being premised for the clearing of the nature of the operation of the Spirit in the first communication of grace unto us, and the will's compliance therewithal, we return unto our arguments or testimonies given unto the actual collation of faith upon us by the Spirit and grace of God, which must needs be effectual and irresistible; for the contrary implies a contradiction,—namely, that God should "work what is not wrought:"—Phil. 1:29, "To you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." To "believe on Christ" expresseth saving faith itself. This is "given" unto us. And how is it given us? Even by the power of God "working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure," chap. 2:13. Our faith is our coming to Christ. "And no man," saith he, "can come unto me, except it be given unto him of my Father," John 6:65. All power in ourselves for this end is utterly taken away: "No man can come unto me." However we may suppose men to be prepared or disposed, whatever arguments may be proposed unto them, and in what season soever, to render things congruous and agreeable unto their inclinations, yet no man of himself can believe, can come to Christ, unless faith itself be "given unto him,"—that is, be wrought in him by the grace of the Father, Phil. 1:29. So it is again asserted, and that both negatively and positively, Eph. 2:8, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Our own ability, be it what it will, however assisted and excited, and God's gift, are contradistinguished. If it be "of ourselves," it is not "the gift of God;" if it be "the gift of God," it is not "of ourselves." And the manner how God bestows this gift upon us is declared, verse 10, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Good works, or gospel obedience, are the things designed. These must proceed from faith, or they are not acceptable with God, Heb. 11:6. And the way whereby this is wrought in us, or a principle of obedience, is by a creating act of God: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." In like manner God is said to "give us

repentance," 2 Tim. 2:25; Acts 11:18. This is the whole of what we plead: God in our conversion, by the exceeding greatness of his power, as he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, actually worketh faith and repentance in us, gives them unto us, bestows them on us; so that they are mere effects of his grace in us. And his working in us infallibly produceth the effect intended, because it is actual faith that he works, and not only a power to believe, which we may either put forth and make use of or suffer to be fruitless, according to the pleasure of our own wills.

Secondly, As God giveth and worketh in us faith and repentance, so the way whereby he doth it, or the manner how he is said to effect them in us, makes it evident that he doth it by a power infallibly efficacious, and which the will of man doth never resist; for this way is such as that he thereby takes away all repugnancy, all resistance, all opposition, every thing that lieth in the way of the effect intended: Deut. 30:6, "The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." A denial of the work here intended is expressed chap. 29:4, "The LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." What it is to have the heart circumcised the apostle declares, Col. 2:11. It is the "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ,"—that is, by our conversion to God. It is the giving "an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear,"—that is, spiritual light and obedience,—by the removal of all obstacles and hinderances. This is the immediate work of the Spirit of God himself. No man ever circumcised his own heart. No man can say he began to do it by the power of his own will, and then God only helped him by his grace. As the act of outward circumcision on the body of a child was the act of another, and not of the child, who was only passive therein, but the effect was in the body of the child only, so is it in this spiritual circumcision,—it is the act of God, whereof our hearts are the subject. And whereas it is the blindness, obstinacy, and stubbornness in sin that is in us by nature, with the prejudices which possess our minds and affections, which hinder us from conversion

unto God, by this circumcision they are taken away; for by it the "body of the sins of the flesh is put off." And how should the heart resist the work of grace, when that whereby it should resist is effectually taken away?

Ezek. 36:26, 27, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." To which may be added, Jer. 24:7, "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: so they shall return unto me with their whole heart." As also, Isa. 44:3-5, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the LORD'S," etc. So Jer. 31:33, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." I shall first inquire two things about these concurrent testimonies:—

1. Is it lawful for us, is it our duty, to pray that God would do and effect what he hath promised to do, and that both for ourselves and others?—[We may pray] for ourselves, that the work of our conversion may be renewed, carried on, and consummated in the way and by the means whereby it was begun, that so "he which hath begun the good work in us may perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. 1:6; for those who are converted and regenerated, and are persuaded on good and infallible grounds that so they are, may yet pray for those things which God promiseth to work in their first conversion. And this is because the same work is to be preserved and carried on in them by the same means, the same power, the same grace, wherewith it was begun. And the reason is, though this work, as it is merely the work of conversion, is immediately perfected and completed as to the being of it; yet as it is the beginning of a work of sanctification, it is continually to be renewed and gone over again, because of the remainder of sin in us and the imperfection of our

grace. [And we may pray] for others, that it may be both begun and finished in them. And do we not in such prayers desire that God would really, powerfully, effectually, by the internal efficiency of his Spirit, take away all hinderances, oppositions, and repugnancy in our minds and wills, and actually collate upon us, give unto us, and work in us, a new principle of obedience, that we may assuredly love, fear, and trust in God always? or do we only desire that God would so help us as to leave us absolutely undetermined whether we will make use of his help or no? Did ever any pious soul couch such an intention in his supplications? He knows not how to pray who prays not that God would, by his own immediate power, work those things in him which he thus prayeth for. And unto this prayer, also, grace effectual is antecedently required. Wherefore, I inquire,—

2. Whether God doth really effect and work in any the things which he here promiseth that he will work and effect? If he do not, where is his truth and faithfulness? It is said that "he doth so, and will so do, provided that men do not refuse his tender of grace nor resist his operations, but comply with them." But this yields no relief,—

For, (1.) What is it not to refuse the grace of conversion, but to comply with it? Is it not to believe, to obey,—to convert ourselves? So, then, God promiseth to convert us, on condition that we convert ourselves; to work faith in us, on condition that we do believe; and a new heart, on condition that we make our hearts new ourselves! To this are all the adversaries of the grace of God brought by those conditions which they feign of its efficacy to preserve the sovereignty of free-will in our conversion,—that is, unto plain and open contradictions, which have been charged sufficiently upon them by others, and from which they could never extricate themselves. (2.) Where God promiseth thus to work, as these testimonies do witness, and doth not effectually do so, it must be either because he cannot or because he will not. If it be said that he doth it not because he will not, then this is that which is ascribed unto God,—that he promiseth indeed to take away our stony heart, and to give us a new heart with his law written in it, but he will not do so; which is to overthrow his

faithfulness, and to make him a liar. If they say it is because he cannot, seeing that men oppose and resist the grace whereby he would work this effect, then where is the wisdom of promising to work that in us which he knew he could not effect without our compliance, and which he knew that we would not comply withal? But it will be said that God promiseth to work and effect these things, but in such a way as he hath appointed,—that is, by giving such supplies of grace as may enable us thereunto,—which if we refuse to make use of, the fault is merely our own. Ans. It is the things themselves that are promised, and not such a communication of means to effect them as may produce them or may not, as the consideration of the place will manifest; whereof observe,—

[1.] The subject spoken of in these promises is the heart. And the heart in the Scripture is taken for the whole rational soul, not absolutely, but as all the faculties of the soul are one common principle of all our moral operations. Hence it hath such properties assigned unto it as are peculiar to the mind or understanding, as to see, perceive, to be wise, and to understand; and, on the contrary, to be blind and foolish; and sometimes such as belong properly to the will and affections, as to obey, to love, to fear, to trust in God. Wherefore, the principle of all our spiritual and moral operations is intended hereby.

[2.] There is a description of this heart, as it is in us antecedent unto the effectual working of the grace of God in us: it is said to be stony,—"The heart of stone." It is not absolutely that it is said so to be, but with respect unto some certain end. This end is declared to be our walking in the ways of God, or our fearing of him. Wherefore, our hearts by nature, as unto living to God or his fear, are a stone, or stony; and who hath not experience hereof from the remainders of it still abiding in them? And two things are included in this expression:—1st. An ineptitude unto any actings towards that end. Whatever else the heart can do of itself, in things natural or civil, in outward things, as to the end of living unto God it can of itself, without his grace, do no more than a stone can do of itself unto any end whereunto it may

be applied. 2dly. An obstinate, stubborn opposition unto all things conducing unto that end. Its hardness or obstinacy, in opposition to the pliability of a heart of flesh, is principally intended in this expression. And in this stubbornness of the heart consists all that repugnancy to the grace of God which is in us by nature, and hence all that resistance doth arise, which some say is always sufficient to render any operation of the Spirit of God by his grace fruitless.

[3.] This heart,—that is, this impotency and enmity which is in our natures unto conversion and spiritual obedience,—God says he will take away; that is, he will do so in them who are to be converted according to the purpose of his will, and whom he will turn unto himself. He doth not say that he will endeavour to take it away, nor that he will use such or such means for the taking of it away, but absolutely that he will take it away. He doth not say that he will persuade men to remove it or do it away, that he will aid and help them in their so doing, and that so far as that it shall wholly be their own fault if it be not done,—which no doubt it is where it is not removed; but positively that he himself will take it away. Wherefore, the act of taking it away is the act of God by his grace, and not the act of our wills but as they are acted thereby; and that such an act as whose effect is necessary. It is impossible that God should take away the stony heart, and yet the stony heart not be taken away. What, therefore, God promiseth herein, in the removal of our natural corruption, is as unto the event infallible, and as to the manner of operation irresistible.

[4.] As what God taketh from us in the cure of our original disease, so what he bestoweth on us or works in us is here also expressed; and this is, a new heart and a new spirit: "I will give you a new heart." And withal it is declared what benefit we do receive thereby: for those who have this new heart bestowed on them or wrought in them, they do actually, by virtue thereof, "fear the LORD and walk in his ways;" for so it is affirmed in the testimonies produced: and no more is required thereunto, as nothing less will effect it. There must, therefore, be in this new heart thus given us a principle of all holy

obedience unto God: the creating of which principle in us is our conversion to him; for God doth convert us, and we are converted. And how is this new heart communicated unto us? "I will," saith God, "give them a new heart." "That is, it may be, he will do what is to be done on his part that they may have it; but we may refuse his assistance, and go without it." No; saith he, "I will put a new spirit within them;" which expression is capable of no such limitation or condition. And to make it more plain yet, he affirms that he "will write his law in our hearts." It is confessed that this is spoken with respect unto his writing of the law of old in the tables of stone. As, then, he wrote the letter of the law in the tables of stone, so that thereon and thereby they were actually engraven therein; so by writing the law, that is, the matter and substance of it, in our hearts, it is as really fixed therein as the letter of it was of old in the tables of stone. And this can be no otherwise but in a principle of obedience and love unto it, which is actually wrought of God in us. And the aids or assistances which some men grant that are left unto the power of our own wills to use or not to use, have no analogy with the writing of the law in tables of stone. And the end of the work of God described is not a power to obey, which may be exerted or not; but it is actual obedience in conversion, and all the fruits of it. And if God do not in these promises declare a real efficiency of internal grace, taking away all repugnancy of nature unto conversion, curing its depravation actually and effectually, and communicating infallibly a principle of scriptural obedience, I know not in what words such a work may be expressed. And whatever is excepted as to the suspending of the efficacy of this work upon conditions in ourselves, it falls immediately into gross and sensible contradictions. An especial instance of this work we have, Acts 16:14.

