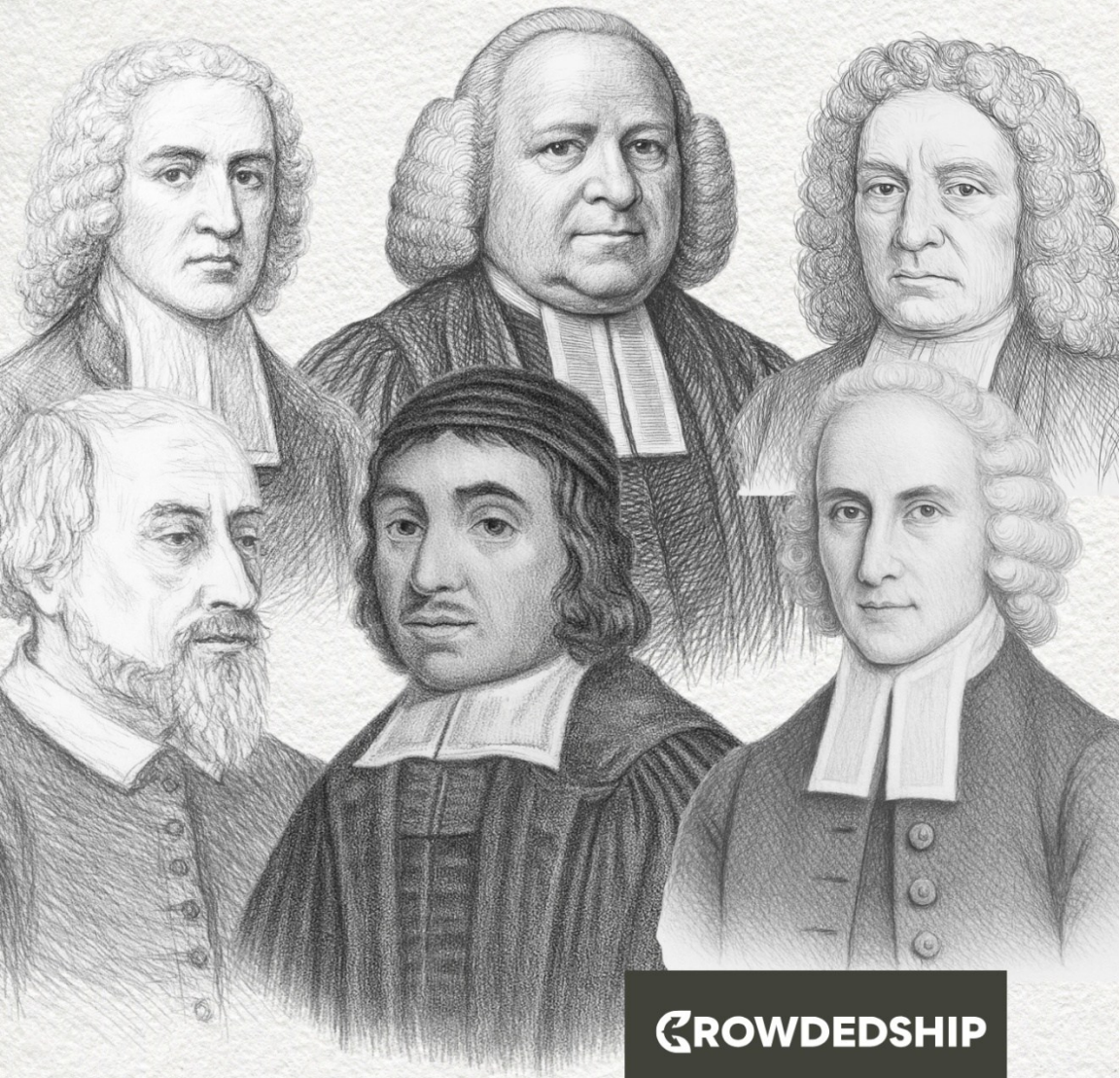


AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY

PURITAN VOICES ON GENUINE FAITH



 **ROWDEDSHIP**

AUTHENTIC
CHRISTIANITY:
PURITAN VOICES ON GENUINE FAITH

COMPILED BY
AARON STURGILL



Authentic Christianity: Puritan Voices on Genuine Faith

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Publisher: Crowdedship Publishing

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This volume, *Authentic Christianity: Puritan Voices on Genuine Faith*, was compiled during a sustained study of James 2:14–26 and its searching call to examine the relationship between faith and works. In a time when the biblical doctrine of conversion is often reduced to mere profession, these classic messages were chosen because they speak with clarity, conviction, and pastoral urgency about the nature of true religion. Each sermon in this collection was selected from the public-domain writings of leading Puritan and early evangelical pastors whose ministries were marked by both deep doctrinal fidelity and practical searching of the conscience.

Jonathan Edwards' *The Marks of a Work of the True Spirit* opens the collection by laying out the biblical tests for discerning genuine spiritual influence, a topic central to seasons of revival and controversy in his own day. George Whitefield's *The Almost Christian* follows with a piercing call to distinguish outward religious practice from inward, saving grace. Thomas Shepard's *Few Saved with Much Difficulty* then surveys Scripture and church history to show how rare genuine conversion has always been, pressing readers toward sober self-examination.

Solomon Stoddard's *The Way to Know Sincerity: Hypocrisy Cleared Up* provides pastoral guidance for determining the presence or absence of true grace in the soul. Benjamin Keach's *The Counterfeit Christian* continues this theme by exposing the subtle ways self-deception can imitate real godliness. Finally, Thomas Brooks' *Hypocrites Detected* concludes the volume with a searching exposé of hypocrisy, urging readers to flee to Christ in sincerity and truth. These sermons, though written in another age, address the same spiritual challenges we face today.

Your servant in Christ,
Aaron Sturgill, Editor & Compiler

JONATHAN EDWARDS:
THE MARKS OF A WORK
OF THE TRUE SPIRIT

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 1 John iv. 1.

In the apostolic age, there was the greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God that ever was; both as to his extraordinary influences and gifts, and his ordinary operations, in convincing, converting, enlightening, and sanctifying the souls of men. But as the influences of the true Spirit abounded, so counterfeits did also abound: the devil was abundant in mimicking, both the ordinary and extraordinary influences of the Spirit of God, as is manifest by innumerable passages of the apostles' writings. This made it very necessary that the church of Christ should be furnished with some certain rules, distinguishing and clear marks, by which she might proceed safely in judging of the true from the false without danger of being imposed upon. The giving of such rules is the plain design of this chapter, where we have this matter more expressly and fully treated of than any where else in the Bible. The apostle, of set purpose, undertakes to supply the church of God with such marks of the true Spirit as may be plain and safe, and well accommodated to use and practice; and that the subject might be clearly and sufficiently handled, he insists upon it throughout the chapter, which makes it wonderful that what is here said is no more taken notice of in this extraordinary day, when there is such an uncommon and extensive operation on the minds of people, such a variety of opinions concerning it, and so much talk about the work of the Spirit.

The apostle's discourse on this subject is introduced by an occasional mention of the indwelling of the Spirit, as the sure evidence of an interest in Christ. "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." Whence we may infer, that the design of the apostle is not only to give marks whereby to distinguish the true Spirit from the false, in his extraordinary gifts of prophecy and miracles, but also in his ordinary influences on the minds of his people, in order to their union to Christ, and being built up in him; which is also manifest from the marks themselves that are given, which we shall hereafter notice.

The words of the text are an introduction to this discourse of the distinguishing signs of the true and false Spirit.—Before the apostle proceeds to lay down these signs, he exhorteth Christians, first, against an over credulousness, and a forwardness to admit every specious appearance as the work of a true Spirit. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God. [1 John 4:1.] " And, second, he shows, that there were many counterfeits, "because many false prophets were gone out into the world. [ibid.]" These did not only pretend to have the Spirit of God in his extraordinary gifts of inspiration, but also to be the great friends and favourites of heaven, to be eminently holy persons, and to have much of the ordinary saving, sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God on their hearts. Hence we are to look upon these words as a direction to examine and try their pretences to the Spirit of God, in both these respects.

My design therefore at this time is to show what are the true, certain, and distinguishing evidences of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we may safely proceed in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see in others. And here I would observe, that we are to take the *Scriptures* as our guide in such cases. This is the great and standing rule which God has given to his church, in order to guide them in things relating to the great concerns of their souls; and it is an infallible and

sufficient rule. There are undoubtedly sufficient marks given to guide the church of God in this great affair of judging of spirits, without which it would lie open to woeful delusion, and would be remedilessly exposed to be imposed on and devoured by its enemies. And we need not be afraid to trust these rules. Doubtless that Spirit who indited the Scriptures knew how to give us good rules, by which to distinguish his operations from all that is falsely pretended to be from him. And this, as I observed before, the Spirit of God has here done of set purpose, and done it more particularly and fully than any where else: so that in my present discourse I shall go no where else for rules or marks for the trial of spirits, but shall confine myself to those that I find in this chapter.— But before I proceed particularly to speak to these, I would prepare my way by, first, observing *negatively*, in some instances, what are *not signs* or evidences of a work of the Spirit of God.

NEGATIVE SIGNS

Section I. Negative Signs; or, What are no signs by which we are to judge of a work and especially, What are no evidences that a work is not from the Spirit of God.

I. Nothing can be certainly concluded from this, That a work is carried on in a way very unusual and extraordinary; provided the variety or difference be such, as may still be comprehended within the limits of scripture rules. What the church has been used to, is not a rule by which we are to judge; because there may be new and extraordinary works of God, and he has heretofore evidently wrought in an extraordinary manner. He has brought to pass new things, strange works; and has wrought in such a manner as to surprise both men and angels.

And as God has done thus in times past, so we have no reason to think but that he will do so still. The prophecies of Scripture give us reason to think that God has things to accomplish, which have never yet been seen. No deviation from what has hitherto been usual, let it be never so great, is an argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God,

if it be no deviation from his prescribed rule. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in his operation; and we know that he uses a great variety; and we cannot tell how great a variety he may use, within the compass of the rules he himself has fixed. We ought not to limit God where he has not limited himself.

Therefore it is not reasonable to determine that a work is not from God's Holy Spirit because of the extraordinary degree in which the minds of persons are influenced. If they seem to have an extraordinary conviction of the dreadful nature of sin, and a very uncommon sense of the misery of a Christless condition—or extraordinary views of the certainty and glory of divine things,—and are proportionably moved with very extraordinary affections of fear and sorrow, desire, love, or joy: or if the apparent change be very sudden, and the work be carried on with very unusual swiftness—and the persons affected are very numerous, and many of them are very young, with other unusual circumstances, not infringing upon scripture marks of a work of the Spirit—these things are no argument that the work is not of the Spirit of God.—The extraordinary and unusual degree of influence, and power of operation, if in its nature it be agreeable to the rules and marks given in Scripture, is rather an argument in its favour; for by how much higher the degree which in its nature is agreeable to the rule, so much the more is there of conformity to the rule; and so much the more evident that conformity. When things are in small degrees, though they be really agreeable to the rule, it is not so easily seen whether their nature agrees with the rule.

There is a great aptness in persons to doubt of things that are strange; especially elderly persons, to think that to be right which they have never been used to in their day, and have not heard of in the days of their day, and have not heard of in the days of their fathers. But if it be a good argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that it is very unusual, then it was so in the apostles' days. The work of the Spirit then, was carried on in a manner that, in very many respects, was

altogether new; such as never had been seen or heard since the world stood. The work was then carried on with more visible and remarkable power than ever; nor had there been seen before such mighty and wonderful effects of the Spirit of God in sudden changes, and such great engagedness and zeal in great multitudes—such a sudden alteration in towns, cities, and countries; such a swift progress, and vast extent of the work—and many other extraordinary circumstances might be mentioned. The great unusualness of the work surprised the Jews; they knew not what to make of it, but could not believe it to be the work of God: many looked upon the persons that were the subjects of it as bereft of reason; as you may see in Acts 2:13, 25:24, and 1 Cor 4:10.

And we have reason from scripture prophecy to suppose, that at the commencement of that last and greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God, that is to be in the latter ages of the world, the manner of the work will be very extraordinary, and such as never has yet been seen; so that there shall be occasion then to say, as in Isa. lxvi. 8. “Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” It may be reasonably expected that the extraordinary manner of the work then, will bear some proportion to the very extraordinary events, and that glorious change in the state of the world, which God will bring to pass by it.

II. A work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength. The influence persons are under, is not to be judged of one way or other, by such effects on the body; and the reason is, because the Scripture nowhere gives us any such rule. We cannot conclude that persons are under the influence of the true Spirit because we see such effects upon their bodies, because this is not given as a mark of the true Spirit; nor on the other hand, have we any reason to conclude, from any such outward appearances, that persons are not under the influence of the Spirit of God, because there is no rule of

Scripture given us to judge of spirits by, that does either expressly or indirectly exclude such effects on the body, nor does reason exclude them. It is easily accounted for from the consideration of the nature of divine and eternal things, and the nature of man, and the laws of the union between soul and body, how a right influence, a true and proper sense of things, should have such effects on the body, even those that are of the most extraordinary kind, such as taking away the bodily strength, or throwing the body into great agonies, and extorting loud outcries. There are none of us but do suppose, and would have been ready at any time to say it, that the misery of hell is doubtless so dreadful, and eternity so vast, that if a person should have a clear apprehension of that misery as it is, it would be more that his feeble frame could bear, and especially if at the same time he saw himself in great danger of it, and to be utterly uncertain whether he should be delivered from it, yea, and to have no security from it one day or hour. If we consider human nature, we must not wonder, that when persons have a great sense of that which is so amazingly dreadful, and also have a great view of their own wickedness and God's anger, that things seem to them to forebode speedy and immediate destruction. We see the nature of man to be such that when he is in danger of some terrible calamity to which he is greatly exposed, he is ready upon every occasion to think, that now it is coming.—When persons' hearts are full of fear, in time of war, they are ready to tremble at the shaking of a leaf, and to expect the enemy every minute, and to say within themselves, now I shall be slain. If we should suppose that a person saw himself hanging over a great pit, full of fierce and glowing flames, by a thread that he knew to be very weak, and not sufficient to bear his weight, and knew that multitudes had been in such circumstances before, and that most of them had fallen and perished, and saw nothing within reach, that he could take hold of to save him, what distress would he be in! How ready to think that *now* the thread was breaking, that now, *this minute*, he should be swallowed up in those dreadful flames! And would not he be ready to cry out in such circumstances? How much more those that see themselves in this

manner hanging over an infinitely more dreadful pit, or held over it in the hand of God, who at the same time they see to be exceedingly provoked! No wonder that the wrath of God, when manifested but a little to the soul, overbears human strength.

So it may easily be accounted for, that a true sense of the glorious excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his wonderful dying love, and the exercise of a truly spiritual love and joy, should be such as very much to overcome the bodily strength. We are all ready to own, that no man can see God and live, and that it is but a very small part of that apprehension of the glory and love of Christ, which the saints enjoy in heaven, that our present frame can bear; therefore it is not at all strange that God should sometimes give his saints such foretastes of heaven, as to diminish their bodily strength. If it was not unaccountable that the queen of Sheba fainted, and had her bodily strength taken away, when she came to see the glory of Solomon, much less is it unaccountable that she who is the antitype of the queen of Sheba, (*viç:*) the Church, that is brought, as it were, from the utmost ends of the earth, from being an alien and stranger, far off, in a state of sin and misery, should faint when she comes to see the glory of Christ, who is the antitype of Solomon; and especially will be so in that prosperous, peaceful, glorious kingdom, which he will set up in the world in its latter age.

Some object against such extraordinary appearances, that we have no instances of them recorded in the New Testament, under the extraordinary effusions of the Spirit. Were this allowed, I can see no force in the objection, if neither reason, nor any rule of Scripture, exclude such things; especially considering what was observed under the foregoing particular. I do not know that we have any express mention in the New Testament of any person's weeping, or groaning, or sighing through fear of hell, or a sense of God's anger; but is there any body so foolish as from hence to argue, that in whomsoever these things appear, their convictions are not from the Spirit of God? And the reason why we do not argue thus, is, because these are easily accounted for, from

what we know of the nature of man, and from what the Scripture informs us in general, concerning the nature of eternal things, and the nature of the convictions of God's Spirit; so that there is no need that any thing should be said in particular concerning these external, circumstantial effects. Nobody supposes that there is any need of express scripture for every external, accidental manifestation of the inward motion of the mind: and though such circumstances are not particularly recorded in sacred history, yet there is a great deal of reason to think, from the general accounts we have, that it could not be otherwise than that such things must be in those days. And there is also reason to think, that such great outpouring of the Spirit was not wholly without those more extraordinary effects on persons' bodies. The jailer in particular, seems to have been an instance of that nature, when he, in the utmost distress and amazement, came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. His falling down at that time does not seem to be a designed putting himself into a posture of supplication, or humble address to Paul and Silas; for he seems not to have said anything to them then; but he first brought them out, and then he says to them, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Acts 16:29, and 30. But his falling down seems to be from the same cause as his trembling. The psalmist gives an account of his crying out aloud, and a great weakening of his body under convictions of conscience, and a sense of the guilt of sin, Psal. 32:3, 4. "When I kept silence my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."—We may at least argue so much from it, that such an effect of conviction of sin may well in some cases be supposed; for if we should suppose any thing of an *auxesis* in the expressions, yet the psalmist would not represent his case by what would be absurd, and to which no degree of that exercise of mind he spoke of, would have any tendency.—We read of the disciples, Matt. xiv. 26. that when they saw Christ coming to them in the storm, and took him for some terrible enemy, threatening their destruction in that storm, "they cried out for fear." Why then should it

be thought strange, that persons should cry out for fear, when God appears to them, as a terrible enemy, and they see themselves in great danger of being swallowed up in the bottomless gulf of eternal misery? The spouse, once and again, speaks of herself as overpowered with the love of Christ, so as to weaken her body, and make her faint. Cant. ii. 5. "Stay my with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." And chap. v. 8. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love." From whence we may at least argue, that such an effect may well be supposed to arise, from such a cause in the saints in some cases, and that such an effect will sometimes be seen in the church of Christ.

It is a weak objection, that the impressions of enthusiasts have a great effect on their bodies. That the Quakers used to tremble, is no argument that Saul, afterwards Paul, and the jailer, did not tremble from real convictions of conscience. Indeed all such objections from effects on the body, let them be greater or less, seem to be exceeding frivolous; they who argue thence, proceed in the dark, they know not what ground they go upon, nor by what rule they judge. The root and course of things is to be looked at, and the nature of the operations and affections are to be inquired into, and examined by the rule of God's word, and not the motions of the blood and animal spirits.

III. It is no argument that an operation on the minds of people is not the work of the Spirit of God, that it occasions a great deal of noise about religion. For though true religion be of a contrary nature to that of the Pharisees—which was ostentatious, and delighted to set itself forth to the view of men for their applause—yet such is human nature, that it is morally impossible there should be a great concern, strong affection, and a general engagedness of mind amongst a people, without causing a notable, visible, and open commotion and alteration amongst that people.—Surely, it is no argument that the minds of persons are not under the influence of God's Spirit, that they are very much moved: for indeed spiritual and eternal things are so great, and of such infinite

concern, that there is a great absurdity in men's being but moderately moved and affected by them; and surely it is no argument that they are not moved by the Spirit of God, that they are affected with these things in some measure as they deserve, or in some proportion to their importance. And when was there ever any such thing since the world stood, as a people in general being greatly affected in any affair whatsoever, without noise or stir? The nature of man will not allow it.

Indeed Christ says, Luke 17:20. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." That is, it will not consist in what is outward and visible; it shall not be like earthly kingdoms, set up with outward pomp, in some particular place, which shall be especially the royal city, and seat of the kingdom; as Christ explains himself in the words next following, "Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there; for behold the kingdom of God is within you." Not that the kingdom of God shall be set up in the world, on the ruin of Satan's kingdom, without a very observable, great effect: a mighty change in the state of things, to the observation and astonishment of the whole world: for such an effect as this is even held forth in the prophecies of Scripture, and is so by Christ himself, in this very place, and even in his own explanation of these forementioned words, ver. 24. "For as the lightning that lightneth out of one part under heaven, shineth unto another part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day." This is to distinguish Christ's coming to set up his kingdom, from the coming of false Christ's, which he tells us will be in a private manner in the deserts, and in the secret chambers; whereas this event of setting up the kingdom of God, should be open and public, in the sight of the whole world with clear manifestation, like lightning that cannot be hid, but glares in every one's eyes, and shines from one side of heaven to the other. And we find, that when Christ's kingdom came, by that remarkable pouring out of the Spirit in the apostles' days, it occasioned a great stir every where. What a mighty opposition was there in Jerusalem, on occasion of that great effusion of the Spirit! And so in Samaria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and other places! The affair

filled the world with noise, and gave occasion to some to say of the apostles, that they had turned the world upside down. Acts xvii. 6.

IV. It is no argument that an operation on the minds of a people, is not the work of the Spirit of God, that many who are the subjects of it, have great impressions made on their imaginations. That persons have many impressions on their imaginations, does not prove that they have nothing else. It is easy to be accounted for, that there should be much of this nature amongst a people, where a great multitude of all kinds of constitutions have their minds engaged with intense thought and strong affections about invisible things; yea, it would be strange if there should not. Such is our nature, that we cannot think of things invisible, without a degree of imagination. I dare appeal to any man, of the greatest powers of mind, whether he is able to fix his thoughts on God, or Christ, or the things of another world, without imaginary ideas attending his meditations? And the more engaged the mind is, and the more intense the contemplation and affection, still the more lively and strong the imaginary idea will ordinarily be; especially when attended with surprise. And this is the case when the mental prospect is very new, and takes strong hold of the passions, as fear or joy; and when the change of the state and views of the mind is sudden, from a contrary extreme, as from that which was extremely dreadful, to that which is extremely ravishing and delightful. And it is no wonder that many persons do not well distinguish between that which is imaginary and that which is intellectual and spiritual; and that they are apt to lay too much weight on the imaginary part, and are most ready to speak of that in the account they give of their experiences, especially persons of less understanding and of distinguishing capacity.

As God has given us such a faculty as the imagination, and so made us that we cannot think of things spiritual and invisible, without some exercise of this faculty; so, it appears to me, that such is our state and nature, that this faculty is really subservient and helpful to the other faculties of the mind, when a proper use is made of it; though

oftentimes, when the imagination is too strong, and the other faculties weak, it overbears, and disturbs them in their exercise. It appears to me manifest, in many instances with which I have been acquainted, that God has really made use of this faculty to truly divine purposes; especially in some that are more ignorant. God seems to condescend to their circumstances, and deal with them as babes; as of old he instructed his church, whilst in a state of ignorance and minority, by types and outward representations. I can see nothing unreasonable in such a position. Let others who have much occasion to deal with souls in spiritual concerns, judge whether experience does not confirm it.

It is no argument that a work is not of the Spirit of God, that some who are the subjects of it have been in a kind of ecstasy, wherein they have been carried beyond themselves, and have had their minds transported into a train of strong and pleasing imaginations, and a kind of visions, as though they were rapt up even to heaven, and there saw glorious sights. I have been acquainted with some such instances, and I see no need of bringing in the help of the devil into the account that we give of these things, nor yet of supposing them to be of the same nature with the visions of the prophets, or St. Paul's rapture into paradise. Human nature, under these intense exercises and affections, is all that need be brought into the account. If it may be well accounted for, that persons under a true sense of the glorious and wonderful greatness and excellency of divine things, and soul-ravishing views of the beauty and love of Christ, should have the strength of nature overpowered, as I have already shown that it may; then I think it is not at all strange, that amongst great numbers that are thus affected and overborne, there should be some persons of particular constitutions that should have their imaginations thus affected. The effect is no other than what bears a proportion and analogy to other effects of the strong exercise of their minds. It is no wonder, when the thoughts are so fixed, and the affections so strong—and the whole soul so engaged, ravished, and swallowed up—that all other parts of the body are so affected, as to be

deprived of their strength, and the whole frame ready to dissolve. Is it any wonder that, in such a case, the brain in particular, (especially in some constitutions,) which we know is most especially affected by intense contemplations and exercises of mind, should be so affected, that its strength and spirits should for a season be diverted, and taken off from impressions made on the organs of external sense, and be wholly employed in a train of pleasing delightful imaginations, corresponding with the present frame of the mind. Some are ready to interpret such things wrong, and to lay too much weight on them, as prophetic visions, divine revelations and sometimes significations from heaven of what shall come to pass; which the issue, in some instances I have known, has shown to be otherwise. But yet, it appears to me that such things are evidently sometimes from the Spirit of God, though indirectly; that is, their extraordinary frame of mind, and that strong and lively sense of divine things which is the occasion of them, is from his Spirit; and also as the mind continues in its holy frame, and retains a divine sense of the excellency of spiritual things even in its rapture; which holy frame and sense is from the Spirit of God, though the imaginations that attend it are but accidental, and therefore there is commonly something or other in them that is confused, improper, and false.

V. It is no sign that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that example is a great means of it. It is surely no argument that an effect is not from God, that means are used in producing it; for we know that it is God's manner to make use of means in carrying on his work in the world, and it is no more an argument against the divinity of an effect, that this means is made use of, than if it was by any other means. It is agreeable to Scripture that persons should be influenced by one another's good example. The Scripture directs us to set good examples to that end, Matt. 5:16. 1 Pet. 3:1. 1 Tim. 4:12. Titus 2:7. and also directs us to be influenced by the good examples of others, and to follow them, 2 Cor. 8:1-7. Heb. 6:12. Phil. 3:17. 1 Cor. 4:16. and chap. 11:1. 2 Thess.

3:9. 1 Thess. 1:7. By which it appears, that example is one of God's means; and certainly it is no argument that a work is not of God, that his own means are made use of to effect it.

And as it is a *scriptural* way of carrying on God's work, by example, so it is a *reasonable* way. It is no argument that men are not influenced by reason, that they are influenced by example. This way of persons holding forth truth to one another, has a tendency to enlighten the mind, and to convince reason. None will deny but that for persons to signify things one to another by words, may rationally be supposed to tend to enlighten each other's minds; but the same thing may be signified by actions, and signified much more fully and effectually. Words are of no use any otherwise than as they convey our own ideas to others; but actions, in some cases, may do it much more fully. There is a language in actions; and in some cases, much more clear and convincing than in words. It is therefore no argument against the goodness of the effect, that persons are greatly affected by seeing other so; yea, though the impression be made only by seeing the tokens of great and extraordinary affection in others in their behaviour, taking for granted what they are affected with, without hearing them say one word.

There may be language sufficient in such a case in their behaviour only, to convey their minds to others, and to signify to them their sense of things more than can possibly be done by words only. If a person should see another under extreme bodily torment, he might receive much clearer ideas, and more convincing evidence of what he suffered by his actions in his misery, than he could do only by the words of an unaffected indifferent relater. In like manner he might receive a greater idea of any thing that is excellent and very delightful, from the behaviour of one that is in actual enjoyment, than by the dull narration of one which is inexperienced and insensible himself. I desire that this matter may be examined by the strictest reason. Is it not manifest, that effects produced in persons' minds are rational, since not only weak and ignorant people are much influenced by example, but also those that

make the greatest boast of strength of reason, are more influenced by reason held forth in this way, than almost any other way. Indeed the religious affections of many when raised by this means, as by hearing the word preached, or any other means, may prove flashy, and soon vanish, as Christ represents the stony-ground hearers; but the affections of some thus moved by example, are abiding, and prove to be of saving issue.

There never yet was a time of remarkable pouring out of the Spirit, and great revival of religion, but that example had a main hand. So it was at the reformation, and in the apostles' days, in Jerusalem and Samaria, and Ephesus, and other parts of the world, as will be most manifest to any one that attends to the accounts we have in the Acts of the Apostles. As in those days one person was moved by another, so one city or town was influenced by the example of another, 1 Thess. 1:7, 8. "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia, for from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad."

It is no valid objection against examples being so much used, that the Scripture speaks of the word as the principal means of carrying on God's work; for the word of God is the principal means, nevertheless, by which other means operate and are made effectual. Even the sacraments have no effect but by the word; and so it is that example becomes effectual; for all that is visible to the eye is unintelligible and vain, without the word of God to instruct and guide the mind. It is the word of God that is indeed held forth and applied by example, as the word of the Lord sounded forth to other towns in Macedonia, and Achaia, by the example of those that believe in Thessalonica.

That example should be a great means of propagating the church of God seems to be several ways signified in Scripture: it is signified by Ruth's following Naomi out of the land of Moab, into the

land of Israel, when she resolved that she would not leave her, but would go whither she went, and would lodge where she lodged; and that Naomi's people should be her people, and Naomi's God, her God. Ruth, who was the ancestral mother of David, and of Christ was undoubtedly a great type of the church; upon which account her history is inserted in the canon of Scripture. In her leaving the land of Moab and its gods, to come and put her trust under the shadow of the wings of the God of Israel, we have a type of the conversion not only of the Gentile church but of every sinner, that is naturally an alien and stranger, but in his conversion forgets his own people, and fathers house, and becomes a fellow-citizen with the saints and a true Israelite. The same seems to be signified in the effect the example of the spouse, when she was sick of love, has on the daughters of Jerusalem, *i.e.* Visible Christians, who are first awakened, by seeing the spouse in such extraordinary circumstances, and then converted. See Cant. 5:8, 9. and 6:1. And this is undoubtedly one way that “the Spirit and the bride say, come.” Rev. 22:17. *i.e.* The Spirit in the bride. It is foretold, that the work of God should be very much carried on by this means, in the last great outpouring of the Spirit, that should introduce the glorious day of the church, so often spoken of in Scripture, Zech. 8:21-23. “And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people, and strong nations, shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

VI. It is no sign that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that many, who seem to be the subjects of it, are guilty of great imprudences and irregularities in their conduct. We are to consider that the end for which God pours out his Spirit, is to make men holy, and not to make

them politicians. Is it no wonder that, in a mixed multitude of all sorts—wise and unwise, young and old, of weak and strong natural abilities, under strong impressions of mind—there are many who behave themselves imprudently. There are but few that know how to conduct them under vehement affections of any kind, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature; to do so requires a great deal of discretion, strength, and steadiness of mind. A thousand imprudences will not prove a work to be not of the Spirit of God; yea, if there be not only imprudences, but many things prevailing that are irregular, and really contrary to the rules of God's holy word. That it should be thus may be well accounted for from the exceeding weakness of human nature, together with the remaining darkness and corruption of those that are yet the subjects of the saving influences of God's Spirit, and have a real zeal for God.

