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On Christian Prudence, Extracted From Mr. Norris

A TREATISE CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE. EXTRACTED FROM MR. NORRIS

CHAPTER 1:

Of the End proposed by Christian Prudence, and the general Means of obtaining it.

1. BY Prudence, I here mean, the same with wisdom, A practical knowledge of the best end and the best means to attain it. actually directing us to the choice of that end, and the use of those means.

2. The end of every reasonable creature is GOD: For He alone is the true object of our happiness: All the happiness we desire, or are capable of, being to be found in Him, and Him only.

3. That the happiness of man is not to be found in any thing but in GOD, is usually proved by showing that it cannot consist in sensual pleasure, riches, honor or power. But the shortest way of proving it is, by showing at once that it cannot consist in any created good. For as by Happiness we mean a state wherein the mind totally acquiesces, and takes full rest and satisfaction, so that which is the object of happiness must be such a good as perfectly satisfies the mind, contents all its desires, and gives it an absolute tranquility and repose. But that no creature does this is plain from experience, from the vanity which we find in all things, and that restlessness and desire of change which is consequent upon it. We try one thing after another, as the searching bee wanders from flower to flower; but we go off from every one with disappointment, and a

deluded expectation; almost every thing promises, but nothing answers, and even the succession of new enjoyments (the best remedy for the emptiness we find in each) amuses, but does not satisfy. And as no created good actually does this, so it is plain by reason none can. For as none but Infinite Truth can satisfy the understanding, so only Infinite Good can satisfy the will. But this the creature is not. As its being is, so is its goodness, both of a limited extent, and so by no means fit to satisfy the capacity of that mind which aspires after all good. Every creature therefore must confess its utter insufficiency to be the object of our happiness: Nay, the whole collection and amassment of created good, must acknowledge the same; the very depth and abyss of it must say, 'Is it not in me.'

4. It is in GOD alone: He is the Fountain of eternal blessedness; all the springs of our happiness are in Him: He is our good, and our end, as being every way sufficient for our happiness. For He is all goodness; He is that Infinite Good which is the entire and adequate object of our will; and which being the proper object of all its inclinations, must needs be able to satisfy them. They cannot aspire to any thing beyond Him, and therefore must needs centre and acquiesce in Him. "When I awake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." Then, and not before, which all resolves into that pious saying of ST. AUSTIN, (Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart has no rest till it rests in thee.'

5. It must therefore be the first office of Christian prudence, to make GOD our end. For indeed not to do so. is the greatest folly that any man can possibly be guilty of. For what can we expect but vanity and disappointment all over, a fruitless labor, and a deluded and abortive hope, if we place our happiness any where but in him, who is the true object of it It is like leaning with our full force upon what cannot bear our weight, the consequence of which is, to fall with violence. And what an imprudence is this, especially for a Christian, since the clear revelation of the Gospel, concerning the true end and final happiness of man: Wherein our Savior has plainly declared, "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true GOD!" Since GOD has not only given us a nature capable of happiness, but has also endued us with faculties and desires which nothing but himself can satisfy, and He both can and will; and above all, since He has been pleased, lest we should miss the end of our being, to point it out to us, and to tell us that himself is the good, which we so passionately desire, and so blindly seek; it must be the very foolishness of folly for any Christian not to make GOD his end; much more, so to forget himself and Him, as to place it in any thing of this vain world: Whether it be directly and professedly, according to the language of the rich Epicure, "Soul, take thy ease;" or consequentially, by pursuing the world, and cleaving to its interests, as if it were his end. And besides the folly of this conduct, it bespeaks also such a contempt of GOD, and of his immense greatness and goodness, as nothing can either parallel or excuse! Especially since the Son of GOD has been pleased to concern himself so far for our happiness, as to make this great and excellent end attainable to us, preparing and providing, and procuring an union and communion of GOD with man, by uniting them both in his own person. Whether, therefore, we consider the excellency or the attainableness of this good, or the manner or price whereby it becomes attainable, GOD by all means is to be made our end, the end of all our desires, and the end of all our designs, the end of all our undertakings, all our actions, and all our hopes; to which we are to refer whatever we think, whatever we speak, and whatever we act; and, in one word, to which our whole life is to be directed.