A third argument is taken from the state and condition of men by nature, before described; for it is such as that no man can be delivered from it, but by that powerful, internal, effectual grace which we plead for, such as wherein the mind and will of man can act nothing in or towards conversion to God but as they are acted by grace. The reason why some despise, some oppose, some deride the

work of the Spirit of God in our regeneration or conversion, or fancy it to be only an outward ceremony, or a moral change of life and conversation, is, their ignorance of the corrupted and depraved estate of the souls of men, in their minds, wills, and affections, by nature; for if it be such as we have described,—that is, such as in the Scripture it is represented to be,—they cannot be so brutish as once to imagine that it may be cured, or that men may be delivered from it, without any other aid but that of those rational considerations which some would have to be the only means of our conversion to God. We shall, therefore, inquire what that grace is, and what it must be, whereby we are delivered from it:—

1. It is called a vivification or quickening. We are by nature "dead in trespasses and sins," as hath been proved, and the nature of that death at large explained. In our deliverance from thence, we are said to be "quickened," Eph. 2:5. Though dead, we "hear the voice of the Son of God, and live," John 5:25; being made "alive unto God through Jesus Christ," Rom. 6:11. Now, no such work can be wrought in us but by an effectual communication of a principle of spiritual life; and nothing else will deliver us. Some think to evade the power of this argument by saying that "all these expressions are metaphorical, and arguings from them are but fulsome metaphors:" and it is well if the whole gospel be not a metaphor unto them. But if there be not an impotency in us by nature unto all acts of spiritual life, like that which is in a dead man unto the acts of life natural; if there be not an alike power of God required unto our deliverance from that condition, and the working in us a principle of spiritual obedience, as is required unto the raising of him that is dead,—they may as well say that the Scripture speaks not truly as that it speaks metaphorically. And that it is almighty power, the "exceeding greatness of God's power," that is put forth and exercised herein, we have proved from Eph. 1:19, 20; Col. 2:12, 13; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Pet. 1:3. And what do these men intend by this quickening, this raising us from the dead by the power of God? A persuasion of our minds by rational motives taken from the word, and the things contained in it! But was there ever heard such a monstrous expression, if there be

nothing else in it? What could the holy writers intend by calling such a work as this by a "quickenings of them who were dead in trespasses and sins through the mighty power of God," unless it were, by a noise of insignificant words, to draw us off from a right understanding of what is intended? And it is well if some are not of that mind.

2. The work itself wrought is our regeneration. I have proved before that this consists in a new, spiritual, supernatural, vital principle or habit of grace, infused into the soul, the mind, will, and affections, by the power of the Holy Spirit, disposing and enabling them in whom it is unto spiritual, supernatural, vital acts of faith and obedience. Some men seem to be inclined to deny all habits of grace. And on such a supposition, a man is no longer a believer than he is in the actual exercise of faith; for there is nothing in him from whence he should be so denominated. But this would plainly overthrow the covenant of God, and all the grace of it. Others expressly deny all gracious, supernatural, infused habits, though they may grant such as are or may be acquired by the frequent acts of those graces or virtues whereof they are the habits. But the Scripture giveth us another description of this work of regeneration, for it consists in the renovation of the image of God in us: Eph. 4:23, 24, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." That Adam in innocency had a supernatural ability of living unto God habitually residing in him is generally acknowledged; and although it were easy for us to prove that whereas he was made for a supernatural end,—namely, to live to God, and to come to the enjoyment of him,—it was utterly impossible that he should answer it or comply with it by the mere strength of his natural faculties, had they not been endued with a supernatural ability, which, with respect unto that end, was created with them and in them, yet we will not contend about terms. Let it be granted that he was created in the image of God, and that he had an ability to fulfil all God's commands, and that in himself, and no more shall be desired. This was lost by the fall. When this is by any denied, it shall be proved. In our regeneration, there is a renovation of this image of God in us: "Renewed in the spirit of your mind." And it is

renewed in us by a creating act of almighty power: "Which after God," or according to his likeness, "is created in righteousness and true holiness." There is, therefore, in it an implantation of a new principle of spiritual life, of a life unto God in repentance, faith, and obedience, or universal holiness, according to gospel truth, or the truth which came by Jesus Christ, John 1:17. And the effect of this work is called "spirit:" John 3:6, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is the Spirit of God of whom we are born; that is, our new life is wrought in us by his efficiency. And that which in us is so born of him is spirit; not the natural faculties of our souls,—they are once created, once born, and no more,—but a new principle of spiritual obedience, whereby we live unto God. And this is the product of the internal immediate efficiency of grace.

This will the better appear if we consider the faculties of the soul distinctly, and what is the especial work of the Holy Spirit upon them in our regeneration or conversion to God:—

(1.) The leading, conducting faculty of the soul is the mind or understanding. Now, this is corrupted and vitiated by the fall; and how it continues depraved in the state of nature hath been declared before. The sum is, that it is not able to discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner; for it is possessed with spiritual blindness or darkness, and is filled with enmity against God and his law, esteeming the things of the gospel to be foolishness; because it is alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in it. We must, therefore, inquire what is the work of the Holy Spirit on our minds in turning of us to God, whereby this depravation is removed and this vicious state cured, whereby we come to see and discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, that we may savingly know God and his mind as revealed in and by Jesus Christ. And this is several ways declared in the Scripture:—

[1.] He is said to give us an understanding: 1 John 5:20, "The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true;" which he doth by his Spirit. Man by sin is become

like the "beasts that perish, which have no understanding," Ps. 49:12, 20. Men have not lost their natural intellective faculty or reason absolutely. It is continued unto them, with the free though impaired use of it, in things natural and civil. And it hath an advance in sin; men are "wise to do evil:" but it is lost as to the especial use of it in the saving knowledge of God and his will, "To do good they have no knowledge," Jer. 4:22; for naturally, "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God," Rom. 3:11. It is corrupted not so much in the root and principle of its actings, as with respect unto their proper object, term, and end. Wherefore, although this giving of an understanding be not the creating in us anew of that natural faculty, yet it is that gracious work in it without which that faculty in us, as depraved, will no more enable us to know God savingly than if we had none at all. The grace, therefore, here asserted in the giving of an understanding is the causing of our natural understandings to understand savingly. This David prays for: Ps. 119:34, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law." The whole work is expressed by the apostle, Eph. 1:17, 18, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being opened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling," etc. That "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" is the Spirit of God working those effects in us, we have before evinced. And it is plain that the "revelation" here intended is subjective, in enabling us to apprehend what is revealed, and not objective, in new revelations, which the apostle prayed not that they might receive. And this is farther evidenced by the ensuing description of it: "The eyes of your understanding being opened." There is an eye in the understanding of man,—that is, the natural power and ability that is in it to discern spiritual things. But this eye is sometimes said to be "blind," sometimes to be "darkness," sometimes to be "shut" or closed; and nothing but the impotency of our minds to know God savingly, or discern things spiritually when proposed unto us, can be intended thereby. It is the work of the Spirit of grace to open this eye, Luke 4:18; Acts 26:18; and this is by the powerful, effectual removal of that depravation of our minds, with all its effects, which we before

described. And how are we made partakers thereof? It is of the gift of God, freely and effectually working it: for, first, he "giveth us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" to that end; and, secondly, works the thing itself in us. He "giveth us a heart to know him," Jer. 24:7, without which we cannot so do, or he would not himself undertake to work it in us for that end. There is, therefore, an effectual, powerful, creating act of the Holy Spirit put forth in the minds of men in their conversion unto God, enabling them spiritually to discern spiritual things; wherein the seed and substance of divine faith is contained.

[2.] This is called the renovation of our minds: "Renewed in the spirit of your mind," Eph. 4:23; which is the same with being "renewed in knowledge," Col. 3:10. And this renovation of our minds hath in it a transforming power to change the whole soul into an obediential frame towards God, Rom. 12:2. And the work of renewing our minds is peculiarly ascribed unto the Holy Spirit: Tit. 3:5, "The renewing of the Holy Ghost." Some men seem to fancy, yea, do declare, that there is no such depravation in or of the mind of man, but that he is able, by the use of his reason, to apprehend, receive, and discern those truths of the gospel which are objectively proposed unto it. But of the use of reason in these matters, and its ability to discern and judge of the sense of propositions and force of inferences in things of religion, we shall treat afterward. At present, I only inquire whether men unregenerate be of themselves able spiritually to discern spiritual things when they are proposed unto them in the dispensation of the gospel, so as their knowledge may be saving in and unto themselves, and acceptable unto God in Christ, and that without any especial, internal, effectual work of the Holy Spirit of grace in them and upon them? If they say they are, as they plainly plead them to be, and will not content themselves with an ascription unto them of that notional, doctrinal knowledge which none deny them to be capable of, I desire to know to what purpose are they said to be "renewed by the Holy Ghost?" to what purpose are all those gracious actings of God in them before recounted? He that shall consider what, on the one hand, the Scripture teacheth us concerning the blindness, darkness, impotency of our minds, with respect unto spiritual things,

when proposed unto us, as in the state of nature; and, on the other, what it affirms concerning the work of the Holy Ghost in their renovation and change, in giving them new power, new ability, a new, active understanding,—will not be much moved with the groundless, confident, unproved dictates of some concerning the power of reason in itself to apprehend and discern religious things, so far as we are required in a way of duty. This is all one as if they should say, that if the sun shine clear and bright, every blind man is able to see.

God herein is said to communicate a light unto our minds, and that so as that we shall see by it, or perceive by it, the things proposed unto us in the gospel usefully and savingly: 2 Cor. 4:6, "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." Did God no otherwise work on the minds of men but by an external, objective proposal of truth unto them, to what purpose doth the apostle mention the almighty act of creating power which he put forth and exercised in the first production of natural light out of darkness? What allusion is there between that work and the doctrinal proposal of truth to the minds of men? It is, therefore, a confidence not to be contended with, if any will deny that the act of God in the spiritual illumination of our minds be of the same nature, as to efficacy and efficiency, with that whereby he created light at the beginning of all things. And because the effect produced in us is called "light," the act itself is described by "shining:" "God hath shined in our hearts,"—that is, our minds. So he conveys light unto them by an act of omnipotent efficiency. And as that which is so wrought in our minds is called "light," so the apostle, leaving his metaphor, plainly declares what he intends thereby,—namely, the actual "knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" that is, as God is revealed in Christ by the gospel, as he declares, verse 4. Having, therefore, first, compared the mind of man by nature, with respect unto a power of discerning spiritual things, to the state of all things under darkness before the creation of light; and, secondly, the powerful working of God in illumination unto the

act of his omnipotency in the production or creation of light natural, —he ascribes our ability to know, and our actual knowledge of God in Christ, unto his real efficiency and operation. And these things in part direct us towards an apprehension of that work of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of men in their conversion unto God whereby their depravation is cured, and without which it will not so be. By this means, and no otherwise, do we who were "darkness" become "light in the Lord," or come to know God in Christ savingly, looking into and discerning spiritual things with a proper intuitive sight, whereby all the other faculties of our souls are guided and influenced unto the obedience of faith.

(2.) It is principally with respect unto the will and its depravation by nature that we are said to be dead in sin. And herein is seated that peculiar obstinacy, whence it is that no unregenerate person doth or can answer his own convictions, or walk up unto his light in obedience. For the will may be considered two ways:—first, As a rational, vital faculty of our souls; secondly, As a free principle, freedom being of its essence or nature. This, therefore, in our conversion to God, is renewed by the Holy Ghost, and that by an effectual implantation in it of a principle of spiritual life and holiness in the room of that original righteousness which it lost by the fall. That he doth so is proved by all the testimonies before insisted on:—First, This is its renovation as it is a rational, vital faculty; and of this vivification see before. Secondly, As it is a free principle, it is determined unto its acts in this case by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, without the least impeachment of its liberty or freedom; as hath been declared. And that this is so might be fully evinced, as by others so by the ensuing arguments; for if the Holy Ghost do not work immediately and effectually upon the will, producing and creating in it a principle of faith and obedience, infallibly determining it in its free acts, then is all the glory of our conversion to be ascribed unto ourselves, and we make ourselves therein, by the obediencial actings of our own free will, to differ from others who do not so comply with the grace of God; which is denied by the apostle, 1 Cor. 4:7. Neither can any purpose of God concerning the conversion

of any one soul be certain and determinate, seeing after he hath done all that is to be done, or can be done towards it, the will, remaining undetermined, may not be converted, contrary to those testimonies of our Saviour, Matt. 11:25, 26; John 6:37; Rom. 8:29. Neither can there be an original infallibility in the promises of God made to Jesus Christ concerning the multitudes that should believe in him, seeing it is possible no one may so do, if it depend on the undetermined liberty of their wills whether they will or no. And then, also, must salvation of necessity be "of him that willeth, and of him that runneth," and not "of God, that showeth mercy on whom he will have mercy," contrary to the apostle, Rom. 9:15, 16. And the whole efficacy of the grace of God is made thereby to depend on the wills of men; which is not consistent with our being the "workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. 2:10. Nor, on this supposition, do men know what they pray for, when they pray for their own or other men's conversion to God; as hath been before declared. There is, therefore, necessary such a work of the Holy Spirit upon our wills as may cure and take away the depravation of them before described, freeing us from the state of spiritual death, causing us to live unto God, and determining them in and unto the acts of faith and obedience. And this he doth whilst and as he makes us new creatures, quickens us who are dead in trespasses and sins, gives us a new heart and puts a new spirit within us, writes his law in our hearts, that we may do the mind of God and walk in his ways, worketh in us to will and to do, making them who were unwilling and obstinate to become willing and obedient, and that freely and of choice.