We have a remarkable instance, in the New Testament, of a people that partook largely of that great effusion of the Spirit in the apostles' days, among whom there nevertheless abounded imprudences and great irregularities; *viz.* The church at Corinth. There is scarcely any church more celebrated in the New Testament for being blessed with large measures of the Spirit of God, both in his ordinary influences, in convincing and converting sinners, and also in his extraordinary and miraculous gifts; yet what manifold imprudences, great and sinful irregularities, and strange confusion did they run into, at the Lord's supper, and in the exercise of church discipline! To which may be added, their indecent manner of attending other parts of public worship, their jarring and contention about their teachers, and even the exercise of their extraordinary gifts of prophecy, speaking with tongues, and the like, wherein they spake and acted by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God.

And if we see great imprudences, and even sinful irregularities, in some who are great instruments to carry on the work, it will not prove it not to be the work of God. The apostle Peter himself, who was a great, eminently holy, and inspired apostle—and one of the chief instruments

of setting up the christian church in the world—when he was actually engaged in this work, was guilty of a great and sinful error in his conduct; of which the apostle Paul speaks, Gal. 2:11-13. “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed; for before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision; and the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch, that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.” If a great pillar of the christian church—one of the chief of those who are the very foundations on which, next to Christ, the whole church is said to be built—was guilty of such an irregularity; is it any wonder if other lesser instruments, who have not that extraordinary conduct of the divine Spirit he had, should be guilty of many irregularities?

And in particular, it is no evidence that a work is not of God, if many who are either the subjects or the instrument of it, are guilty of too great forwardness to censure others as unconverted. For this may be through mistakes they have embraced concerning the marks by which they are to judge of the hypocrisy and carnality of others; or from not duly apprehending the latitude the Spirit of God uses in the methods of his operations; or, from want of making due allowance for that infirmity and corruption that may be left in the hearts of the saints; as well as through want of a due sense of their own blindness and weakness, and remaining corruption, whereby spiritual pride may have a secret vent this way, under some disguise, and not be discovered.—If we allow that truly pious men may have a great deal of remaining blindness and corruption, and may be liable to mistakes about the marks of hypocrisy, as undoubtedly all will allow, then it is not unaccountable that they should sometimes run into such errors as these. It is as easy, and upon some accounts more easy to be accounted for, why the remaining corruption of good men should sometimes have an unobserved vent this way, than

most other ways; and without doubt (however lamentable) many holy men have erred in this way.

Lukewarmness in religion is abominable, and zeal an excellent grace; yet above all other christian virtues, this needs to be strictly watched and searched; for it is that with which corruption, and particularly pride and human passion, is exceedingly apt to mix unobserved. And it is observable, that there never was a time of great reformation, to cause a revival of zeal in the church of God, but that it has been attended, in some notable instances, with irregularity, and a running out some way or other into an undue severity. Thus in the apostles' days, a great deal of zeal was spent about unclean meats, with heat of spirit in Christians one against another, both parties condemning and censuring one another, as not true Christians; when the apostle had charity for both, as influenced by a spirit of real piety: "he that eats," says he, "to the Lord he eats, and giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." So in the church of Corinth, they had got into a way of extolling some ministers, and censuring others, and were puffed up one against another: but yet these things were no sign that the work then so wonderfully carried on, was not the work of God. And after this, when religion was still greatly flourishing in the world, and a spirit of eminent holiness and zeal prevailed in the christian church, the zeal of Christians ran out into a very improper and undue severity, in the exercise of church discipline towards delinquents. In some cases they would by no means admit them into their charity and communion though they appeared never so humble and penitent. And in the days of Constantine the Great, the zeal of Christians against heathenism ran out into a degree of persecution. So in that glorious revival of religion, at the reformation, zeal in many instances appeared in a very improper severity, and even a degree of persecution; yea, in some of the most eminent reformers; as in the great Calvin in particular. And many in those days of the flourishing of vital

religion, were guilty of severely censuring others that differed from them in opinion in some points of divinity.

VII. Nor are many errors in judgment, and some delusions of Satan intermixed with the work, any argument that the work in general is not of the Spirit of God. However great a spiritual influence may be, it is not to be expected that the Spirit of God should be given now in the same manner as to the apostles, infallibly to guide them in points of christian doctrine, so that what they taught might be relied on as a rule to the christian church. And if many delusions of Satan appear, at the same time that a great religious concern prevails, it is not an argument that the work in general is not the work of God, any more than it was an argument in Egypt, that there were no true miracles wrought there, by the hand of God, because Jannes and Jambres wrought false miracles at the same time by the hand of the devil. Yea, the same persons may be the subjects of much of the influences of the Spirit of God, and yet in some things be led away by the delusions of Satan, and this be no more of paradox than many other things that are true of real saints, in the present state, where grace dwells with so much corruption, and the new man and the old man subsist together in the same person; and the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil remain for a while together in the same heart. Many godly persons have undoubtedly in this and other ages, exposed themselves to woeful delusions, by an aptness to lay too much weight on impulses and impressions, as if they were immediate revelations from God, to signify something future, or to direct them where to go, and what to do.

VIII. If some, who were thought to be wrought upon, fall away into gross errors, or scandalous practices, it is no argument that the work in general is not the work of the Spirit of God. That there are some counterfeits, is no argument that nothing is true: such things are always expected in a time of reformation. If we look into church history, we shall find no instance of any great revival of religion, but what has been attended with many such things. Instances of this nature in the apostles'

days were innumerable; some fell away into gross heresies, others into vile practices, though they seemed to be the subjects of a work of the Spirit—and were accepted for a while amongst those that were truly so, as their brethren and companions—and were not suspected till they went out from them. And some of these were teachers and officers—and eminent persons in the christian church—whom God had endowed with miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; as appears by the beginning of the 6th chapter of the Hebrews. An instance of these was Judas, who was one of the twelve apostles, and had long been constantly united to, and intimately conversant with, a company of truly experienced disciples, without being discovered or suspected, till he discovered himself by his scandalous practice.

He had been treated by Jesus himself, in all external things, as if he had truly been a disciple, even investing him with the character of apostle, sending him forth to preach the gospel, and enduing him with miraculous gifts of the Spirit. For though Christ knew him, yet he did not then clothe himself with the character of omniscient Judge, and searcher of hearts, but acted the part of a minister of the visible church; (for he was his Father's minister;) and therefore rejected him not, till he had discovered himself by his scandalous practice; thereby giving an example to guides and rulers of the visible church, not to take it upon them to act the part of searcher of hearts, but to be influenced in their administrations by what is visible and open.—There were some instances then of such apostates, as were esteemed eminently full of the grace of God's Spirit. An instance of this nature probably was Nicolas, one of the seven deacons, who was looked upon by the Christians in Jerusalem, in the time of that extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit, as a man full of the Holy Ghost, and was chosen out of the multitude of Christians to that office, for that reason; as you may see in Acts 6:3, 5. Yet he afterwards fell away and became the head of a sect of vile heretics, of gross practices, called from his name the sect of the Nicolaitans, [But through these heretics assumed his name, it does not

follow that he countenanced their enormities. See Calmet's Dict. Nicolas] Rev. 2:6, and 15.

So in the time of the reformation from popery, how great was the number of those who for a while seemed to join with the reformers, yet fell away into the grossest and most absurd errors, and abominable practices. And it is particularly observable, that in times of great pouring out of the Spirit to revive religion in the world, a number of those who for a while seemed to partake in it, have fallen off into whimsical and extravagant errors, and gross enthusiasm, boasting of high degrees of spirituality and perfection, censuring and condemning others as carnal. Thus it was with the Gnostics in the apostles' times; and thus it was with several sects at the reformation, as Anthony Burgess observes in his book called *Spiritual Refinings*, Part I. Sermon. 23. P. 132. "The first worthy reformers, and glorious instruments of God, found a bitter conflict herein, so that they were exercised not only with formalists, and traditionary papists on the one side, but men that pretended themselves to be more enlightened than the reformers were, on the other side: hence they called those that did adhere to the Scripture, and would try revelations by it, Literists and Vowelists, as men acquainted with the words and vowels of the Scripture, having nothing of the Spirit of God: and wheresoever in any town the true doctrine of the gospel brake forth to the displacing of popery, presently such opinions arose, like tares that came up among the good wheat; whereby great divisions were raised, and the reformation made abominable and odious to the world; as if that had been the sun to give heat and warmth to those worms and serpents to crawl out of the ground. Hence they inveighed against Luther, and said he had only promulgated a carnal gospel."—Some of the leaders of those wild enthusiasts had been for a while highly esteemed by the first reformers, and peculiarly dear to them.—Thus also in England, at the time when vital religion much prevailed in the days of King Charles I, the interregnum, and Oliver Cromwell, such things as these abounded. And so in New England, in her purest days, when vital

piety flourished, such kind of things as these broke out. Therefore the devil's sowing such tares is no proof that a true work of the Spirit of God is not gloriously carried on.

IX. It is no argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that it seems to be promoted by ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God's holy law, and that with a great deal of pathos and earnestness. If there be really a hell of such dreadful and never-ending torments, as is generally supposed, of which multitudes are in great danger—and into which the greater part of men in christian countries do actually from generation to generation fall, for want of a sense of its terribleness, and so for want of taking due care to avoid it—then why is it not proper for those who have the care of souls to take great pains to make men sensible of it? Why should they not be told as much of the truth as can be? If I am in danger of going to hell, I should be glad to know as much as possibly I can of the dreadfulness of it. If I am very prone to neglect due care to avoid it, he does me the best kindness, who does most to represent to me the truth of the case, that sets forth my misery and danger in the liveliest manner.

I appeal to every one, whether this is not the very course they would take in case of exposedness to any great temporal calamity? If any of you who are heads of families saw one of your children in a house all on fire, and in imminent danger of being soon consumed in the flames, yet seemed to be very insensible of its danger, and neglected to escape after you had often called to it—would you go on to speak to it only in a cold and indifferent manner? Would not you cry aloud, and call earnestly to it, and represent the danger it was in, and its own folly in delaying, in the most lively manner of which you was capable? If you should continue to speak to it only in a cold manner, as you are wont to do in ordinary conversation about indifferent matters, would not those about you begin to think you were bereft of reason yourself? This is not the way of mankind in temporal affairs of great moment, that require earnest heed and great haste, and about which they are greatly

concerned. They are not wont to speak to other of their danger, and warn them but a little or in a cold and indifferent manner. Nature teaches men otherwise. If we who have the care of souls, knew what hell was, had seen the state of the damned, or by any other means had become sensible how dreadful their case was—and at the same time knew that the greater part of men went thither, and saw our hearers not sensible of their danger—it would be morally impossible for us to avoid most earnestly setting before them the dreadfulness of that misery, and their great exposedness to it, and even to cry aloud to them.

When ministers preach of hell, and warn sinners to avoid it, in a cold manner—though they may say in words that it is infinitely terrible—they contradict themselves. For actions, as I observed before, have a language as well as words. If a preacher's words represent the sinner's state as infinitely dreadful, while his behaviour and manner of speaking contradict it—showing that the preacher does not think so—he defeats his own purpose; for the language of his actions, in such a case, is much more effectual than the bare signification of his words. Not that I think that the law only should be preached: ministers may preach other things too little. The gospel is to be preached as well as the law, and the law is to be preached only to make way for the gospel, and in order that it may be preached more effectually. The main work of ministers is to preach the gospel: “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.” So that a minister would miss it very much if he should insist so much on the terrors of the law, as to forget his Lord, and neglect to preach the gospel; but yet the law is very much to be insisted on, and the preaching of the gospel is like to be in vain without it.

And certainly such earnestness and affection in speaking is beautiful, as becomes the nature and importance of the subject. Not but that there may be such a thing as an indecent boisterousness in a preacher, something besides what naturally arises from the nature of his subject, and in which the matter and manner do not well agree together. Some talk of it as an unreasonable thing to fright persons to heaven; but

I think it is a reasonable thing to endeavour to fright persons away from hell. They stand upon its brink, and are just ready to fall into it, and are senseless of their danger. Is it not a reasonable thing to fright a person out of a house on fire? The word *fright* is commonly used for sudden, causeless fear, or groundless surprise; but surely a just fear, for which there is good reason, is not to be spoken against under any such name.

DISTINGUISHING SCRIPTURE EVIDENCES

Section II. What are distinguishing scripture evidences of a work of the Spirit of God.

Having shown, in some instances, what are not evidences that a work wrought among a people, is not a work of the Spirit of God, I now proceed, in the second place, as was proposed, to show positively, what are the sure, distinguishing scripture evidences and marks of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we may proceed in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see among a people, without danger of being misled.—And in this, as I said before, I shall confine myself wholly to those marks which are given us by the apostle in the chapter wherein is my text, where this matter is particularly handled, and more plainly and fully than any where else in the Bible. And in speaking to these marks, I shall take them in the order in which I find them in the chapter.

I. When the operation is such as to **raise their esteem of that Jesus** who was born of the Virgin, and was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; and seems more to confirm and establish their minds in the truth of what the gospel declares to us of his being the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; is a sure sign that it is from the Spirit of God. This sign the apostle gives us in the 2d and 3d verses, “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; and every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.” This implies a confessing not only that there was such a person who appeared in

Palestine, and did and suffered those things that are recorded of him, but that he was Christ, *i.e.* The Son of God, anointed to be Lord and Saviour, as the name Jesus Christ implies. That thus much is implied in the apostle's meaning, is confirmed by the 15th verse, where the apostle is still on the same subject of signs of the true Spirit; "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." And it is to be observed that the word *confess*, as it is often used in the New Testament, signifies more then merely *allowing*: it implies an establishing and confirming of a thing by testimony, and declaring it with manifestation of esteem and affection; so Matt. 10:32. "Whosoever therefore shall *confess* me before men, him will I *confess* also before my Father which is in heaven." Rom. 15:9. "I will *confess* to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." And Phil. 2:11. "That every tongue shall *confess* that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And that this is the force of the expression, as the apostle John uses it in the place, is confirmed in the next chapter, ver. 1. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." And by that parallel place of the apostle Paul, where we have the same rule given to distinguish the true Spirit from all counterfeits, 1 Cor. 12:3. "Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; (or will show an ill or mean esteem of him;) and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

So that if the spirit that is at work among a people is plainly observed to work so as to convince them of Christ, and lead them to him—to confirm their minds in the belief of the history of Christ as he appeared in the flesh—and that he is the Son of God, and was sent of God to save sinners; that he is the only Saviour, and that they stand in great need of him; and if he seems to beget in them higher and more honourable thoughts of him than they used to have, and to incline their affections more to him; it is a sure sign that it is the true and right Spirit;

however incapable we may be to determine, whether that conviction and affection be in that manner, or to that degree, as to be saving or not.

But the words of the apostle are remarkable; the person to whom the Spirit gives testimony, and for whom he raises their esteem, must be that Jesus who appeared in the flesh, and not another Christ in his stead; nor any mystical fantastical Christ; such as the light within. This the spirit of Quakers extols, while it diminishes their esteem of and dependence upon an outward Christ—or Jesus as he came in the flesh—and leads them off from him; but the spirit that gives testimony for that Jesus, and leads to him, can be no other than the Spirit of God.

The devil has the most bitter and implacable enmity against that person, especially in his character of the Saviour of men; he mortally hates the story and doctrine of his redemption; he never would go about to beget in men more honourable thoughts of him, and lay greater weight on his instructions and commands. The Spirit that inclines men's hearts to the seed of the woman, is not the spirit of the serpent that has such an irreconcilable enmity against him. He that heightens men's esteem of the glorious Michael, that prince of angels, is not the spirit of the dragon that is at war with him.

II. When the spirit that is at work **operates against the interests of Satan's kingdom**, which lies in encouraging and establishing sin, and cherishing men's worldly lusts; this is a sure sign that it is a true, and not a false spirit. This sign we have given us in the 4th and 5th verses. “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.” Here is a plain antithesis: it is evident that the apostle is still comparing those that are influenced by the two opposite kinds of spirits, the true and the false, and showing the difference; the one is of God, and overcomes the spirit of the world; the other is of the world, and speaks and savours of the things of the world. The spirit of the devil is here called, “he that is in the world.” Christ says, “My kingdom

is not of this world.” But it is otherwise with Satan's kingdom; he is “the god of this world.”

What the apostle means by *the world*, or “the things that are of the world,” we learn by his own words, in the 2d chapter of this epistle, 15th and 16th verses. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” So that by the world the apostle evidently means every thing that appertains to the interest of sin, and comprehends all the corruptions and lusts of men, and all those acts and objects by which they are gratified.

So that we may safely determine, from what the apostle says, that the spirit that is at work amongst a people, after such a manner, as to lessen men's esteem of the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world, and to take off their hearts from an eager pursuit after these things; and to engage them in a deep concern about a future state and eternal happiness which the gospel reveals—and puts them upon earnestly seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and the spirit that convinces them of the dreadfulness of sin, the guilt it brings, and the misery to which it exposes; must needs be the Spirit of God.

It is not to be supposed that Satan would convince men of sin, and awaken the conscience; it can no way serve his end, to make that candle of the Lord shine the brighter, and to open the mouth of that vicergerent of God in the soul. It is for his interest, whatever he does, to lull conscience asleep, and keep it quiet. To have that, with its eyes and mouth open in the soul, will tend to clog and hinder all his designs of darkness, and evermore to disturb his affairs, to cross his interest, and disquiet him, so that he can manage nothing to his mind without molestation. Would the devil, when he is about to establish men in sin, take such a course, in the first place, to enlighten and awaken the conscience to see the dreadfulness of sin, and make them exceedingly afraid of it, and sensible of their misery by reason of their past sins, and

their great need of deliverance from their guilt? Would he make them more careful, inquisitive, and watchful to discern what is sinful; and to avoid future sins; and so more afraid of the devil's temptations, and more careful to guard against them? What do those men do with their reason, that suppose that the Spirit that operates thus, is the spirit of the devil?

Possibly some may say, that the devil may even awaken men's consciences to deceive them, and make them think they have been the subjects of a saving work of the Spirit of God, while they are indeed still in the gall of bitterness. But to this it may be replied, that the man who has an awakened conscience, is the least likely to be deceived of any man in the world; it is the drowsy, insensible, stupid conscience that is most easily blinded. The more sensible conscience is in a diseased soul, the less easily is it quieted without a real healing. The more sensible conscience is made of the dreadfulness of sin, and of the greatness of a man's own guilt, the less likely is he to rest in his own righteousness, or to be pacified with nothing but shadows. A man that has been thoroughly terrified with a sense of his own danger and misery, is not easily flattered and made to believe himself safe, without any good grounds. To awaken conscience, and convince it of the evil of sin, cannot tend to establish it, but certainly tends to make way for sin and Satan's being cut out. Therefore this is a good argument that the Spirit that operates thus, cannot be the spirit of the devil; except we suppose that Christ knew not how to argue, who told the Pharisees—who supposed that the Spirit by which he wrought, was the spirit of the devil—that *Satan would not cast out Satan*, Matt. 12:25, 26.—And therefore, if we see persons made sensible of the dreadful nature of sin, and of the displeasure of God against it; of their own miserable condition as they are in themselves, by reason of sin, and earnestly concerned for their eternal salvation—and sensible of their need of God's pity and help, and engaged to seek it in the use of the means that God has appointed—we may certainly conclude that it is from the Spirit

of God, whatever effects this concern has on their bodies; though it cause them to cry out aloud, or to shriek, or to faint; or, though it throw them into convulsions, or whatever other way the blood and spirits are moved.

The influence of the Spirit of God is yet more abundantly manifest, if persons have their hearts *drawn off* from the world, and weaned from the objects of their worldly lusts, and taken off from worldly pursuits, by the sense they have of the excellency of divine things, and the affection they have to those spiritual enjoyments of another world, that are promised in the gospel.

III. The spirit that operates in such a manner, as to cause in men **a greater regard to the Holy Scriptures**, and establishes them more in their truth and divinity, is certainly the Spirit of God. This rule the apostle gives us in the 6th verse: "*We are of God*; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us: hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." We are of God; that is, "We the apostles are sent forth of God, and appointed by him to teach the world, and to deliver those doctrine and instructions, which are to be their rule; *he that knoweth God, heareth us*," &c.—The apostle's argument here equally reaches all that in the same sense are *of God*; that is, all those that God has appointed and inspired to deliver to his church its rule of faith and practice; all the prophets and apostles, whose doctrine God has made the foundation on which he has built his church, as in Eph. 2:20. in a word, all the penmen of the Holy Scriptures. The devil never would attempt to beget in persons a regard to that divine word which God has given to be the great and standing rule for the direction of his church in all religious matters, and all concerns of their souls, in all ages. A spirit of delusion will not incline persons to seek direction at the mouth of God. To the law and to the testimony, is never the cry of those evil spirits that have no light in them; for it is God's own direction to discover their delusions. Isa. 8:19, 20. "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep

and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? For the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” The devil does not say the same as Abraham did, “They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them:” nor the same that the voice from heaven did concerning Christ, “Hear ye him.” Would the spirit of error, in order to deceive men, beget in them a high opinion of the infallible rule, and incline them to think much of it, and be very conversant with it? Would the prince of darkness, in order to promote his kingdom of darkness, lead men to the sun? The devil has ever shown a mortal spite and hatred towards that holy book the Bible: he has done all in his power to extinguish that light; and to draw men off from it: he knows it to be that light by which his kingdom of darkness is to be overthrown. He has had for many ages experience of its power to defeat his purposes, and baffle his designs: it is his constant plague. It is the main weapon which Michael uses in his war with him: it is the sword of the Spirit, that pierces him and conquers him. It is that great and strong sword, with which God punishes Leviathan, that crooked serpent. It is that sharp sword that we read of, Rev. 19:15. That proceeds out of the mouth of him that sat on the horse, with which he smites his enemies. Every text is a dart to torment the old serpent. He has felt the stinging smart thousands of times; therefore he is engaged against the Bible, and hates every word in it: and we may be sure that he never will attempt to raise persons' esteem of it, or affection to it. And accordingly we see it common in enthusiasts, that they depreciate this written rule, and set up the light within or some other rule above it.

IV. Another rule to judge of spirits may be drawn from those compellations given to the opposite spirits, in the last words of the 6th verse, “The spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” These words exhibit the two opposite characters of the Spirit of God, and other spirits that counterfeit his operations. And therefore, if by observing the manner of the operation of a spirit that is at work among a people, we see that

it operates as a spirit of truth, leading persons to truth, convincing them of those things that are true, we may safely determine that it is a right and true spirit. For instance, if we observe that the spirit at work makes men more sensible than they used to be, that there is a God, and that he is a great and sin-hating God; that life is short, and very uncertain; and that there is another world; that they have immortal souls, and must give account of themselves to God, that they are exceeding sinful by nature and practice; that they are helpless in themselves; and confirms them in other things that are agreeable to some sound doctrine; the spirit that works thus operates as a spirit of truth; he represents things as they truly are. He brings men to the light; for whatever makes truth manifest is light; as the apostle Paul observes, Eph. 5:13. "But all things that are reprov'd (or discovered, as it is in the margin) are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." And therefore we may conclude, that it is not the spirit of darkness that doth thus discover and make manifest the truth. Christ tells us that Satan is a liar, and the father of lies; and his kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. It is upheld and promoted only by darkness and error. Satan has all his power of dominion by darkness. Hence we read of the power of darkness. Luke 12:53. And Col. 1:13. And devils are called "the rulers of the darkness of this world." Whatever spirit removes our darkness, and brings us to the light, undeceives us, and, by convincing us of the truth, doth us a kindness. If I am brought to a sight of truth, and am made sensible of things as they really are, my duty is immediately to thank God for it, without standing first to inquire by what means I have such a benefit.

V. If the spirit that is at work among a people operates as **a spirit of love to God and man**, it is a sure sign that it is the Spirit of God. This sign the apostle insists upon from the 6th verse to the end of the chapter. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God: he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love," &c. Here it is evident, that the

apostle is still comparing those two sorts of persons that are influenced by the opposite kinds of spirits; and mentions love as a mark by which we may know who has the true spirit: but this is especially evident by the 12th and 13th verses. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us: hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." In these verses love is spoken of as if it were that wherein the very nature of the Holy Spirit consisted; or, as if *divine love* dwelling in us, and the *Spirit of God* dwelling in us, were the same thing; as it is also in the last two verses of the foregoing chapter, and in the 16th verse. of this chapter. Therefore this last mark which the apostle gives of the true Spirit he seems to speak of as the most eminent: and so insists much more largely upon it, than upon all the rest; and speaks expressly of both love to God and men; of *love to men* in the 7th, 11th, and 12th verses;. and of *love to God*, in the 17th, 18th, and 19th verses.; and of both together, in the last two verses; and of love to men, as arising from love to God, in these last two verses.

Therefore, when the spirit that is at work amongst the people, tends this way, and brings many of them to high and exalting thoughts of the Divine Being, and his glorious perfections; and works in them an admiring, delightful sense of the excellency of Jesus Christ; representing him as the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, and makes him precious to the soul; winning and drawing the heart with those motives and incitements to love, of which the apostle speaks in that passage of Scripture we are upon, *viz.* The wonderful, free love of God in giving his only-begotten Son to die for us, and the wonderful dying love of Christ to us, who had no love to him, but were his enemies; must needs be the Spirit of God, as ver. 9, 10. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his onlybegotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And ver. 16. "And we have known, and believed, the love that God hath to us." And ver. 19. "We love him because he first loved

us.” The spirit that excites to love on these motives, and makes the attributes of God as revealed in the gospel, and manifested in Christ, delightful objects of contemplation; and makes the soul to long after God and Christ—after their presence and communion, acquaintance with them, and conformity to them—and to live so as to please and honour them; the spirit that quells contentions among men, and gives a spirit of peace and good will, excites to acts of outward kindness, and earnest desires of the salvation of souls—and causes a delight in those that appear as the children God, and followers of Christ; I say, when a spirit operates after this manner among a people, there is the highest kind of evidence of the influence of a true and divine spirit.

Indeed there is a counterfeit love, that often appears among those who are led by a spirit of delusion. There is commonly in the wildest enthusiasts, a kind of union and affection, arising from self-love, occasioned by their agreeing in those things wherein they greatly differ from all others, and from which they are objects of the ridicule of all the rest of mankind. This naturally will cause them so much the more to prize those peculiarities that make them the objects of others' contempt. Thus the ancient Gnostics, and the wild fanatics that appeared at the beginning of the reformation, boasted of their great love one to another; one sect of them, in particular, calling themselves the *family of love*. But this is quite another thing, than that christian love I have just described: it is only the working of a natural self-love, and no true benevolence, any more than the union and friendship which may be among a company of pirates, that are at war with all the rest of the world. There is enough said in this passage of the nature of a truly christian love, thoroughly to distinguish it from all such counterfeits. It is love that arises from apprehension of the wonderful riches of the free grace and sovereignty of God's love to us, in Christ Jesus; being attended with a sense of our own utter unworthiness, as in ourselves the enemies and haters of God and Christ, and with a renunciation of all our own excellency and righteousness. See ver. 9, 10, 11, and 19. The surest

character of true divine supernatural love—distinguishing it from counterfeits that arise from a natural self-love—is, that the christian virtue of *humility* shines in it; that which above all others renounces, abases, and annihilates what we term *self*. Christian love, or true charity, is an humble love. 1 Cor. 8:4, 5. “Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked.” When therefore we see love in persons attended with a sense of their own littleness, vileness, weakness, and utter insufficiency; and so with self-diffidence, self-emptiness, self-renunciation, and poverty of spirit; these are the manifest tokens of the Spirit of God.

He that thus dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him. What the apostle speaks of as a great evidence of the true Spirit, is God's love or Christ's love; as ver. 12.—”his love is perfected in us.” What kind of love that is, we may see best in what appeared in Christ's example. The love that appeared in that Lamb of God, was not only a love to friends, but to enemies, and a love attended with a meek and humble spirit. “Learn of me,” says he, “for I am meek and lowly in heart.”—Love and humility are two things the most contrary to the spirit of the devil, of any thing in the world; for the character of that evil spirit, above all things, consists in pride and malice.

Thus I have spoken particularly to the several marks the apostle gives us of a work of the true Spirit. There are some of these things which the devil *would not* do if he could: thus he would not awaken the conscience, and make men sensible of their miserable state by reason of sin, and sensible of their great need of a Saviour; and he would not confirm men in the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners, or raise men's value and esteem of him: he would not beget in men's minds an opinion of the necessity, usefulness, and truth of the Holy Scriptures, or incline them to make much use of them; nor would he show men the truth, in things that concern their souls' interest; to undeceive them, and lead them out of darkness into light, and give them a view of things as they really are. And there are other things that the

devil *neither can nor will do*; he will not give men a spirit of divine love, or christian humility and poverty of spirit; nor *could* he if he would. He cannot give those things he has not himself: these things are as contrary as possible to his nature. And therefore when there is an extraordinary influence or operation appearing on the minds of a people, if these things are found in it, we are safe in determining that it is the work of God, whatever other circumstances it may be attended with, whatever instruments are used, whatever methods are taken to promote it; whatever means a sovereign God, whose judgments are a great deep, employs to carry it on; and whatever motion there may be of the animal spirits, whatever effects may be wrought on men's bodies. These marks, that the apostle has given us, are sufficient to stand alone, and support themselves. They plainly show the *finger of God*, and are sufficient to outweigh a thousand such little objections, as many make from oddities, irregularities, errors in conduct, and the delusions and scandals of some professors.

But here some may *object* to the sufficiency of the marks given, what the apostle Paul says in 2 Cor. 11:13, 14. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

To which I *answer*, that this can be no objection against the sufficiency of these marks to distinguish the true from the false spirit, in those false apostles and prophets, in whom the devil was transformed into an angel of light, because it is principally with a view to them that the apostle gives these marks; as appears by the words of the text, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God;" and this is the reason he gives, because many false prophets are gone out into the world: *viz.* "There are many gone out into the world who are the ministers of the devil, who transform themselves into the prophets of God, in whom the spirit of the devil is transformed into an angel of light; therefore try the spirits by these rules that I shall give you, that you

may be able to distinguish the true spirit from the false, under such a crafty disguise.” Those *false prophets* the apostle *John* speaks of, are doubtless the same sort of men with those *false apostles*, and deceitful workers, that the apostle *Paul* speaks of, in whom the devil was transformed into an angel of light: and therefore we may be sure that these marks are especially adapted to distinguish between the true Spirit, and the devil transformed into an angel of light, because they are given especially for that end; that is the apostle's declared purpose and design, to give marks by which the true Spirit may be distinguished from that sort of counterfeits.