6. What a thorough concern then ought every Christian to feel, how hearty a care ought he to take for the obtaining and securing this his right and only end, the fruition, of GOD This our Savior calls, "The one thing needful," in opposition to the many things that are apt to trouble and distract us in this busy life, which, unless so far as they fall in with this, are all mere trifle and amusement.

Even those affairs which carry the face of the greatest seriousness, and pretend to be of the weightiest consequence, if they are not so many parts of this," are lighter than vanity and nothing." For indeed, a man has but one business in the world, and that is, to make sure his everlasting happiness, and to secure to himself the fruition of that excellent good which is the true end of his being. This is the whole of man, his only considerable interest, and that upon which all depends. It is not necessary, that he should be born to an estate, or that he should acquire one. It is not necessary that he should succeed in his attempts, for this or that dignity or preferment; that he should live long to enjoy his wealth or greatness, or even that he should live at all. But it is absolutely necessary that he should arrive at his end, that he should attain to the fruition of GOD, whose loving-kindness is better than life, and without whom he cannot be happy. All the rest may be spared, but there is no dispensing with this. Should he lose all besides, and gain this one thing, yet still he would be happy. And should he gain all besides and lose this one thing, yet still he would be miserable: For what gain will ever make amends for such a loss Not that of the whole world, if we believe our Savior," What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" Which is then only lost, when it loses GOD. It is therefore one great part of the prudence of every Christian, after he has fixed this his right end, to endeavor, by much consideration, to possess his mind with a due sense of its moment and importance; and of what consequence it is, that he should succeed in this affair, whatever he miscarries in beside: Which, when he is once thoroughly convinced of, he will then diligently apply himself to the use of such means as are necessary thereto.

7. All the particular acts of prudence with regard to these means, may be summed up in one general one, and that is, to-choose those very means to this our great end, which GOD has chosen for us already. To follow his, is indeed an implicit choice, but at the same time, it is a very safe and a very wise one. For He cannot but know what means are most fit to procure the end for which he made us. And he will not impose upon our weakness, or do what he has forbidden us," make the blind go out of his way." And therefore, without inquiring into its intrinsic nature, we may securely depend upon this in general, that the way which he has prescribed, must be the very best, and consequently, that it is our wisdom to walk in it

8. Now the means which GOD has chosen for us are no other than his commandments, which were intended by GOD for our direction to happiness. As He made us for Himself, so the laws which He prescribes to us are but a pursuance of the same kind design, namely, to bring us to Himself. For since we cannot suppose Him to propose any advantage of his own, by giving us rules of life; and since we can as little suppose, that He does it for so poor a reason as only to show his authority, and much less that He does it for no reason at all, we cannot but conclude, that the laws of GOD are given us with this design, to show us the path of life, the true way to that great end for which we were made, the everlasting fruition of GOD. A consideration which, by the way, ought greatly to endear the laws of GOD to us, and invite us to yield a free, ready, and cheerful obedience to them. Especially if we add,

9. That as they were given for our direction to happiness, so they actually lead to it: " If thou wilt enter into life," says our Savior," keep the commandments." This is the path of life, the way of the kingdom, the direct road that leads to happiness, described to us by Him who is Himself the Way, the Truth and the Life. Men may employ' their wits, consult their ease, and flatter their hopes in the invention of other ways; but if we will believe our Guide, the way of happiness is the way of obedience.

10. That it is so by the positive order and appointment of GOD, is plain from the whole tenor of the Gospel. And equally plain it is, that He therefore appointed these means, because they naturally conduce to our happiness. For some things are, by the very original constitution of their being, conducive to our good, as others to our hurt; the former He commands, and the latter He forbids. That there is this difference in things with regard to our present happiness, is evident from -experience. Temperance, for instance, is more conducive than intemperance to the health of the body, and consequently to the health of the mind too, as depending upon the other. The power which plants have variously to affect our bodies, either by the way of physic or poison, is not more plain and certain than the different influence which different dispositions have upon the well or ill-being of our souls. And GOD in his laws concerning these things, does but what a physician does for those, whose health he takes care of; he prescribes the wholesome diet or physic, and forbids the poison.