(3.) In like manner a prevailing love is implanted upon the affections by the Spirit of grace, causing the soul with delight and complacency to cleave to God and his ways. This removes and takes away the enmity before described, with the effects of it: Deut. 30:6, "The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." This circumcision of the heart consists in the "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh," as the apostle speaks,

Col. 2:11. He "crucifies the flesh, with the affections and lusts" thereof. Some men are inclined to think that all the depravation of our nature consists in that of the sensitive part of the soul, or our affections; the vanity and folly of which opinion hath been before discovered. Yet it is not denied but that the affections are signally depraved, so that by them principally the mind and will do act those lusts that are peculiarly seated in them, or by them do act according to their perverse and corrupt inclinations, Gal. 5:24; James 1:14, 15. Wherefore, in the circumcision of our hearts, wherein the flesh, with the lusts, affections, and deeds thereof, is crucified by the Spirit, he takes from them their enmity, carnal prejudices, and depraved inclinations, really though not absolutely and perfectly; and instead of them he fills us with holy spiritual love, joy, fear, and delight, not changing the being of our affections, but sanctifying and guiding them by the principle of saving light and knowledge before described, and uniting them unto their proper object in a due manner.

From what hath been spoken in this third argument, it is evident that the Holy Spirit, designing the regeneration or conversion of the souls of men, worketh therein effectually, powerfully, and irresistibly; which was proposed unto confirmation.

From the whole it appears that our regeneration is a work of the Spirit of God, and that not any act of our own, which is only so, is intended thereby. I say it is not so our own as by outward helps and assistance to be educed out of the principles of our natures. And herein is the Scripture express; for, mentioning this work directly with respect unto its cause, and the manner of its operation in the effecting of it, it assigns it positively unto God or his Spirit: 1 Pet. 1:3, "God, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again." James 1:18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." John 3:5, 6, 8, "Born of the Spirit." 1 John 3:9, "Born of God." And, on the other hand, it excludes the will of man from any active interest herein; I mean, as to the first beginning of it: 1 Pet. 1:23, "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the

word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." John 1:13, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." See Matt. 16:17; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 2:9, 10. It is, therefore, incumbent on them who plead for the active interest of the will of man in regeneration to produce some testimonies of Scripture where it is assigned unto it, as the effect unto its proper cause. Where is it said that a man is born again or begotten anew by himself? And if it be granted,—as it must be so, unless violence be offered not only to the Scripture but to reason and common sense,—that whatever be our duty and power herein, yet these expressions must denote an act of God, and not ours, the substance of what we contend for is granted, as we shall be ready at any time to demonstrate. It is true, God doth command us to circumcise our hearts and to make them new: but he doth therein declare our duty, not our power; for himself promiseth to work in us what he requireth of us. And that power which we have and do exercise in the progress of this work, in sanctification and holiness, proceeds from the infused principle which we receive in our regeneration; for all which ends we ought to pray for Him, according to the example of holy men of old.

CHAPTER VI:

THE MANNER OF CONVERSION EXPLAINED IN THE INSTANCE OF AUGUSTINE

The outward means and manner of conversion to God, or regeneration, with the degrees of spiritual operations on the minds of men and their effects, exemplified in the conversion of Augustine, as the account is given thereof by himself.

As among all the doctrines of the gospel, there is none opposed with more violence and subtlety than that concerning our regeneration by the immediate, powerful, effectual operation of the Holy Spirit of grace; so there is not scarce any thing more despised or scorned by many in the world than that any should profess that there hath been such a work of God upon themselves, or on any occasion declare aught of the way and manner whereby it was wrought. The very mentioning hereof is grown a derision among some that call themselves Christians; and to plead an interest or concern in this grace is to forfeit all a man's reputation with many who would be thought wise, and boast themselves to be rational. Neither is this a practice taken up of late, in these declining times of the world, but seems to have been started and followed from days of old,—possibly from the beginning; yea, the enmity of Cain against Abel was but a branch of this proud and perverse inclination. The instance of Ishmael in the Scripture is representative of all such as, under an outward profession of the true religion, did or do scoff at those who, being, as Isaac, children of the promise, do profess and evidence an interest in the internal power of it, which they are unacquainted withal. And the same practice may be traced in succeeding ages. Hence, holy Austin, entering upon the confession of his greater sins, designing thereby to magnify the glory and efficacy of the grace of God in his conversion, provides against this scorn of men, which he knew he should meet withal. "Irrideant," saith he, "me arrogantes et nondum salubriter prostrati et elisi a te, Deus meus, ego tamen confitear tibi dedecora mea, in laude tua," Confess, lib. iv. cap. 1;—"Let arrogant men deride or scorn me, who were never savingly cast down nor broken in pieces by thee, my God, yet I will [rather, let me] confess my own shame, unto thy praise." Let none be offended with these expressions, of being "savingly or wholesomely cast down and broken of God;" for, in the judgment of this great person, they are not fanatical. We may not, therefore, think it strange if the same truth, the same practice, and profession of it, do still meet with the same entertainment. Let them deride and scorn it who were never humbled savingly, nor broken with a sense of sin, nor relieved by

grace; the holy work of God's Spirit is to be owned, and the truth to be avowed as it is in Jesus.

Of the original depravation of our nature we have treated so far as is needful unto our present purpose; yet some things must be added concerning the effects of that depravation, which will conduce unto the right understanding of the way and manner whereby the Spirit of God proceedeth for the healing and removal of it, which we have now under especial consideration. And we may observe,—

First, That the corrupt principle of sin, the native habitual inclination that is in us unto evil, worketh early in our natures, and for the most part preventeth all the actings of grace in us. Though some may be sanctified in or from the womb, yet in order of nature this native corruption hath first place in them; for a clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean, but "that which is born of the flesh is flesh:" Ps. 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." It is to no purpose to say that he speaks of wicked men,—that is, such who are habitually and profligately so; for, whatever any man may afterward run into by a course of sin, all men are morally alike from the womb, and it is an aggravation of the wickedness of men that it begins so early, and holds on an uninterrupted course. Children are not able to speak from the womb, as soon as they are born; yet here are they said to speak lies. It is, therefore, the perverse acting of depraved nature in infancy that is intended; for every thing that is irregular, that answers not the law of our creation and rule of our obedience, is a lie. And among the many instances collected by Austin of such irregular actings of nature in its infant state, one is peculiarly remarkable: Confess, lib. i. cap. 6, "Paulatim sentiebam ubi essem, et voluntates meas volebam ostendere eis per quos implerentur, et non poteram Itaque jactabam membra, et voces, signa similia voluntatibus meis, pauca quæ poteram, qualia poteram; et cum mihi non obtemperabatur, vel non intellecto, vel ne obsesset, indignabar non subditis majoribus, et liberis non servientibus, et me de illis flendo vindicabam." This again he repeats, cap. 7: "An pro tempore illa bona

erant, flendo petere etiam quod noxie daretur; indignari acriter non subjectis hominibus, liberis et majoribus, hisque a quibus genitus est; multisque præterea prudentioribus, oribus, non ad nutum voluntatis obtemperantibus, feriendo nocere niti, quantum potest, quia non obeditur imperils quibus perniciose obediretur? Ita imbecillitas membrorum infantilium innocens est, non animus infantium." Those irregular and perverse agitations of mind, and of the will or appetite, not yet under the conduct of reason, which appear in infants, with the indignation and little self-revenges wherewith they are accompanied in their disappointments when all about them do not subject themselves unto their inclinations, it may be to their hurt, are from the obliquity of our nature, and effects of that depraved habit of sin wherewith it is wholly possessed. And by the frequency of these lesser actings are the mind and will prepared for those more violent and impetuous motions which, by the improving of their natural capacities, and the incitation of new objects presented unto their corruptions, they are exposed unto and filled withal. God did not originally thus create our nature,—a condition worse than and inferior unto that of other creatures, in whose young ones there are none of these disorders, but a regular compliance with their natural instinct prevails in them. And as the dying of multitudes of infants, notwithstanding the utmost care for their preservation, whereas the young ones of other creatures all generally live, if they have whereby their nature may be sustained, argues the imputation of sin unto them,—for death entered by sin, and passed upon all, inasmuch as all have sinned,—so those irregular actings, peculiar unto them, prove sin inherent in them, or the corruption of their nature from their conceptions.

Secondly, With the increase of our natural faculties, and the strengthening of the members of our bodies, which by nature are become ready "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," Rom. 6:13, this perverse principle acts itself with more evidence, frequency, and success in the production of actual sin, or inordinate actings of the mind, will, and affections. So the wise man tells us that "childhood and youth are vanity," Eccles. 11:10. The mind of man, in the state of

childhood and youth, puts itself forth in all kinds of vain actings, in foolish imaginations, perverse and froward appetites, falseness in words, with sensible effects of corrupt inclinations in every kind. Austin's first book of Confessions is an excellent comment on that text, wherein the "vanity of childhood and youth" are graphically described, with pathetical self-reflecting complaints concerning the guilt of sin which is contracted in them. Some, perhaps, may think light of those ways of folly and vanity wherein childhood doth, or left alone would, consume itself;—that there is no moral evil in those childish innocencies. That good man was of another mind. "Istane est," saith he, "innocentia puerilis? non est, Domine, non est, oro te, Deus meus. Nam hæc ipsa sunt quæ a pædagogis et magistris, a nucibus et pilulis et passeribus, ad præfectos et reges, aurum, prædia, mancipia, hæc ipsa omnino quæ succedentibus majoribus ætatibus transeunt [sicuti ferulis majora supplicia succedunt]," lib. i. cap. 19. This is not innocency; it is not so. The same principle and habit of mind, carried over unto riper age and greater occasions, bring forth those greater sins which the lives of men are filled withal in this world. And who is there, who hath a serious reverence of God, with any due apprehension of his holiness, and a clear conviction of the nature of sin, who is not able to call over such actings in childhood, which most think meet to connive at, wherein they may remember that perversity whereof they are now ashamed? By this means is the heart prepared for a farther obduration in sin, by the confirmation of native obstinacy.