And if we look over what is said about these false prophets, and false apostles, (as there is much said about them in the New Testament,) and take notice in what manner the devil was transformed into an angel of light in them, we shall not find any thing that in the least injures the sufficiency of these marks to distinguish the true Spirit from such counterfeits. The devil transformed himself into an angel of light, as there was in them a show, and great boast, of extraordinary knowledge in divine things; Col. 2:8. 1. Tim. 1:6, 7. and chap. 6:3-5. 2 Tim. 2:14-18. Tit. 1:10, 16. Hence their followers called themselves *Gnostics*, from their great pretended knowledge: and the devil in them mimicked the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, in visions, revelations, prophecies, miracles, &c. Hence they are called false apostles, and false prophets: see Matt. 24:24. Again, there was a false show of, and lying pretensions to, great holiness and devotion in words: Rom. 16:17, 18. Ephes. 4:14. Hence they are called deceitful workers, and wells and clouds without water. 2 Cor. 11:13. 2 Pet. 2: 17. Jude 12. There was also in them a show of extraordinary piety and righteousness in their superstitious worship: Col. 2:16-23. So they had a false, proud, and bitter zeal: Gal. 4:17, 18. 1 Tim. 1:6. and chap. vi. 4, 5. And likewise a false show of humility, in affecting an extraordinary outward meanness and dejection, when indeed they were “vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind:” and made a righteousness of their humility, and were exceedingly lifted up with their

eminent piety: Col. 2:18, 23. But how do such things as these in the least injure those things that have been mentioned as the distinguishing evidences of the true Spirit?—Besides such vain shows which may be from the devil, there are common influences of the Spirit, which are often mistaken for saving grace; but these are out of the question, because though they are not saving, yet are the work of the true Spirit.

Having thus fulfilled what I at first proposed, in considering what are the certain, distinguishing marks, by which we may safely proceed in judging of any work that falls under our observation, whether it be the work of the Spirit of God or no; I now proceed to the Application.

PRACTICAL INFERENCES

I. From what has been said, I will venture to draw this inference, viz. That the extraordinary influence that has lately appeared, causing an uncommon concern and engagedness of mind about the things of religion, is undoubtedly, in the general, from the Spirit of God. There are but two things that need to be known in order to such a work's being judged of, viz. Facts and rules. The rules of the word of God we have had laid before us; and as to facts, there are but two ways that we can come at them, so as to be in a capacity to compare them with the rules, either by our own observation, or by information from others who have had opportunity to observe them.

As to this work, there are many things concerning it that are notorious, and which, unless the apostle John was out in his rules, are sufficient to determine it to be in general the work of God. The Spirit that is at work, takes off persons' minds from the vanities of the world, and engages them in a deep concern about eternal happiness, and puts them upon earnestly seeking their salvation, and convinces them of the dreadfulness of sin, and of their own guilty and miserable state as they are by nature. It awakens men's consciences, and makes them sensible of the dreadfulness of God's anger, and causes in them a great desire

and earnest care and endeavour to obtain his favour. It puts them upon a more diligent improvement of the means of grace which God has appointed; accompanied with a greater regard to the word of God, a desire of hearing and reading it, and of being more conversant with it than they used to be. And it is notoriously manifest, that the spirit that is at work, in general, operates as a spirit of truth, making persons more sensible of what is really true in those things that concern their eternal salvation: as, that they must die, and that life is very short and uncertain; that there is a great sin-hating God, to whom they are accountable, and who will fix them in an eternal state in another world; and that they stand in great need of a Saviour. It makes persons more sensible of the value of Jesus who was crucified, and their need of him; and that it puts them upon earnestly seeking an interest in him. It cannot be but that these things should be apparent to people in general through the land; for these things are not done in a corner; the work has not been confined to a few towns, in some remoter parts, but has been carried on in many places all over the land, and in most of the principal, the populous, and public places in it. Christ in this respect has wrought amongst us, in the same manner that he wrought his miracles in Judea. It has now been continued for a considerable time; so that there has been a great opportunity to observe the manner of the work. And all such as have been very conversant with the subjects of it, see a great deal more, that, by the rules of the apostle, does clearly and certainly show it to be the work of God.

And here I would observe, that the nature and tendency of a spirit that is at work, may be determined with much greater certainty, and less danger of being imposed upon, when it is observed in a great multitude of people of all sorts, and in various places, than when it is only seen in a few, in some particular place, that have been much conversant one with another. A few particular persons may agree to put a cheat upon others, by a false pretence, and professing things of which they never were conscious. But when the work is spread over great parts

of a country, in places distant from one another, among people of all sorts and of all ages, and in multitudes possessed of a sound mind, good understanding, and known integrity; there would be the greatest absurdity in supposing, from all the observation that can be made by all that is heard from and seen in them—for many months together, and by those who are most intimate with them in these affairs, and have long been acquainted with them—that yet it cannot be determined what kind of influence the operation they are under, has upon people's minds, can it not be determined whether it tends to awaken their consciences, or to stupify them; whether it inclines them more to seek their salvation, or neglect it; whether it seems to confirm them in a belief of the Scriptures, or to lead them to deism; whether it makes them have more regard for the great truths of religion, or less?

And here it is to be observed, that for persons to profess that they are so convinced of certain divine truths, as to esteem and love them in a *saving manner*; and for them to profess, that they are *more convinced* or confirmed in the truth of them, than they used to be, and find that they have a greater regard to them than they had before, are two very different things. Persons of honesty and common sense, have much greater right to demand credit to be given to the latter profession, than to the former. Indeed in the former, it is less likely that a people in general should be deceived, than some particular persons. But whether persons' convictions, and the alteration in their dispositions and affections, be in a degree and manner that is saving, is beside the present question. If there be such effects on people's judgments, dispositions, and affections, as have been spoken of, whether they be in a degree and manner that is saving or no, it is nevertheless a sign of the influence of the Spirit of God. Scripture rules serve to distinguish the common influences of the Spirit of God, as well as those that are saving, from the influence of other causes.

And as, by the providence of God, I have for some months past been much amongst those who have been the subjects of the work in

question; and particularly, have been in the way of seeing and observing those extraordinary things with which many persons have been offended;—such as persons' crying out aloud, shrieking, being put into great agonies of body, &c.—and have seen the manner and issue of such operations, and the fruits of them, for several months together; many of them being persons with whom I have been intimately acquainted in soul concerns, before and since; so I look upon myself called on this occasion to give my testimony, that—so far as the nature and tendency of such a work is capable of falling under the observation of a bystander, to whom those that have been the subjects of it have endeavoured to open their hearts, or can be come at by diligent and particular inquiry—this work has all those marks that have been pointed out. And this has been the case in very many instances, in *every article*; and in many others, all those marks have appeared in a very great degree.

The subjects of these uncommon appearances, have been of two sorts; either those who have been in great distress from an apprehension of their sin and misery; or those who have been overcome with a sweet sense of the greatness, wonderfulness, and excellency of divine things.

Of the multitude of those of the former sort, that I have had opportunity to observe, there have been very few, but their distress has arisen apparently from real proper conviction, and being in a degree sensible of that which was the truth. And though I do not suppose, when such things were observed to be common, that persons have laid themselves under those violent restraints to avoid outward manifestations of their distress, that perhaps they otherwise would have done; yet there have been very few in whom there has been any appearance of feigning or affecting such manifestations, and very many for whom it would have been undoubtedly utterly impossible for them to avoid them. Generally, in these agonies they have appeared to be in the perfect exercise of their reason; and those of them who could speak, have been well able to give an account of the circumstances of their

mind, and the cause of their distress, at the time, and were able to remember, and give an account of it afterwards. I have know a very few instances of those, who, in their great extremity, have for a short space been deprived, in some measure, of the use of reason; but among the many hundreds, and it may be thousands, that have lately been brought to such agonies, I never yet knew one lastingly deprived of their reason. In some that I have known, melancholy has evidently been mixed; and when it is so, the difference is very apparent; their distresses are of another kind, and operate quite after another manner, than when their distress is from mere conviction. It is not truth only that distresses them, but many vain shadows and notions that will not give place either to Scripture or reason. Some in their great distress have not been well able to give an account of themselves, or to declare the sense they have of things, or to explain the manner and cause of their trouble to others, that yet I have had no reason to think were not under proper convictions, and in whom there has been manifested a good issue. But this will not be at all wondered at, by those who have had much to do with souls under spiritual difficulties: some things of which they are sensible, are altogether new to them; their ideas and inward sensations are new, and what they therefore know not how to express in words. Some who, on first inquiry, said they knew not what was the matter with them, have on being particularly examined and interrogated, been able to represent their case, though of themselves they could not find expressions and forms of speech to do it.

Some suppose, that terrors producing such effects are only a fright. But certainly there ought to be a distinction made between a very great fear, or extreme distress arising from an apprehension of some dreadful truth—a cause fully proportionable to such an effect—and a needless, causeless fright. The latter is of two kinds; either, first, when persons are terrified with that which is not the truth; (of which I have seen very few instances unless in case of melancholy;) or, secondly, when they are in a fright from some terrible outward appearance and noise,

and a general notion thence arising. These apprehend, that there is something or other terrible, they know not what; without having in their minds any particular truth whatever. Of such a kind of fright I have seen very little appearance, among either old or young.

Those who are in such extremity, commonly express a great sense of their exceeding wickedness, the multitude and aggravations of their actual sins; their dreadful pollution, enmity, and perverseness; their obstinacy and hardness of heart; a sense of their great guilt in the sight of God; and the dreadfulness of the punishment due to sin. Very often they have a lively idea of the horrible pit of eternal misery; and at the same time it appears to them that the great God who has them in his hands, is exceedingly angry, and his wrath appears amazingly terrible to them. God appears to them so much provoked, and his great wrath so increased; that they are apprehensive of great danger, and that he will not bear with them any longer; but will now forthwith cut them off, and send them down to the dreadful pit they have in view; at the same time seeing no refuge. They see more and more of the vanity of every thing they use to trust to, and with which they flattered themselves, till they are brought wholly to despair in all, and to see that they are at the disposal of the mere will of the God who is so angry with them. Very many, in the midst of their extremity, have been brought to an extraordinary sense of their fully deserving that wrath, and the destruction which was then before their eyes. They feared every moment, that it would be executed upon them; they have been greatly convinced that this would be altogether just, and that God is indeed absolutely sovereign. Very often, some text of Scripture expressing God's sovereignty, has been set home upon their minds, whereby they have been calmed. They have been brought, as it were, to lie at God's feet; and after great agonies, a little before light has arisen, they have been composed and quiet, in submission to a just and sovereign God; but their bodily strength much spent. Sometimes their lives, to appearance, were almost gone; and then light has appeared, and a

glorious Redeemer, with his wonderful, all-sufficient grace, has been represented to them often, in some sweet invitation of Scripture. Sometimes the light comes in suddenly, sometimes more gradually, filling their souls with love, admiration, joy, and selfabasement: drawing forth their hearts after the excellent lovely Redeemer, and longings to lie in the dust before him; and that others might behold, embrace, and be delivered by him. They had longings to live to his glory; but were sensible that they can do nothing of themselves, appearing vile in their own eyes, and having much jealousy over their own hearts. And all the appearances of a real change of heart have followed; and grace has acted, from time to time, after the same manner that is used to act in those that were converted formerly, with the like difficulties, temptations, buffetings, and comforts; excepting that in many, the light and comfort have been in higher degrees than ordinary. Many very young children have been thus wrought upon. There have been some instances very much like those (Mark i. 26. and chap. ix. 26.) of whom we read, that “when the devil had cried with a loud voice, and rent them sore, he came out of them.” And probably those instances were designed for a type of such things as these. Some have several turns of great agonies, before they are delivered; and others have been in such distress, which has passed off, and no deliverance at all has followed.

Some object against it as great confusion, when there is a number together in such circumstances making a noise; and say, God cannot be the author of it; because he is the God of order, not of confusion. But let it be considered, what is the proper notion of confusion, but the breaking that order of things, whereby they are properly disposed, and duly directed to their end, so that the order and due connexion of means being broken, they fail of their end. Now the conviction of sinners for their conversion is the obtaining of the end of religious means. Not but that I think the persons thus extraordinarily moved, should endeavour to refrain from such outward manifestations, what they well can, and should refrain to their utmost, at the time of

their solemn worship. But if God is pleased to convince the consciences of persons, so that they cannot avoid great outward manifestations, even to interrupting and breaking off those public means they were attending, I do not think this is confusion, or an unhappy interruption, any more than if a company should meet on the field to pray for rain, and should be broken off from their exercise by a plentiful shower. Would to God that all the public assemblies in the land were broken off from their public exercises with such confusion as this the next sabbath day! We need not be sorry for breaking the order of means, by obtaining the end to which that order is directed. He who is going to fetch a treasure, need not be sorry that he is stopped, by meeting the treasure in the midst of his journey.

Besides those who are overcome with conviction and distress, I have seen many of late, who have had their bodily strength taken away with a sense of the glorious excellency of the Redeemer, and the wonders of his dying love; with a very uncommon sense of their own littleness and exceeding vileness attending it, with all expressions and appearances of the greatest abasement and abhorrence of themselves. Not only new converts, but many who were, as we hope, formerly converted, have had their love and joy attended with a flood of tears, and a great appearance of contrition and humiliation, especially for their having lived no more to God's glory since their conversion. These have had a far greater sight of their vileness, and the evil of their hearts, than ever they had; with an exceeding earnestness of desire to live better for the time to come, but attended with greater self-diffidence than ever: and many have been overcome with pity to the souls of others, and longing for their salvation.—And many other things I might mention, in this extraordinary work, answering to every one of those marks which have been insisted on. So that if the apostle John knew how to give signs of a work of the true Spirit, this is such a work.

Providence has cast my lot in a place where the work of God has *formerly* been carried on. I had the happiness to be settled in that

place two years with the venerable Stoddard; and was then acquainted with a number who, during that season, were wrought upon under his ministry. I have been intimately acquainted with the experiences of many others who were wrought upon under his ministry, before that period, in a manner agreeable to the doctrine of all orthodox divines. And of late, a work has been carried on there, with very much of uncommon operations; but it is evidently the same work that was carried on there, in different periods, though attended with some new circumstances. And certainly we must throw by all talk of conversion and christian experience; and not only so, but we must throw by our Bibles, and give up revealed religion; if this be not in general the work of God. Not that I suppose the degree of the Spirit's influence is to be determined by the degree of effect on men's bodies; or, that those are always the best experiences which have the greatest influence on the body. And as to the imprudencies, irregularities, and mixture of delusion that has been observed; it is not at all to be wondered at, that a reformation, after a long-continued and almost universal deadness, should at first, when the revival is new, be attended with such things. In the first creation God did not make a complete world at once; but there was a great deal of imperfection, darkness, and mixture of chaos and confusion, after God first said, "Let there be light," before the whole stood forth in perfect form. When God at first began his great work for the deliverance of his people, after their long-continued bondage in Egypt, there were false wonders mixed with the true for a while; which hardened the unbelieving Egyptians, and made them to doubt of the divinity of the whole work. When the children of Israel first went to bring up the ark of God, after it had been neglected, and had been long absent, they sought not the Lord after the due order, 1 Chron. xv. 13. At the time when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them. And Solomon's ships, when they brought gold, and silver, and pearls, also brought apes and peacocks. When daylight first appears after a night of darkness, we must expect to have darkness mixt with light for a while, and not have perfect day and the

sun risen at once. The fruits of the earth are first green before they are ripe, and come to their proper perfection gradually; and so, Christ tells us, is the kingdom of God. Mark iv. 26, 27, 28. "So is the kingdom of God; as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day; and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how: for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

The imprudences and errors that have attended this work, are the less to be wondered at, if it be considered, that chiefly young persons have been the subjects of it, who have less steadiness and experience, and being in the heat of youth, are much more ready to run to extremes. Satan will keep men secure as long as he can; but when he can do that no longer, he often endeavours to drive them to extremes, and so to dishonour God, and wound religion in that way. And doubtless it has been one occasion of much misconduct, that in many places, people see plainly that their ministers have an ill opinion of the work; and therefore, with just reason, durst not apply themselves to them as their guides in it; and so are without guides.—No wonder then that when a people are as sheep without a shepherd, they wander out of the way. A people in such circumstances, stand in great and continual need of guides, and their guides stand in continual need of much more wisdom than they have of their own. And if a people have ministers that favour the work, and rejoice in it, yet it is not to be expected that either the people or ministers should know so well how to conduct themselves in such an extraordinary state of things—while it is new, and what they never had any experience of before, and time to see their tendency, consequences, and issue. The happy influence of experience is very manifest at this day, in the people among whom God has settled my abode.

The work which has been carried on there this year, has been much purer than that which was wrought there six years before: it has seemed to be more purely spiritual; free from natural and corrupt mixtures, and any thing savouring of enthusiastic wildness and

extravagance. It has wrought more by deep humiliation and abasement before God and men; and they have been much freer from imprudences and irregularities. And particularly there has been a remarkable difference in this respect, that whereas many before, in their comforts and rejoicings, did too much forget their distance from God, and were ready in their conversation together of the things of God, and of their own experiences, to talk with too much lightness; but now they seem to have no disposition that way, but rejoice with a more solemn, reverential, humble joy, as God directs. (Psal. 2:11.) Not because the joy is not as great, and in many instances much greater. Many among us who were wrought upon in that former season, have now had much greater communications from heaven than they had then. Their rejoicing operates in another manner; it abases them, breaks their hearts, and brings them into the dust. When they speak of their joys, it is not with laughter, but a flood of tears. Thus those that laughed before, weep now, and yet by their united testimony, their joy is vastly purer and sweeter than that which before did more raise their animal spirits. They are now more like Jacob, when God appeared to him at Bethel, when he saw the ladder that reached to heaven, and said, "How dreadful is this place!" And like Moses, when God showed him his glory on the mount, when he made haste and "bowed himself unto the earth."

II. Let us all be hence warned, by no means to oppose, or do any thing in the least to clog or hinder, the work; but, on the contrary, do our utmost to promote it. Now Christ is come down from heaven in a remarkable and wonderful work of his Spirit, it becomes all his professed disciples to acknowledge him, and give him honour.

The example of the Jews in Christ's and the apostles' times, is enough to beget in those who do not acknowledge this work, a great jealousy of themselves, and to make them exceeding cautious of what they say or do. Christ then was in the world, and the world knew him not: he came to his own professing people, and his own received him not. That coming of Christ had been much spoken of in the prophecies

of Scripture which they had in their hands, and it had been long expected; and yet because Christ came in a manner they did not expect, and which was not agreeable to their carnal reason, they would not own him. Nay, they opposed him, counted him a madman, and pronounced the spirit that he wrought by to be the spirit of the devil. They stood and wondered at the great things done, and knew not what to make of them; but yet they met with so many stumbling-blocks, that they finally could not acknowledge him. And when the Spirit of God came to be poured out so wonderfully in the apostles' days, they looked upon it as confusion and distraction. They were *astonished* by what they saw and heard, but not *convinced*. And especially was the work of God then rejected by those that were most conceited of their own understanding and knowledge, agreeable to Isa. 29:14. "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work amongst this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." And many who had been in reputation for religion and piety, had a great spite against the work, because they saw it tended to diminish their honour, and to reproach their formality and lukewarmness. Some, upon these accounts, maliciously and openly opposed and reproached the work of the Spirit of God, and called it the work of the devil, against inward conviction, and so were guilty of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.

There is another, a spiritual coming of Christ, to set up his kingdom in the world, that is as much spoken of in scripture prophecy as that first coming, and which has long been expected by the church of God. We have reason to think, from what is said of this, that it will be, in many respects, parallel with the other. And certainly, that low state into which the visible church of God has lately been sunk is very parallel with the state of the Jewish church, when Christ came; and therefore no wonder at all, that when Christ comes, his work should appear a strange work to most; yea, it would be wonder if it should be otherwise. Whether the present work be the beginning of that great and frequently predicted

coming of Christ to set up his kingdom, or not, it is evident, from what has been said, that it is a work of the same Spirit, and of the same nature. And there is no reason to doubt, but that the conduct of persons who continue long to refuse acknowledging Christ in the work—especially those who are set to be teachers in his church—will be in like manner provoking to God, as it was in the Jews of old, while refusing to acknowledge Christ; notwithstanding what they may plead of the great stumbling-blocks that are in the way, and the cause they have to doubt of the work. The teachers of the Jewish church found innumerable stumbling-blocks, that were to them insuperable. Many things appeared in Christ, and in the work of the Spirit after his ascension, which were exceeding strange to them; they seemed assured that they had just cause for their scruples. Christ and his work were to the Jews a stumbling-block; “But blessed is he,” says Christ, “whosoever shall not be offended in me. [Luke 7:23] “ As strange and as unexpected as the manner of Christ's appearance was, yet he had not been long in Judea working miracles, before all those who had opportunity to observe, and yet refused to acknowledge him, brought fearful guilt upon themselves in the sight of God; and Christ condemned them, that though “they could discern the face of the sky, and of the earth, yet they could not discern the signs of those times: and why,” says he, “even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?” Luke xii. At the latter end.

It is not to be supposed that the great Jehovah had bowed the heavens, and appeared here now for so long a time, in such a glorious work of his power and grace in so extensive a manner, in the most public places of the land, and in almost all parts of it—without giving such evidences of his presence, that great numbers, and even many teachers in his church, can remain guiltless in his sight, without ever receiving and acknowledging him, and giving him honour, and appearing to rejoice in his gracious presence; or without so much as once giving him thanks for so glorious and blessed a work of his grace, wherein his goodness does more appear, than if he had bestowed on us all the temporal blessings

that the world affords. A long-continued silence in such a case is undoubtedly provoking to God; especially in ministers. It is a secret kind of opposition, that really tends to hinder the work. Such silent ministers stand in the way of the work of God, as Christ said of old, "He that is not with us is against us." Those who stand wondering at this strange work, not knowing what to make of it, and refusing to receive it—and ready it may be sometimes to speak contemptibly of it, as was the case with the Jews of old would do well to consider, and to tremble at St. Paul's words to them, Acts xiii. 40, 41. "Beware therefore lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Those who cannot believe the work to be true, because of the extraordinary degree and manner of it, should consider how it was with the unbelieving lord in Samaria, who said, "Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" To whom Elisha said, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. [2 Kings 7:19.] "Let all to whom this work is a cloud and darkness—as the pillar of cloud and fire was to the Egyptians—take heed that it be not their destruction, while it gives light to God's Israel.

I would entreat those who quiet themselves, that they proceed on a principle of prudence, and are waiting to see the issue of things and what fruits those that are the subjects of this work will bring forth in their lives and conversations—to consider, whether this will justify a long refraining from acknowledging Christ when he appears so wonderfully and graciously present in the land. It is probable that many of those who are thus waiting, know not for what they are waiting. If they wait to see a work of God without difficulties and stumbling-blocks, it will be like the fool's waiting at the river side to have the water all run by. A work of God without stumbling-blocks is never to be expected. "It must need be that offences come." There never yet was any great manifestation that God made of himself to the world, without

many difficulties attending it. It is with the works of God, as with his word: they seem at first full of things that are strange, inconsistent, and difficult to the carnal unbelieving hearts of men. Christ and his work always was, and always will be, a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, a gin and a snare to many. The prophet Hosea, (chap. 14) speaking of a glorious revival of religion in God's church—when God would be as the dew unto Israel, who should grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon, whose branches should spread, &c.—concludes all thus; “Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.”

It is probable that the stumbling-blocks that now attend this work, will in some respects be increased, and not diminished. We probably shall see more instances of apostacy and gross iniquity among professors. And if one kind of stumbling-blocks are removed, it is to be expected that others will come. It is with Christ's works as it was with his parables; things that are difficult to men's dark minds are ordered of purpose, for the trial of their dispositions and spiritual sense; and that those of corrupt minds and of an unbelieving, perverse, cavilling spirit, “seeing might see and not understand.” Those who are now waiting to see the issue of this work, think they shall be better able to determine by and by; but probably many of them are mistaken. The Jews that saw Christ's miracles, waited to see better evidences of his being the Messiah; they wanted a sign from heaven; but they waited in vain; their stumbling-blocks did not diminish, but increase. They found no end to them, and so were more and more hardened in unbelief. Many have been praying for that glorious reformation spoken of in Scripture, who knew not what they have been praying for, (as it was with the Jews when they prayed for the coming of Christ,) and who, if it should come, would not acknowledge or receive it.

This pretended prudence, in persons waiting so long before they acknowledged this work, will probably in the end prove the greatest

imprudence. Hereby they will fail of any share of so great a blessing, and will miss the most precious opportunity of obtaining divine light, grace, and comfort, heavenly and eternal benefits, that God ever gave in New England. While the glorious fountain is set open in so wonderful a manner, and multitudes flock to it and receive a rich supply for the wants of their souls, they stand at a distance, doubting, wondering, and receiving nothing, and are like to continue thus till the precious season is past.—It is indeed to be wondered at, that those who have doubted of the work, which has been attended with such uncommon external appearances, should be easy in their doubts, without taking thorough pains to inform themselves, by going where such things have been to be seen, narrowly observing and diligently inquiring into them; not contenting themselves with observing two or three instances, nor resting till they were fully informed by their own observation. I do not doubt but that if this course had been taken, it would have convinced all whose minds are not shut up against conviction. How greatly have they erred, who only from the uncertain reproofs of others, have ventured to speak slightly of these things! That caution of an unbelieving Jew might teach them more prudence, Acts 5:38, 39. “Refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found to fight against God.” Whether what has been said in this discourse be enough to produce conviction, that this is the work of God or not; yet I hope that for the future, they will at least hearken to the caution of Gamaliel, now mentioned; so as not to oppose it, or say any thing which has even an indirect tendency to bring it into discredit, lest they should be found opposers of the Holy Ghost. There is no kind of sins so hurtful and dangerous to the souls of men, as those committed against the Holy Ghost. We had better speak against God the Father, or the Son, than to speak against the Holy Spirit in his gracious operations on the hearts of men. Nothing will so much tend for ever to prevent our having any benefit of his operations on our own souls.

If there be any who still resolutely go on to speak contemptibly of these things, I would beg of them to take heed that they be not guilty of the unpardonable sin. When the Holy Spirit is much poured out, and men's lusts, lukewarmness, and hypocrisy are reproached by its powerful operations, then is the most likely time of any, for this sin to be committed. If the work goes on, it is well if among the many that show an enmity against it, some be not guilty of this sin, if none have been already. Those who maliciously oppose and reproach this work, and call it the work of the devil, want but one thing of the unpardonable sin, and that is, doing it against inward conviction. And though some are so prudent, as not openly to oppose and reproach this work, yet it is to be feared—at this day, when the Lord is going forth so gloriously against his enemies—that many who are silent and inactive, especially ministers, will bring that curse of the angel of the Lord upon themselves, Judg. 5:23. “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

Since the great God has come down from heaven, and manifested himself in so wonderful a manner in this land, it is vain for any of us to expect any other than to be greatly affected by it in our spiritual state and circumstances, respecting the favour of God, one way or other. Those who do not become more happy by it, will become far more guilty and miserable. It is always so; such a season as proves an acceptable year, and a time of great favour to them who accept and improve it, proves a day of vengeance to others (Isa. 59:2). When God sends forth his *word*, it shall not return to him void; much less his *Spirit*. When Christ was upon earth in Judea, many slighted and rejected him; but it proved in the issue to be no matter of indifference to them. God made all that people to feel that Christ had been among them; those who did not feel it to their comfort, felt it to their great sorrow. When God only sent the prophet Ezekiel to the children of Israel, he declared that whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, yet they should

know that there had been a prophet among them; how much more may we suppose that when God has appeared so wonderfully in this land, that he will make every one to know that the great Jehovah had been in New England.—I come now, in the last place,

III. To apply myself to those who are the friends of this work, who have been partakers of it, and are zealous to promote it. Let me earnestly exhort such to give diligent heed to themselves to avoid all errors and misconduct, and whatever may darken and obscure the work; and to give no occasion to those who stand ready to reproach it. The apostle was careful to cut off occasion from those that desired occasion. The same apostle exhorts Titus, to maintain a strict care and watch over himself, that both his preaching and behaviour might be such as “could not be condemned; that he who was of the contrary part might be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of them,” Tit. 2:7, 8. We had need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. It is of no small consequence that we should at this day behave ourselves innocently and prudently. We must expect that the great enemy of this work will especially try his utmost with us; and he will especially triumph if he can prevail in any thing to blind and mislead us. He knows it will do more to further his purpose and interest than if he prevailed against a hundred others. We had need to watch and pray, for we are but little children; this roaring lion is too strong for us, and this old serpent too subtle for us.

Humility and self-diffidence, and an entire dependence on our Lord Jesus Christ, will be our best defense. Let us therefore maintain the strictest watch against spiritual pride, or being lifted up with extraordinary experiences and comforts, and the high favours of heaven, that any of us may have received. We had need, after such favours, in a special manner to keep a strict and jealous eye upon our own hearts, lest there should arise self-exalting reflections upon what we have received, and high thoughts of ourselves, as being now some of the most eminent of saints and peculiar favourites of heaven, and that the secret of the Lord is especially with us. Let us not presume, that we above all are fit

to be advanced as the great instructors and censors of this evil generation; and, in a high conceit of our own wisdom and discerning, assume to ourselves the airs of prophets, or extraordinary ambassadors of heaven. When we have great discoveries of God made to our souls, we should not shine bright in our own eyes. Moses, when he had been conversing with God in the mount, though his face shone so as to dazzle the eyes of Aaron and the people, yet he did not shine in his own eyes; "he wist not that his face shone." Let none think themselves out of danger of this spiritual pride, even in their best frames. God saw that the apostle Paul (though probably the most eminent saint that ever lived) was not out of danger of it, no not when he had just been conversing with God in the third heaven: see 2 Cor. 12:7. Pride is the worst viper in the heart; it is the first sin that ever entered into the universe, lies lowest of all in the foundation of the whole building of sin, and is the most secret, deceitful, and unsearchable in its ways of working, of any lusts whatever. It is ready to mix with every thing; and nothing is so hateful to God, contrary to the spirit of the gospel, or of so dangerous consequence; and there is no one sin that does so much let in the devil into the hearts of the saints, and expose them to his delusions. I have seen it in many instances, and that in eminent saints. The devil has come in at this door presently after some eminent experience and extraordinary communion with God, and has woefully deluded and led them astray, till God has mercifully opened their eyes and delivered them; and they themselves have afterwards been made sensible that it was pride that betrayed them.

Some of the true friends of the work of God's Spirit have erred in giving too much heed to impulses and strong impressions on their minds, as though they were immediate significations from heaven to them, of something that should come to pass, or something that it was the mind and will of God that they should do, which was not signified or revealed any where in the Bible without those impulses. These impressions, if they are truly from the Spirit of God, are of a quite

different nature from his gracious influences on the hearts of the saints: they are of the nature of the *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit, and are properly inspiration, such as the prophets and apostles and others had of old; which the apostle distinguishes from the *grace* of the Spirit, 1 Cor. xiii.