11. The same observation will hold as to future happiness; which resulting (as all happiness does) from a certain proportion and agreement between the faculty and the object, must depend upon, and require a certain temper and disposition of the mind, as a natural qualification for it. We find it is so even in the pleasures of sense. Let the ear be unmusically disposed, and the sweetest sounds put together with the greatest art, will give it no entertainment. And if the organs of taste are indisposed, either naturally or by a disease, the most delicious food is brought in vain, which, as it finds no taste, will give no relish. And if it be thus in the lowest pleasures, can it be otherwise in the highest If a guest sit idle at a nice and plentiful table, merely because he wants a stomach to eat, or a palate to relish what he finds there, shall an indisposed soul enjoy GOD Is there no disposition requisite to make it relish the heavenly banquet Are these the only pleasures that are to be enjoyed at any rate, and however disposed we come to them No, without doubt there are dispositions, for this, as well as for other enjoyments, a certain temper of mind, which, as the Apostle speaks, is to make us" meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

12. Now this temper that qualifies us for happiness, must be, in general, to be like Him who is the object of it, to have our minds conformable to his mind, and our wills conformable to his will; to resemble Him as far as He is imitable by us, to have a Godlike frame of spirit, or, as the Apostle expresses it," to be partakers of the Divine nature." And that for this clear reason, because without being in some measure like GOD, it is not possible we should enjoy him, or take any delight in beholding his excellent glory. But when I awake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it. LORD, what a satisfying likeness is thine Our likeness to the world makes us love it, but the love of it does not satisfy. O make us like unto thee, that we may be satisfied with thee.'

13. More particularly, the temper that qualifies us for happiness, consists in those virtuous dispositions, which the Gospel enjoins to all Christians, such as truth, justice, and mercy: Because in these consists that part of the Divine nature, wherein alone we can be like Him: His other perfections being peculiar to Himself, and such as no creature can partake of. And accordingly we are exhorted to" be holy, as the LORD our GOD is holy; to be followers of GOD, as dear children; to be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." There is therefore a necessity for us, as to be like GOD, that we may enjoy Him, so to be endued with virtuous habits, without which we cannot be like Him, nor consequently enjoy Him.

14. But there are two dispositions, which are more particularly necessary to qualify us for the fruition of GOD, charity and purity: That charity, as it signifies the love of our neighbor, is a necessary qualification is plain, because without this we cannot be like GOD, who is all love and goodness, overflowing with kindness to all his creatures, and continually doing good to them all, as far as they are capable of receiving it. If ever therefore we mean to be happy with and in Him, we must be of the same good and loving spirit. And as to charity, taken in its proper primary sense, for the love of GOD, this is so immediate a qualification for happiness, that nothing can be more so, since all enjoyment depends upon the love of what we are possessed of, and therefore unless we love GOD, it is impossible we should enjoy Him. And for this reason it is, that the love of God is so strictly enjoined, and in so high a measure, no less than that of our whole heart and soul, and mind and strength; and that the precept which requires it is called, "The first and great commandment: "First and great in many respects, and particularly in this, that it is the fundamental qualification for happiness, as immediately respecting the object of it, which if we do not love, we can never enjoy.

15. The other great qualification for the enjoyment of GOD, is purity; that part of it especially which relates to the pleasures of sense. Now the reason why this is such a qualification for our final happiness is this: GOD, the object of it, is a spiritual being, and the happiness of heaven which consists in the fruition of Him, is all over of a rational and intellectual nature: Being indeed no other than this, the pleasure of the understanding contemplating the Supreme Truth, and of the will transported with the love of the Sovereign Good. And therefore a love of sensual pleasure must indispose us for the love of a good so purely spiritual. And if ever it rises so high as to become the prevailing and governing affection of the soul, (the case and character of those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of GOD,") it must utterly unqualify us for it. For what can a sensualized soul find in heaven, that will suit with his distempered taste A Mahometan Paradise would suit with such affections well; but in heaven they would meet with nothing but disappointment; and therefore ST. PETER, with a pressing earnestness, cautions us against them: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly desires that war against the soul." They war against the soul, not only by betraying us into sin, either by consenting to them in unlawful circumstances, or by indulging them in an immoderate degree, but chiefly by indisposing us for the enjoyment of a far nobler happiness. And accordingly ST. JOHN, among all virtuous dispositions, singles out purity as a preparation for heaven." Every man," says he, "that has this hope, purifieth himself as He is pure." And our Savior applies this purity to the heart, to show how that ought to be disposed for happiness." Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD." O Infinite Purity, what heart will be fit to see thee, if thou dost not purge and cleanse it O purify us by thy grace, and so fit us for thy glory'