Thirdly, Unto those more general irregularities actual sins do succeed,—such, I mean, as are against the remaining light of nature, or committed in rebellion unto the dictates and guidance of our minds and consciences, the influence of those intelligences of moral good and evil which are inseparable from the faculties of our souls; for although in some they may be stifled and overborne, yet can they never be utterly obliterated or extinguished, but will accompany the nature of man unto eternity, even in that condition wherein they shall be of no other use but to add to and increase its misery. Amongst those we may call over one or two instances. Lying is such a

sin, which the depravation of nature in youth is prone to exert itself by, and that on sundry reasons, not now to be inquired into: "They go astray from the womb, speaking lies." The first inducement of our nature unto sin was by a lie, and we fell in Adam by giving credit thereunto; and there is in every sin a particular lie. But speaking falsely, contrary unto what they know to be true, is that which children are prone unto, though some more than others, according as other vicious habits prevail in them, whose actings they foolishly think to thatch over and cover thereby. This that holy person whom we instance in acknowledgeth, and bewaileth in him-self: "Non videbam voraginem turpitudinis in quam projectus eram ab oculis tuis. Nam in illisjam quid me foedius fuit, [ubi etiam talibus displicebam], fallendo innumerabilibus mendaciis, et pædagogum et magistros et parentes amore ludendi, studio spectandi nugatoria [et imitandi ludicra inquietudine?]" lib. i. cap. 19;—"I saw not (O God) into what a gulf of filth I was cast out from before thee; for what was more filthy than I, whilst out of love of plays, and desire of looking after vanities, I deceived teachers and parents with innumerable lies?" And this the good man was afterward exceedingly humbled for, and from it learned much of the vileness of his own nature. And we find by experience that a sense of this sin oftentimes accompanies the first real convictions that befall the souls of men; for when they seriously reflect upon themselves, or do view themselves in the glass of the law, they are not only sensible of the nature of this sin, but also how much they indulged themselves therein, partly whilst they remember how on the least occasions they were surprised into it, which yet they neglected to watch against, and partly understanding how sometimes they made it their business, by premeditated falsehoods, so to cover other sins as to escape rebuke and correction. The mention of these things will probably be entertained with contempt and scorn in this age, wherein the most prodigious wickednesses of men are made but a sport; but God, his holiness, and his truth, are still the same, whatever alterations there may be in the world. And the holy psalmist seems to have some reflection on this vice of youth, when he prays that God would take from him the "way of lying." Of the same nature are those lesser thefts, in

despoiling their parents and governors of such things as they are not allowed to take and make use of for themselves: "They rob their father or mother, and say, It is no transgression," Prov. 28:24. So saith the same person, "Furta etiam faciebam de cellario parentum et de mensa, vel gula imperitante, vel ut haberem quod darem pueris, ludum suum mihi, quo pariter delectabantur tamen, vendentibus," lib. i. cap. 19. He sometimes stole from his parents, either to gratify his own sensual appetite, or to give unto his companions. In such instances doth original pravity exert itself in youth or childhood, and thereby both increase its own power and fortify the mind and the affections against the light and efficacy of conviction.

Fourthly, As men grow up in the state of nature, sin gets ground in them and upon them, subjectively and objectively. Concupiscence gets strength with age, and grows in violence as persons arrive to ability for its exercise; the instruments of it, in the faculties of the soul, organs of the senses, and members of the body, growing every day more serviceable unto it, and more apt to receive impressions from it or to comply with its motions. Hence some charge the sins of youth on the heat of blood and the restlessness of the animal spirits, which prompt men unto irregularities and extravagancies;—but these are only *vehicula concupiscentiæ*, things which it makes use of to exert its poison by; for sin turns every thing in this state unto its own advantage, and abuseth even "the commandment" itself, to "work in us all manner of concupiscence," Rom. 7:8. Again, the objects of lust, by the occasions of life, are now multiplied. Temptations increase with years and the businesses of the world, but especially by that corruption of conversation which is among the most. Hence sundry persons are in this part of their youth, one way or other, overtaken with some gross actual sin or sins. That all are not so is a mere effect of preventing grace, and not at all from themselves. This the apostle respects in his charge, 2 Tim. 2:22, "Flee youthful lusts;" such lusts as work effectually and prevail mightily in those that are young, if not subdued by the grace of God. And David, in a sense and from experience hereof, prays that God would not remember "the sins of his youth," Ps. 25:7. And a reflection from

them is sometimes the torment of age, Job 20:11: so he in whom we have chosen to exemplify the instances of such a course. He humbly confesseth unto God his falling into and being overtaken with great sins, such as fornication and uncleanness, in his younger days; in the mire whereof he was long detained. To this purpose he discourseth at large, lib. ii. cap. 1–3. And of the reason of this his humble and public acknowledgment he gives this holy account: "Neque enim tibi, Deus meus, sed apud te narro hæc generi meo, generi humano, quantulacunque ex particula incidere potest in istas meas literas. Et ut quid hoc? Ut videlicet ego et quisquis hæc legit, cogitemus de quam profundo clamandum sit ad te," cap. 3;—"I declare these things, O my God, not unto thee, but before thee" (or in thy presence), "unto my own race, unto human kind, whatever portion thereof may fall on these writings of mine. And unto what end? Namely, that I and every one who shall read these things may consider out of what great depths we are to cry unto thee." So he, who lived not to see the days wherein humble confession of sin was made a matter of contempt and scorn.

Now, there is commonly a twofold event of men's falling under the power of temptations, and thereby into great actual sins:—

1. God sometimes takes occasion from them to awaken their consciences unto a deep sense not only of that sin in particular whose guilt they have contracted, but of their other sins also. The great Physician of their souls turns this poison into a medicine, and makes that wound which they have given themselves to be the lancing of a festered sore; for whereas their oscitancy, prejudices, and custom of sinning, have taken away the sense of lesser sins, and secure them from reflections from them, the stroke on their consciences from those greater provocations pierceth so deep as that they are forced to entertain thoughts of looking out after a release or remedy. So did they of old at the sermon of Peter, when he charged them with the guilt of a consent to the crucifying of Jesus Christ: "They were pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts 2:36, 37.

2. With others it proves a violent entrance into a farther pursuit of sin. The bounds of restraints, with the influence of natural light, being broken up and rejected, men's lusts being let loose, do break through all remaining obstacles, and run out into the greatest compass of excess and riot; observing no present evil to ensue on what they have done, according to their first fears, they are emboldened to greater wickedness, Eccles. 8:11. And by this means is their conversion unto God rendered more difficult, and men thus wander away more and more from him unto the greatest distance that is recoverable by grace; for,—

Fifthly, A course in, and a custom of, sinning with many ensues hereon. Such the apostle treats concerning, Eph. 4:18, 19, "Being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Custom of sinning takes away the sense of it; the course of the world takes away the shame of it; and love to it makes men greedy in the pursuit of it. See Confess. lib. ii. cap. 6. And this last effect of sin, as incited, provoked, and assisted by temptations, hath great variety in the effects and degrees of it. Hence are the various courses of unhumbled sinners in the world, wherein the outrage and excess of some seems to justify others in their more sedate irregularities and less conspicuous provocations. Yea, some who are not in any better state and condition as to their interest in the covenant of God than others, will yet not only startle at but really abhor those outrages of sin and wickedness which they fall into. Now, this difference ariseth not from hence, that the nature of all men is not equally corrupt and depraved, but that God is pleased to make his restraining grace effectual towards some, to keep them within those bounds of sinning which they shall not pass over, and to permit others so to fall under a conjunction of their lusts and temptations as that they proceed unto all manner of evil. Moreover, there are peculiar inclinations unto some sins, if not inlaid in, yet much enhanced and made obnoxious unto incitations by, the temperature of the body; and some are more exposed unto temptations in the world from their outward circumstances and occasions of life. Hereby are some even precipitated to all manner of

evil. But still "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," is the same naturally in all. All difference as to good from evil, —I mean not as to the nature of the things themselves, but as to men's interest in them, so as to adhere to the one and avoid the other,—is from the will of God. Thus he secretly prepares for some a better temperature of nature, docile and pliable unto such notices of things as may entertain their minds, and satisfy them above sensual delights. And some he disposeth, in their education, callings, societies, aims, and designs in the world, into ways inconsistent with open lewdness, which will much balance their inclinations, besides his secret internal actings on their hearts and minds, whereof afterward. This is, excellently expressed by Austin, Confess. lib. ii. cap. 7: "Diligam te, Domine, et gratias agam, et confitear nomini tuo, quoniam tanta dimisisti mihi mala et nefaria opera mea. Gratia tuae deputo et misericordia tuae quod peccata mea tanquam glaciem solvisti, gratia tuae deputo et quaecunque non feci mala; quid enim non facere potui qui etiam gratuitum facinus amavi? Et omnia mihi dimissa esse fateor, et quae mea sponte feci mala, et quae te duce non feci. Quis est hominum, qui suam cogitans infirmitatem, audet viribus suis tribuere castitatem atque innocentiam suam, ut minus amet te, quasi minus ei necessaria fuerit misericordia tua, quam condonas peccata conversis ad te? Qui enim vocatus ad te secutus est vocem tuam et vitavit, et quae me de meipso recordantem et fatentem legit, non me derideat ab eo medico aegrum sanari, a quo sibi prestitum est ut non aegrotaret, vel potius ut minus aegrotaret; et ideo te tantundem imo vero amplius diligat, quia per quem me videt tantis peccatorum meorum languoribus exui, per eum se videt tantis peccatorum languoribus non implicari;"—"I will love thee, O Lord, and thank thee, and confess unto thy name, because thou hast forgiven me my evil and nefarious deeds. I impute it to thy grace and mercy that thou hast made my sins to melt away as ice, and I impute it to thy grace as to all the evils which I have not done; for what could not I have done who loved wickedness for itself? All I acknowledge are forgiven me, both the evils that I have done of my own accord, and what through thy guidance I have not done. Who is there who, considering his own weakness, dare ascribe his chastity or innocency

unto his own strength, that he may less love thee, as though thy mercy were less necessary unto him, whereby thou forgivest the sins of them that are converted to thee. For let not him who, being called of thee, and having heard thy voice, hath avoided the evils which I have confessed, deride me that, being sick, was healed of that physician from whom he received the mercy not to be sick, or not to be so sick; [and therefore let him love thee so much the more, as he sees himself prevented from having fallen into the great maladies of sin, through that God by whom he sees me delivered from the great maladies of the sin into which I had actually fallen.]"

This brief account of the actings of corrupted nature, until it comes unto the utmost of a recoverable alienation from God, may somewhat illustrate and set off the work of his grace towards us. And thus far, whatever habit be contracted in a course of sin, yet the state of men is absolutely recoverable by the grace of Jesus Christ administered in the gospel, 1 Cor. 6:9–11. No state of sin is absolutely unhealable until God hath variously dealt with men by his Spirit. His word must be rejected, and he must be sinned against in a peculiar manner, before remission be impossible. All sins and blasphemies antecedent thereunto may be forgiven unto men, and that before their conversion unto God, Matt. 12:31, 32; Luke 12:10. Wherefore, the manner and degrees of the operations of this Spirit of God on the minds of men, towards and in their conversion, is that which we shall now inquire into, reducing what we have to offer concerning it unto certain heads or instances:—

FIRST, Under the ashes of our collapsed nature there are yet remaining certain sparks of celestial fire, consisting in inbred notices of good and evil, of rewards and punishments, of the presence and all-seeing eye of God, of help and assistance to be had from him, with a dread of his excellencies where any thing is apprehended unworthy of him or provoking unto him; and where there are any means of instruction from supernatural revelation, by the word preached, or the care of parents in private, there they are insensibly improved and increased. Hereby men do obtain an objective, distinct knowledge of

what they had subjectively and radically, though very imperfectly, before. These notices, therefore, God oftentimes excites and quickens even in them that are young, so that they shall work in them some real regard of and applications unto him. And those great workings about the things of God, and towards him, which are sometimes found in children, are not mere effects of nature; for that would not so act itself were it not, by one occasion or other, for that end administered by the providence of God, effectually excited. And many can call over such divine visitations in their youth, which now they understand to be so. To this purpose speaks the person mentioned: "Puer cœpi rogare te auxilium et refugium meum, et in tuam invocationem rumpebam nodos linguæ meæ, et rogabam te parvus non parvo affectu, ne in schola vapularem." He prayed earnestly to God as a refuge, when he was afraid to be beat at school. And this he resolves into instruction, or what he had observed in others: "Invenimus homines rogantes te, et didicimus ab eis, sentientes te ut poteramus esse magnum aliquem; qui posses etiam non adparens sensibus nostris, exaudire nos et subvenire nobis," lib. i. cap. 9. And hereunto he adds some general instruction which he had from the word, cap. 11. And from the same principles, when, he was a little after surprised with a fit of sickness, he cried out with all earnestness that he might be baptized, that so he might, as he thought, go to heaven; for his father was not yet a Christian, whence he was not baptized in his infancy: "Vidisti, Domine, cum adhuc puer essem, et quodam die pressus stomachi dolore repente æstuem pene moriturus; vidisti, Deus meus, quoniam custos meus jam eras, quo motu animi et qua fide baptismum Christi tui, Dei et Domini mei flagitavi," cap. 11. Such affections and occasional actings of soul towards God are wrought in many by the Spirit. With the most they wear off and perish, as they did with him, who after this cast himself into many flagitious sins. But in some God doth, in and by the use of these means, inlay their hearts with those seeds of faith and grace which he gradually cherisheth and increaseth.