One reason why some have been ready to lay weight on such impulses, is an opinion they have had, that the glory of the approaching happy days of the church would partly consist in restoring those *extraordinary gifts* of the Spirit. This opinion, I believe, arises partly through want of duly considering and comparing the nature and value of those two kinds of influences of the Spirit, *viz.* Those that are ordinary and gracious, and those that are extraordinary and miraculous. The former are by far the most excellent and glorious; as the apostle largely shows. (1 Cor. 12:31., &c.) Speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, he says, "But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet I show you a more excellent way;" *i.e.* a more excellent way of the influence of the Spirit. And then he goes on, in the next chapter, to show what that more excellent way is, even the grace of the Spirit, which summarily consists in charity, or divine love. And throughout that chapter he shows the great preference of that above inspiration. God communicates his own nature to the soul in saving *grace* in the heart, more than in all miraculous *gifts*. The blessed image of God consists in *that* and not in *these*. The excellency, happiness, and glory of the soul, immediately consists in the former. That is a root which bears infinitely more excellent fruit. Salvation and the eternal enjoyment of God is promised to divine grace, but not to inspiration. A man may have those extraordinary gifts, and yet be abominable to God, and go to hell. The spiritual and eternal life of the soul consists in the grace of the Spirit, which God bestows only on his favourites and dear children. He has sometimes thrown out the other as it were to dogs and swine, as he did to Balaam, Saul, and Judas; and some who, in the primitive times of the christian church, committed the unpardonable sin. (Heb. vi.) Many

wicked men at the day of the judgment will plead, "Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works." The greatest privilege of the prophets and apostles, was not their being inspired and working miracles, but their eminent holiness. The grace that was in their hearts, was a thousand times more their dignity and honour, than their miraculous gifts. The things in which we find David comforting himself, are not his being a king, or a prophet, but the holy influences of the Spirit of God in his heart, communicating to him divine light, love, and joy. The apostle Paul abounded in visions, revelations, and miraculous gifts, above all the apostles; but yet he esteems all things but loss for the excellency of the spiritual knowledge of Christ. It was not the gifts but the grace of the apostles, that was the proper evidence of their names being written in heaven; in which Christ directs them to rejoice, much more than in the devils being subject to them. To have grace in the heart, is a higher privilege than the blessed Virgin herself had, in having the body of the second person in the Trinity conceived in her womb, by the power of the Highest overshadowing her: Luke 11:27, 28. "And it came to pass as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice, and said unto him; Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked! But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." See also to the same purpose, Matt. 12:47, &c. The influence of the Holy Spirit, or divine charity in the heart, is the greatest privilege and glory of the highest archangel in heaven; yea, this is the very thing by which the creature has fellowship with God himself, with the Father and the Son, in their beauty and happiness. Hereby the saints are made partakers of the divine nature, and have Christ's joy fulfilled in themselves.

The ordinary sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God are the *end* of all extraordinary gifts, as the apostle shows, Ephes. 4:11, 12, 13. They are good for nothing, any further than as they are subordinate to this end; they will be so far from profiting any without it, that they

will only aggravate their misery. This is, as the apostle observes, the most excellent way of God's communicating his Spirit to his church, it is the greatest glory of the church in all ages. This glory is what makes the church on earth most like the church in heaven, when prophecy, and tongues, and other miraculous gifts, cease. And God communicates his Spirit only in that more excellent way of which the apostle speaks, *viz.* *charity* or divine love, “which never faileth.” Therefore the glory of the approaching happy state of the church does not at all require these extraordinary gifts. As that state of the church will be nearest of any to its perfect state in heaven, so I believe it will be like it in this, that all extraordinary gifts shall have ceased and vanished away; and all those stars, and the moon with the reflected light they gave in the night, or in a dark season, shall be swallowed up in the sun of divine love. The apostle speaks of these gifts of inspiration as childish things, in comparison of the influence of the Spirit in divine love; things given to the church only to support it in its minority, till the church should have a complete standing rule established, and all the ordinary means of grace should be settled; but as things that should cease, as the church advanced to the state of manhood. 1 Cor. 13:11. “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things;” compared with the three preceding verses.

When the apostle, in this chapter, speaks of prophecies, tongues, and revelations ceasing, and vanishing away in the church—when the christian church should be advanced from a state of minority to a state of manhood—he seems to have respect to its coming to an adult state in this world, as well as in heaven; for he speaks of such a state of manhood, wherein those three things, Faith, Hope, and Charity, should remain after miracles and revelation had ceased; as in the last verse, and “now abideth (**menei**, *remaineth*) Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three.” The apostle's manner of speaking here shows an evident reference to what he had just been saying before; and here is a manifest *antithesis*,

between *remaining*, and that *failing*, *ceasing*, and *vanishing away*, spoken of in the 8th verse. The apostle had been showing how all those gifts of inspiration, which were the leading-strings of the christian church in its infancy, should vanish away, when the church came to a state of manhood. Then he returns to observe, what things remain after those had failed and ceased; and he observes that those three things shall remain in the church, Faith, Hope, and Charity: and therefore the adult state of the church he speaks of, is the more perfect one at which it shall arrive on earth, especially in the latter ages of the world. And this was the more properly observed to the church at Corinth, upon two accounts; because the apostle had before observed to that church, that they were in a state of infancy, chap. iii. 1, 2. And because that church seems above all others to have abounded with miraculous gifts. When the expected glorious state of the church comes, the increase of light shall be so great that it will in some respect answer what is said, ver. 12. of *seeing face to face*. (See Isa. xxiv. 23. and xxv. 7.)

Therefore I do not expect a restoration of these miraculous gifts in the approaching glorious times of the church, nor do I desire it. It appears to me, that it would add nothing to the glory of those times, but rather diminish from it. For my part, I had rather enjoy the sweet influences of the Spirit, showing Christ's spiritual divine beauty, infinite grace, and dying love, drawing forth the holy exercises of faith, divine love, sweet complacence, and humble joy in God, one quarter of an hour, than to have prophetic visions and revelations the whole year. It appears to me much more probable that God should give immediate revelation to his saints in the dark times of prophecy, than now in the approach of the most glorious and perfect state of his church on earth. It does not appear to me that there is any need of those extraordinary gifts to introduce this happy state, and set up the kingdom of God through the world; I have seen so much of the power of God in a more excellent way, as to convince me that God can easily do it without.

I would therefore entreat the people of God to be very cautious how they give heed to such things. I have seen them fail in very many instances, and know by experience that impressions being made with great power, and upon the minds of true, yea eminent,—saints even in the midst of extraordinary exercises of grace, and sweet communion with God, and attended with texts of Scripture strongly impressed on the mind—are no sure signs of their being revelations from heaven. I have known such impressions fail, in some instances, attended with all these circumstances. They who leave the sure word of prophecy which God has given us as a light shining in a dark place—to follow such impressions and impulses, leave the guidance of the polar star, to follow a *Jack with a lantern*. No wonder therefore that sometimes they are led into woeful extravagancies.

Moreover, seeing inspiration is not to be expected, *let us not despise human learning*. They who assert that human learning is of little or no use in the work of the ministry, do not well consider what they say; if they did, they would not say it. By human learning I mean, and suppose others mean, the improvement of common knowledge by human and outward means. And therefore to say, that human learning is of no use, is as much as to say that the education of a child, or that the common knowledge which a grown man has more than a little child, is of no use. At this rate, a child of four years old is as fit for a teacher in the church of God, with the same degree of grace—and capable of doing as much to advance the kingdom of Christ, by his instruction—as a very knowing man of thirty years of age. If adult persons have greater ability and advantage to do service, because they have more knowledge than a little child, then doubtless if they have more human knowledge still, with the same degree of grace, they would have still greater ability and advantage to do service. An increase of knowledge, without doubt, increases a man's advantage either to do good or hurt, according as he is disposed. It is too manifest to be denied, that God

made great use of human learning in the apostle Paul, as he also did in Moses and Solomon.

And if knowledge, obtained by human means, is not to be despised, then it will follow that the means of obtaining it are not to be neglected, *viz.* *study*; and that this is of great use in order to a preparation for publicly instructing others. And though having the heart full of the powerful influences of the Spirit of God, may at some time enable persons to speak profitably, yea, very excellently, without study; yet this will not warrant us needlessly to cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, depending upon it that the angel of the Lord will bear us up, and keep us from dashing our foot against a stone, when there is another way to go down, though it be not so quick. And I would pray, that *method*, in public discourses, which tends greatly to help both the understanding and memory, may not be wholly neglected.

Another thing I would beg the dear children of God more fully to consider of, is, how far, and upon what grounds, the rules of the Holy Scriptures will truly justify their passing censures upon other professing Christians, as hypocrites, and ignorant of real religion. We all know that there is a judging and censuring of some sort or other, that the Scripture very often and very strictly forbids. I desire that those rules of Scripture may be looked into, and thoroughly weighed; and that it may be considered whether our taking it upon us to discern the state of other and to pass sentence upon them as wicked men, though professing Christians, and of a good visible conversation—be not really forbidden by Christ in the New Testament. If it be, then doubtless the disciples of Christ ought to avoid this practice, however sufficient they may think themselves for it, or however needful, or of good tendency, they may think it. It is plain that the sort of judgment which God claims as his prerogative, whatever that be, is forbidden. We know that a certain judging of the hearts of the children of men, is often spoken of as the great prerogative of God, and which belongs only to him; as in 1 Kings 8:39. ‘Forgive, and do, and give unto every man according to his ways,

whose heart thou knowest; for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men.” And if we examine, we shall find that the judging of hearts which is spoken of as God's prerogative, relates not only to the aims and dispositions of men's hearts in particular actions, but chiefly to the state of their hearts as the professors of religion, and with regard to that profession. This will appear very manifest by looking over the following scriptures; 1 Chron. 28:9. Psal. 7:9, 10, 11. Psal. 26. Throughout. Prov. 16:2. and 17:3. and 21:2. Job 2:23, 24, 25. Rev. 2:22, 23. That sort of judging which is God's proper business, is forbidden, as Rom. 14:4. “Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.” “There is one lawgiver that is able to save or destroy; who are thou that judgest another?” 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. “But with me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea I judge not mine own self; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”

Again, whatsoever kind of judging is the proper work and business of the day of judgment, is what we are forbidden, as in 1 Cor. 4:5. “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come; who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God.” But to distinguish hypocrites, that have the form of godliness and the visible conversation of godly men, from true saints; or, to separate the sheep from the goats, is the proper business of the day of judgment; yea, it is represented as the main business and end of that day. They therefore do greatly err who take it upon them positively to determine who are sincere, and who are not—to draw the dividing line between true saints and hypocrites, and to separate between sheep and goats, setting the one on the right hand and the other on the left—and to distinguish and gather out the tares from amongst the wheat. Many of the servants of the owner of the field are very ready to think themselves sufficient for this, and are forward to offer their service to this end; but their Lord says, “May, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye

root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest;” and in the time of the harvest I will take care to see a thorough separation made; as Matt. 13:28, 29, 30. Agreeably to that forementioned prohibition of the apostle, 1 Cor. 4:5. “Judge nothing before the time.” In this parable, by the servants who have the care of the fruit of the field, is doubtless meant the same with the servants who have the care of the fruit of the vineyard, Luke 20. And who are elsewhere represented as servants of the Lord of the harvest, appointed as labourers in his harvest. These we know are ministers of the gospel. *Now* is that parable in the 13th of Matthew fulfilled: “While men sleep,” (during a long sleepy, dead time in the church,) “the enemy has sowed tares;” now is the time “when the blade is sprung up,” and religion is reviving; and now some of the servants who have the care of the field say, “Let us go and gather up the tares.”—I know there is a great aptness in men who suppose they have had some experience of the power of religion, to think themselves sufficient to discern and determine the state of others by a little conversation with them; and experience has taught me that this is an error. I once did not imagine that the heart of man had been so unsearchable as it is.

I am less charitable, and less uncharitable than once I was. I find more things in wicked men that may counterfeit, and make a fair show of, piety; and more ways that the remaining corruption of the godly may make them appear like carnal men, formalists, and dead hypocrites, than once I knew of. The longer I live, the less I wonder that God challenges it as his prerogative to try the hearts of the children of men, and directs that this business should be let alone till harvest. I desire to adore the wisdom of God, and his goodness to me and my fellow-creatures, that he has not committed this great business into the hands of such a poor, weak, and dim-sighted creature—one of so much blindness, pride, partiality, prejudice, and deceitfulness of heart—but has committed it into the hands of one infinitely fitter for it, and has made it his prerogative.

The talk of some persons, and the account they give of their experiences, is exceedingly satisfying, and such as forbids and banishes the thought of their being any other than the precious children of God. It obliges, and as it were forces, full charity; but yet we must allow the Scriptures to stand good that speak of every thing in the saint, belonging to the spiritual and divine life, as hidden. (Col. 3:3, 4.) Their food is the hidden manna; they have meat to eat that others know not of; a stranger intermeddles not with their joys. The heart in which they possess their divine distinguishing ornaments, is the hidden man, and in the sight of God only, 1 Pet. 3:4. Their new name, which Christ has given them, no man knows but he that receives it, Rev. 2:17. The praise of the true Israelites, whose circumcision is that of the heart, is not of men but of God, Rom. 2:29. that is, they can be certainly known and discerned to be Israelites, so as to have the honour that belongs to such, only of God; as appears by the use of the like expression by the same apostle, 1 Cor. 4:5. Here he speaks of its being God's prerogative to judge who are upright Christians, and what he will do at the day of judgment, adding, "and then shall every man have praise of God."

The instance of *Judas* is remarkable; whom though he had been so much amongst the rest of the disciples, all persons of true experience, yet his associates never seemed to have entertained a thought of his being any other than a true disciple, till he discovered himself by his scandalous practice.—And the instance of *Ahitophel* is also very remarkable; David did not suspect him, though so wise and holy a man, so great a divine, and had such a great acquaintance with Scripture. He knew more than all his teachers, more than the ancients, was grown old in experience, and was in the greatest ripeness of his judgment. He was a great prophet, and was intimately acquainted with *Ahitophel*, he being his familiar friend, and most intimate companion in religious and spiritual concerns. Yet David not only never discovered him to be a hypocrite, but relied upon him as a true saint. He relished his religious discourse, it was sweet to him and he counted him an eminent saint; so

that he made him above any other man his guide and counsellor in soul matters; but yet he was not only no saint, but a notoriously wicked man, a murderous, vile wretch. Psal. 55:11-14. "Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets: for it was not an open enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance: we took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

To suppose that men have ability and right do determine the state of the souls of visible Christians, and so to make an open separation between saints and hypocrites, that true saints may be of one visible company, and hypocrites of another, separated by a partition that men make, carries in it an inconsistency: for it supposes that God has given men power to make another visible church, within his visible church; for by visible Christians or visible saints is meant, persons who have a right to be received as such in the eye of a public charity. None can have a right to exclude any one of this visible church but in the way of that regular ecclesiastical proceeding, which God has established in his visible church.—I beg of those who have a true zeal for promoting this work of God, well to consider these things. I am persuaded, that as many of them as have much to do with souls, if they do not hearken to me now, will be of the same mind when they have had more experience.

And another thing that I would entreat the zealous friends of this glorious work of God to avoid, is managing the controversy with opposers with too much heat, and appearance of an angry zeal; and particularly insisting very much in public prayer and preaching, on the persecution of opposers. If their persecution were ten times so great as it is, me thinks it would not be best to say so much about it. If it becomes Christians to be like lambs, not apt to complain and cry when they are hurt; it becomes them to be dumb and not to open their mouth, after the example of our dear Redeemer; and not to be like swine, that are apt

to scream aloud when they are touched. We should not be ready presently to think and speak of tire from heaven, when the Samaritans oppose us, and will not receive us into their villages. God's zealous ministers would do well to think of the direction the apostle Paul gave to a zealous minister, 2 Tim. 2:24-26. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

I would humbly recommend to those that love the Lord Jesus Christ, and would advance his kingdom, a good attendance to that excellent rule of prudence which Christ has left us, Matt. 9:16, 17. "No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish. But they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." I am afraid the wine is now running out in some part of this land, for want of attending to this rule. For though I believe we have confined ourselves too much to a certain stated method and form in the management of our religious affairs; which has had a tendency to cause all our religion to degenerate into mere formality; yet whatever has the appearance of a great innovation—that tends much to shock and surprise people's minds, and to set them a talking and disputing—tends greatly to hinder the progress of the power of religion. It raises the opposition of some, diverts the mind of others, and perplexes many with doubts and scruples. It causes people to swerve from their great business, and turn aside to vain jangling. Therefore that which is very much beside the common practice, unless it be a thing in its own nature of considerable importance, had better be avoided. Herein we shall follow the example of one who had the greatest success in propagating the power of religion. 1 Cor. 9:20-23. "Unto the

Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.”

GEORGE WHITEFIELD:
THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN

Acts 26:28 - "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

The chapter, out of which the text is taken, contains an admirable account which the great St. Paul gave of his wonderful conversion from Judaism to Christianity, when he was called to make his defense before Festus a Gentile governor, and king Agrippa. Our blessed Lord had long since foretold, that when the Son of man should be lifted up, "his disciples should be brought before kings and rulers, for his name's sake, for a testimony unto them." And very good was the design of infinite wisdom in thus ordaining it; for Christianity being, from the beginning, a doctrine of the Cross, the princes and rulers of the earth thought themselves too high to be instructed by such mean teachers, or too happy to be disturbed by such unwelcome truths; and therefore would have always continued strangers to Jesus Christ, and him crucified, had not the apostles, by being arraigned before them, gained opportunities of preaching to them "Jesus and the resurrection." St. Paul knew full well that this was the main reason, why his blessed Master permitted his enemies at this time to arraign him at a public bar; and therefore, in compliance with the divine will, thinks it not sufficient, barely to make his defense, but endeavors at the same time to convert his judges. And this he did with such demonstration of the spirit, and of power, that Festus, unwilling to be convinced by the strongest evidence, cries out with a loud voice, "Paul, much earning doth make thee mad." To which the brave apostle (like a true follower of the holy Jesus) meekly replies, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." But in all probability, seeing king Agrippa more affected with his discourse, and observing in him an inclination to know the truth, he

applies himself more particularly to him. "The king knoweth of these things; before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him." And then, that if possible he might complete his wished-for conversion, he with an inimitable strain of oratory, addresses himself still more closely, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest them." At which the passions of the king began to work so strongly, that he was obliged in open court, to own himself affected by the prisoner's preaching, and ingenuously to cry out, "Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Which words, taken with the context, afford us a lively representation of the different reception, which the doctrine of Christ's ministers, who come in the power and spirit of St. Paul, meets with now-a-days in the minds of men. For notwithstanding they, like this great apostle, "speak forth the words of truth and soberness;" and with such energy and power, that all their adversaries cannot justly gainsay or resist; yet, too many, with the noble Festus before-mentioned, being like him, either too proud to be taught, or too sensual, too careless, or too worldly-minded to live up to the doctrine, in order to excuse themselves, cry out, that "much learning, much study, or, what is more unaccountable, much piety, hath made them mad." And though, blessed be God! All do not thus disbelieve our report; yet amongst those who gladly receive the word, and confess that we speak the words of truth and soberness, there are so few, who arrive at any higher degree of piety than that of Agrippa, or are any farther persuaded than to be almost Christians, that I cannot but think it highly necessary to warn my dear hearers of the danger of such a state. And therefore, from the words of the text, shall endeavor to show these three things:

First, What is meant by an almost-Christian.

Secondly, What are the chief reasons, why so many are no more than almost Christians.

Thirdly, I shall consider the ineffectualness, danger, absurdity, and uneasiness which attends those who are but almost Christians; and then conclude with a general exhortation, to set all upon striving not only be almost, but altogether Christians.

WHAT IS MEANT BY ALMOST CHRISTIAN

And, First, I am to consider what is meant by an almost Christians.

An almost Christian, if we consider him in respect to his duty to God, is one that halts between two opinions; that wavers between Christ and the world; that would reconcile God and Mammon, light and darkness, Christ and Belial. It is true, he has an inclination to religion, but then he is very cautious how he goes too far in it: his false heart is always crying out, Spare thyself, do thyself no harm. He prays indeed, that "God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven." But notwithstanding, he is very partial in his obedience, and fondly hopes that God will not be extreme to mark every thing that he willfully does amiss; though an inspired apostle has told him, that "he who offends in one point is guilty of all." But chiefly, he is one that depends much on outward ordinances, and on that account looks upon himself as righteous, and despises others; though at the same time he is as great a stranger to the divine life as any other person whatsoever. In short, he is fond of the form, but never experiences the power of godliness in his heart. He goes on year after year, attending on the means of grace, but then, like Pharaoh's lean kine, he is never the better, but rather the worse for them.

If you consider him in respect to his neighbor, he is one that is strictly just to all; but then this does not proceed from any love to God

or regard to man, but only through a principle of self-love: because he knows dishonesty will spoil his reputation, and consequently hinder his thriving in the world.

He is one that depends much upon being negatively good, and contents himself with the consciousness of having done no one any harm; though he reads in the gospel, that “the unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness,” and the barren fig-tree was cursed and dried up from the roots, not for bearing bad, but no fruit.

He is no enemy to charitable contributions in public, if not too frequently recommended: but then he is unacquainted with the kind offices of visiting the sick and imprisoned, clothing the naked, and relieving the hungry in a private manner. He thinks that these things belong only to the clergy, though his own false heart tells him, that nothing but pride keeps him from exercising these acts of humility; and that Jesus Christ, in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, condemns persons to everlasting punishment, not merely for being fornicators, drunkards, or extortioners, but for neglecting these charitable offices, “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, he shall set the sheep on his right-hand, and the goats on his left. And then shall he say unto them on his left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or a-thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment unto me: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment.” I thought proper to give you this whole passage of

scripture at large, because our Savior lays such a particular stress upon it; and yet it is so little regarded, that were we to judge by the practice of Christians, one should be tempted to think there were no such verses in the Bible.

But to proceed in the character of an Almost Christian: If we consider him in respect of himself; as we said he was strictly honest to his neighbor, so he is likewise strictly sober in himself: but then both his honesty and sobriety proceed from the same principle of a false self-love. It is true, he runs not into the same excess of riot with other men; but then it is not out of obedience to the laws of God, but either because his constitution will not away with intemperance; or rather because he is cautious of forfeiting his reputation, or unfitting himself for temporal business. But though he is so prudent as to avoid intemperance and excess, for the reasons before-mentioned; yet he always goes to the extremity of what is lawful. It is true, he is no drunkard; but then he has no *Christian self-denial*. He cannot think our Savior to be so austere a Master, as to deny us to indulge ourselves in some particulars: and so by this means he is destitute of a sense of true religion, as much as if he lived in debauchery, or any other crime whatever. As to settling his principles as well as practice, he is guided more by the world, than by the word of God: for his part, he cannot think the way to heaven so narrow as some would make it; and therefore considers not so much what scripture requires, as what such and such a good man does, or what will best suit his own corrupt inclinations. Upon this account, he is not only very cautious himself, but likewise very careful of young converts, whose faces are set heavenward; and therefore is always acting the devil's part, and bidding them spare themselves, though they are doing no more than what the scripture strictly requires them to do: The consequence of which is, that "he suffers not himself to enter into the kingdom of God, and those that are entering in he hinders."

Thus lives the almost Christian: not that I can say, I have fully described him to you; but from these outlines and sketches of his character, if your consciences have done their proper office, and made a particular application of what has been said to your own hearts, I cannot but fear that some of you may observe some features in his picture, odious as it is, to near resembling your own; and therefore I cannot but hope, that you will join with the apostle in the words immediately following the text, and wish yourselves “to be not only almost, but altogether Christians.”

WHY SO MANY ARE ALMOST CHRISTIANS

I proceed to the second general thing proposed; to consider the reasons why so many are no more than almost Christians.

1. And the first reason I shall mention is, because **so many set out with false notions of religion**; though they live in a Christian country, yet they know not what Christianity is. This perhaps may be esteemed a hard saying, but experience sadly evinces the truth of it; for some place religion in being of this or that communion; more in morality; most in a round of duties, and a model of performances; and few, very few acknowledge it to be, what it really is, a thorough inward change of nature, a divine life, a vital participation of Jesus Christ, an union of the soul with God; which the apostle expresses by saying, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Hence it happens, that so many, even of the most knowing professors, when you come to converse with them concerning the essence, the life, the soul of religion, I mean our new birth in Jesus Christ, confess themselves quite ignorant of the matter, and cry out with Nicodemus, “How can this thing be?” And no wonder then, that so many are only almost Christians, when so many know not what Christianity is: no marvel, that so many take up with the form, when they are quite strangers to the power of godliness; or content themselves with the shadow, when they know so little about the

substance of it. And this is one cause why so many are almost, and so few are altogether Christians.

2. A second reason that may be assigned why so many are no more than almost Christians, is **a servile fear of man**: multitudes there are and have been, who, though awakened to a sense of the divine life, and have tasted and felt the powers of the world to come; yet out of a base sinful fear of being counted singular, or contemned by men, have suffered all those good impressions to wear off. It is true, they have some esteem for Jesus Christ; but then, like Nicodemus, they would come to him only by night: they are willing to serve him; but then they would do it secretly, for fear of the Jews: they have a mind to see Jesus, but then they cannot come to him because of the press, and for fear of being laughed at, and ridiculed by those with whom they used to sit at meat. But well did our Savior prophesy of such persons, “How can ye love me, who receive honor one of another?” Alas! have they never read, that “the friendship of this world is enmity with God;” and that our Lord himself has threatened, “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me or of my words, in this wicked and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and of his holy angels?” No wonder that so many are no more than almost Christians, since so many “love the praise of men more than the honor which cometh of God.”

3. A third reason why so many are no more than almost Christians, is **a reigning love of money**. This was the pitiable case of that forward young man in the gospel, who came running to our blessed Lord, and kneeling before him, inquired “what he must do to inherit eternal life;” to whom our blessed Master replied, “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal:” To which the young man replied, “All these have I kept from my youth.” But when our Lord proceeded to tell him, “Yet lackest thou one thing;

Go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor; he was grieved at that saying, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions!” Poor youth! He had a good mind to be a Christian, and to inherit eternal life, but thought it too dear, if it could be purchased at no less an expense than of his estate! And thus many, both young and old, now-a-days, come running to worship our blessed Lord in public, and kneel before him in private, and inquire at his gospel, what they must do to inherit eternal life: but when they find they must renounce the self-enjoyment of riches, and forsake all in affection to follow him, they cry, “The Lord pardon us in this thing! We pray thee, have us excused.”

But is heaven so small a trifle in men's esteem, as not to be worth a little gilded earth? Is eternal life so mean a purchase, as not to deserve the temporary renunciation of a few transitory riches? Surely it is. But however inconsistent such a behavior may be, this inordinate love of money is too evidently the common and fatal cause, why so many are no more than almost Christians.

4. Nor is **the love of pleasure** a less uncommon, or a less fatal cause why so many are no more than almost Christians. Thousands and ten thousands there are, who despise riches, and would willingly be true disciples of Jesus Christ, if parting with their money would make them so; but when they are told that our blessed Lord has said, “Whosoever will come after him must deny himself;” like the pitiable young man before-mentioned, “they go away sorrowful”“ for they have too great a love for sensual pleasures. They will perhaps send for the ministers of Christ, as Herod did for John, and hear them gladly: but touch them in their Herodias, tell them they must part with such or such a darling pleasure; and with wicked Ahab they cry out, “Hast thou found us, O our enemy?” Tell them of the necessity of mortification and self-denial, and it is as difficult for them to hear, as if you was to bid them “cut off a right-hand, or pluck out a right-eye.” They cannot think our blessed

Lord requires so much at their hands, though an inspired apostle has commanded us to “mortify our members which are upon earth.” And who himself, even after he had converted thousands, and was very near arrived to the end of his race, yet professed that it was his daily practice to “keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest after he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away!”

But some men would be wiser than this great apostle, and chalk out to us what they falsely imagine an easier way to happiness. They would flatter us, we may go to heaven without offering violence to our sensual appetites; and enter into the strait gate without striving against our carnal inclinations. And this is another reason why so many are only almost, and not altogether Christians.

5. The fifth and last reason I shall assign why so many are only almost Christians, is **a fickleness and instability of temper.**

It has been, no doubt, a misfortune that many a minister and sincere Christian has met with, to weep and wail over numbers of promising converts, who seemingly began in the Spirit, but after a while fell away, and basely ended in the flesh; and this not for want of right notions in religion, nor out of a servile fear of man, nor from the love of money, or of sensual pleasure, but through an instability and fickleness of temper. They looked upon religion merely for novelty, as something which pleased them for a while; but after their curiosity was satisfied, they laid it aside again: like the young man that came to see Jesus with a linen cloth about his naked body, they have followed him for a season, but when temptations came to take hold on them, for want of a little more resolution, they have been stripped of all their good intentions, and fled away naked. They at first, like a tree planted by the water-side, grew up and flourished for a while; but having no root in themselves, no inward principle of holiness and piety, like Jonah's gourd,

they were soon dried up and withered. Their good intentions are too like the violent motions of the animal spirits of a body newly beheaded, which, though impetuous, are not lasting. In short, they set out well in their journey to heaven, but finding the way either narrower or longer than they expected, through an unsteadiness of temper, they have made an eternal halt, and so “returned like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the more!”

But I tremble to pronounce the fate of such unstable professors, who having put their hands to the plough, for want of a little more resolution, shamefully look back. How shall I repeat to them that dreadful threatening, “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him:” And again, “It is impossible (that is, exceeding difficult at least) for those that have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away, to be renewed again unto repentance.” But notwithstanding the gospel is so severe against apostates, yet many that begun well, through a fickleness of temper, (O that none of us here present may ever be such) have been by this means of the number of those that turn back unto perdition. And this is the fifth, and the last reason I shall give, why so many are only almost, and not altogether Christians.

THE FOLLY OF BEING AN ALMOST CHRISTIAN

Proceed we now to the general thing proposed, namely, to consider the folly of being no more than an almost Christian.

1. And the First proof I shall give of the folly of such a proceeding is, that **it is ineffectual to salvation**. It is true, such men are almost good; but almost to hit the mark, is really to miss it. God requires us “to love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength.” He loves us too well to admit any rival; because, so far as our hearts are empty of God, so far must they be unhappy. The devil,

indeed, like the false mother that came before Solomon, would have our hearts divided, as she would have had the child; but God, like the true mother, will have all or none. "My Son, give me thy heart," thy whole heart, is the general call to all: and if this be not done, we never can expect the divine mercy.