17. By all these considerations it appears, that the commandments of GOD are the means that lead us to happiness. And for this reason it is, that GOD, who is willing we should be happy, having made us for that very end, requires them of us, and obliges us to them by all the authority he has over us. For this reason it is, for instance, that he commands us to love him. What is our love to him! Nothing at all. But though it be nothing to him, yet it is to ourselves, as being a necessary qualification for our happiness. This GOD knows, and therefore requires us to love him; nay, to love him with all our heart and all our strength, because he knows a less degree of love is neither worthy of him, nor will qualify us to be happy in him. And so in every other instance, GOD makes those things our duty which have a close connection with our happiness: And this is that which makes his laws so good and so excellent, and his service a truly reasonable service; for certainly nothing can be more reasonable than for a man to pursue his own good, nor consequently than to serve and obey GOD, since this is a certain means to that end, and his own good is the natural fruit of that obedience; and how should this (as was intimated before) endear the service of GOD to us How should it make us in love with our duty to him, and glad to be subject to his government How should it incite us, to yield the most free, ready, cheerful and zealous obedience to his laws In a word, to do his will on earth as the angels do it in heaven, since our own advantage is both the reason of his laws, and the sure consequence of keeping them. Every prudent Christian therefore looks upon the commandments of GOD, not as so many imperious curbs and retrenchments of his liberty, nor as so many arbitrary impositions, much less as burdens and grievances, (as human laws sometimes are, for want of wisdom or goodness in those that make them,) but as so many kind provisions for our happiness, and so many merciful instructions to bring us to our true end; and in this view he yields them obedience, not such as is forced and violent, servile and extorted by fear, such as slaves pay to tyrants, but such as is liberal and ingenuous, and wherein love is the prevailing principle, as becomes one who is under, a government so good and gracious, and so every way directed and administered for the best advantage of the subject, as that of GOD is.

18. And now since it appears that the means that lead to our end, the great highway to happiness, are no other than the commandments of GOD, it appears with equal clearness, that the one business of every prudent Christian is, to pay a due obedience to all these commandments. This is our wisdom, and indeed the only wise thing we can do, not to indulge our own fancies, not to Fulfill our own will, or to follow the devices and desires of our own hearts, but to apply ourselves to the law of GOD, to lay hold of those "paths of life" which he has described to us. By doing this we shall give a better proof of our wisdom, than by all the fine-wrought plots and cunning intrigues of worldly policy, or by "the most acute reasonings of philosophy, of the deepest treasures of learning. These things cast indeed a dazzling light, and make a figure in the world; but after all, the wisdom of man is, to attain to his end, and consequently to find and use the true means of attaining it. And since the commandments of GOD are those true means," to keep and do them is our wisdom and understanding;" or, as JOB expresses it, "Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."

19. It is not only wisdom, but our wisdom, the wisdom of man, the wisdom that belongs to his nature, as being made for happiness, that belongs to the present state and condition of his nature, as having capacities to qualify himself fully for this: whereas his faculties will carry him but a very little way in speculative knowledge. It is the wisdom that belongs to his present circumstances in this world, which is wholly in order to the other, and is no farther considerable than as it is a preparation for eternity: And after this, I need not say, it is the wisdom that belongs to his interest, nothing being more evident, than that it is every man's greatest interest to be everlastingly happy. Upon all which considerations it appears, that the study and practice of GOD'S commandments, the devoting himself to His service, and to the obedience of all His laws, is the true and proper wisdom of man, in which alone he is concerned to employ and to prove himself, and to which all his other learning, knowledge, and business, all he thinks, says, or does, is to be referred.