SECONDLY, God works upon men by his Spirit in outward means, to cause them to take some real and steady consideration of him, their

own distance from him, and obnoxiousness unto his righteousness on the account of sin. It is almost incredible to apprehend, but that it is testified unto by daily experience, how men will live even where the word is read and preached; how they will get a form of speaking of God, yea, and of performing some duties of religion, and yet never come to have any steady thoughts of God, or of their relation to him, or of their concernment in his will. Whatever they speak of God, "he is not in all their thoughts," Ps. 10:4. Whatever they do in religion, they do it not unto him, Amos 5:25. They have "neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape," John 5:37; knowing nothing for themselves, which is their duty, Job 5:27. And yet it is hard to convince them that such is their condition. But when God is pleased to carry on his work of light and grace in them, they can call to mind and understand how it was with them in their former darkness. Then will they acknowledge that in truth they never had serious, steady thoughts of God, but only such as were occasional and transient. Wherefore God begins here with them. And thereby to subduct them from under the absolute power of the vanity of their minds, by one means or other he fixeth in them steady thoughts concerning himself, and their relation unto him. And there are several ways which he proceedeth in for the effecting hereof; as,—

1. By some sudden amazing judgments, whereby he "revealeth his wrath from heaven against the ungodliness of men," Rom. 1:18. So Waldo was affected when his companion was stricken dead as he walked with him in the fields; which proved the occasion of his conversion unto God. So the psalmist describes the affections and thoughts of men when they are surprised with a storm at sea, Ps. 107:25–28; an instance whereof we have in the mariners of Jonah's ship, chap. 1:4–7. And that Pharaoh who despised one day, saying, "Who is the LORD, that I should regard him?" being the next day terrified with thunder and lightning, cries out, "Entreat the LORD for me that it may be so no more," Exod. 9:28. And such like impressions from divine power most men, at one time or other, have experience of.

2. By personal afflictions, Job 33:19, 20; Ps. 78:34, 35; Hos. 5:15. Affliction naturally bespeaks anger, and anger respects sin. It bespeaks itself to be God's messenger to call sin to remembrance, 1 Kings 17:18; Gen. 42:21, 22. The time of affliction is a time of consideration, Eccles. 7:14; and if men be not obdurate and hardened almost unto practical atheism by a course of sinning, they cannot but bethink themselves who sends affliction, and for what end it is sent. Hence great thoughts of the holiness of God and of his hatred of sin, with some sense of men's own guilt and especial crimes, will arise; and these effects many times prove preparatory and materially dispositive unto conversion. And not what these things are in themselves able to operate is to be considered, but what they are designed unto and made effectual for by the Holy Ghost.

3. By remarkable deliverances and mercies: so it was with Naaman the Syrian, 2 Kings 5:15–17. Sudden changes from great dangers and distresses by unexpected reliefs deeply affect the minds of men, convincing them of the power, presence, and goodness of God; and this produceth a sense and acknowledgment of their own unworthiness of what they have received. Hence, also, some temporary effects of submission to the divine will and gratitude do proceed.

4. An observation of the conversation of others hath affected many to seek into the causes and ends of it; and this inclines them unto imitation, 1 Pet. 3:1, 2.

5. The word, in the reading or preaching of it, is the principal means hereof. This the Holy Spirit employeth and maketh use of in his entrance into this work, 1 Cor. 14:24, 25; for those convictions befall not men from the word universally or promiscuously, but as the Holy Spirit willeth and designeth. It is by the law that men have the knowledge of sin, Rom. 7:7; yet we see by experience that the doctrine of the law is despised by the most that hear it. Wherefore, it hath not in itself a force or virtue always to work conviction of sin in them unto whom it is outwardly proposed; only towards some the

Spirit of God is pleased to put forth an especial energy in the dispensation thereof.

By these and the like means doth God oftentimes put the wildness of corrupted nature unto a stand, and stir up the faculties of the soul, by an effectual though not saving impression upon them, seriously to consider of itself, and its relation unto him and his will. And hereby are men oftentimes incited and engaged unto many duties of religion, as prayer for the pardon of sin, with resolutions of amendment. And although these things in some are subordinated unto a farther and more effectual work of the Spirit of God upon them, yet with many they prove evanid and fading, their goodness in them being "as a morning cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away," Hos. 6:4. And the reasons whence it is that men cast off these warnings of God, and pursue not their own intentions under them, nor answer what they lead unto, are obvious; for,—

(1.) The darkness of their minds being yet uncured, they are not able to discern the true nature of these divine intimations and instructions, but after a while regard them not, or reject them as the occasions of needless scruples and fears. (2.) Presumption of their present condition, that it is as good as it need be, or as is convenient in their present circumstances and occasions, makes them neglect the improvement of their warnings. (3.) Profane societies and relations, such as, it may be, scoff at and deride all tremblings at divine warnings, with ignorant ministers, that undertake to teach what they have not learned, are great means of hardening men in their sins, and of forfeiting the benefit of these divine intimations. (4.) They will, as to all efficacy, and the motions they bring on the affections of men, decay and expire of themselves, if they are not diligently improved: wherefore in many they perish through mere sloth and negligence. (5.) Satan applies all his engines to the defeatment of these beginnings of any good in the souls of men. (6.) That which effectually and utterly overthrows this work, which causeth them to cast off these heavenly warnings, is mere love of lusts and pleasures, or the unconquered adherence of a corrupted

heart unto sensual and sinful objects, that offer present satisfaction unto its carnal desires. By this means is this work of the Spirit of God in the hearts and minds of many utterly defeated, to the increase of their guilt, an addition to their natural hardness, and the ruin of their souls. But in some of them he is graciously pleased to renew his work, and by more effectual means to carry it on to perfection, as shall be afterward declared.

Now, there is scarce any of these instances of the care and watchfulness of God over the souls of men whom he designs either to convince or convert, for the ends of his own glory, but the holy person whom we have proposed as an example gives an account of them in and towards himself, declaring in like manner how, by the ways and means mentioned, they were frustrated, and came to nothing. Such were the warnings which he acknowledged that God gave him by the persuasions and exhortations of his mother, lib. ii. cap. 3; such were those which he had in sicknesses of his own, and in the death of his dear friend and companion, lib. iv. cap. 5–7. And in all the several warnings he had from God, he chargeth the want and guilt of their non-improvement on his natural blindness, his mind being not illuminated, and the corruption of his nature not yet cured, with the efficacy of evil society, and the course of the world in the places where he lived. But it would be tedious to transcribe the particular accounts that he gives of these things, though all of them singularly worthy of consideration: for I must say, that, in my judgment, there is none among the ancient or modern divines unto this day, who, either in the declarations of their own experiences, or their directions unto others, have equalled, much less outgone him, in an accurate search and observation of all the secret actings of the Spirit of God on the minds and souls of men, both towards and in their recovery or conversion; and in order hereunto, scarce any one not divinely inspired hath so traced the way of the serpent, or the effectual working of original sin in and on the hearts of men, with the efficacy communicated thereunto by various temptations and occasions of life in this world. The ways, also, whereby the deceitfulness of sin, in compliance with objective temptations, doth

seek to elude and frustrate the work of God's grace, when it begins to attempt the strongholds of sin in the heart, were exceedingly discovered unto him. Neither hath any man more lively and expressly laid open the power of effectual and victorious grace, with the manner of its operation and prevalency. And all these things, by the guidance of the good Spirit of God and attendance unto the word, did he exemplify from his own experience in the whole work of God towards him; only it must be acknowledged that he declareth these things in such a way and manner, as also with such expressions, as many in our days would cry out on as fulsome and fanatical.

THIRDLY, In the way of calling men unto the saving knowledge of God, the Holy Spirit convinceth them of sin, or he brings them under the power of a work of conviction.

It is not my design, nor here in my way, to handle the nature of the work of conviction, the means, causes, and effects of it. Besides, it hath been done at large by others. It is sufficient unto my purpose,—

1. To show the nature of it in general;
2. The causes of it;
3. The ways whereby men lose their convictions, and so become more and more hardened in sin;
4. How the Holy Spirit doth carry on the work in some unto complete conversion unto God:—

1. For the nature of it in general, it consists in a fixing the vain mind of a sinner upon a due consideration of sin, its nature, tendency, and end, with his own concernment therein, and a fixing of a due sense of sin upon the secure mind of the sinner, with suitable affections unto its apprehensions. The warnings, before insisted on, whereby God excites men to some steady notices of him and themselves, are like calls given unto a man in a profound sleep, whereat being startled he lifts up himself for a little space, but oppressed with the power of his deep slumber, quickly lays him down again, as Austin expresseth it; but this work of conviction abides with men, and they are no way able speedily to disentangle themselves from it.

Now, the mind of man, which is the subject of this work of conviction, hath two things distinctly to be considered in it:—first, The understanding, which is the active, noetical, or contemplative power and faculty of it; second, The affections, wherein its passive and sensitive power doth consist. With respect hereunto there are two parts of the work of conviction:—(1.) The fixing of the mind, the rational, contemplative power of it, upon a due consideration of sin; (2.) The fixing of a due sense of sin on the practical, passive, sensible part of the mind,—that is, the conscience and affections, as was said before:—

(1.) It is a great work, to fix the vain mind of an unregenerate sinner on a due consideration of sin, its nature and tendency. The darkness of their own mind and inexpressible vanity,—wherein I place the principal effect of our apostasy from God,—do disenable, hinder, and divert them from such apprehensions. Hence God so often complains of the foolishness of the people, that they would not consider, that they would not be wise to consider their latter end. We find by experience this folly and vanity in many unto an astonishment. No reasons, arguments, entreaties, by all that is naturally dear to them, no necessities, can prevail with them to fix their minds on a due consideration of sin. Moreover, Satan now employs all his engines to beat off the efficacy and power of this work; and when his temptations and delusions are mixed with men's natural darkness and vanity, the mind seems to be impregably fortified against the power of conviction: for although it be [only] real conversion unto God that overthrows the kingdom of Satan in us, yet this work of conviction raiseth such a combustion in it that he cannot but fear it will be its end; and this strong man armed would, if possible, keep his goods and house in peace. Hence all sorts of persons have daily experience, in their children, servants, relations, how difficult, yea, how impossible, it is to fix their minds on a due consideration of sin, until it be wrought in them by the exceeding greatness of the power of the Spirit of God. Wherefore, herein consists the first part of this work of conviction,—it fixeth the mind on a due consideration of sin. So it is expressed, Ps. 51:3, "My sin is ever before me." God "reproves

men," and "sets their sins in order before their eyes," Ps. 50:21. Hence they are necessitated, as it were, always to behold them, and that which way soever they turn themselves. Fain they would cast them behind their backs, or cast out the thoughts of them, but the arrows of God stick in them, and they cannot take off their minds from their consideration. And whereas there are three things in sin, —1st. The original of it, and its native inherence in us, as Ps. 51:5; 2dly. The state of it, or the obnoxiousness of men to the wrath of God on the account thereof, Eph. 2:1–3; 3dly. The particular sins of men's lives;—in the first part of the work of conviction, the minds of men are variously exercised with respect unto them, according as the Spirit of God is pleased to engage and fix them.