Persons may play the hypocrite; but God at the great day will strike them dead, (as he did Ananias and Sapphira by the mouth of his servant Peter) for pretending to offer him all their hearts, when they keep back from him the greatest part. They may perhaps impose upon their fellow-creatures for a while; but he that enabled Elijah to cry out, "Come in thou wife of Jeroboam," when she came disguised to inquire about his sick son, will also discover them through their most artful dissimulations; and if their hearts are not wholly with him, appoint them their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers.

2. But, Secondly, What renders an half-way-piety more inexcusable is, that **it is not only insufficient to our own salvation, but also very prejudicial to that of others.**

An almost Christian is one of the most hurtful creatures in the world; he is a wolf in sheep's clothing: he is one of those false prophets, our blessed Lord bids us beware of in his sermon on the mount, who would persuade men, that the way to heaven is broader than it really is; and thereby, as it was observed before, "enter not into the kingdom of God themselves, and those that are entering in they hinder." These, these are the men that turn the world into a luke-warm Laodicean spirit; that hang out false lights, and so shipwreck unthinking benighted souls in their voyage to the haven of eternity. These are they who are greater enemies to the cross of Christ, than infidels themselves: for of an unbeliever every one will be aware; but an almost Christian, through his

subtle hypocrisy, draws away many after him; and therefore must expect to receive the greater damnation.

3. But, Thirdly, As it is most prejudicial to ourselves and hurtful to others, so **it is the greatest instance of ingratitude we can express towards our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.** For did he come down from heaven, and shed his precious blood, to purchase these hearts of ours, and shall we only give him half of them? O how can we say we love him, when our hearts are not wholly with him? How can we call him our Savior, when we will not endeavor sincerely to approve ourselves to him, and so let him see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied!

Had any of us purchased a slave at a most expensive rate, and who was before involved in the utmost miseries and torments, and so must have continued for ever, had we shut up our bowels of compassion from him; and was this slave afterwards to grow rebellious, or deny giving us but half his service; how, how should we exclaim against his base ingratitude! And yet this base ungrateful slave thou art, O man, who acknowledgest thyself to be redeemed from infinite unavoidable misery and punishment by the death of Jesus Christ, and yet wilt not give thyself wholly to him. But shall we deal with God our Maker in a manner we would not be dealt with by a man like ourselves? God forbid! No. Suffer me, therefore,

To add a word or two of exhortation to you, to excite you to be not only almost, but Christians. O let us scorn all base and treacherous treatment of our King and Savior, of our God and Creator. Let us not take some pains all our lives to go to haven, and yet plunge ourselves into hell as last. Let us give to God our whole hearts, and no longer halt between two opinions: if the world be God, let us serve that; if pleasure be a God, let us serve that; but if the Lord he be God, let us, O let us

serve him alone. Alas! why, why should we stand out any longer? Why should we be so in love with slavery, as not wholly to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, which, like so many spiritual chains, bind down our souls, and hinder them from flying up to God. Alas! what are we afraid of? Is not God able to reward our entire obedience? If he is, as the almost Christian's lame way of serving him, seems to grant, why then will we not serve him entirely? For the same reason we do so much, why do we not do more? Or do you think that being only half religious will make you happy, but that going farther, will render you miserable and uneasy? Alas! this, my brethren, is delusion all over: for what is it but this half piety, this wavering between God and the world, that makes so many, that are seemingly well disposed, such utter strangers to the comforts of religion? They choose just so much of religion as will disturb them in their lusts, and follow their lusts so far as to deprive themselves of the comforts of religion. Whereas on the contrary, would they sincerely leave all in affection, and give their hearts wholly to God, they would then (and they cannot till then) experience the unspeakable pleasure of having a mind at unity with itself, and enjoy such a peace of God, which even in this life passes all understanding, and which they were entire strangers to before. It is true, if we will devote ourselves entirely to God, we must meet with contempt; but then it is because contempt is necessary to heal our pride. We must renounce some sensual pleasures, but then it is because those unfit us for spiritual ones, which are infinitely better. We must renounce the love of the world; but then it is that we may be filled with the love of God: and when that has once enlarged our hearts, we shall, like Jacob when he served for his beloved Rachel, think nothing too difficult to undergo, no hardships too tedious to endure, because of the love we shall then have for our dear Redeemer. Thus easy, thus delightful will be the ways of God even in this life: but when once we throw off these bodies, and our souls are filled with all

the fullness of God, O! what heart can conceive, what tongue can express, with what unspeakable joy and consolation shall we then look back on our past sincere and hearty services. Think you then, my dear hearers, we shall repent we had done too much; or rather think you not, we shall be ashamed that we did no more; and blush we were so backward to give up all to God; when he intended hereafter to give us himself?

Let me therefore, to conclude, exhort you, my brethren, to have always before you the unspeakable happiness of enjoying God. And think withal, that every degree of holiness you neglect, every act of piety you omit, is a jewel taken out of your crown, a degree of blessedness lost in the vision of God. O! do but always think and act thus, and you will no longer be laboring to compound matters between God and the world; but, on the contrary, be daily endeavoring to give up yourselves more and more unto him; you will be always watching, always praying, always aspiring after farther degrees of purity and love, and consequently always preparing yourselves for a fuller sight and enjoyment of that God, in whose presence there is fullness of joy, and at whose right-hand there are pleasures for ever more. Amen! Amen!

THOMAS SHEPARD:
FEW SAVED WITH
MUCH DIFFICULTY

*“Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life,
and few there be that find it.” (Matt 7:14)*

Here are two parts: (1) The paucity of them that shall be saved: few find the way thither. (2) The difficulty of being saved: strait and narrow is the way and gate unto life. Hence arise two doctrines:

DOCTRINE 1: THE NUMBER OF THEM SAVED IS VERY SMALL

That the number of them that shall be saved is very small. (Luke xiii. 24.) The devil hath his drove, and swarms to go to hell, as fast as bees to their hive. Christ hath his flock, and that is but a little flock; hence God's children are called jewels, (Mai 3:17), which commonly are kept secret, in respect of the other lumber in the house; hence they are called strangers and pilgrims, which are very few in respect of the inhabitants of the country through which they pass; hence they are called sons of God, (1 John 3:2); of the blood royal, which are few in respect of common subjects.

All Times and All Places

But see the truth of this point in these two things: First, look to all ages and times of the world; secondly, to all places and persons in the world; and we shall see few men were saved.

1. Look to all ages, and we shall find but a handful saved.

As soon as ever the Lord began to keep house, and there were but two families in it, there was a bloody Cain living, and a good Abel slain. And

as the world increased in number, so in wickedness. Gen 6:12, it is said, "All flesh had corrupted their ways," and amongst so many thousand men, not one righteous but Noah and his family, and yet in the ark there crept in a cursed Cham.

Afterwards, as Abraham's posterity increased, so we see their sin abounded. When his posterity was in Egypt, where, one would think, if ever men were good, now it would appear, being so heavily afflicted by Pharaoh, being by so many miracles miraculously delivered by the hand of Moses, yet most of these God was wroth with (Heb 3:12), and only two of them, Caleb and Joshua, went into Canaan, a type of heaven. Look into Solomon's time, what glorious times? what great profession was there then? Yet, after his death, ten tribes fell to the odious sin of idolatry, following the command of Jeroboam, their king. Look further into Isaiah's time, when there were multitudes of sacrifices and prayers (Isa 1:11); yet then there was but a remnant; nay, a very little remnant, that should be saved. And look to the time of Christ's coming in the flesh, (for I pick out the best time of all.) when one would think, by such sermons he preached, such miracles he wrought, such a life as he led, all the Jews would have entertained him; yet it is said, "He came unto his own, and they received him not." So few, that Christ himself admires at one good Nathaniel, "Behold an Israelite in whom there is no guile." In the apostles' time, many, indeed, were converted, but few comparatively, and amongst the best churches many bad, as that at Philippi (Phil 3:18). Many had a name to live, but were dead, and few only kept their garments unspotted. And presently, after the apostles' time, "Many grievous wolves came and devoured the sheep; "and so, in succeeding ages (Rev 12:9), all the earth wondered at the whore in scarlet.

And in Luther's time, when the light began to arise again, he saw so many carnal gospellers, that he breaks out in one sermon into these speeches: "God grant I may never live to see those bloody days that are coming upon an ungodly world." Latimer heard so much profaneness in his time, that he thought verily doomsday was just at hand. And have

not our ears heard censuring those in the Palatinate, where (as it is reported) many have fallen from the glorious gospel to Popery, as fast as leaves fall in autumn? Who would have thought there had lurked such hearts under such a show of detesting Popery as was among them before? And at Christ's coming, shall he find faith on the earth?

2. Let us look into all places and persons and see how few shall be saved. The world is now split into four parts, Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; and the three biggest parts are drowned in a deluge of profaneness and superstition; they do not so much as profess Christ; you may see the sentence of death written on these men's foreheads. (Jer. x. ult.) But let us look upon the best part of the world, and that is Europe; how few shall be saved there! First, the Grecian church, howsoever, now in these days, their good patriarch of Constantinople is about a general reformation among them, and hath done much good, yet are they for the present, and have been for the most part of them, without the saving means of knowledge. They content themselves with their old superstitions, having little or no preaching at all. And for the other parts, as Italy, Spain, France, Germany, for the most part they are Popish; and see the end of these men (2 Thess 2:9-12). And now amongst them that carry the badge of honesty, I will not speak what mine ears have heard and my heart believes concerning other churches: I will come into our own church of England, which is the most flourishing church in the world; never had church such preachers, such means; yet have we not some chapels and churches stand as dark lanterns without light, where people are led with blind, or idle, or licentious ministers, and so both fall into the ditch?

Nay, even amongst them that have the means of grace, but few shall be saved. It may be sometimes amongst ninety-nine in a parish, Christ sends a minister to call some one lost sheep among them. (Matt, xiii.) Three grounds were bad where the seed was sown, and only one good. It is a strange speech of Chrysostom in his fourth sermon to the people of Antioch, where he was much beloved, and did much good -

How many do you think, saith he, shall be saved in this city? It will be a hard speech to you, but I will speak it; though here be so many thousands of you, yet there cannot be found a hundred that shall be saved, and I doubt of them too; for what villainy is there among youth! what sloth in old men! and so he goes on. So say I, Never tell me we are baptized, and are Christians, and trust to Christ; let us but separate the goats from the sheep, and exclude none but such as the Scriptures doth, and sets a cross upon their doors, with, Lord, have mercy upon them, and we shall see only a few in the city shall be saved.

Cast out all the profane people among us, as drunkards, swearers, whores, liars, which the Scripture brands for black sheep, and condemns them in a hundred places.

Set by all civil men that are but wolves chained up, tame devils, swine in a fair meadow, that pay all they owe, and do nobody any harm, yet do none any great good; that plead for themselves, and say, Who can say, Black is mine eye? These are righteous men, whom Christ never came to call. "For he came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Cast by all hypocrites, that like stage players, in the sight of others, act the part of kings and honest men; when, look upon them in their tiring house, they are but base varlets.

Formal professors and carnal gospellers, that have a thing like faith, and like sorrow, and like true repentance, and like good desires, but yet they be but pictures; they deceive others and themselves too. (2 Tim 3:5).

Set by these four sorts, how few then are to be saved, even among them that are hatched in the bosom of the church!

First. Here, then, is a use of encouragement. Be not discouraged by the name of singularity. What! do you think yourself wiser than others? and shall none be saved but such as are so precise as ministers prate? Are you wiser than others, that you think none shall go to heaven

but yourself? I tell you, if you would be saved, you must be singular men, not out of faction, but out of conscience. (Acts 24:16).

Secondly. Here is matter of terror to all those that be of opinion that few shall be saved; and therefore, when they are convinced of the danger of sin by the word, they fly to this shelter: If I be damned, it will be woe to many more beside me then; as though most should not be damned. O, yes, the most of them that live in the church shall perish; and this made a hermit which Theodoret mentions to live fifteen years in a cell in a desolate wilderness, with nothing but bread and water, and yet doubted, after all his sorrow, whether he should be saved or not. O, God's wrath is heavy, which thou shalt one day bear.

Thirdly. This ministereth exhortation to all confident people, that think they believe, and say, they doubt not but to be saved, and hence do not much fear death. O, learn hence to suspect and fear your estates, and fear it so much that thou canst not be quiet until thou hast got some assurance thou shalt be saved. When Christ told his disciples that one of them should betray him, they all said, "Master, is it I?" "But if he had said eleven of them should betray him, all except one, would they not all conclude, Surely, it is I?" If the Lord had said, Only few shall be damned, every man might fear, It may be it is I; but now he says most shall, every man may cry out and say, Surely it is I. No humble heart but is driven to and fro with many stinging fears this way; yet there is a generation of presumptuous, brazen-faced, bold people, that confidently think of themselves, as the Jews of the Pharisees, (being so holy and strict,) that if God save but two in the world, they shall make one.

The child of God, indeed, is bold as a lion; but he hath God's spirit and promise, assuring him of his eternal welfare. But I speak of divers that have no sound ground to prove this point, (which they pertinaciously defend,) that they shall be saved. This confident humor rageth most of all in our old professors at large, who think, that is a jest indeed, that having been of a good belief so long, that they now should

be so far behindhand as to begin the work, and lay the foundation anew. And not only among these, but amongst divers sorts of people whom the devil never troubles, because he is sure of them already, and therefore cries peace in their ears, whose consciences never trouble them, because that hath shut its eyes; and hence they sleep, and sleeping dream that God is merciful unto them, and will be so; yet never see they are deceived, until they awake with the flames of hell about their ears; and the world troubles them not; they have their hearts' desire here, because they are friends to it, and so enemies to God. And ministers never trouble them, for they have none such as are fit for that work near them; or if they have, they can sit and sleep in the church, and choose whether they will believe him. And their friends never trouble them, because they are afraid to displease them. And God himself never troubles them, because that time is to come hereafter. This one truth, well pondered and thought on, may damp thine heart, and make thy conscience fly in thy face, and say, "Thou art the man;" it may be there are better in hell than thyself, that art so confident; and therefore tell me, what hast thou to say for thyself, that thou shalt be saved? In what thing hast thou gone beyond them that "think they are rich and want nothing, who yet are poor, blind, miserable, and naked?"

Thou wilt say, haply, first, I have left my sins I once lived in, and am now no drunkard, no swearer, no liar, &c.

I answer, Thou mayest be washed from thy mire, (the pollution of the world,) and yet be a swine in God's account, (2 Pet 2:20); thou mayest live a blameless, innocent, honest, smooth life, and yet be a miserable creature still (Phil. 3:6).

But I pray, and that often.

This thou mayest do, and yet never be saved (Isa 1:11). To what purpose is your multitude of sacrifices? Nay, thou mayest pray with much affection, with a good heart, as thou thinkest, yet a thousand miles off from being saved (Prov 1:28).

But I fast sometimes, as well as pray.

So did the scribes and Pharisees, even twice a week, which could not be public, but private fasts. And yet this righteousness could never save them.

But I hear the word of God, and like the best preachers.

This thou mayest do too, and yet never be saved. Nay, thou mayest so hear, as to receive much joy and comfort in hearing, nay, to believe and catch hold on Christ, and so say and think he is thine, and yet not be saved; as the stony ground did, (Matt, xiii.,) who heard the word with joy, and for a season believed.

I read the Scriptures often.

This you may do too, and yet never be saved; as the Pharisees, who were so perfect in reading the Bible, that Christ needed but only say, "It hath been said of old time;" for they knew the text and place well enough without intimation.

But I am grieved and am sorrowful, and repent for my sins past.

Judas did thus (Matt 27:3); he repents himself with a legal repentance for fear of hell, and with a natural sorrow for dealing so unkindly with Christ, in betraying not only blood, but innocent blood. True humiliation is ever accompanied with hearty reformation.

O, but I love good men and their company.

So did the five foolish virgins love the company, and (at the time of extremity) the very oil and grace of the wise; yet they were locked out of the gates of mercy.

But God hath given me more knowledge than others, or than I myself had once.

This thou mayest have, and be able to teach others, and think so of thyself too, and yet never be saved.

But I keep the Lord's day strictly.

So did the Jews, whom yet Christ condemned, and were never saved.

I have very many good desires and endeavors to get to heaven.

These thou and thousands may have, and yet miss of heaven.

Many shall seek to enter in at that narrow gate, and not be able.

True, thou wilt say, Many men do many duties, but without any life or zeal; I am zealous.

So thou mayest be, and yet never be saved, as Jehu. Paul was zealous when he was a Pharisee, and if he was so for a false religion, and a bad cause, why, much more mayest thou be for a good cause; so zealous as not only to cry out against profaneness in the wicked, but civil honesty of others, and hypocrisy of others, yea, even of the coldness of the best of God's people; thou mayest be the fore horse in the team, and the ringleader of good exercises amongst the best men, (as Joash, a wicked king, was the first that complained of the negligence of his best officers in not repairing the temple,) and so stir them up unto it; nay, thou mayest be so forward as to be persecuted, and not yield an inch, nor shrink in the wetting, but mayest manfully and courageously stand it out in time of persecution, as the thorny ground did: so zealous thou mayest be, as to like best of and to flock most unto the most zealous preachers, that search men's consciences best, as the whole country of Judea came flocking to John's ministry, and delighted to hear him for a sea-son; nay, thou mayest be zealous as to take sweet delight in doing of all these things. (Isa 8:2, 3) "They delight in approaching near unto God," yet come short of heaven.

But thou wilt say, True, many a man rides post that breaks his neck at last; many a man is zealous, but his fire is soon quenched, and his zeal is soon spent; they hold not out; whereas I am constant, and persevere in godly courses.

So did that young man; yet he was a graceless man. (Matt 19:20),
“All these things have I done from my youth; what lack I yet?”

It is true, hypocrites may persevere; but they know themselves to be naught all the while, and so deceive others; but I am persuaded that I am in God's favor, and in a safe and happy estate, since I do all with a good heart for God.

This thou mayest verily think of thyself, and yet be deceived and damned, and go to the devil at last. “There is a way,” saith Solomon, “that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.” For he is a hypocrite not only that makes a seeming outward show of what he hath not, but also that hath a true show of what indeed there is not. The first sort of hypocrites deceive others only; the latter, having some inward yet common work, deceive themselves too. (James i. 26,) “If any man seem to be religious,” (so many are, and so deceive the world;) but it is added, “deceiving his own soul.” Way, thou mayest go so fairly, and live so honestly, that all the best Christians about thee may think well of thee and never suspect thee, and so mayest pass through the world, and die with a deluded comfort that thou shalt go to heaven and be canonized for a saint in thy funeral sermon, and never know thou art counterfeit till the Lord brings thee to thy strict and last examination, and so thou receivest that dreadful sentence, “Go, ye cursed.” So it was with the five foolish virgins, that were never discovered by the wise, nor by themselves, until the gate of grace was shut upon them. If thou hast, therefore, no better evidences to show for thyself, that thine estate, is good, than these, I will not give a pin's point for all thy nattering false hopes of being saved. But it may be thou hast never yet come so far as to this pitch; and if not, Lord, what will become of thee? Suspect thyself much, and when, in this shipwreck of souls, thou seest so many thousands sink, cry out, and conclude, It is a wonder of wonders, and a thousand and a thousand to one, if ever thou comest safe to shore.

O, strive, then, to be one of them that shall be saved, though it cost thee thy blood and the loss of all that thou hast; labor to go beyond

all those that go so far and yet perish at the last. Do not say that, seeing so few shall be saved, therefore this discourageth me from seeking, because all my labor may be in vain. Consider that Christ here makes another and a better use of it. (Luke 3:21). Seeing that “many shall seek and not enter, therefore,” saith he, “strive to enter in at the strait gate.” Venture, at least, and try what the Lord will do for thee.

Wherein doth the child of God, and so how may I, go beyond these hypocrites that go so far?

In Three Things Principally

First. No unregenerate man, though he go never so far, let him do never so much, but he lives in some one sin or other, secret or open, little or great. Judas went far, but he was covetous. Herod went far, but he loved his Herodias. Every dog hath his kennel; every swine hath his swill, and every wicked man his lust. For no unregenerate man hath fruition of God to content him, and there is no man's heart but it must have some good to content it; which good is to be found only in the fountain of all good, and that is God, or in the cistern, and that is in the creatures. Hence, a man having lost full content in God, he seeks for and feeds upon contentment in the creature which he makes a god to him; and here lies his lust or sin, which he must needs live in. Hence, ask those men that go very far, and take their penny for good silver, and commend themselves for their good desires - I say, ask them if they have no sin. Yes, say they; who can live without sin? And so they give way to sin, and therefore live in sin. Nay, commonly, all the duties, prayers, care, and zeal of the best hypocrites are to hide a lust, as the whore in the Proverbs, that wipes her mouth, and goes to the temple, and pays her vows; or to feed a lust, as Jehu his zeal against Baal was to get a kingdom. There remains a root of bitterness in the best hypocrites, which, howsoever it be lopped off sometimes by sickness or horror of conscience, and a man hath purposes never to commit again, yet there it secretly lurks; and, though it seemeth to be bound and conquered by the word, or by prayer, or by outward crosses, or while the

hand of God is upon a man, yet the inward strength and power of it remains still; and therefore, when temptations, like strong Philistines, are upon this man again, he breaks all vows, promises, bonds of God, and will save the life of his sin.

Secondly. No unregenerate man or woman ever came to be poor in spirit, and so to be carried out of all duties unto Christ. If it were possible for them to forsake and break loose forever from all sin, yet here they stick, as the scribes and Pharisees; and so, like zealous Paul before his conversion, they fasted and prayed, and kept the Sabbath, but they rested in their legal righteousness, and in the performance of these and the like duties. Take the best hypocrite, that hath the most strong persuasions of God's love to him, and ask him why he hopes to be saved. He will answer, I pray, read, hear, love good men, cry out of the sins of the time. And tell him again that a hypocrite may climb these stairs and go as far, he will reply, True, indeed; but they do not what they do with a sound heart, but to be seen of men. Mark, now, how these men feel a good heart in themselves and in all things they do; and therefore feel not a want of all good, which is poverty of spirit; and therefore here they fall short (Isa 66:2). There were divers hypocrites forward for the worship of God in the temple; but God loathes these, because not poor in spirit; to them only, it is said, the Lord will look. I have seen many professors very forward for all good duties, but as ignorant of Christ, when they are sifted, as blocks. And if a man (as few do) know not Christ, he must rest in his duties, because he knows not Christ, to whom he must go and be carried if ever he be saved. I have heard of a man that, being condemned to die, thought to escape the gallows, and to save himself from hanging, by a certain gift he said he had of whistling. So men seek to save themselves by their gifts of knowledge, gifts of memory, gifts of prayer; and when they see they must die for their sins, this is the ruin of many a soul, that, though he forsake Egypt and his sins and flesh pots there, and will never be so as he hath been, yet he never cometh into

Canaan, but loseth himself and his soul in a wilderness of many duties, and there perisheth.

Thirdly. If any unregenerate man come unto Christ, he never gets into Christ, that is, never takes his eternal rest and lodging in Jesus Christ only. (Heb. iv, 4.) Judas followed Christ for the bag; he would have the bag and Christ too. The young man came unto Christ to be his disciple; but he would have Christ and the world too. They will not content themselves with Christ alone, nor with the world alone, but make their markets out of both, like whorish wives, that will please their husbands and others too. Men in distress of conscience, if they have comfort from Christ, they are contented; if they have salvation from hell by Christ, they are contented; but Christ himself contents them not. Thus far a hypocrite goes not. So much for the first doctrine observed out of the text. I come now to the second.

DOCTRINE 2: SAVED WITH MUCH DIFFICULTY

That those that are saved are saved with much difficulty; or it is a wonderful hard thing to be saved. The gate is strait, and therefore a man must sweat and strive to enter; both the entrance is difficult, and the progress of salvation too. Jesus Christ is not got with a wet finger. It is not wishing and desiring to be saved will bring men to heaven; hell's mouth is full of good wishes. It is not shedding a tear at a sermon, or blubbering now and then in a corner, and saying over thy prayers, and crying God mercy for thy sins, will save thee. It is not, *Lord, have mercy upon us*, will do thee good. It is not coming constantly to church. These are easy matters. But it is a tough work, a wonderful hard matter, to be saved. (1 Pet 4:18). Hence the way to heaven is compared to a race, where a man must put forth all his strength, and stretch every limb, and all to get forward. Hence a Christian's life is compared to wrestling. (Eph 6:12). All the policy and power of hell buckle together against a Christian; therefore he must look to himself, or else he falls. Hence it is compared to fighting. (2 Tim 4:7). A man must fight against the devil,

the world, himself, who shoot poisoned bullets in the soul, where a man must kill or be killed. God hath not lined the way to Christ with velvet, nor strewed it with rushes. He will never feed a slothful humor in man, who will be saved if Christ and heaven would drop into their mouths, and if any would bear their charges thither. If Christ might be bought for a few cold wishes and lazy desires, he would be of small reckoning amongst men, who would say, Lightly come, lightly go. Indeed, Christ's yoke is easy in itself; and when a man is got into Christ, nothing is so sweet; but for a carnal, dull heart, it is hard to draw in it; for:

Four Strait Gates

There are four strait gates which everyone must pass through before he can enter into heaven.

1. There is the strait gate of humiliation. God saveth none but first he humbleth them. Now, it is hard to pass through the gates and flames of hell; for a heart as stiff as a stake to bow; as hard as a stone to bleed for the least prick; not to mourn for one sin, but all sins; and not for a fit, but all a man's lifetime. O, it is hard for a man to suffer himself to be loaden with sin, and pressed to death for sin, so as never to love sin more, but to spit in the face of that which he once loved as dearly as his life. It is easy to drop a tear or two, and be sermon sick; but to have a heart rent for sin and from sin, this is true humiliation; and this is hard.

2. The strait gate of faith (Eph 1:19). It is an easy matter to presume, but hard to believe in Christ. It is easy for a man that was never humbled to believe and say, *It is but believing*; but it is a hard matter for a man humbled, when he sees all his sins in order before him, the devil and conscience roaring upon him, and crying out against him, and God frowning upon him, now to call God Father, is a hard work. Judas had rather be hanged than believe. It is hard to see a Christ as a rock to stand upon, when we are overwhelmed with sorrow of heart for sin. It is hard to prize Christ above ten thousand worlds of pearl; it is hard to desire

Christ, and nothing but Christ; hard to follow Christ all the day long, and never to be quiet till he is got in thine arms, and then with Simeon to say, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.”

3. The strait gate of repentance. It is an easy matter for a man to confess himself to be a sinner, and to cry to God forgiveness until next time; but to have a bitter sorrow, and so to turn from all sin, and to return to God, and all the ways of God, which is true repentance indeed, this is hard.

4. The strait gate of opposition of devils, the world, and a man's own self, who knock a man down when he begins to look toward Christ and heaven.

Hence learn, that every easy way to heaven is a false way, although ministers should preach it out of their pulpits, and angels should publish it out of heaven.

Now, there are nine easy ways to heaven, (as men think,) all which lead to hell.

The common broad way, wherein a whole parish may all go abroadth in it; tell these people they shall be damned, their answer is, Then woe to many more besides me.

The way of civil education, whereby many wild natures are by little and little tamed, and like wolves are chained up easily 'while they are young.

Balaam's way of good wishes, whereby many people will confess their ignorance, forgetfulness. and that they can not make such shows as others do, but they thank God their hearts are as good, and God for his part accepts (say they) the will for the deed. And, “My son, give me thy heart;” the heart is all in all, and so long they hope to do well enough. Poor deluded creatures thus think to break through armies of sins, devils, temptations, and to break open the very gates of heaven

with a few good wishes; they think to come to their journey's end without legs, because their hearts are good to God.

Fourthly. **The way of formality**, whereby men rest in the performance of most or of all external duties without inward life (Mark 1:14). Every man must have some religion, some fig leaves to hide their nakedness. Now, this religion must be either true religion or the false one; if the true, he must either take up the power of it, - hut that he will not, because it is burdensome, - or the form of it; and this being easy, men embrace it as their God, and will rather lose their lives than their religion thus taken up. This form of religion is the easiest religion in the world; partly because it easeth men of trouble of conscience, quieting that: Thou hast sinned, saith conscience, and God is offended; take a book, and pray, keep thy conscience better, and bring thy Bible with thee; now, conscience is silent, being charmed down with the form of religion, as the devil is driven away (as they say) with holy water,; partly, also, because the form of religion credits a man, partly because it is easy in itself; it is of a light carriage, being but the shadow and picture of the substance of religion; as now, what an easy matter it is to come to church! They hear (at least outwardly) very attentively an hour and more, and then to turn to a proof, and to turn down a leaf: here is the form. But now to spend Saturday night, and all the whole Sabbath day morning, in trimming the lamp, and in getting oil in the heart to meet the bridegroom the next day, and so meet him in the word, and there to tremble at the voice of God, and suck the breast while it is open; and when the word is done, to go aside privately, and there to chew upon the word, there to lament with tears all the vain thoughts in duties, deadness in hearing, this is hard, because this is the power of godliness, and this men will not take up: so for private prayer; what an easy matter is it for a man to say over a few prayers out of some devout book, or to repeat some old prayer, got by heart since a child, or to have two or three short-winded wishes for God's mercy in the morning and at night! this form is easy. But now to prepare the heart by serious meditation of God and

man's self, before he prays, then to come to God with a bleeding, hunger-starved heart, not only with a desire, but with a warrant, I must have such or such a mercy, and there to wrestle with God, although it be an hour or two together for a blessing, this is too hard; men think none do thus, and therefore they will not.

Fifthly. **The way of presumption**, whereby men, having seen their sins, catch hold easily upon God's mercy, and snatch comforts before they are reached out unto them. There is no word of comfort, in the book of God, intended for such as regard iniquity in their hearts, though they do not act it in their lives. Their only comfort is, that the sentence of damnation is not yet executed upon them.

Sixthly. **The way of sloth**, whereby men lie still, and say, God must do all. If the Lord would set up a pulpit at the alehouse door, it may be they would hear oftener. If God will always thunder, they will always pray; if strike them now and then with sickness, God shall be paid with good words and promises enough, that they will be better if they live; but, as long as peace lasts, they will run to hell as fast as they can; and, if God will not catch them, they care not, they will not return.