(2.) As the mind is hereby fixed on the consideration of sin, so a sense of sin must also be fixed on the mind,—that is, the conscience and affections. A bare contemplation of the concernments of sin is of little use in this matter. The Scripture principally evidenceth this work of conviction, or placeth it in this effect of a sense of sin, in trouble, sorrow, disquietment of mind, fear of ruin, and the like: see Acts 2:37, 24:25. But this I must not enlarge upon. This, therefore, is the second thing which we observe in God's gracious actings towards the recovery of the souls of men from their apostasy and from under the power of sin.

2. The principal efficient cause of this work is the Holy Ghost; the preaching of the word, especially of the law, being the instrument which be maketh use of therein. The knowledge of sin is by the law, both the nature, guilt, and curse belonging to it, Rom. 7:7. There is, therefore, no conviction of sin but what consists in an emanation of light, and knowledge from the doctrine of the law, with an evidence of its power and a sense of its curse. Other means, as afflictions, dangers, sicknesses, fears, disappointments, may be made use of to excite, stir up, and put an edge upon the minds and affections of men; yet it is, by one means or other, from the law of God that such a discovery is made of sin unto them, and such a sense of it wrought upon them, as belong unto this work of conviction. But it is the Spirit

of God alone that is the principal efficient cause of it, for he works these effects on the minds of men. God takes it upon himself, as his own work, to "reprove men, and set their sins in order before their eyes," Ps 50:21. And that this same work is done immediately by the Spirit is expressly declared, John 16:8. He alone it is who makes all means effectual unto this end and purpose. Without his especial and immediate actings on us to this end, we may hear the law preached all the days of our lives and not be once affected with it.

And it may, by the way, be worth our observation to consider how God, designing the calling or conversion of the souls of men, doth, in his holy, wise providence, overrule all their outward concernments, so as that they shall be disposed into such circumstances as conduce to the end aimed at. Either by their own inclinations and choice, or by the intervention of accidents crossing their inclinations and frustrating their designs, he will lead them into such societies, acquaintances, relations, places, means, as he hath ordained to be useful unto them for the great ends of their conviction and conversion. So, in particular, Austin aboundeth in his contemplation on the holy, wise providence of God, in carrying of him from Carthage to Rome, and from thence to Milan, where he heard Ambrose preach every Lord's day; which proved at length the means of his thorough conversion to God. And in that whole course, by his discourse upon it, he discovers excellently, as, on the one hand, the variety of his own projects and designs, his aims and ends, which oftentimes were perverse and froward; so, on the other, the constant guidance of divine Providence, working powerfully through all occurrences towards the blessed end designed for him. And I no way doubt but that God exercised him unto those distinct experiences of sin and grace in his own heart and ways, because he had designed him to be the great champion of the doctrine of his grace against all its enemies, and that not only in his own age, wherein it met with a fierce opposition, but also in all succeeding ages, by his excellent labours, preserved for the use of the church: see Confess, lib. v. cap. 7-9, etc. "Tu spes mea [et portio mea] in terra viventium, ad mutandum terrarum locum pro salute animæ mea, et Carthagini

stimulos quibus inde avellerer admovebas, et Romæ illecebras quibus attraherer, proponebas mihi per homines, qui diligunt vitam mortuam, hinc insana facientes, inde vana pollicentes, et ad corrigendos gressus meos, utebaris occulte et illorum et mea perversitate," cap. 8;—"Thou who art my hope [and my portion] in the land of the living, that I might remove from one country to another, for the salvation of my soul, didst both apply goads unto me at Carthage, whereby I might be driven from thence, and proposedst allurements unto me at Rome, whereby I might be drawn thither; and this thou didst by men: who love the dead life in sin, here doing things outrageous, there promising things desirable to vain minds, whilst thou, to correct and reform my ways, didst secretly make use of their frowardness and mine."

3. It must be granted that many on whom this work hath been wrought, producing great resolutions of amendment and much reformation of life, do lose all the power and efficacy of it, with all the impressions it had made on their affections. And some of these wax worse and more profligate in sinning than ever they were before; for having broken down the dam of their restraints, they pour out their lusts like a flood, and are more senseless than ever of those checks and fears with which before they were bridled and awed, 2 Pet. 2:20–22. So the person lately mentioned declares, that after many convictions which he had digested and neglected, he was grown so obdurate and senseless, that falling into a fever, wherein he thought he should die and go immediately unto hell, he had not that endeavour after deliverance and mercy which he had many years before on lesser dangers. And this perverse effect is variously brought about:—

(1.) It is with most an immediate product of the power of their own lust. Especially is it so with them who together with their convictions receive no gifts of the Holy Ghost; for, as we observed, their lusts being only checked and controlled, not subdued, they get new strength by their restraint, and rebel with success against conviction. Such as these fall away from what they have attained suddenly, Matt.

13:5, 21. One day they seem to lie in hell by the terror of their convictions, and the next to be hasting to wards it by their sins and pollutions: see Luke 11:24–26; Hos. 6:4.

(2.) This apostasy is promoted and hastened by others; as,—[1.] Such as undertake to be spiritual guides and instructors of men in their way towards rest, who being unskilful in the word of righteousness, do heal their wounds slightly, or turn them out of the way. Seducers also, it may be, interpose their crafty deceits, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and so turn men off from those good ways of God whereinto they would otherwise enter. So it fell out with Austin, who, beginning somewhat to inquire after God, fell into the society and heresy of the Manichees, which frustrated all the convictions which by any means he had received. [2.] Such as directly, and that perhaps with importunity and violence, will endeavour to draw men back into the ways of the world and the pursuit of their lusts, Prov. 1:11–14. So the same person declares with what earnestness and restless importunities some of his companions endeavoured to draw him unto the spectacles and plays at Rome. And it is not easily imagined with what subtlety some persons will entice others into sinful courses, nor what violence they will use in their temptations, under a pretence of love and friendship. [3.] The awe that is put on the minds of men in their convictions, arising from a dread of the terror of the law, and the judgments of God threatened therein, is apt of itself to wear off when the soul is a little accustomed unto it, and yet sees no evil actually to ensue, Eccles. 8:11; 2 Pet. 3:4.

4. In some the Holy Spirit of God is pleased to carry on this work of conviction towards a farther blessed issue, and then two things ensue thereon in the minds of them who are so convinced:—

(1.) There will follow great and strange conflicts between their corruptions and their convictions. And this doth especially manifest itself in them who have been accustomed unto a course of sinning, or have any particular sin wherein they delight, and by which they have given satisfaction unto their lusts; for the law, coming with power

and terror on the conscience, requires a relinquishment of all sins, at the eternal peril of the soul. Sin hereby is incited and provoked, and the soul begins to see its disability to conflict with that which before it thought absolutely in its own power: for men that indulge themselves in their sins doubt not but that they can leave them at their pleasure; but when they begin to make head against them on the command of the law, they find themselves to be in the power of that which they imagined to be in theirs. So doth sin take occasion by the commandment to work in men all manner of concupiscence; and those who thought themselves before to be alive do find that it is sin which lives, and that themselves are dead, Rom. 7:7–9. Sin rising up in rebellion against the law, discovers its own power, and the utter impotency of them in whom it is to contest with it or destroy it. But yet men's convictions in this condition will discover themselves, and operate two ways, or in a twofold degree:—

[1.] They will produce some endeavours and promises of amendment and reformation of life. These men are unavoidably cast upon or wrought unto, to pacify the voice of the law in their consciences, which bids them do so or perish. But such endeavours or promises, for the most part, hold only unto the next occasion of sinning or temptation. An access of the least outward advantage or provocation unto the internal power of sin slights all such resolutions, and the soul gives up itself unto the power of its old ruler. Such effects of the word are described, Hos. 6:4. So Austin expresseth his own experience after his great convictions and before his full conversion, lib. viii. cap. 5: "*Suspirabam ligatus non ferro alieno, sed mea ferrea voluntate. Velle meum tenebat inimicus, et inde mihi catenam fecerat et constrinxerat me. Quippe ex voluntate perversa facta est libido, et dum servitur libidini, facta est consuetudo; et dum consuetudini non resistitur, facta est necessitas. Quibus quasi ansulis sibimet innexis, unde catenam appellavi, tenebat me obstrictum dura servitus.*" And he shows how faint and languid his endeavours were for reformation and amendment: "*Sarcinâ sæculi, velut somno adsolet, dulciter premebar, et cogitationes quibus meditabar in te, similes erant conatibus expergisci volentium, qui tamen superati*

soporis altitudine remerguntur." And he confesseth that although, through the urgency of his convictions, he could not but pray that he might be freed from the power of sin, yet, through the prevalency of that power in him, he had a secret reserve and desire not to part with that sin which he prayed against, cap. 7: "Petieram a te castitatem et dixeram, Da mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed noli modo. Timebam enim ne me cito exaudires, et cito sanares a morbo concupiscentiæ, quam malebam expleri quam extinguui."

[2.] These endeavours do arise unto great perplexities and distresses; for after a while, the soul of a sinner is torn and divided between the power of corruption and the terror of conviction. And this falls out upon a double account:—1st. Upon some occasional sharpening of former convictions, when the sense of them has been ready to wear off. 2dly. From the secret insinuation of a principle of spiritual life and strength into the will, whose nature and power the soul is as yet unacquainted withal. Of both these we have signal instances in the person before mentioned; for after all the means which God had used towards him for his conversion, whilst yet he was detained under the power of sin, and ready on every temptation to revert to his former courses, he occasionally heard one Pontitianus giving an account of the conversion of two eminent courtiers, who immediately renounced the world, and betook themselves wholly to the service of God. This discourse God was pleased to make use of farther to awake him, and even to amaze him. Lib. viii. cap. 7: "Narrabat hoc Pontitianus; tu autem, Domine, inter verba ejus retorquebas me ad meipsum, auferens me a dorso meo ubi me posueram, dum nollem me attendere, et constituebas me ante faciem meam, ut viderem quam turpis essem, quam distortus et sordidus, maculosus et ulcerosus: et videbam et horrebam, et quo a me fugerem non erat. Et si conabar a me avertere aspectum narrabat ille quod narrabat, et tu me rursus opponebas mihi, et impingebas me in oculos meos, ut invenirem iniquitatem meam et odissem." And a little after, "Ita rodebar intus et confundebar pudore horribili vehementer, cum Pontitianus talia loqueretur." The substance of what he says is, that in and by that discourse of Pontitianus, God held him to the

consideration of himself, caused him to see and behold his own filth and vileness, until he was horribly perplexed and confounded in himself. So it often falls out in this work of the Spirit of God. When his first warnings are not complied withal, when the light he communicates is not improved, upon the return of them they shall be mixed with some sense of severity.

This effect, I say, proceeds from hence, that under this work God is pleased secretly to communicate a principle of grace or spiritual life unto the will. This, therefore, being designed to rule and bear sway in the soul, begins its conflict effectually to eject sin out of its throne and dominion; for whereas, when we come under the power of grace, sin can no longer have dominion over us, Rom. 6:14; so the Spirit begins now to "lust against the flesh," as Gal. 5:17, aiming at and intending a complete victory or conquest. There was, upon bare conviction, a contest before in the soul, but it was merely between the mind and conscience on the one hand, and the will on the other. The will was still absolutely bent on sin, only some head, was made against its inclinations by the light of the mind before sin, and rebukes of conscience after it; but the conflict begins now to be in the will itself. A new principle of grace being infused thereinto, opposeth those habitual inclinations unto evil which were before predominant in it. This fills the mind with amazement, and in some brings them to the very door of despair, because they see not how nor when they shall be delivered. So was it with the person instanced in. Lib. viii. cap. 5: "*Voluntas nova quæ mihi esse cœperat, ut te gratis colerem fruique te vellem, Deus, sola certa jucunditas, nondum erat idonea ad superandam priorem vetustate roboratam. Ita duæ voluntates meæ, una vetus, alia nova, illa carnalis, illa spiritualis, confligebant inter se, atque discordando dissipabant animam meam. Sic intelligebam in me ipso experimento id quod legeram, quomodo 'caro concupisceret adversus Spiritum, et Spiritus adversus carnem'. Ego quidem in utroque, sed magis ego in eo quod in me approbavam quam in eo quod in me improbavam. Ibi enim magis jam non ego, quia ex magna parte id patiebar invitus, quod faciebam volens;*"—"The new will which began to be in me, whereby I would

love thee, my God, the only certain sweetness, was not yet able to overcome my former will, confirmed by long continuance. So my two wills, the one old, the other new, the one carnal, the other spiritual, conflicted between themselves, and rent my soul by their disagreement. Then did I understand by experience in myself what I had read, how 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.' I was myself on both sides, but more in that which I approved in myself than in what I condemned in myself. I was not more in that which I condemned, because for the most part I suffered it unwillingly, rather than did it willingly." This conflict between grace and sin in the will he most excellently expresseth, cap. 9–11, delivering those things which more or less are evident in the experience of those who have passed through this work. His fluctuations, his promises, his hopes and fears, the ground he got and lost, the pangs of conscience and travail of soul which he underwent in the new birth, are all of them graphically represented by him.

In this tumult and distress of the soul, God oftentimes quiets it by some suitable word of truth, administered unto it either in the preaching of the gospel, or by some other means disposed in his providence unto the same end. In the midst of this storm and disorder, he comes and says, "Peace, be still;" for, together with his word, he communicates some influence of his grace that shall break the rebellious strength, and subdue the power of sin, and give the mind satisfaction in a full resolution for its everlasting relinquishment. So was it with him mentioned. When in the condition described, he was hurried up and down almost like a distracted person, whilst he suffered the terrors of the Lord, sometimes praying, some times weeping, sometimes alone, sometimes in the company of his friends, sometimes walking, and sometimes lying on the ground, he was, by an unusual occurrence, warned to take up a book and read. The book next him was that of Paul's Epistle, which taking up and opening, the place he first fixed his eyes upon was Rom. 13:13, 14, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and

wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Immediately on the reading of these words, there was an end put unto his perplexing conflict. He found his whole soul, by the power of almighty grace, subdued wholly to the will of God, and fixed unto a prevalent resolution of adhering to him with a relinquishment of sin, with an assured composure upon the account of the success he should have therein through Jesus Christ. Immediately he declared what he had done, what had befallen him, first to his friend, then to his mother; which proved the occasion of conversion to the one and inexpressible joy to the other. The end of the story deserves to be reported in his own words: "Arripui librum. aperui, et legi Nec ultra volui legere, nec opus erat; statim quippe cum fine hujusce sententiæ, quasi luce securitatis infusâ cordi meo, omnes dubitationis tenebræ diffugerunt. Turn interjecto aut digito aut nescio quo alio signo, codicem clausi, et tranquillo jam vultu indicavi Alypio. At ille quid in se ageretur, quod ego nesciebam, sic indicavit: petit videre quid legissem. Ostendi, et attendit etiam ultra quam ego legeram, et ignorabam quid sequeretur. Sequebatur vero, 'Infirmum autem in fide recipite,' quod ille ad se retulit, mihi que aperuit. Sed tali admonitione firmatus est, placitoque ac proposito bono, et congruentissimo suis moribus, quibus a me in melius jam olim valde longeque distabat, sine ulla turbulenta cunctatione conjunctus est. Inde ad matrem ingredimur. Indicamus, gaudet. Narramus quemadmodum gestum sit; exultat et triumphat, et benedicit tibi, qui potens es ultra quam petimus aut intelligimus facere," lib. viii. cap. 12;—"Having read these verses, I would read no more, nor was there any need that so I should do; for upon the end of that sentence, as if a light of peace or security had been infused into my heart, all darkness of doubts fled away. Marking the book with my finger put into it, or by some other sign, I shut it, and with a quiet countenance declared what was done to Alypius; and hereupon he also declared what was at work in himself, whereof I was ignorant. He desired to see what I had read; which when I had showed him, he looked farther than I had read, nor did I know what followed. But it was this, 'Him that is weak in the faith receive;' which he applied unto

himself, and declared it unto me. Confirmed by this admonition, with a firm purpose, and suitable to his manners, wherein he formerly much excelled me, he was joined to me without any turbulent delay. We go in hereon unto my mother, and declare what was done; she rejoiceth. We make known the manner of it how it was done; she exulteth and triumpheth, and blesseth thee, O God, who art able to do for us more than we know how to ask or understand." And these things doth the holy man express to bear witness, as he says, "adversus typhum humani generis,"—to "repress the swelling pride of mankind." And in the example of Alypius we have an instance how variously God is pleased to effect this work in men, carrying some through strong convictions, deep humiliations, great distresses, and perplexing terrors of mind, before they come to peace and rest; leading others gently and quietly, without any visible disturbances, unto the saving knowledge of himself by Jesus Christ.

(2.) A second thing which befalls men under this work of conviction, is a dread and fear as to their eternal condition. There doth befall them an apprehension of that wrath which is due to their sins, and threatened in the curse of the law to be inflicted on them. This fills them with afflictive perturbations of mind, with dread and terror, consternation and humbling of their souls thereon. And what befalls the minds of men on this account is handled by some distinctly, under the names or titles of "dolor legalis," "timor servilis," "attritio mentis," "compunctio cordis," "humiliatio animæ,"—"legal sorrow," "servile fear," "attrition of mind," "compunction," and "humiliation," and the like. And as these things have been handled most of them by modern divines, and cast into a certain series and dependence on one another, with a discovery of their nature and degrees, and how far they are required in order unto sincere conversion and sound believing; so they are all of them treated on, in their way, by the schoolmen, as also they were before them by many of the fathers. The charge, therefore, of novelty, which is laid by some against the doctrine of these things, ariseth from a fulsome mixture of ignorance and confidence. Whether, therefore, all things that are delivered concerning these things be right or no, sure enough I am that the

whole doctrine about them, for the substance of it, is no newer than the gospel, and that it hath been taught in all ages of the church. What is needful to be received concerning it I shall reduce to the ensuing heads:—

[1.] Conviction of sin being ordinarily by the law, either immediately or by light and truth thence derived, there doth ordinarily accompany it a deep sense and apprehension of the eternal danger which the soul is liable unto on the account of the guilt of the sin whereof it is convinced; for the law comes with its whole power upon the mind and conscience. Men may be partial in the law; the law will not be partial. It doth not only convince by its light, but also at the same time condemns by its authority; for what the law speaks, "it speaks unto them that are under the law." It takes men under its power, then, shutting them under sin, it speaks unto them in great severity. This is called the coming of the commandment, and slaying of a sinner, Rom. 7:9.

[2.] This apprehension will ordinarily ingenerate disquieting and perplexing affections in the minds of men; nor can it be otherwise where it is fixed and prevalent; as,—1st. Sorrow and shame for and of what they have done. Shame was the first thing wherein conviction of sin discovered itself, Gen. 3:7. And sorrow always accompanieth it. Acts 2:37, hearing these things, κατενύγησαν τῇ καρδίᾳ,—"they were pierced with perplexing grief in their heart." Then eyes are opened to see the guilt and sense of sin, which pierceth them through with dividing sorrow. 2dly. Fear of eternal wrath. This keeps the soul in bondage, Heb. 2:15, and is accompanied with torment. The person so convinced believes the threatening of the law to be true, and trembles at it; an eminent instance whereof we have in our first parents also, Gen. 3:8, 10. 3dly. Perplexing unsatisfactory inquiries after means and ways for deliverance out of this present distress and from future misery. "What shall we do? what shall we do to be saved?" is the restless inquiry of such persons, Mic. 6:6, 7; Acts 2:37, 16:30.

[3.] These things will assuredly put the soul on many duties, as prayer for deliverance, abstinence from sin, endeavours after a general change of life; in all which, and the like, this conviction puts forth and variously exerciseth its power.

[4.] We do not ascribe the effects intended unto the mere working of the passions of the minds of men upon the rational consideration of their state and condition; which yet cannot but be grievous and afflictive. These things may be so proposed unto men and pressed on them as that they shall not be able to avoid their consideration, and the conclusions which naturally follow on them; and yet they may not be in the least affected with them, as we see by experience. Wherefore we say, moreover, that the law or the doctrine of it, when the consciences of men are effectually brought under its power, is accompanied with a secret virtue from God, called a "spirit of bondage;" which causeth a sense of the curse of it to take a deep impression on the soul, to fill it with fear and dread, yea, sometimes with horror and despair. This the apostle calls the "spirit of bondage unto fear," Rom. 8:15, and declares at large how all that are under the law,—that is, the convincing and condemning power of it,—are in bondage; nor doth the law in the administration of it lead or gender unto any thing else but bondage, Gal. 4:22–24.

[5.] The substance of these things is ordinarily found in those who are converted unto God when grown up unto the use of reason, and capable of impressions from external administrations. Especially are they evident in the minds and consciences of such as have been engaged in any open sinful course or practice. But yet no certain rule or measure of them can be prescribed as necessary in or unto any antecedaneously unto conversion. To evince the truth hereof two things may be observed:—1st. That perturbations, sorrows, dejections, dread, fears, are no duty unto any; only they are such things as sometimes ensue or are immitted into the mind upon that which is a duty indispensable, namely, conviction of sin. They belong not to the precept of the law, but to its curse. They are no part of what is required of us, but of what is inflicted on us. There is a gospel

sorrow and humiliation after believing that is a duty, that is both commanded and hath promises annexed unto it; but this legal sorrow is an effect of the curse of the law, and not of its command. 2dly. God is pleased to exercise a prerogative and sovereignty in this whole matter, and deals with the souls of men in unspeakable variety. Some he leads by the gates of death and hell unto rest in his love, like the people of old through the waste and howling wilderness into Canaan; and the paths of others he makes plain and easy unto them. Some walk or wander long in darkness; in the souls of others Christ is formed in the first gracious visitation.

[6.] There is, as was said, no certain measure or degree of these accidents or consequents of conviction to be prescribed unto any as antecedaneously necessary to sincere conversion and sound believing; but these two things in general are so:—1st. Such a conviction of sin,—that is, of a state of sin, of a course of sin, of actual sins, against the light of natural conscience,—as that the soul is satisfied that it is thereby obnoxious unto the curse of the law and the wrath of God. Thus, at least, doth God conclude and shut up every one under sin on whom he will have mercy; for "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God," Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:22. Without this no man ever did, nor ever will, sincerely believe in Jesus Christ; for he calleth none unto him but those who in some measure are weary or thirsty, or one way or other seek after deliverance. "The whole," he tells us,—that is, those who so conceit themselves,—"have no need of a physician" they will neither inquire after him nor care to go unto him when they are invited so to do. See Isa. 32:2. 2dly. A due apprehension and resolved judgment that there is no way within the compass of a man's own contrivance to find out, or his ability to make use of and to walk in, nor any other way of God's appointment or approbation, which will deliver the soul in and from the state and condition wherein it is and that which it fears, but only that which is proposed in the gospel by Jesus Christ.