Seventhly. **The way of carelessness**, when men, feeling many difficulties, pass through some of them, but not all, and what they can not get now, they feed themselves with a false hope they shall hereafter; they are content to be called precisians, and fools, and crazy brains, but they want brokenness of heart, and they will pray (it may be) for it, and pass by that difficulty; but to keep the wound always open, this they will not do; to be always sighing for help, and never to give themselves rest till their hearts are humbled, that they will not: "These have a name to live, yet are dead."

Eighthly. **The way of moderation, or honest discretion** (Rev 3:16), which, indeed, is nothing but lukewarmness of the soul; and that is, when a man contrives, and cuts out such a way to heaven as he may be hated of none, but please all, and so do any thing for a quiet life, and

so sleep in a whole skin. The Lord saith, “He that will live godly must suffer persecution.” No, not so, Lord. Surely, (think they,) if men were discreet and wise, it would prevent a great deal of trouble and opposition in good courses; this man will commend those that are most zealous, if they were but wise; if he meet with a black-mouthed swearer, he will not reprove him, lest he be displeased with him; if he meet with an honest man, he will yield to all he saith, that so he may commend him; and when he meets them both together, they shall be both alike welcome (whatever he thinks) to his house and table, because he would fain be at peace with all men.

Ninthly, and lastly. **The way of self-love**, whereby a man, fearing terribly he shall be damned, useth diligently all means whereby he shall be saved. Here is the strongest difficulty of all, to row against the stream, and to hate a man's self, and then to follow Christ fully.

SOLOMON STODDARD:
THE WAY TO KNOW
SINCERITY. HYPOCRISY
CLEARED UP

*Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.
He that loveth not, knoweth not God. 1 John 4:7b-8a.*

Godliness is a thing of great concernment. The acceptance of services, the hearing of prayers, and the salvation of the soul doth depend upon it. And because it is of such moment, the comfort of men doth much depend upon the knowledge of it. But there is a great deal of darkness in the minds of men about it. Many times godly men have scruples, and sometimes great fears, that they are not godly: They often set in judgment on themselves, and are at a loss what sentence to pronounce. And some ungodly men have great hopes that they are in a good estate, and steal comfort that do not belong to them. Some cannot see their way to condemn themselves, and some give judgment for themselves. But the Apostle doth here direct the one sort and the other in the determination of their condition. First, he tells us how a godly man may know his godliness: He that sees the workings of the grace of love in himself; he that sees more or fewer actings of that grace, may conclude for himself, that he is born of God, hath had a work of regeneration, the gospel has had a saving efficacy on his heart, he has the spiritual knowledge of God, his eyes have been opened to see the glory of God. Secondly, he tells us how hypocrites may know their hypocrisy: He that loveth not, that liveth in the omission of love, that hath nothing of the working of that spirit, that lives in the neglect of it, hath not the spiritual knowledge of God; whatever pretences he makes, this casts the case against him.

The like we may say with respect to every other grace: He that believeth on Jesus Christ, that loveth God, that has godly sorrow, is born of God: But he that doth not believe in Christ, that loveth not God, that hath not godly sorrow, knoweth not God, whatever professions he maketh

DOCTRINE. Men may know their Hypocrisy only by their Course of life; but their Sincerity only by particular Acts.

There are two sorts of professors, saints and hypocrites. Some are compared to Wheat, and some to Chaff: (Mat. 3:12). He will gather the wheat into his garner; but he will burn up chaff with unquenchable fire. Some are compared to stony and thorny ground, some to good ground (Mat. 13:20. & seq.) Some have a wedding garment, some have not, (Matt. 22:11). Some are compared to wise, some to foolish Virgins, (Matt. 25:1:2). Some are compared to men that build upon a rock, others to men that build upon the sand. (Matt. 7:24. & seq.) And many persons are studying this question, of what sort they are: This Doctrine doth resolve it.

PROPOSITION 1: HYPOCRISY IS TO BE KNOWN ONLY BY THEIR COURSE OF LIFE. MEN KNOW IT ONLY BY THEIR WALK.

For the clearing of this, Consider,

1. Particular Acts of sin are no evidence of hypocrisy.

1. Many internal acts of sin, are no evidence of hypocrisy. Every godly man has a corrupt principle remaining in him, and that principle does not lie still; but is busy and active. Though it be mortified, yet it is full of life, (Heb. 12:1). Lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us. It is like a fountain, always springing up (Gal. 5:17). The flesh lusts against the spirit (Rom. 7:21). I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. The choicest saints do find every day the stirrings of corruption. If they are alone, if they are in company, if they are in the works of their calling, if they are exercising themselves in the

duties of religion, they are always haunted with a corrupt heart. They have a multitude of evil thoughts, desires, delights, fears, sorrows. Unbelief is often stirring; so pride and worldliness, frowardness and envy. There be many stirrings of sin that they do not perceive; but abundance that falls under their observation. A corrupt principle will stir upon all occasions; everything that occurs will awaken it: Therefore saints are warned to keep their hearts with all diligence (Prov. 4:33). And godly men have great occasion every day to repent, and to say as Paul (Rom. 7:24). O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!

2 Many external acts of Sin are no evidence of Hypocrisy. Men have much more command of their words and outward actions than of their thoughts, and the inward workings of their hearts: Yet godly men are often guilty of external sins: They commit many sins in words (Jam. 3:8). The tongue is an unruly evil. Many times their words favor of vanity, pride, unbelief, and discontentedness. And they are often guilty of other external sins, (Psal, 19:12). Who can understand his errors? Every corruption is running them into transgression; sometimes omitting duty, sometimes committing sin. They are guilty of many sins of ignorance. Men that understand general rules, often fail in applying them to particular cases. There be many proud, worldly, froward carriages that they are not aware of, and are ready to justify. And many sins are committed through inadvertency; they are hurried through fear, or passion, or pride, and consider not at the time, but presently after they see it, and are sorry for it.

3. An act of gross transgression is no evidence. Gross transgressions are not the ordinary spots of God's children; but grace is no certain preservation from them. Mortified corruption may run a man into such transgression as many natural men were never guilty of. Gross transgressions are of such a nature that they seem to be inconsistent with grace: But as a man that has corruption in him may do choice act of holiness, so a man that has grace in him may commit gross acts of

sin. If a man's nature be much weakened, yet in a fit he may act very strongly: So, if men's corruptions be much weakened, yet they may have fits wherein they may act very powerfully. It is an idle thing to think, that such things are impossible as several time have come to pass. Noah 's intemperance, Lot 's incest, David 's adultery, Peter 's denying of Christ, are unanswerable arguments, that gross transgression is no evidence of an Hypocrite. It is no wonder if a gross transgression should make a man suspect his godliness, but it is no evidence. If God withdraw from a godly man, his grace will not prevent gross transgression. Natural conscience doth often preserve men, but grace doth not always preserve men from gross sin.

2. A course of sin is an evidence of hypocrisy

If a man makes a profession of religion, and lives in a way of sin against the light of his conscience, he is an hypocrite. He that makes a profession, and contradicts it in his conversation, is an hypocrite. Tit. 1:16 . They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him. He that pretends to godliness, and turns aside to crooked ways, is an hypocrite; for those that are really godly do live in a way of obedience. Psal. 119:1, 2, 3. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the way of the Lord, they also do no iniquity. Luk. 1:6. They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But such as live in ways of sin are dissemblers; for all such will be rejected in the day of Judgment: Mat. 7:23. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. The like we have, Luk. 13:27. If Men live in a way of Disobedience they do not love God; for love will make men keep God's commands. 1 Joh. 5:3 Herein is love, that we keep his commands, and his commands are not grievous. If men live in a way of Disobedience they have not a spirit of Faith; for faith sanctifies men: Acts 16:68. Sanctified by faith that is in me. If men live in a way of disobedience they are not Christ's sheep; for his sheep hear his voice, Joh. 10:27. Men that live in a way of disobedience are not born of God; 1 Joh. 3:9. He that is born of God sinneth not. Men that live in a way

of disobedience are the servants of sin; Joh. 8:34. He that committeth sin is the servant of sin.

1. A course of external sin is an evidence of Hypocrisy, whether it be a sin of omission or commission. If men live in the neglect of known duties, or in the practice of known evils, that will be their condemnation. Let the sin be what it will; let it be Profaneness, Drunkenness, Uncleanness, Lying, or Injustice. Thus it was with the Sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, they are called sons of Belial, that knew not the Lord, 1 Sam. 2:12. The foundation of their censure was their profaneness and uncleanness, v. 13:14, 22. So it was with Jehu, notwithstanding his zeal in destroying Baal, because he practiced and tolerated the worship of the Calves at Dan and Bethel, (2 King 10:3). Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel, with all his heart and with all his soul; for he turned aside after the sin of Jeroboam. So many of the Pharisees were wicked, because they devoured widows houses, Mat. 23:14. Thus Judas appeared to be an hypocrite, because he lived in theft, Joh. 12:6. He was a thief That showed the rottenness of the heart of Demas, that he was an apostate, 2 Tim. 4:10. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil world. To live impenitently in any outward known sin, will cast against a man, and prove him an hypocrite.

2 A course of internal sin proves a man to be an hypocrite. Though he washes his hands, if he does not cleanse his heart, he is ungodly. The external conversation of some hypocrites may excel the conversation of some saints; but if there be a way of internal sin, their pretenses to godliness are vain. There be two sorts of internal sins, which men may live in a way of, and is a witness against them. One is, a way of corrupt thoughts and affections: If men allow themselves in malice, envy, wanton thoughts, profane thoughts, that will condemn them.

Though those corruptions do not break out in any scandalous way, those thoughts are an evidence of a rotten heart Tit. 3:3. We

ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and enemy, hateful and hating one another. If a man allows himself, though he thinks he doth not, in malice or envy, he is an hypocrite; though his conscience disallows it, yet if his heart allows it he is no saint; if he does not hate and mortify those corrupt affections, he is no saint. The other way of living in internal sin is, to live in the omission of spiritual duties: Whether a man knows it or knows it not, it is an evidence of hypocrisy. Many men that make a fair show, do not believe in Jesus Christ: They have a persuasion of the truth of the gospel, they hope Christ will save them, they have had some joy in hearing the gospel, but they do not believe in Christ; either they are carnally confident, or discouraged: This doth condemn them. He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him, Joh. 3:36. He that is contentious and obeys not the gospel, will be condemned, Rom. 2:8. So, if a man live in the neglect of love to God; if there be no hearty love to God in his profession, in his obedience, he is not godly: Though there be affection, yet if there be not hearty love, that will condemn him: That was the condemnation of the Jews, Joh. 5:42. I know you, that you have not the love of God in you. If men be zealous men, have tenderness of conscience, delight in sabbaths, but are destitute of love to God, they are hypocrites. So, if there be not a spirit of love to saints, 1 Cor. 13:23. If I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal So, 1 Joh. 4:8. He that loveth not, knoweth not God.

PROPOSITION 2: SINCERITY IS KNOWN BY PARTICULAR ACTS OF GRACE.

The habits of Grace cannot be seen immediately: As no man can see his own Soul or any of the faculties of it immediately, so he cannot see the gracious principles that are there immediately. And there is no external act of obedience that is evidential, for an ungodly man may do an external act of obedience. He may give all his goods to the poor and his body to be burned, though he has no charity. 1 Cor. 13:3. But by

particular acts of grace they may know their uprightness, and by them only. If a man were to try his sincerity by his certain knowledge of his gracious carriages day by day, he would never attain assurance, but be under perpetual uncertainty; but by particular acts of Grace he may know it.

Consider,

1. Saints may certainly see particular acts of Grace. Though there be many acts of grace that a man doth not know to be such, yet some acts of grace are plain to be seen. We find Christ enquiring of one whether he did believe, Joh. 9:35. Dost thou believe on the Son of God? and of another whether he loved him, Joh. 21:16. Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? That shows that such things may be known, else to what purpose would it be to ask those questions. And reason shows that they may be seen, for they do greatly differ from all counterfeit acts, and sometimes grace acts very strongly and apparently. And we have an account in Scripture of saints that have spoken very confidently about the workings of a spirit of grace; so Job, Job 42:5, 6. Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes. He saw the mighty workings of a spirit of repentance, and was at no loss about it. So David, Psal. 116:1. I love the Lord. He speaks of it as of a thing he was assured of. The like workings of heart he found towards the law, Psal, 119:97. O how love I thy law. So, Peter appears to Christ, who knew his heart, Joh. 21:17. Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. And others have had the like experience.

2. Ordinarily, they do certainly see but few particular acts of grace. There is a very great difference in godly men upon this account. I take it for granted, that there are not two men in ten thousand, that have just the same experience. More generally, godly men do hope and think, that they exercise grace many times every day, in their prayers, and in their callings, and in their conversation with men; but it is but now and then that they can certainly speak up to it. There be great mixtures of corruption with grace, there be many false appearances of grace,

which makes them afraid whether they did indeed exercise grace; and this makes it evident, that it is thus with Saints, that many of them are for a long time under doubt whether they be indeed godly; thence we have these precepts, 2 Pet. 1:10. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. 2 Cor. 13:5. Examine yourselves, whether you be in the Faith. Some hypocrites are a great deal more confident than many saints. Many godly men are at a loss whether their faith be any other than what unconverted men may have. And so about their other graces; there be some saints that have assurance, but the foundation of it is, that now and then they see the plain actings of faith and love, and repentance. They see something of encouragement from their daily walk. But that which begets assurance is, that sometimes they plainly see Grace.

3. By these visible actings of grace, they may conclude there is a course of gracious carriages. Godly men are described to be men that walk in a course of holiness. Psal. 119:1. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the law of the Lord. And we find that godly men have been well satisfied that they have walked in a way of holiness. Isai. 39:3. Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. If it be inquired, how they do know that their obedience is not the fruit of natural conscience and common grace, as it is with many others; The Answer is, that they see now and then the plain exercises of grace, and from thence conclude, that they are under the influence of a gracious spirit in their walk; that though they be guilty of much formality and hypocrisy, yet there is a spirit of holiness working in them, and an hearty care to keep the commandments of God. If a man sees now and then a spirit of love to God, he may safely conclude that his religion is not the fruit of ostentation, or slavish fear, but that a gracious spirit doth stir him up to perform his duty, and that his walk his holy.

USE 1.

Is of awaking to those that live in a course of sin. Some make pretences to godliness, whereby they do not only deceive others, but which is a great deal worse, they deceive themselves also. But this will condemn them, that they live in a course of sin; and such must go with ungodly men: Psal. 125, 5. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. If there be a great change in a man's Carriage, and he be reformed in several particulars, yet if there be one evil way, the man is an ungodly man. If he doth choice service for the church of God, yet he is an ungodly man. If there are twenty hopeful things that may be alleged for him, yet he will not pass for a godly man. Where there is piety, there is universal obedience. A man may have great infirmities, yet be a godly man; so it was with Lot and David and Peter; but if he lives in a way of sin, he does not render his godliness only suspicious, but it is full evidence against him. Men that are godly, have a respect to all God's commandments, Psal. 119:1. There be a great many commands, and if there be one of them that a man has not a respect unto, he will be put to shame another day. If a man lives in one evil way, he is not subject to God's authority; but then he lives in rebellion, and that will take off all his pleas, and at once cut off all his pretences, and he will be condemned in the day of Judgment; Luk. 13 27. Depart from me, all ye that work iniquity. One way of sin is exception enough against the man's salvation.

1. Though the sin that he lives in be small such persons will not be guilty of perjury, stealing, drunkenness, fornication; they look upon them to be heinous things, and they are afraid of them, but they do not much matter it if they oppress a little in a bargain, if they commend a thing too much which they are about to sell, if they break a promise, if they spend the Sabbath unprofitably, if they neglect secret prayer, if they talk rudely, and reproach others; they think these things are but small things: If they can keep clear of great transgression, they hope that God will not insist upon small things; but indeed all the commands of God are established by divine authority, and that man that doth not lay weight

upon little commands, keeps none as he ought to do. A small shot may kill a man as well as a cannon bullet. A small leak may sink a ship. If a man lives in small sins, that shows that he has no love to God, no sincere care to please and honor God. Little sins are of a damning nature as well as great; if they do not deserve so much punishment as greater, yet they do deserve damnation. There is contempt of God in small sins, Mat. 5:19. He that shall break one of the lest of these commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of God. There is rebellion in little sins; Prov. 19:16. He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul, but he that despiseth his ways shall die. If a man says, this is a great command, and so lays wait on it, and another is a little commandment, and so do not regard it, but will not allow himself to break it, he is in a perishing condition.

2. Though their temptations be great. Some Persons delight in iniquity, they take pleasure in rudeness, and intemperate practices: But there be others that do not delight in sin; they can handsomely avoid it, they do not choose it: Except they be under some great necessity they will not do it: They are afraid to sin, they think it is dangerous, and have some care to avoid it. But sometimes they force themselves to sin: They are reduced to difficulties, and cannot tell how well to avoid it. It is a dangerous thing not to do it. If Naaman do not bow himself in the house of Rimmon, the king will be in a rage with him, take away his office, it may be take away his life, and so he complies; 2 Kings 5:18. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this. So Jeroboam forced himself to set up the Calves at Dan and Bethel. He thought if the people went up to Jerusalem to worship, they would return to Rehoboam, and kill him; therefore he must think of some expedient to deliver himself in this strait: 1 King 12:27.28. Whereupon the king took council, and made too calves of gold; and said to them, it is too much for you to go

up to Jerusalem, behold thy gods O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. He was driven by appearing necessity to take this wicked course. So the stony ground hearers were willing to retain the profession of the true religion, but the case was such that they thought they could not well do it; Mat 13:21. When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. They would have chose to have lived and died in the profession of the truth, but they cannot brook confiscation, and prisons, and death; and so they must be excused if they drop their profession. So Achan and Gehozi had singular opportunities to get an estate; if they live twenty years, they are not like to have such an advantage, and they force themselves to borrow a point, and break the law of God. They lay a necessity on estate, and liberty, and life, but not upon obedience. If a man be willing to serve God in ordinary cases, but excuse himself when there be great difficulties, he is not godly. It is a small matter to serve God, when men have no temptation; but Lot was holy in Sodom, Noah was righteous in the old world. Temptations try men, but they do not force men to sin; and grace will establish the heart in a day of temptation. They are blessed that do endure temptation, Jam. 1:12. But they are cursed that fall away in a day of temptation.

3. Though they be afterwards sorry for it. Some men fall into great transgression, but when they consider of it they are sorry for it. They do not justify themselves, neither do they excuse themselves, and say others do so as well as they, and if men be left of God who can help it; but they confess it, and bewail it before God, it is an affliction to them that they were carried away with temptation, they see they have acted foolishly, that they have despised the commandments of God, and they hope they shall never do so again, be drunk, again, or lie again. Sometimes men take occasion to talk with them, and they are ready to own their fault, they are ashamed, and they shed tears; but after a while the temptation returns, and they are as bad again: They are like the dead fish, that are carried down the stream; but they are sorry again; and so

they keep on, sinning and repenting. Just thus it was with Saul: Jonathan talks to him and he hearkens, 1 Sam. 19 6. Saul hearkened to Jonathan, and Saul sware, as the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain. After a while he is persecuting David again; but upon David 's saving his life, he weeps and makes confession, 1 Sam. 24:16. Saul lift up his voice and wept. But upon the Invitation of the Ziphites he pursues David again, and David spares his life a second time; and upon that Saul confesses and promises, 1 Sam. 26 21. Then said Saul, I have sinned, return my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, I have played the fool, and erred exceedingly. There is no trusting such men; if they live in ways of sin, they are ungodly. Godly sorrow will make men live holily; 2 Cor. 7:10. Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.

USE 2.

Of encouragement to those that have seen gracious actings in their own hearts. I suppose that there be several of you that have seen the actings of grace in your own hearts. You have seen the workings of faith, as Paul 2 Tim. 1:12. I know him whom I have believed. of love, as Peter. Joh, 21:17 Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee; of repentance, as Job. Job 42:6. I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. You may conclude from hence that you are godly. You may have scruples upon many account: You may be under difficulties because God hides his face at present from you: You may have temptation from singular afflictions, and because God denies to answer some prayers, in things that lie much upon your hearts: You may have difficulties from such workings of corruption as seems to be inconsistent with Grace: You may have temptation because you do not seem to grow; but if you have certainly seen the working of a gracious spirit, if an hundred times, if ten times, if one time, you may conclude that you are godly. That which was not in being could not be seen that which is not, is invisible. If there were no sun, or moon, or stars, none could be seen: So, if there were no faith, or love, they could not be seen. There may be grace where

it is not seen, but where it is seen, there it is; and you may conclude that you are godly. For,

1. This shows that there was at the time a principle of grace. The habits of grace are not immediately to be seen, but only by their workings. If there be a gracious act, there must be a gracious principle; if there be not an antecedent one, there must be at least a concomitant one; for while a man remains in his natural condition, he cannot act graciously; Rom. 8:7. The natural mind is enmity to God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. If a man loves God, he is disposed to love him; if he believes in Christ, he is disposed to believe in Christ. It is impossible to do those actions without a disposition to them; and that disposition is a principle or habit of grace. Every man that acts graciously is a new creature: Until the heart be changed, it will not carry graciously. Any act of grace is a sure token of regeneration: If a man believes in Christ, he is certainly born of God; Joh. 1:12, 13. To them that received him gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. If a man breaths, and sees, and hears, and walks, he is certainly a living man. Where there is an act of life, there is a principle of life; 1 Joh. 37. He that doth righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Every effect must have a proper cause. If the heart were utterly opposite to believing, loving or repenting, he would not believe, love or repeat. The heart of a man is always inclined to what he chooses. The mind may understand a thing that he is not inclined to understand; but the Will never chooses without an inclination so to do. If there be a change in the behavior of the heart, there is a change in the disposition of the heart.

2. If a principle of grace were once there, it is always there. It was otherwise under the covenant of works; Adam 's grace was perfect but mutable; for he did not fulfil the condition of the covenant; if he had once done that, his grace would have been immutable. But under

the new covenant, if a man be once godly, he always will be godly; for everyone who is godly, has fulfilled the condition of the covenant. Grace may decay, but it never will be lost: It may wither, but never die. Common grace may be lost, but saving grace cannot be lost: If grace be once begun it will continue; Phil. 6. I am confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it to the day of Christ. The power of God is engaged for the preservation of grace. Once godly and always godly; 1 Pet. 1:5. Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. Sometimes they are afraid they shall fall away, but whether they have more strength or less strength, they shall never fall away; God's covenant is their security. Such men may have great temptations; Heretics may endeavor to seduce them, vicious men may seek to debauch them, worldly men may entice them, persecutors may seek to fright them out of their religion; but nothing can be too hard for them: Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it, Cant. 8:7. They may have temptation to pride, to presumption, to discouragement; but if they be led into temptation, they will be delivered from evil. A principle of grace is like a living fountain; Joh. 4:14. Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. False hearted men may fall away, but those that are sincere will be more than Conquerors. If Abraham be once godly, he will continue so, though he lives an hundred and seventy years. If grace be begun here, it will be perfected in heaven.

USE 3.

Of direction to godly men, how you may know your sincerity; viz. by renewing the visible actings of grace. Many signs are given of holiness, that will not bear examination; and there is danger that many are deceived thereby. Some godly, and some ungodly men that find them in themselves may be comforted thereby, but they beget no assurance: And some men that find them in themselves, remain at a loss whether they be godly or no. The way to know your godliness, is to renew the visible

exercises of grace. When a man sees that he loves God, and believes in Jesus Christ, he will not be unsatisfied about his godliness. If he has been in the dark, and in great temptations just before, yet this will beget assurance.

Here you may observe,

1. If you do not know that you live in sin, that can be no evidence of your godliness: As you cannot condemn yourselves, so you cannot justify yourselves. Some persons examine themselves whether they live in any known sin; and upon the strictest enquiry they do not find that they do. They do not find that they live in the neglect of any duty, or in the commission of any sin. Their hearts do not reproach them: They duly attend prayer, they are careful to sanctify the Sabbath, they live soberly, chastely, justly, they are true to their word, and faithful in their places, they do not know upon the most narrow search that they live in any way of sin, yet they cannot justify themselves from hence; 1 Cor. 4:4. I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified: For men that examines themselves may be ignorant that they live in a way of sin, yet they may live in a way of sin; men's understandings are corrupted, and they may live in pride, worldliness and unbelief, and not know it: They may think those corruptions do not reign when indeed they do reign. Many men that do not know that they live in sin, are fain to suspend their judgment about themselves; they hope from hence that they are holy, but do not know it. Though men do not know that they live in sin, yet God may know that they do: Prov. 30:12. There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, yet are not cleansed from their filthiness.

2. If there be great probability that you live in a way of faith, and love, and repentance, that do not make it evident. There is some probability of some men's faith, because gospel promises have been a comfort to them; and of their love, because they are zealous and do delight in ordinances, and in praising God; of their repentance, for their sins are a great burden to them, and they are careful to avoid sin: but

probabilities prove nothing; that may be probable, that may be false; there may be some probability of a thing, yet the contrary may be certain. Probabilities leave men under uncertainties. If they raise hopes, yet they leave room for fears. There may be probabilities one way, and as great probabilities the other way. Men will not content themselves with a probable title to their land. God will not take men to heaven because there is a probability of their goodness. Twenty Probabilities make the thing more probable, but they do not make it certain. Probabilities are no Demonstration. The hopes that are built on them may be disappointed, therefore we are directed to make our Calling and Election sure. 2 Pet. 1:10.

3. All the visible exercises of grace are evidential. The word of God tells that all that believe in Jesus Christ are Children of God, Joh, 1:12. To them that received him, gave he power to become the Sons of God. It tells that all that love God are heirs of heaven. Jam. 1:12. God has promised a Crown of life, to them that love him. So it tells us that all that have godly Sorrow shall be saved. 2 Cor. 7:10. Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto Salvation. And that all that love the brethren shall have eternal life, 1 Joh. 3:24. We know that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren. Hence if any of these workings be clearly seen, the man has a sure evidence of his good estate: He has ground to cast the case for himself: It is no presumption for him to conclude his Justification: He has a divine warrant to give sentence for himself: At such a time when he pronounces himself a saint, he goes according to law and evidence: His confidence is assurance: For those exercises of grace that he is conscious to are peculiar to godly men, and do assuredly distinguish them from all other men.

4. The more these visible exercises of grace are renewed, the more certain you will be: the more frequently these actings are renewed, the more abiding and confirmed your assurance will be. A man that has been assured of such visible exercises of grace may quickly after be in doubt whether he was not mistaken; but when such actings are renewed

again and again, he grows more settled and established about his good estate. If a man see a thing once, that makes him sure; but if afterwards he fear he was deceived, when he comes to see it again, he is more sure he is not mistaken. If a man read such passages in a Book, he is sure it is so; some months after some may bear him down, that he was mistaken, so as to make him question it himself; but when he looks and reads it again, he is abundantly confirmed. The more men's grace is multiplied, the more their peace is multiplied. 2 Pet. 1:2, Grace and Peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. The third time the question was put to Peter whether he loved Christ, he answers with greater assurance; the very proposing of the question stirred up the working of a spirit of love, and he speaks with very great confidence, Job. 21:15, 16, 17. The first and second time he says, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee: But the third time he speaks with greatest assurance, Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. It went greatly to his heart that his love should be so often questioned, and so he was more abundantly satisfied in the truth of his love.

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*An exposition of that parabolical speech of our Savior (Matt 12:43-45).
Preached August 10, 1690.*

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. ⁴⁴Then he says, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished. ⁴⁵Then goes he and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

This place of Holy Scripture is generally acknowledged to be hard to be understood; most expositors and annotators (I have met with) say but little to it.

Some call it a parable, and others a parabolical speech or a similitude.

By the scope and coherence of the place it is evident our Savior sets forth by it the direful state and condition of the scribes and pharisees, and other people of the Jews, who boasted of their external holiness, or seeming sanctity, they being not profane or notorious sinners; or as they themselves foolishly said, *not extortioners, unjust, or adulterers, like as the publicans were* (Luke 18:11). Yet the Lord Jesus shows by this parable how they were deceived: for though they were delivered from that profane and debauched unclean spirit yet was their state worse than the state of gross and wicked sinners, which is signified by the entering into them seven other unclean spirits worse or more wicked than the first that were gone out of them.

That the words may be applied to them and other people of that generation, is evident from the sequel of verse 45. *Even so shall it be with the people of this fromard generation* (Matt 12:45). Yet no doubt our blessed Savior in this place may have reference to a man in the like state; or as Beza, *Caeterum quum Spiritus impurus exierit à quopiam, &c.* as well as unto that people who were carried away with cursed hypocrisy.

WHEN THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT, &C.

By the unclean spirit, τὸ ἀκάθαρτον πνεῦμα, is certainly meant the Devil, called, an unclean spirit (Mk 5:8).

1. Because he has lost his own original purity, or clean and holy nature, he being at first created an angel of light, having like holiness before he fell, which the blessed and elect angels of heaven have.

2. Because he is so universally filthy and abominable vile in himself, and so remains and will abide forever, there being no possibility for him to become better, he being left and forsaken of God, without any means afforded of being purged from his unclean and filthy nature.

3. Because he is not only unclean in himself, but also defiles the hearts and spirits of all such persons who receive and entertain him; nay, all the pollution of our nature, yea, the whole nature of human race, was originally from that compliance and yielding to him by our first parents; it is this unclean spirit that hath poisoned and notoriously defiled the whole man both body and soul in all its powers and faculties, and not the whole man only, but the whole world also. And as this is naturally the filthy and miserable condition of all creatures, so those who yield to his temptations come to have farther pollution and defilement cleave to their hearts and lives. Sin is an unclean thing, and it makes all such loathsome and abominable in the sight of God, who are overcome by it. Though all naturally are vile and filthy, yet there are degrees of uncleanness, some are worse than others, more wicked, and so more like to the Devil, in whom his very image or likeness clearly may be seen.

4. He may also be called an unclean spirit, because he continually entices and strives to draw men to filthiness, and to all manner of uncleanness, being an utter enemy to all purity and true holiness, envying all those who love it, and strive to promote it.

Is gone out of man. Not that the man was actually possessed with the Devil (as some may think) though it is very like the Lord Jesus may borrow this parabolical speech from a person actually possessed; but he shows hereby that all wicked men are in a mystical and spiritual sense possessed with the Devil; all graceless sinners have an unclean spirit in them. Where sin predominates and rules in the heart, there the Devil has possession; that heart is Satan's throne where he reigns and sways the scepter. Satan was said to enter into Judas (Lk 22:3) and to fill the heart of Ananias (Ac 5:3). Both these had this unclean spirit in them; the one was plagued or possessed with a treacherous devil, and the other with a lying devil. Hence it is also said, that Satan, who is the prince of the power of the air, *both works and rules in the children of disobedience* (Eph 2:2-3).

Gone out. Either by the power and force of the grace of God in its common operations he was thrown out; or else, through policy, he voluntarily leaves his house for a time, with an intention to return again with a stronger force. Some adhere to the first sense, and others to the last.

Gone out, i.e. as a carnal, profane, or black devil, for so he may be said to be in all debauched persons: and in this respect he may be said to be gone out, or thrown out of the Pharisees, and other false and counterfeit professors; he may not be able to keep them any longer under the power of open and gross profaneness. And from hence the Pharisee proudly breaks forth, *God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican* (Lk 18:11). Why may not Satan be expelled or forced out of his house in some degree, by the common influences of the spirit? All generally grant that legal convictions, and the operation of common grace through the workings

of natural conscience, have some considerable power in them to reform the life of a wicked person. Nor can I think Satan would yield to any soul voluntarily so far as to let him become so much as civilized if he could help it; therefore I rather think he was forced to give place, as not being able to hold his own (in some respect) as formerly, although whilst the creature abides in his natural state, not having a changed heart, Satan hath possession of that soul still in a great measure; and therefore he leaves, no doubt, a strong guard behind him, when he is said to go out, though they may be said to hide themselves, or retire into some lurking-places and corners of the house, or rather of the heart. Satan cannot doubtless keep possession always, so far as to hold men under the power of gross and scandalous sins, or cause them to continue openly profane; such power and virtue is there in the common operation of the spirit, or in legal convictions and workings of natural conscience, together with the help of the external ministration of God's Word, and by the means of afflictions, and those severe providences and dispensations, under which wicked men may be exercised, that it may tend to make them become other men: though it cannot change their hearts, yet it may make a great change in their lives, by which means they may look like saints, and talk like saints and sanctified persons, and be taken for such too by the truly godly; nay, and that which is worse, may conclude within themselves they are converted, since their former enemy, that debauched gross and unclean spirit is gone out of them. I am so far of the mind of James Arminius, that man by the means of that common help and power God affords to all in general, may leave the gross acts of wickedness, let Satan do what he can, which has been often evinced by that terror severe human laws have had on the consciences of wicked and ungodly persons. I am persuaded were there a law that he that swore an oath, or was drunk, or committed adultery, should have his right hand cut off, or be made a slave all the days of his life, we should see men would get power over those temptations of Satan, and neither be drunk nor commit adultery.

HE WALKETH THROUGH DRY PLACES.

1. Satan is said in that of Job, To go to and fro in the earth, and to walk up and down in it (Job 1:7). Satan here speaks, saith Mr. Caryl like a prince; therefore saith he; Some conceive this was the prince of devils that is mentioned in this text, or Beelzebub the chief of devils. He walks about to view his provinces and territories, from one place to another, but he does not walk to and fro as an idle peripatetic, but to inquire, to observe, and consider, as a spy, to search all things and persons as he passes along. Therefore;

2. This notes that Satan is a diligent enemy. If he has lost a little ground or is worsted in one soul, he will try what power and success he can find in another.

3. It shows that he is an unquiet and restless spirit, being cast out of Heaven, he can rest nowhere; and if he be forced out of some men at one time, he will tempt others; nay, if the servant hath a little worsted him, he, to revenge himself, will fall perhaps in the next place upon the Son; if he lose some place in his own house, he will see if he cannot get into the Temple of the Holy Ghost; or, if he is forced to leave wet and filthy places in which he delights, he will walk through dry places, and see what he can meet with there.

4. Satan's great work which he employs himself in and about is no doubt to get into the heart of men to dwell, nay rule there, and so subject them to himself, and defile and pollute them one way or other.

Dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. i.e. where there is no water or moisture, or not enough to refresh him; he has a cruel thirst upon him, and unless he can meet with that he seeks, which is to make a prey of the souls of men, he is in a restless state, like a thirsty person who walking through dry places can find no water. There are some sorts of men that afford Satan no content nor satisfaction. He often seeks for that which he finds not. He is not pleased to be as a traveler, to pass through a place and stay (as it were but for a night) but

would fain find rest, i.e. have a place or heart to dwell in, and take sole possession of. I find one of the ancients, who writing on this dark expression, speaks thus: *So long as he dwells not in me, he is said to seek rest, he is grieved and vexed, &c.*

1. Dry places are commonly clean places or places where there is no dirt or mire; and Satan, that unclean spirit, is like a swine, i.e. he delights in filthy and miry places, which may signify his assaulting the saints, or seeking to get into sanctified hearts, or hearts renewed by the special grace of God, and thoroughly purged by the blood of Christ, in whom that filthy sink of sin and pollution is not only dried up, but the heart is changed and made new, and so no more a house or habitation for this unclean spirit, but is become the Temple of the Holy Ghost, or a habitation for God through the Spirit. And these men's hearts are unto Satan, like dry places to a thirsty and restless person: for as the Holy Spirit cannot rest, nor take up his abode in filthy and polluted hearts; so the Devil, that wicked spirit, can find no rest nor place of abode in renewed and sanctified hearts. And as it is no suitable house or habitation for him; so likewise, believers have one dwelling in them, strong enough to keep Satan out: *for stronger* (says the apostle) *is he that is in us than he which is in the world.* And again, he says, *you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you; and you have overcome the wicked one. He that is begotten of God, keeps himself, and the wicked one touches him not:* shall not so touch him as to enter into his heart and take up his dwelling or get possession of him anymore; and therefore these men's hearts, i.e. the hearts of true sanctified Christians, I conclude are meant here by our Savior, which are to Satan as dry places, where there is no dwelling or abiding for him.

2. As dry places are clean places; so likewise they are commonly barren places, places where little or nothing will grow. Satan is for such hearts that will receive his evil seed, i.e. suited and fit to close in with his cursed temptations, which are like to moist or miry places; such as all corrupt and unregenerate hearts are, in others that bitter and evil seed

which this unclean spirit sows, will not take root: or if it should so fall out, that through the carelessness and negligence of believers, and strength of temptations, Satan should drop some of his cursed seed in them, and it should meet with a little of the old corrupt nature (there being in the best of men an unregenerate part) yet it would soon wither and come to nothing; for their hearts are, (as I said before) no proper soil for the seed of the wicked one, therefore if he gets in a little, he is soon turned out again. So that in a Word, according to the import of this saying of Christ, (as I conceive) these men's hearts are to the Devil, like dry places, where he can find no rest.

3. Dry places are for the most part places least inhabited for want of water. The hearts of Saints are like uninhabitable places to Satan; in them he cannot find those proper accommodations which he needs and must have where he dwells. But since he can find no dwelling here, no diabolical comfort nor refreshment, i.e. no abode in godly hearts; he says, *I will return into my house from whence I came out* (vs. 44).

I will return: Not that he was quite routed and vanquished before, it is called still his house, he lays claim and pleads propriety in him and interest still. Therefore, this man's heart had not yet become the temple of the Holy Spirit, he was gone out, or forced out before, as a *swearing, cheating, whoring, or drunken devil*, &c. and this might enrage him, and move him to attempt some greater enterprise, which we have already spoken to. Satan does not love to loose or let go any strong hold he has on carnal and profane persons; but seeing he had received some small defeat, he sets upon the truly godly Christian; like as when he was cast out of heaven unto the earth, he presently persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child (Rev 12:13). When he saw he could not uphold his kingdom by paganism, nor farther execute his malice by pagan emperors, but was routed and overcome as to that power he had, (as our late annotators observe) to let us know that he retains his malice, though he has lost his former strength, he goes on in pursuing the Church of God. Even so, I say, he having been forced to give way before

(as was hinted) he walks about to seek revenge upon the saints; but they being to him like dry places to a thirsty man, or as an inn to a traveler, viz. no resting place, he resolves to return to his own house, that is, the hearts of hypocritical professors, such as the Pharisees were. And this returning of his into his old house, imports (as I conceive) his coming again in another form or shape, and with a resolution to get better and more firmer and surer possession than he had before.

Now he *appears as an angel of light*. Nor can we suppose he had no party left in the said house when he went out. Parables must not be strained too far. We ought not to screw or make too severe a scrutiny upon every phrase. Therefore, we cannot think when he is said to return to his former house or attempt afresh the false and counterfeit Christian that he hath quite given over his designs in assaulting sanctified persons. He cannot endure to be an underling; he is for kinging it in the souls of men. He would fain reign and sway the scepter there; and where he cannot rule and domineer, he has no rest, nor can be satisfied. And therefore he may be said to return as an exiled prince. Lest he should be discovered, he puts on a new garb and is now contented his captive should become religious, so that the deluded sinner might not discern him, but take him for his lawful sovereign; as if he should say, I will yield to you now; if you will be a professor and become religious, you shall, but I will dwell with you notwithstanding; here is room enough for me as a white Devil, though not as a black one

AND WHEN HE IS COME, HE FINDS IT EMPTY, SWEEPED AND GARNISHED.

Empty; That is, the Spirit of God was not there, true grace was not there, Christ dwelleth not there. That house may well be said to be empty, where God and Jesus Christ are not. Nor is it a hard and difficult thing for the unclean spirit to enter into such a soul, since there was no enemy strong enough to keep him out. But contrariwise, the place seems to be rather prepared and made fit for him, to take up his abode in this

new religious and spiritual appearance. Nay here is not only room for himself, but the house is so empty that many other unclean spirits more wicked than himself, may have their abode and dwelling there also. Satan says, *I will return to my house*, &c. He speaks as if he was sure enough that this sinner was his own, and therefore should without any difficulty enter in, in that new disguise in which he now appears; and accordingly, it is said, he finds it empty and also swept. Doubtless some dirt and filth was yet in some hole or corner. For like as a lazy and slothful housewife uses to sweep a little of the loose dust and filth in the open and middle of the room, and lets many secret corners lie foul as before, and may be leaves the dirt behind the door out of the public view of people. So, the false and counterfeit Christian reforms his life in the sight of men; or, like the Pharisees, makes clean the outside of the cup and platter; but their hearts are still polluted and as vile as ever.

Swept; but not with a proper and fit broom; it is said to be swept, but alas 'twas only with the besom of legal reformation; and how far that will cleanse the unclean and wicked person, is known to all understanding men. It only takes away the filth of gross and scandalous sins; therefore, said by St. Peter, *To escape the corruption that is in the world* (2 Pe 2); that is, the profane world, i.e. vile and notorious sins and pollutions.

And garnished, or painted; which may signify that seeming sanctity, moral virtue, and the common graces of the Spirit. Our Savior elsewhere compares pharisaical holiness to painting or garnishing of a sepulcher; *Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness: You build (says he) the tombs of the prophets and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous* (Matt 23:27, 29). And thus pharisaical and hypocritical professors may be said to be garnished, i.e. they seem glorious to men, who only judge by the outward appearance, and know not the heart. There may be a great change of life, a beautiful outside, and yet the evil and vicious habits and pollutions of the heart may be

still the same and not changed. And remarkable is this phrase of our Savior, *garnished*, which we know is commonly a curious piece of art. Men by their ingenuity strive to imitate nature; they will draw the face of a man, &c. with curious painting, very exact, so that it much resembles the person's natural face, yet it is not the same, it is but a piece of paint, an artificial invention. Even so in like manner by the improvement of a man's natural parts, common grace, light and knowledge, he may appear in the view and sight of men, as a true child of God, and may talk and discourse like a saint, read and hear God's Word, nay, and pray also with much seeming devotion and piety, and may likewise bridle many unruly lusts, and gross enormities of life, and give alms to the poor, insomuch that he may very exactly resemble a true and sincere Christian, and be taken by all godly people to be indeed such an one. But notwithstanding all, it is but an artificial piece, it is but like a curious paint, or vain-glorious garnish. It is not the image of God, it is not the new creature; though it looks like it, much resembles it, yet it is not the same: for the man is a mere hypocrite, a counterfeit Christian, the work upon him being only the product of natural improvements, and not the effects of the saving operations of the Holy Spirit. Nay, and Satan, though an unclean spirit, likes to dwell in such a house, I mean such a heart, thus swept and garnished, as well as in the heart of a vile and debauched person. And evident it is, that this sweeping or external cleansing with the broom of outward reformation, or the garnish of moral righteousness, common gifts and graces of the Spirit, prayer, hearing the Word, partaking of the sacraments, and doing many good works, cannot secure the soul against Satan's attempts of his taking up habitation in such persons hearts.

After I had preached these two sermons, a godly friend who heard them, told me he had met with a treatise of Mr. Richard Allen's, author of *Vindiciae Pietatis*, who gives the same sense on this mysterious place of Scripture. He helped me to the book which I was ignorant of,

and Mr. Allen being a very worthy person, I shall give you some brief hints of what he said.

When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, &c. That sinners are vile and abominable, says he, it is from that wicked spirit, Satan, that dwells in them. Every sinner is a person possessed of a devil; when a little reformed, they seem for a time to be dispossessed, &c. *He walks through dry places.* What these dry places may be, is not easy to determine. Some by these *loca arida*, understand *loca vacua*, void empty places, the deserts and wastes of the earth, where he finds nobody to attempt or molest.

But could Satan, says he, think to find rest there where was no house for him to lay his head in? Would the tempter waste his time in seeking whom to devour in those waste places, where he knew well enough there were none to be found? He knows too well where sinners dwell, to go to seek them where they are not; more like to find the Devil at a market, than in a wilderness. This therefore seems not to be the sense—.

Why may not, says he, these dry places be the saints on earth, the fountain of whose blood is dried up? in whom the sun has dried up their dirt and mire, in which this swine loves to wallow, &c. [*He seeks rest*] this notes two things.

1. When the Devil is gone out of any person, he is never at rest till he is gotten in again, either thither whence he went out, or into some other habitation, where he may do more mischief. Like children, like father, it is said of them, so it is much more true of him, he rests not but in doing mischief.

2. The Devil loves to dwell where he may be at rest; that is, not from work (his rest is his work) but from resistance or opposition, i.e. in carnal and unclean hearts, &c.

Seeking Rest and finding none. He goes through these dry places, from saint to saint, from heart to heart, in hope to find entertainment, but is still disappointed. *Here's little rest for me to be had, these dry places I see are no places for me, here's watching and wrestling and warring against me; so much praying, complaining against me, that there's no stay for me here. I will go back to my old habitation.* And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished, a little cleaner and handsomer than when he left it. The Devil can allow sinners a little reformation; but though it be a little cleansed and garnished, yet it lies empty still, there's no tenant hath taken it up, though the Devil went out, Christ was not let in, but there it lies void for the next that comes.

Then he goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Beware of a returning devil; the Devil at his return often makes sevenfold worse work than before he he did. [*Allen's Godly Fear*, p. 213-216.]

He modestly offers this as his thoughts on the place, and I find others confirming by some brief hints the same things. I thought it not amiss to recite this passage of his, as a farther confirmation of the exposition I have briefly given you of this dark place of scripture, not doubting but it is the sense and meaning of our Savior.

DOCTRINE

But now to draw towards a close, take two or three points of doctrine. Observe,

1. *Satan is an unclean spirit.* As God is the author and original of all true holiness, so is Satan of all sin and wickedness. As God's nature is pure, so the Devil in his nature is impure. All purity proceeds from God, and all sin proceeds from Satan. God strives to promote the one, and the Devil labors to promote the other. As God's kingdom is set up

in the world, and maintained by holiness and spiritual sanctity; so the Devil's kingdom is set up and upheld by sin and filthiness. As God by his Spirit dwells in sanctified hearts, so the Devil dwells in polluted and sinful hearts. And as Christ makes that man or woman holy and clean where he makes his abode; so Satan makes those souls where he takes up his dwelling, unclean and abominably wicked. Moreover, as he who is truly sanctified and made holy, is said to be of God; so they that are wicked and ungodly, are said to be of the Devil. All those who are spiritual and truly gracious are like to God or bear some resemblance of him; and all unclean and wicked persons are like to the Devil. These things considered; no marvel Satan is called an unclean spirit.

2. All profane notorious and ungodly sinners are in a woeful state, the unclean spirit is in them, their hearts are Satan's habitation.

The heart of man was not originally Satan's house, nor had he any just right or propriety in it. It is his by usurpation and conquest, as men yield up themselves to him, and entertain his temptations. Man, both body and soul, is the Lord's; he is his creature. Nor ought he to suffer any to dwell in him, much less to rule and sway the scepter over him, but the Holy God. But as all men as they come into the world, have wretched and cursed natures, through original depravity; so ungodly men actually have cast off God, their lawful and only sovereign, and have embraced the wicked one, they have received, and do subject themselves to Satan that unclean and filthy spirit. He is king and lord over them. The Devil got possession by craft, he enticed our first parents to open the door to him, they gave him the first entertainment, 'twas then he took possession, and thereby at once corrupted all that are in the house; I mean, all the faculties of the soul, to such a degree, that they all naturally side with Satan, and are for him, and are filled with enmity against God, and oppose and resist his spirit, and rebel against the light. Wicked men had rather be under the tyrannical government of the Devil, than to be ruled and governed by Jesus Christ. And from hence it is no wonder they rather choose to have wicked earthly rulers

and tyrannical kings to be over them, than to be subject to a prince who is an enemy to wickedness, tyranny and oppression. This shows the blindness and miserable state and condition of all wicked and ungodly men. We may further note also,

3. That Satan may lose some ground in sinners hearts, he may seem to be gone out of them, and they may become sober and civilized, and yet may be in the gall of bitterness, and their hearts notwithstanding may be still Satan's habitation.

Let these men change their lives and become other men in the view of the world, alter their course of life, yet they are miserable. Satan has spiritual power and dominion over them; he has a strong party in their hearts, when he seems to be gone out, and knows they are his still, and owns them as his dwelling place. When he cannot meet with entertainment in other places, when saints afford him no encouragement, but displeasure and defy him, and their hearts are as dry places, he can nevertheless return at pleasure to his old habitation, and there he enters and dwells. Let them change their religion, yet they are Satan's slaves still, he matters not if they leave popery and cleave to prelacy, and so become Protestants in general; nay, embrace a more refined sort of people, and take upon them a more strict profession of religion, yet still they belong to him, if they are not truly regenerated and renewed in their souls. Let them be Presbyterians, Independents, or Baptists, it signifies nothing, they are still the same, and under Satan's power and dominion. O how miserably are some men deceived, thinking if they are reformed and become zealous for external ordinances, and have taken up this or that form of religion, and are taken for saints by men, that all is well, and they shall be saved! How did the Pharisees glory in their seeming zeal and piety, and flatter themselves, and yet woefully blinded, and in a damnable state and condition? Note also, that,

4. Morality, external gifts, and common grace are but like a vain paint, a mere empty and artificial garnish.

They make a fair show in the flesh, they pride it in themselves, and men praise and admire them, but what doth all this signify? They are still under a diabolical power and influence, and twofold more the children of the Devil than they were before. Nay, as I shall hereafter show, rather seven times worse than when they were openly wicked and profane.

APPLICATION

1. A Terror to sinners. Tremble you that live wicked lives. Remember the unclean spirit dwells in you and has power over you. Your hearts are his habitation, he rules in you, and takes you captive at his will. If in this state you die, you are undone forever.

2. See to it, you that are professors, lest you are also deceived. What is a reformed life without a changed heart? Casting off gross acts of sin will not avail you anything, without the breaking of evil habits, and being renewed in the spirit of your mind. Though you seem to be godly to men, yet God knows your hearts, and how they stand affected to him and to true real godliness. A form of religion will never save you; and though you may have got some ground against Satan, and he seems to have left you, or is gone out, yet take heed he does not return again with greater strength, and get you into stronger bonds now, than he had before. But because this will be more fully opened in the next place, I shall at present say no more to it now.

3. This also affords much comfort to God's people. Satan sets upon you, and fain he would subject your souls to himself, and take possession of your hearts, but he cannot prevail, you have got one in you who is stronger than Satan, who will preserve you to his heavenly kingdom. But no more at this time: I shall leave what I have said to the blessing of God.

The unclean Spirit that goes out,
Of men that vicious are,

Doth oftentimes seek and search about
For rest both here and there:
And fain would he make his abode,
In places dry and clean;
And ruin all the saints of God,
Which hath been often seen.

But thou, O Lord, dost them preserve,
And in them thou dost dwell,
So that from thee they cannot swerve,
To be over-come by Hell.
Which Satan seeing, strait-way goes,
To his own dwelling place,
And with him brings more dismal woes,
On such who want thy grace.

Who of it being empty quite,
Tho swept and garnished,
He enters in, and with strong might
They captive all are led,
And overcome by him again,
Through cursed hypocrisy,
And in them he does rule and reign,
Which few are brought to see.

What cause have such thy praise to sing,
Who are renewed by thee?
Whose heart thy habitation is,
They always happy be.

THOMAS BROOKS:
HYPOCRITES DETECTED

I will send him against an hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire in the street. ISA. 10:6.

I WILL not spend that short time that is left me about that which will turn least to your souls' account, therefore I will very briefly open the words of my text: 'I will send thee against an hypocritical nation.' The word that is rendered 'hypocritical' signifies to pollute, or defile. Of all sins, the sin of hypocrisy is the most defiling sin. It defiles men's prayers and praises; it defiles all duties and ordinances. 'I will give him in charge, to take the spoil and to take the prey.' The word that is rendered 'charge' signifies to give command with authority and power, to bind, and to tread them down 'like the mire of the streets,' or rather, as the Hebrew has it, 'to lay there a-treading.'

The main thing the words hold forth is this,—*That of all sorts of sinners God will be most severe in his judgments against hypocrites.* Or thus: *Hypocrites are the proper objects of God's wrath, and such as he will most severely punish.*

I shall, in the handling of this point, briefly point out to you those scriptures that speak out this truth, and then open it to you. The scriptures that speak out this truth are these, Job 15:34; Isa. 33:14, and 9:17; Mat. 23, and 24:51.

For the opening of the point, I shall endeavour these two things: First, to give you the reasons of God's severity against hypocrites; and secondly, discover to you who these hypocrites be that are the objects of God's wrath; and thirdly, give you the uses of the point, which is the main thing I intend.

REASONS OF GOD'S SEVERITY AGAINST HYPOCRITES

1. Now, first, for the reasons of the point, I shall give you only these six:—

Reason 1. First, Because of all sorts of sinners, hypocrites *are most dangerous to human society*. There are no sorts of sinners upon earth so dangerous to human society as hypocrites are: Job 34:30, 'That the hypocrites reign not, lest the people be ensnared,'—*mimloch*, from *malach*, [מלך] 'that the hypocrite king it not.' There are no sorts of men on earth that delight to king it as hypocrites do. 'That the hypocrite king it not, lest the people be ensnared.' There are no men in the world so skilful and careful to lay snares and traps to ensnare the silly birds, as hypocrites are to ensnare the children of men: Prov. 11:9, 'An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour.' The breath of the hypocrite is poisonous; he breathes out nothing but poison. The word that is rendered 'destroy' signifies utterly to destroy. It is used for corruption both in religion and manners. Hypocrites destroy persons by their vices and corruptions: Mat. 23:13, 'But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.' The great mischief that a hypocrite may do, will sufficiently appear by this history.

Constantia, the widow of Licinius, sister of the emperor Constantine the Great, entertained in [her] house a certain presbyter, who professed the orthodox religion for fear of Constantine, but was in secret an Arian. Several bishops of the Arian sect made use of this man to promote their cause by his sly dissimulation. At length, Constantia, lying sick upon her death-bed, her brother, the emperor, came to visit her. She soon prevailed with him to entertain the presbyter into his court. He soon grew into great credit and favour with Constantine, so that when he died he intrusted him with his last will, whereby he had an opportunity to make himself gracious with Constantius, the emperor's son and successor, which opportunity he did improve. First, he corrupts

one Eusebius, a eunuch, the new emperor's chief chamberlain, and by this means other courtiers, and then the empress, and at length the emperor himself, and by degrees brought him to be [a] defender of Arianism, and a great persecutor of the truth which his father had professed, and which himself had been brought up in.

Reason 2. The second reason is this: Because, of all sorts of sinners, there is none *so hardened against the Lord Jesus Christ as hypocrites are*. None stout it against Jesus Christ as hypocrites do. If that Christ call upon the profane man, he hearkens; if he entreats, he yields; if he knock, he opens. But as for the hypocrite, Christ may call and cry, entreat and beseech, and yet the hypocrite will not hear, nor yield, nor open to him: Mat. 21:31, 32, 'Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you; for John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and yet ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him.' Christ comes to the harlot's door, and to the profane man's door, and knocks, and they open to him, and kiss him, and embrace him, and receive him; but as for the hypocrite, though Christ does knock, and call, and cry out to him, yet he will not hear; nay, though he take his soul and hang it over the scorching flames of hell, and say to him, Ah hypocrite! 'is it good to dwell in everlasting burnings?' yet he will not yield; and though he take him and shew him the glory of heaven, and the happiness of sincere souls, yet he will not yield nor open to Christ, though he miss of heaven, and be cast into the hottest and the lowest place in hell.

Reason 3. Because hypocrites *yield the greatest assistance to Christ's grand enemy, to wit, Satan*. One hardened and seared hypocrite is more advantage to carry out Satan's design, than a thousand loose profane persons. A hypocrite is Satan's firstborn; he is Satan's darling; he leans upon the devil's breast, as John did upon Christ's. There are none so active for Satan, nor none have those advantages to carry on his work, as the hypocrite hath, Mat. 23:15. They 'compass sea and land to make a proselyte.' They are very active to enlarge the dominion of Satan, and therefore no wonder God is so severe in his judgments against them.

Reason 4. A fourth reason is, Because hypocrites *are false to the marriage-bed*; and therefore God is so severe against them. They pretend love to Christ, and yet they give up their hearts to other lovers besides Christ, Ezek. 33:31; Isa. 29:13. You know in law nothing gives a man that advantage to put away his wife as falseness to the marriage-bed; and Christ will take that advantage to cast off hypocrites for ever.

Reason 5. Because they are *the very worst of sinners*. They are often in Scripture compared to the very worst of things, to vipers, serpents, wolves, &c., which speaks them out to be the worst of men. They are secret enemies, which are of all enemies the worst; as Leo the emperor said, *Occulti inimici pessimi*, A close enemy is far worse than an open; a close enemy kisses and kills, but an open enemy shoots off his warning-piece before he shoots off his murdering-piece. Again, hypocrites are doomed to the worst of judgments, as that they shall not come before God: Job 13:16, 'An hypocrite shall not come before God;' he shall not be taken up into spiritual enjoyment of God on earth, nor into glorious communion with God in heaven. Hypocrites, they are doomed by Christ to the greatest torments in hell: Mat. 23:14, 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shall receive the greater damnation.' The darkest and the lowest place in hell is theirs. Hypocrites are hell's freeholders; all other sinners are but inmates to hypocrites. Of all sinners, hypocrites sin against the greatest light, and against the greatest knowledge, against the greatest discovery of God, which speaks them out to be the worst of sinners; yea, though they do know sins against knowledge to be very dangerous, though they know them to be wounding and wasting sins—*peccata vulnerantia et devastantia*—yet hypocrites will hold on in their sin. The hypocrite will rather go to hell with his lusts, than to heaven without his lusts. Though he be convinced that he and his beloved sins must part, or Christ and his soul will never meet, yet the hypocrite will say, Farewell Christ, and welcome sin! A hypocrite will hold on in religious duties, and yet hold on in a resolved way of wickedness, Jer. 7:9; Ezek. 33:30–32. A hypocrite will sin and pray, and he will hear and swear, &c.; like Louis the Eleventh, king of

France, he would swear, and then kiss the cross, and swear again, and then kiss the cross. And is there any people on earth who are more infamous for this than the Scots, against whose hypocrisy God has given so great a testimony? A hypocrite hath two hands, the one to embrace, and the other to stab with, as Joab; he hath two tongues, with Judas, the one to salute Christ, and another to betray Christ; he hath two faces, with Janus, one looks backward, and the other forward. A hypocrite hath two hearts, with the Israelites, he can cry, 'Hail king Solomon, hail king Adonijah;' like Apuleius' parrot, 'Hail Augustus the emperor, hail Antony,' *Ave Auguste imperator, ave Antoni*; all which speaks them out to be the worst of sinners.

Reason 6. The sixth and last reason is this, Because hypocrites *fight against Christ with his own weapons*. They fight against God with his own gifts that he hath bestowed upon them, as David fought against Goliath with his own sword; or as Jehu fought against Jehoram with his own men. Thus did the scribes and Pharisees, Spira and Judas, fight against Christ to their own eternal overthrow. The hypocrite will fight against God with that knowledge, wisdom, light, and understanding which God hath given him, though he dies eternally for it. Julian the apostate fought against Christ with his own weapons; and through the strength of his parts he prevailed more by persuading than by enforcing, and by enticements than by torments, to the ruin of Christians. Hypocrites fight against God with his own weapons, and dare heaven, and therefore God will cast them to hell.

WHO THOSE HYPOCRITES BE

The second thing that I am to do, is to discover to you *what hypocrites are that God is so severe in his judgment against*. The Greek word ὑποκριτης, signifies stage-players. A hypocrite is a slave in king's robes; he is a devil in angel's apparel; he is a wolf in a sheep's skin. As Cicero saith of Epicurus, that he was no philosopher in truth, but put on the bare name of a philosopher; so I may say, a hypocrite is no saint, no holy man in truth, but one that puts on the name of a saint, and outwardly appears

to be a saint, though inwardly he is a devil incarnate. The Hebrew word **הוֹנֵן**, that is rendered a hypocrite, signifies to dissemble, and defile, or pollute: Hypocrites are the greatest dissemblers in the world; they dissemble with God, with men, and with their own souls; and as they are the greatest dissemblers, so they are the greatest defilers in the world; they defile all places and company where they come; they defile all duties, mercies, and ordinances they touch. But I shall shew you more fully what he is in these six following things:—

[1.] First, Hypocritical hearts *are proud, vain-glorious hearts*. Every man's silver is but brass to theirs, and every man's light is but darkness to theirs; and no men's duties and abilities are comparable to theirs. The proud and vain-glorious hypocrite, Jehu-like, says, 'Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts,' 2 Kings 10:16. A sincere heart loves to do much for Christ, and not to be seen by any but Christ. Jehu's zeal is but the shadow of zeal, as all hypocrites' virtues are but the shadows of virtues, and yet the hypocrite, Narcissuslike, falls in love with his own shadow. The hypocrite loves to see the hat move, and the knee to bow, and men to cry, Rabbi, rabbi, in the market-place, Mat. 23:5–7. Charis, a soldier, was so proud because of the wound he gave Cyrus, that shortly after he went mad, saith Plutarch; and Menecrates was so proud because he cured many patients which others could not, that he called himself Jupiter; so hypocrites are proud, and swell with the thoughts of their own worth and doings, that they cry up and set up themselves above others: Luke 18:11, 12, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are,' &c. 'I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess;' Isa. 65:5, which say, 'Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.'