[7.] Where these things are, the duty of a person so convinced is,—1st, To inquire after and to receive the revelation of Jesus Christ, and

the righteousness of God in him, John 1:12. And in order hereunto, he ought,—(1st.) To own the sentence of the law under which he suffereth, justifying God in his righteousness and the law in its holiness, whatever be the issue of this dispensation to wards himself, Rom. 3:19, 20, 7:12, 13; for God in this work intends to break the stubbornness of men's hearts, and to hide pride from them, chap. 3:4. (2dly.) Not hastily to believe every thing that will propose itself unto him as a remedy or means of relief, Micah 6:6, 7. The things which will present themselves in such a case as means of relief are of two sorts:—[1st.] Such as the fears and superstitions of men have suggested or will suggest. That which hath raised all the false religion which is in the world is nothing but a contrivance for the satisfaction of men's consciences under convictions. To pass by Gentilism, this is the very life and soul of Popery. What is the meaning of the sacrifice of the mass, of purgatory, of pardons, penances, indulgences, abstinences, and the like things innumerable, but only to satisfy conscience by them, perplexed with a sense of sin? Hence many among them, after great and outrageous wickednesses, do betake themselves to their highest monastical severity. The life and soul of superstition consists in endeavours to quiet and charm the consciences of men convinced of sin. [2dly.] That which is pressed with most vehemency and plausibility, being suggested by the law itself, in a way of escape from the danger of its sentence, as the sense of what it speaks, represented in a natural conscience, is legal righteousness, to be sought after in amendment of life. This proposeth itself unto the soul, as with great importunity, so with great advantages, to further its acceptance; for,—First, The matter of it is unquestionably necessary, and without it in its proper place, and with respect unto its proper end, there is no sincere conversion unto God. Secondly, It is looked on as the sense of the law, or as that which will give satisfaction thereunto. But there is a deceit in all these things as to the end proposed, and if any amendment of life be leaned on to that purpose, it will prove a broken reed, and pierce the hand of him that rests upon it; for al though the law require at all times an abstinence from sin, and so for the future, which in a sinner is amendment of life, yet it proposeth it not as that which will deliver

any soul from the guilt of sin already contracted, which is the state under consideration. And if it win upon the mind to accept of its terms unto that end or purpose, it can do no more, nor will do less, than shut up the person under its curse. 2dly. It is the duty of persons in such a condition to beware of entangling temptations; as,—(1st.) That they have not attained such a degree of sorrow for sin and humiliation as is necessary unto them that are called to believe in Jesus Christ. There was, indeed, more reason of giving caution against temptations of this kind in former days, when preachers of the gospel dealt more severely,—I wish I may not also say more sincerely,—with the consciences of convinced sinners, than it is the manner of most now to do. But it is yet possible that herein may lie a mistake, seeing no such degrees of these things as some may be troubled about are prescribed for any such end either in the law or gospel. (2dly.) That those who persuade them to believe know not how great sinners they are. But yet they know that Christ called the greatest; and it is an undervaluation of the grace of Christ to suppose that the greatest sins should disappoint the effects of it in any that sincerely come unto him.

FOURTHLY, The last thing, whereby this work of conversion to God is completed, as to the outward means of it, which is the ingenerating and acting of faith in God by Jesus Christ, remains alone to be considered, wherein all possible brevity and plainness shall be consulted; and I shall comprise what I have to offer on this head in the ensuing observations:—

1. This is the proper and peculiar work of the gospel, and ever was so from the first giving of the promise. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," John 1:17; Rom. 1:16; 1 Pet 1:23; James 1:18; Eph. 3:8–10.

2. To this purpose it is necessary that the gospel,—that is, the doctrine of it concerning redemption, righteousness, and salvation, by Jesus Christ,—be declared and made known to convinced sinners.

And this also is an effect of sovereign wisdom and grace, Rom. 10:13–15.

3. The declaration of the gospel is accompanied with a revelation of the will of God with respect unto the faith and obedience of them unto whom it is declared. "This is the work of God," the work which he requires at our hands, "that we believe on him whom he hath sent," John 6:29. And this command of God unto sinners, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation, the gospel teacheth us to press from the manifold aggravations which attend the sin of not complying therewith: for it is, as therein declared,—(1.) A rejection of the testimony of God, which he gives unto his wisdom, love, and grace, with the excellency and certainty of the way of salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ; which is to make God a liar, 1 John 5:10; John 3:33. (2.) A contempt of love and grace, with the way and means of their communication to lost sinners by the blood of the Son of God; which is the highest provocation that can be offered unto the divine Majesty.

4. In the declaration of the gospel, the Lord Christ is in an especial manner proposed as crucified and lifted up for the especial object of our faith, John 3:14, 15; Gal. 3:1. And this proposition of Christ hath included in it an invitation unto all convinced sinners to come unto him for life and salvation, Isa. 55:1–3, 65:1.

5. The Lord Christ being proposed unto sinners in the gospel, and their acceptance or receiving of him being urged on them, it is withal declared for what end he is so proposed; and this is, in general, to "save them from their sins," Matt. 1:21, or "the wrath to come," whereof they are afraid, 1 Thess. 1:10: for in the evangelical proposition of him there is included,—(1.) That there is a way yet remaining for sinners whereby they may escape the curse of the law and the wrath of God, which they have deserved, Ps. 130:4; Job 33:24; Acts 4:12. (2.) That the foundation of these ways lies in an atonement made by Jesus Christ unto the justice of God, and satisfaction to his law for sin, Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13. (3.)

That God is well pleased with this atonement, and his will is that we should accept of it and acquiesce in it, 2 Cor. 5:18–20; Isa. 53:11, 12; Rom. 5:10, 11.

6. It is proposed and promised that through and upon their believing,—that is, on Christ as proposed in the gospel, for the only way of redemption and salvation,—convinced sinners shall be pardoned, justified, and acquitted before God, discharged of the law against them, through the imputation unto them of what the Lord Christ hath done for them and suffered in their stead, Rom. 8:1, 3, 4, 10:3, 4; 1 Cor. 1:30, 31; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:8–10.

7. To prevail with and win over the souls of men unto a consent to receive Christ on the terms wherein he is proposed,—that is, to believe in him and trust unto him, to what he is, hath done and suffered, and continueth to do, for pardon of sin, life, and salvation,—the gospel is filled with arguments, invitations, encouragements, exhortations, promises, all of them designed to explain and declare the love, grace, faithfulness, and good-will of God herein. In the due management and improvement of these parts of the gospel consists the principal wisdom and skill of the ministers of the New Testament.

8. Among these various ways or means of the declaration of himself and his will, God frequently causeth some especial word, promise, or passage to fix itself on the mind of a sinner; as we saw it in the instance before insisted on. Hereby the soul is first excited to exert and act the faith wherewith it is endued by the effectual working of the Spirit of God before described; and by this means are men directed unto rest, peace, and consolation, in that variety of degrees wherein God is pleased to communicate them.

9. This acting of faith on Christ, through the promise of the gospel, for pardon, righteousness, and salvation, is inseparably accompanied with, and that faith is the root and infallible cause of, a universal engagement of heart unto all holy obedience to God in Christ, with a

relinquishment of all known sin, necessarily producing a thorough change and reformation of life and fruitfulness in obedience: for as, upon a discovery of the love of God in Christ, the promises whereby it is exhibited unto us being mixed with faith, the soul of a poor sinner will be filled with godly sorrow and shame for its former sins, and will be deeply humbled for them; so all the faculties of it being now renewed and inwardly changed, it can no more refrain from the love of holiness and from an engagement into a watchful course of universal obedience unto God, by such free actings as are proper unto it, than one that is new born can refrain from all acts of life natural, in motion, desire of food, and the like. Vain and foolish, therefore, are the reproaches of some, who, in a high course of a worldly life and profane, do charge others with preaching a justification by faith alone in Christ Jesus, unto a neglect of holiness, righteousness, and obedience to God, which such scoffers and fierce despisers of all that are good do so earnestly plead for. Those whom they openly reflect upon do unanimously teach that the faith which doth not purify the heart and reform the life, which is not fruitful in good works, which is not an effectual cause and means of repentance and newness of life, is not genuine nor pleadable unto justification, but empty, dead, and that which, if trusted unto, will eternally deceive the souls of men. They do all of them press the indispensable necessity of universal holiness, godliness, righteousness, or obedience to all the commands of God, on surer principles, with more cogent arguments, in a more clear compliance with the will, grace, and love of God in Christ, than any they pretend unto who ignorantly and falsely traduce them as those who regard them not. And as they urge an obediential holiness which is not defective in any duty, either towards God or man, which they either plead for or pretend unto, so it contains that in it which is more sublime, spiritual, and heavenly than what they are either acquainted with or do regard; which in its proper place shall be made more fully to appear.

10. Those who were thus converted unto God in the primitive times of the church were, upon their confession or profession hereof,

admitted into church-society and to a participation of all the mysteries thereof. And this being the common way whereby any were added unto the fellowship of the faithful, it was an effectual means of in tense love without dissimulation among them all, on the account of their joint interest in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I shall shut up this discourse with one instance hereof, given us by Austin, in the conversion and admission into church-society of Victorinus, a Platonical philosopher, as he received the story from Simplicianus, by whom he was baptized: "Ut ventum est ad horam profitendæ fidei quæ verbis certis conceptis retentisque memoriter, de loco eminentiore, in conspectu populi fidelis, Romæ reddi solet ab eis qui accessuri sunt ad gratiam tuam, oblatum esse dicebat Victorino a presbyteris, ut secretius redderet, sicut nonnullis qui vereciundia trepidaturi videbantur, offerri mos erat; illum autem maluisse salutem suam in conspectu sanctæ multitudinis profiteri. Non enim erat salus, quam docebat in rhetorica, et tamen eam publice professus erat. Quanto minus ergo vereri debuit mansuetum gregem tuum pronuncians verbum tuum, qui non verebatur in verbis suis turbas insanorum! Itaque ubi ascendit ut redderet, omnes sibimet invicem quisque ut eum noverant, instrepuerunt nomen ejus strepitu gratulationis, (quis autem ibi eum non noverat?) et sonuit presso sonitu per ora cunctorum collætantium, Victorinus, Victorinus. Cito sonuerunt exultatione quia videbant eum, et cito siluerunt intentione ut audirent eum. Pronunciavit ille fidem veracem præclara fiducia, et volebant eum omnes rapere intro in cor suum; et rapiebant amando et gaudento. Hæ rapiendum manus erant," lib. viii. cap. 2. Not a few things concerning the order, discipline, and fervent love of the primitive Christians in their church-societies are intimated and represented in these words, which I shall not here reflect upon.

And this is the second great work of the Spirit of God in the new creation. This is a summary description of his forming and creating the members of that mystical body, whose head is Christ Jesus. The latter part of our discourse, concerning the external manner of regeneration or conversion unto God, with the gradual preparation

for it and accomplishment of it in the souls of men, is that subject which many practical divines of this nation have in their preaching and writings much insisted on and improved, to the great profit and edification of the church of God. But this whole doctrine, with all the declarations and applications of it, is now, by some among ourselves, derided and exposed to scorn, although it be known to have been the constant doctrine of the most learned prelates of the church of England. And as the doctrine is exploded, so all experience of the work itself in the souls of men is decried as fanatical and enthusiastical.

To obviate the pride and wantonness of this filthy spirit, I have, in the summary representation of the work itself now given, confirmed the several instances of it with the experience of the great and holy man so often named; for whereas some of those by whom this doctrine and work are despised are puffed up with a conceit of their excellency in the theatrical, sceptical faculty of these days, unto a contempt of all by whom they are contradicted in the most importune of their dictates, yet if they should swell themselves until they break, like the frog in the fable, they would never prevail with their fondest admirers to admit them into a competition with the immortal wit, grace, and learning of that eminent champion of the truth and light of the age wherein he lived.

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