[2.] Secondly, Hypocrites, they do always *cover their cruel and bloody intentions with specious and religious pretences*. Herod, a notorious hypocrite, covers his intentions of murdering Christ, with pretences of worshipping Christ; and those in Ezra 4 cover their intentions of pulling down the temple, with pretences of help [in] building the temple. They

pretend to build the temple, and yet they intended to pull down the temple; and so did Jezebel, in that 1 Kings 21; and so Ishmael covers his bloody intention of murdering, with weeping, Jer. 41. A hypocrite will draw a fair glove upon a foul hand; he is like the serpent that stings without hissing; they will kiss, and kill you; they will kiss, and betray you; they will stroke you, and cut your throat. There is nothing more evident in experience and Scripture than that hypocrites have all along covered their bloody and cruel designs with religious pretences. Parsons, when he had plotted that matchless villainy the Powder-plot, he sets out his book of resolutions as if he had been made up all of devotions. Hypocrites are like the Italians, that will hug and embrace you in those arms they intend to imbrue in your dearest blood.

[3.] A hypocritical heart *is a subtle heart, a deceitful heart*. What is said of Jonadab, 2 Sam. 13:2, that he was a very subtle man, that may I say of all hypocrites; they are very subtle men; by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple, drawing them unawares into the lion's paw, as Mohammed did. The hypocrite is a cloud without rain, a blossoming tree without fruit, a star without light, a shell without a kernel. The hypocrite is like the fruit of Sodom, that without is very fair, but within is nothing but dust. The hypocrite is like the images Lucian speaks of, that were bravely wrought over with silver and pearl, but within are filled up with the meanest and basest things, as pieces of wood, pitch, mortar, &c; whereas a sincere heart is like Brutus his staff, thorn without and gold within; or like that ark, gold within and goat's hair without.

[4.] Fourthly, again, Hypocrites *never do good out of love to God, but out of designs to advantage themselves*, Mat. 23:14, and 6:1–3. The hypocrite very seldom follows Maximilian's counsel, *Tene mensuram et respice finem*, Keep thyself within compass, and always have an eye to the end of thy life and actions. Jehu makes a great deal of stir; he pretends to be very zealous for God; he destroys idolaters, but not idolatry; and all this was only that he might come to the crown. Mr Knox reports of some noblemen in Scotland who seemed very forward for Reformation, but

their design was merely for spoil, and for their private commodity; but, saith he, they were very licentious, they greedily griped the possessions of the church, and would not lack their part of Christ's coat. And Mr Blair, a great counsellor of Scotland, being under great horrors of conscience, professed that he pretended to religion only to get wealth. I have read of a prince that was of no religion but that which was for his own advantage, and that would advance his own interest. Truly there is no hypocrite that breathes, that doth any good, but he hath some carnal design in it.

[5.] Fifthly, A hypocrite *will not acknowledge*: Job 36:13, 'The hypocrite crieth not when God bindeth him.' The Hebrew word, *annegun*, that is here rendered 'cry,' comes from a Hebrew root, which signifies to make no noise. A hypocrite will not acknowledge the justice and the righteousness of God against him; he will not cry, he will make no noise. Although God's hand be sore upon him and against him, he will not say, This is the justice and the righteousness of God; though God's hand be lifted up against him, yet he makes no noise; though God binds him and deals with him as prisoners are bound and dealt with—for so the Hebrew signifies—yet they will make no noise. In Isa. 26:11, 'When thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed.'

The word, **רָחַק**, signifies to 'see' with the greatest exactness and curiosity that can be, to see with the eye and contemplate with the mind: he will not see. Ay, but, saith God, before I have done with him, I will make him see with his eye, and contemplate on my judgments with his mind. He shall see: Jer. 5:10–12, 'Go ye up upon the walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: and take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's.' The Hebrew word, **גִּטָּעִים**, *natash*, that is rendered 'battlements,' signifies the young suckers that grow up about a plant; and by a similitude here may be understood the counter-scarf towers and leaning places. The battlements were to compass the house round about, to keep men from falling off; for among the Jews their houses had flat

roofs, on which men walked, and from thence they called and spake to the people: to which Christ alludes in Mat. 10:27. The height of the battlement was not to be less than ten hands'-breadths, and it was to be strong, that men might lean thereon, and not fall to maim any. Take away her battlements, take away her succours, her towers, her leaning-places, for they are not the Lord's. But why will God strip them of their strength, and succours, and leaning or resting-places? Ver. 11, 'For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord.' 'They have deceived me, they have deceived me;' so it is in the Hebrew, to shew that they have most notoriously and frequently dealt guiltfully, deceitfully, and fraudulently with God. But how does this appear, that they have dealt thus with God? It is answered in ver. 12, 'They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine.' The Hebrew word that is rendered here 'belied,' 'they have belied the Lord,' [כחש] signifies 'to deny.' So it is used in Gen. 18:15, 'Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not.' It is the same word that is here rendered belied. 'They have denied the Lord, and said, It is not he;' they have denied the justice and righteousness and severity of God in his judgments against them; and this is evident in the third verse of this chapter, 'O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them.' The Hebrew word signifies 'to smite,' [נכה] *nacha*,] 'to wound,' 'to kill.' Lord, thou hast smitten them, thou hast wounded them, thou hast killed some of them, but they have not grieved. The Hebrew word signifies [*halu a bol*] 'to pain,' 'to make sick.' Though I have dealt thus severely with them, yet they are not pained, they are not sick, but bear up hard against all the blows and wounds I have given them. 'Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction.' The Hebrew word that is here rendered 'refused,' signifies to refuse with the greatest pride, disdain, and scorn that may be, Ezek. 17:14. Oh! says God, though I have consumed them, yet they proudly, disdainfully, and scornfully refuse to receive correction. The word that is here rendered 'correction' signifies both

chastening and teaching, the one being the end of the other. Though my rod has been heavy upon them, yet they have proudly and scornfully refused to be taught by my rod; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

[6.] Sixthly, Hypocrites *despise those that, in their apprehension, are in outward form below them, and envy those that, in the spirit and power of holiness and godliness, do excel them*: Luke 18:11, 12, ‘God, I bless thee that I am not as this publican: I fast twice in the week.’ He pleads his negative righteousness, and he stands on his comparative goodness, ‘I am not as this publican: I fast twice in the week,’—on Thursdays, because on that day Moses went up to mount Sinai; and on Mondays, because on that day he came down, saith Drusius. Hypocrites are better at shewing their worth than their wants; they are as notable at discommending others, as they are at commending themselves; at abasing others, as at exalting themselves; at lessening others, as at greatening themselves. They envy every sun that outshines their own. Let a man excel them in his enjoyments of God, in his communion with God, in acting for God, &c., he shall be envied and hated to the death, John 11:47, 48. Androgeus, son of Minos, king of Crete, was slain by the Athenians, and Megarenes, for envy, because he overcame all in exercises of arms. So Socrates, that in the judgment of Apollo was the wisest man on earth, and in many moral excellencies did outshine all others, which the eye of envy could not endure, which occasioned him to say, ‘My accusers nor my crime cannot kill me, but envy only, which hath and will destroy the worthiest ever.’ The emperor Adrian oppressed some, and slew others, that excelled in any art or faculty, that he might be held the only skilful artist. Aristotle is said to have burnt and abolished the books of many philosophers, that he might be the more admired: even so do hypocrites envy all that do excel them in any spiritual or moral excellencies.

There are divers other characters that I might give of those hypocrites that God is so severe in his judgments against: as (1) that they are most zealous about the external part of duties, and regard not the spiritual part of duties, Isa. 1:11–18; Mat. 23:25–27; John 18:28. And (2)

that they are seemingly for one thing and really for another, as Herod, Pilate, and Judas were. And (3) that they are uneven-carried hearts; they do not carry themselves evenly in all places, nor in all companies, nor at all times. Witness the scribes and pharisees. A sincere heart is like a die, which is every way even, and, like itself, turn it or throw it how you will: but the hypocrite is like the cameleon, that changes his colours—now he is this, and now he is that; sometimes you shall have him an angel at home and a devil abroad, and sometimes a devil at home and an angel abroad. Hypocrites are like Cicero: they will speak to please Pompey and Cæsar too.

(5.) Hypocrites will rather use spectacles to behold other men's sins, than looking-glasses to behold their own, Mat. 7:3–5. Hypocrites mind not Conradus' motto, *Omnium mores, tuos imprimis, observato*, Observe all men's carriages, but especially thy own.

(6.) Hypocrites trade not with God upon the credit of Christ's love, blood, righteousness, and intercession, but upon the credit of their own prayers, tears, desires, and endeavours, Isa. 58:3.

(7.) Hypocrites usually hold not on in religious duties under the want of outward encouragements, and against outward discouragements, John 6:66; Job 27:10.

(8.) Hypocrites are heartless in all religious duties, Isa. 29:13; Hosea 7:14; Ezek. 33:31, 32.

(9.) Hypocrites are not only heartless in duties, but they are also partial in duties. The less they will do, the greater they will not do, Mat. 23:23. So Saul, Herod, Judas, and Pilate, &c. It shall suffice that I have named these things. Let us now come to the uses of the point, which is the main thing that I have in my eye.

Beloved, God hath in a very eminent manner made good this truth to a dissembling nation before all the world, even upon them that in the pride of their hearts did say, We have them in Essex's pound, and that did debate what terms to offer to your army for the delivery up of

your arms. I confess, God hath all along made my soul tender of them that fear his name in that nation, so that I have improved that interest that I have in heaven for their good; yet I say for the generality of that nation, they are known round about to be a dissembling nation. And truly what I have seen them lately act, is but suitable to that character that is given of them in those parts where I have travelled.

But the main thing that my heart is most upon is to present unto you those choice things that the great and glorious appearance of God against the hypocritical nation, and for your safety, does bespeak of you; and they are these:—

[1.] First, *Thankfulness*. Oh bless that God that hath given you life, when your enemies had passed upon you the sentence of death. Of all the mercies that you have had, is not this the most big-bellied mercy? Ah, the mercies that are in the belly of this mercy, the city mercy, the country's mercy, the family mercies, the soul mercies, that are in the belly of this mercy! Are not all your former mercies, and all future desired mercies, to be found in the belly of this mercy? Besides, is it not an unexpected mercy? Your army at that time did not expect it till they were engaged; many of your friends here did not at that time look for it; and most men, when the first news of it came, could not believe it. And will not you be thankful for it? Was it not a mercy that came in after solemn appeals and prayers made to the God of your mercies, that he would deal with you according to the righteousness of your cause, and according to the uprightness of his people, that were in their sincere desires and endeavours tender of his glory? And will you not be thankful for it? Was it not a mercy given in upon the account of Christ pleading at the right hand of his Father, for them that were as sheep appointed for the slaughter? And will you not be thankful for it? Has not his giving in of this mercy been a means to weaken the hands, the hopes, the counsels, the strength of your enemies? And will you not be thankful for it? Has not the giving in of this mercy given you a further and a greater advantage to honour God, and lift up Christ, and make sure the things that belong to your peace, and to do good to the saints, and to

serve your generation? And will you not be thankful for it? Can you look upon it as clothed with all its glorious circumstances, and not be thankful for it? As God looks upon his people's sins, so they should look upon his mercies: he looks upon their sins as clothed with their circumstances; they sinned at the sea, even at the Red Sea, Ps. 106:7. In the Hebrew it is at the sea, in the sea, when the waters were as walls, on their right hand and on their left. Now as God looks upon his people's sins as clothed with circumstances, so should you look upon all his mercies as they are clothed with circumstances. O beloved, to have so great a mercy at such a time, when your enemies were strongest, and your army weakest, and under many wants, and temptations, and weaknesses, &c., this should engage you to everlasting thankfulness. That worms and dead men should thresh the mountains, is a mercy that bespeaks the greatest thankfulness; and yet, oh how few are there that return thanks to God for this mercy! Amongst the ten lepers that were cleansed, one returned to give thanks; but were it not well if there were one out of twenty that in good earnest did return thanks for this so great a mercy? A thankful man is worth his weight in gold. Most men are like the philosopher that forgot his own name; so most men in our days forget their own mercies. Too many are like Pythagoras' scholars, that speak not in five years, or rather, like the dumb man in the Gospel, they speak not at all. Many men in our days have a spiritual palsy in their tongues, so as they cannot call mercies mercy; but, with the murmuring Israelites, they call mercies miseries, and saviours destroyers, and deliverers murderers. When the Jews would not be thankful for mercies, the prophet calls out, 'Hear, O heavens, and hearken, O earth,' Isa. 1:2; and Jeremiah calls out, 'O earth, earth, earth,' Jer. 22:29; and Micah calls out to the mountains, and the foundations of the earth, chap. 6:2. And truly if for this mercy you will not be thankful, I think the heavens and the earth, and the foundations thereof, will another day be witness against you. The manifestations of God in his providence are the most precious things in the world; and had we as many tongues as Argus had eyes, they were all too little to set forth the goodness of God for his mercy. It was a good saying of

Augustine, 'If God give prosperity, praise him, and it shall be increased; if adversity, praise him, and it shall be removed, or at least sanctified.' It is sad to think that among so many that pretend to the Spirit, there should be so many that have such a spiritual palsy on their tongues, as that they cannot be thankful for the works of the Spirit. The stork is said to leave one of her young ones where she hatcheth them, and the elephant to turn up the first twig toward heaven when she comes to food, and both do this out of some instinct of gratitude: and shall not Christians be thankful for greater mercies? When Tamerlane had taken Bajazet, amongst other questions he asked him whether ever he had given God thanks for making him so great an emperor. He confessed ingenuously he had never thought of it. Ah, it were well if we had none such among us, that do never think of the great things that God has done for them!

[2.] The second thing that the glorious appearances of God for you does bespeak of you, is *to be greatly magnanimous for God*. Right Honourable and beloved, God does expect that you, and all his people in the land, should appear magnanimous for him. God does now expect that all his people should be taken up with those things that have most of God, and most of Christ, and most of heaven in them, and for these his people should be most magnanimous. Your feet should be where other men's heads are. It was a good saying of one, *Vere magnum est magna facere, et teipsum putare nihil*, Great men should do great things, and count themselves nothing, [Euseb.] As Cleopatra said to Mark Antony, It is not for you to be a-fishing for gudgeons, but for towns, and forts, and castles: so I say, It is not for you, for whom God has done such great things, to exercise yourselves about poor, low things, but about high, noble, and honourable things, that may answer to those great things God has done for you. You must not be like the king of Navarre, who told Beza that he would launch no further into the sea, than he might return at pleasure to the shore, though he did shew some countenance to religion. It was an excellent saying of Pacunius, 'I hate the men that are idle in deed and philosophical in word.' God loves, saith Luther, *curistas*,

not *quaristas*. When Demosthenes was asked what was the first part of an orator, he answered, Action; what the second, he answered, Action; what the third, he answered, Action. Oh that Severus the emperor's motto might be still in your eye, and still upon your hearts, *Laboremus*, Let us be doing.

[3.] The third thing that the glorious appearance of God for you does bespeak of you, is *to take heed of great sins after these great mercies*, Ezra 9:13, 14. David, Lot, Solomon, and Noah, fell foulest after great mercies. Of all sins, sin after great mercies are most provoking to the God of mercy: 1 Kings 11:9, 'The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned back from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice.' The Hebrew word that is rendered 'angry' is from a root that signifies to snuff and look pale—**אנף**, *anaph*—with anger, to shew how greatly God was angry with him. O beloved, if God snuff with anger against Solomon, because his heart was turned back from that God who had appeared gloriously to him twice, what tongue can express how the anger of the Lord will burn against you, if your hearts should be turned back from him that hath appeared gloriously, not only twice, but many hundred times to you, and for you? I beseech you seriously consider that great sins after great mercies will cloud the face of God, and make the greatest wounds in conscience, and imbitter present mercies, and prevent future mercies, and cloud your evidences, and weaken your graces, and raise your fears, and heighten your enemies' hopes, and strengthen their hands; and therefore take heed of great sins after great mercies. Boleslaus, king of Poland, when he was to speak or do anything of importance, he would take out a little picture of his father that he carried about him, and kiss it, and say, Dear father, I wish I may do nothing unworthy of thy name. Ah souls! this should be your constant wishes and endeavours, that you may do nothing unworthy of that glorious name that has done such glorious things for you.

[4.] The fourth thing that the glorious appearance of God for you does bespeak of you, is *to own God, and cleave to God in the face of all*

discouragements, who has owned you in the face of all your weakness and unworthiness and unrighteousness before the whole world. God, by his owning of you, does with open mouth bespeak you to own him. Caleb owns God, and follows God in the face of all discouragements; and this was to him a praise and an honour, Num. 14:24. The word that is rendered ‘followed’ is taken from a ship under sail—מָלַח, *male*—which is carried strongly with the wind, as if it feared neither rocks nor sands. So Caleb followed the Lord in the face of all discouragements, without any slavish fears; and this was his crown, and for this he shall enjoy that mercy that most were shut out from. You for whom God has done such great things, must be resolved with Dionysius, come life, come death, to worship none but the God of heaven and earth. Thus did those worthies in Dan. 3 and those in Heb. 11. And thus did Chrysostom, Luther, Calvin, Galeacius [Carraciolus,] and Basil the Great, with many more, own Christ and cleave to Christ in the face of all discouragements. And why should you degenerate from their examples, which is your highest honour to follow? Oh, shall Cleombrotus, in hope of immortality, tumble himself down a hill, and Socrates smile upon his hemlock, and Scævola burn his own hand without ever gnashing his teeth at it, and Marcus Cato scorn his own life because given him by his enemy, and tear off the salve from his bleeding side; and will not you do as much, yea, more, for that glorious God who has wrought so many wonders for you? Oh let not God have cause to say, Lo, here is a parliament, here is a commonwealth, that I have owned in the face of all their sins, unworthiness, and unrighteousness; and they have disowned me when troubles and trials have been upon them. There is nothing that takes God more than men’s owning of him in the face of all discouragements: Jer. 2:2, ‘Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.’ It is nothing to follow God in a paradise; but it is a glorious, God-taking thing to follow him in a wilderness.

[5.] Fifthly, The glorious appearances of God for you do bespeak you *to set some character of favour and love upon the instruments of your mercy*. I need not tell you that it was the custom of the Romans to reward and crown their soldiers for their good services, but because I understand your hearts have been and are drawn out this way, I shall say no more to this, but sit down satisfied, that you will honour them whom God has honoured, and bless them whom God has blessed, though all the world should slight and curse them.

[6.] Sixthly, The glorious appearances of God for you do bespeak you *to improve your time and opportunities for the honour and advancement of the glory of that God that hath taken all opportunities to set all his golden wheels, his glorious attributes, at work for your good, and for all our safety and security*. Oh do much for that God in a little time, who hath done exceedingly much for you in so short a time. Time is a jewel more worth than a world. Time is not yours to dispose of as you please; it is a glorious talent that men must be accountable for as well as any other talent. Cato, a heathen, held that an account must be given not only of our labour, but also of our leisure. You have no lease of your lives, and death is not bound to give you warning before it gives you that deadly blow that will send you to everlasting misery or everlasting felicity. Of all talents, time is the hardest well to improve. Chilo, one of the seven sages, being asked what was the hardest thing in the world to be done, answered, To use and employ a man's time well. It was a notorious reproach to Domitian the Roman emperor, that he spent much of his time in killing of flies. And it was a reproach to Artaxerxes, that he spent his time in making hafts for knives, and to Solyman the great Turk that he spent his time in making notches of horn for bows, and to Archimedes that he spent his time in drawing lines in the dust, when he should have been fighting for his life with his sword. Ah, Right Honourable, was their spending their time so vainly such a reproach to them, and will your misspending your time be an honour to you? Oh spend your time so as God may have much honour, the commonwealth much good, and your souls much comfort and boldness when you shall

stand before the judgment-seat, where princes must lay their crowns, and parliament-men must put off their robes. Oh, when you have spent your time in the parliament, or in the committees, in shewing your wit and the strength of your parts to oppose and cross one another, when you should have all readily, cheerfully, and willingly agreed together for common justice and righteousness towards all men,—oh then cry out with Titus Vespasian, ‘O my friends, I have lost a day! I have lost a day!’ Bernard brings in the vain person thus lamenting himself: Oh what a wretch! what a beast! what a mad devil was I! so woefully to waste the marrow and fat of my precious time in sinful pleasures and delights! I have read of one that, upon his dying-bed, would have given a world for time, he crying out day and night, Call time again! oh, call time again! The desires of my soul to God for you shall be, that you may so improve your time, that you may never have cause lamentingly to cry out, ‘Call time again! oh, call time again!’ Ah, beloved, have not you need to improve your time, who have much work to do in a short time: your souls to save, a God to honour, a Christ to exalt, a hell to escape, a race to run, a crown to win, temptations to withstand, corruptions to conquer, afflictions to bear, mercies to improve, and your generation to serve.

[7.] The glorious appearances of God for you do bespeak you *to rest and rely upon God in future distress, notwithstanding all your unrighteousnesses, weaknesses, and disadvantages*. O beloved, this glorious appearance of God in the mount for you, does for ever bespeak you to rest and rely upon him in your longest day of trouble, and in your darkest night of sorrow. David, in the day of sore distress, does heighten his confidence by former experiences; and so do those worthies in 2 Cor. 1:8–10. There is nothing that engages God to act high for his people when they are low, like resting and relying upon him; as you may see in that 2 Chron. 13:16–18 verses compared. It is a scripture worthy to be writ in letters of gold. Abijah and his people slew five hundred thousand chosen men, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers. The Hebrew word that is rendered ‘relied,’ **שָׁעָן**, is from a root that signifies to ‘lean’ or ‘rest’

upon the Lord, as a man does upon a staff or rest. Oh, nothing does engage God to act for a people like leaning upon God, chap. 14:8–15 compared with 7–9th verses of the 16th chapter. Now if you would lean upon God in your distress, then keep open the eye of your faith. So long as faith sees in God a fulness of abundance—in [Deo] *plenitudo abundantiae et plenitudo redundantiae*—and a fulness of redundancy, the soul cannot but lean on God.

[8.] Eighthly, Another thing that the glorious appearances of God for you do bespeak of you and the whole nation, is to *set light by all worldly glory*. You are not ignorant how that hypocritical nation began to pride themselves, and to exalt themselves, and glory in their arm of flesh; but in the things wherein they did deal proudly, the Lord was above them, and has laid their glory in the dust. Oh it is high time to set light by all earthly glory, when God hath taken counsel to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth, Isa. 23:9. The word that is rendered ‘purposed’ may be read counselled: the Lord has agreed upon it in counsel, to stain. In the Hebrew it is ‘to *pollute*’ the pride of all glory, &c.

Severus the emperor, finding the emptiness and insufficiency of all earthly happiness, cries out at last, *Omnia expertus fui et nihil expedit*, I have tried all things, and find no solid content in anything. Charles the Fifth, in his old age, he curses his honours, and curses his victories, &c., saying, *Abite hinc, abite longe*, Get you hence, get you far away! Severus his soldier could say, when one asked him why he did not wear his crown as the other soldiers did, A Christian ought not to wear his crown in this life; *Non decet Christianum in hac vita coronari*.

[9.] The ninth thing that the glorious appearances of God for you do bespeak of you, is to *live to him that has given you your lives as a prey*. God calls with open mouth upon you, and upon all the saints in England, to live to him who hath with his glorious arm saved you, when your proud enemies had passed the sentence of death upon you. God has therefore given you your lives for a prey, that you may no longer live

to yourselves, nor to the lusts of the flesh, but to him who lives for ever, as the apostle speaks in that 2 Cor. 1:8–12; Deut. 10:12, ‘And now, O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?’ The Hebrew word that is rendered ‘require,’ ‘What does the Lord thy God *require* of thee,’ signifies to ask, to request, to petition. Oh! God does ask, and request, and as it were petition men that they would live out all his goodness, and live up to all those glorious things that he has done for them. Cyprian, Jerome, and others, complained of the Christians in their time, that they were angels to see to, but wolves in their conversation. *Non in verbis sed in factis res nostra religionis consistunt*, saith Peter Martyr. Oh that we had no cause to complain of such in our days! Noble Mirandola said, it were great madness not to believe the gospel, now it is everywhere believed; yet a greater matter it is not to doubt of the truth of the gospel, and yet to live so as if without all doubt it were false. Plutarch laughed at the folly of such in his time as would be accounted as wise as Plato, and yet would be drunk in the company of Alexander. But oh that our eyes were a fountain of tears, that we might weep for those that pretend to be Christians, and yet live like heathens. Seneca, a heathen, gave this advice to his friend Lucilius, that he should live with men as if God saw him, and pray to God as if men heard him. He liked not such as are always about to live better, but never begin to live better. I shall conclude this with that counsel Periander king of Corinth gave: Live in such sort, saith he, that thou mayest have honour by thy life, and that men may count thee happy after death: *Semper victuri*.

[10.] The tenth thing that the glorious appearances of God for you do bespeak of you, and that is that you *be constantly careful to decline those sins which was the Scots’ overthrow and ruin*; and I think that all those that are got above their pride, and passions, and envy, &c., will judge the sins that did usher in their ruin to be these:—(1.) Hypocrisy; (2.) Resting and boasting in an arm of flesh; (3.) Their sinful compliances with those against whom wrath is gone forth: as Isa. 14:19–22; Jer. 31:2; (4.) Their

hatred and malice against those that in an outward form did differ from them, though they were never so precious to Christ, and eminent in the power and practice of godliness, which sin shall not go unpunished, Isa. 60:14, 66:5, and 36:10, 11; (5.) Their self-love and covetous desires to enrich themselves, and make themselves great in others' ruins, and under the pretence of being the king and covenant; (6.) Their ingratitude to God, and to the parliament and commonwealth of England, who have so many ways shewed their love to them in the days of their distress, and to that army who was formerly instrumental to pull them as brands out of the fire. As you would avoid their judgments, take heed of their sins. I hope that none of you that hear me this day are of Radbode (?) king of Phrisia's mind, who, coming to the font to be baptized, asked what was to become of all his ancestors? Answer was made, that they died in a fearful state, unbaptized. He replied, that he would rather perish with the multitude, than go to heaven with a few. You are wise, and know how to apply it.

[11.] The next thing that the glorious appearances of God for you do bespeak of you, is *to endeavour with all your might to make a conquest of all those enemies that be within you*. Now the Lord has made so glorious a conquest over those proud enemies that rose up against you, I beseech you consider, of all conquests the conquest of enemies within is the most honourable and the most noble conquest; for in conquering of those enemies that be within, you make a conquest over the devil and hell itself. Of all conquests that is the highest and the greatest that is over enemies within you: Prov. 16:32, 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.' The word that is rendered 'ruleth,' signifies to 'conquer, and overcome,' (*משל, mashal*.) It is this conquest that lifts a man up above all other men in the world. And as this is the most noble conquest, so it is the most necessary conquest. You must be the death of your sins, or they will be the death of your souls. Sin is a viper, that does always kill where it is not killed. There is nothing gained by making peace with sin, but repentance here, and hell hereafter. Every yielding to sin is a welcoming

of Satan into our very bosoms. Alexander and many of the Persian kings conquered and commanded the whole world, and yet were commanded by their concubines, and by enemies within, which was the ruin of their souls. Valentinian the emperor said upon his death-bed, that among all his victories, one only comforted him; and being asked what that was, he answered, 'I have overcome my worst enemy, mine own naughty heart.' Ah! Right Honourable, when you shall lie upon a dying-bed, then no conquest will thoroughly comfort, but the conquest of your own sinful hearts. None were to triumph in Rome that had not got five victories; and he shall never triumph in heaven that subdueth not his five senses, saith Isidorus. Ah, souls! what mercy is it to be delivered from an enemy without, and to be eternally destroyed by an enemy within?

[12.] The next thing that the glorious appearances of God for you do bespeak of you, is *to persevere and hold on in well-doing*. As God holds on in doing you good, so you must hold on in well-doing for his glory: 'Be faithful to the death, and you shall have a crown of life,' Rev. 2:10. *Vincenti dabo*. 'To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me in my kingdom: as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his kingdom,' Rev. 3:21. It is said of Sceva, that he so long resisted Pompey's army, that he had two hundred and twenty darts sticking in his shield, and lost one of his eyes, and yet gave not over till Cæsar came to his rescue. So, beloved, you must never leave standing for God, and contending for God, and acting for God, who still stands and contends and acts for you against all those that rise up against you. It was a good saying of Mr Bucer, *Pietas quæ finem novit, non est vera pietas*, That piety that has an end is no true piety. He that in a golden game, or in a golden race, shall run after flies or feathers, or faint before he comes to the goal, will lose not only his pains, but also the crown for which he runs. My desires to the Lord shall be, that we may all so run as that we may obtain the crown.

[13.] Lastly, The glorious appearances of God for you do bespeak you *to shew mercy to others*. Now God has shewed such great mercy towards you, oh let 'the sighing of the prisoner' come before you, and

the desires, the tears, the cries, the wounds, and the blood of poor distressed souls move your compassion towards them, that so you may do for all to the uttermost what you are able, that so their sorrows may be turned into joy, and sighing and mourning may flee away, and their souls may arise and call you blessed. The only way to have full barns, is to have charitable hands. The gainfullest art is almsgiving, saith Chrysostom. Whatsoever we lay out for them, we do but lay up for ourselves. Whatsoever we scatter to the poor, we gather for ourselves. Not getting, but giving, is the way to wealth. The poor man's hand is Christ's treasury, Christ's bank. Oh let not Christ's hand and Christ's treasury be empty! and yet be careful that what you cast into Christ's treasury be got in Christ's wages. It is better to gratify none, than to grate upon any one, saith Augustine. The Hebrew words signifying 'alms,' צדקה, (*tsedakah*), properly signifies justice; to intimate to us that the matter of our alms should be goods justly gotten. Hence also the Jews call their alms-box, [*Kuph ashel tsedaka*,] the chest-behest of justice. O Right Honourable, shall the Persians, and many Indians, erect hospitals, not only for lame and diseased men, but also for aged, starved, or hurt birds, beasts, and such like creatures; and will not you do much more for those that have ventured their blood to save yours, and that are the price of the blood of Christ? It is storied up of Stephen, king of Hungary, and of Oswald, sometime king of England, that their right hands, though dead, never putrified, because much exercised in giving and relieving the poor and afflicted. Surely the names and souls of such that do look to *quoad fontem*, and to *quoad finem*, to do this duty from a right principle, to a right end, shall never die, but live for ever; which that all your names and souls may do, shall be my constant desire and prayer at the throne of grace.