CHAPTER 2:

How far Christian Prudence is concerned in the Manner of keeping GOD'S Commandments.

1. As to the manner of keeping GOD'S commandments, the main difficulty is in the doing, and not in determining what in prudence ought to be done. Prudence, doubtless, (as well as duty,) requires that we should keep them in as good a manner as we can: For since the commandments of GOD are evidently the means that qualify us for happiness, it follows, that the better they are kept by us, the more we shall be qualified by them. Now, it is unquestionably the part of every prudent man to obtain as much happiness as he can; and, consequently, to do his best to serve GOD and keep his commandments in the most perfect manner he is able; because the better he keeps them, the happier he will be; and no wise man would be less happy when he may be more so.

2. Setting aside, therefore, all inducements of either love or fear, all arguments of gratitude or generosity, all the reasonableness and justice of serving GOD, and living in obedience to his laws, all the pleasures of religion, and the present advantage of it both to our souls and bodies: I say, though we should set aside all these considerations, yet there is a prudential consideration sufficient to engage every wise Christian to do his best, and to be as holy as he can, namely, that the better he is, the happier he will be; every addition to his virtue being so much stock laid in for his future happiness.

The question concerning Degrees of Glory, seems to have been put merely for argument's sake; for it cannot be put seriously, but by one that is> as ignorant of the nature of things, as of Divine revelation. Were the Scripture silent, yet the very nature of the thing infers it; for since holiness is a natural qualification for happiness, it necessarily follows, that the more holiness the more happiness, and consequently, that the best must be the happiest man; and therefore it is great prudence for every Christian to labor to be excellently good, as good as he can be according to the measure of grace imparted to him. To reduce this to an instance, our SAVIOR has annexed to purity of heart a particular blessedness, even that of seeing GOD: Whence we may gather, that this is a particular qualification for the beatific vision, and accordingly, that those who have most of this purity will be most happy, as either seeing more of GOD, or as being more delighted with what they see of him; and therefore every prudent Christian "that has this hope," will study to "purify himself" as much as he can, that so he may be a more meet partaker of that happiness, which is promised to the pure in heart.

3. Let not therefore any Christian content himself with his present state, or his past attainments in goodness; much less let him designedly aim at a slender degree, such as he thinks may just carry him to heaven. He may be mistaken in his measure, and when laid in the balance be found wanting: But suppose he be not, yet he stands in his own light, and is frugal to his own great loss: For, it is but an ill thrift to deal hardly for heaven, and to think to go thither the cheapest way; since beside the danger of miscarrying, so much as he abates of his holiness, so much he abates of his own perfection, and cuts short his own happiness: And where is the gain or the wisdom of such a thrift! It is folly and loss all over. Let us not therefore rest satisfied with narrow and scanty measures, much less expressly design them: For besides, that it is not easy to persevere in such a weak and languishing state of piety; every little blast of temptation being ready to blow out a lamp that is fed with so little oil. Suppose we should persevere in it, yet there is no getting over this consideration, that the more we come short in goodness, the more we shall fall short in happiness; that every abatement in the former is so much deducted from the latter, a jewel taken out of their crown. Therefore let no one who pretends to Christian prudence, sit down with a low infant-state of goodness, but let him endeavor to grow in grace, and always to abound in the work of the LORD: Not contenting himself with his present state, but always studying to excel himself, to grow better and better, and to make a constant progress in religion, correcting what is amiss, and supplying what is wanting, and aspiring after the largest measures and fullest degrees of holiness, always remembering, that all the while he is thus serving GOD, he is consulting his own interest, and that the more goodness he brings with him to heaven, the more happiness he will find there.

4. In consequence of this, a prudent Christian will begin betimes, and set out early in the ways of piety; not only that he may have the advantage of the morning, the proper time for traveling, and the satisfaction of serving GOD in the prime of his age, and the vigor of his strength: But also that he may lengthen his day, and have the more time to serve GOD in, and to prepare himself for the fruition of Him in glory; that he may have the more time before him, to correct his disorders, to fill up his deficiencies, to regulate his passions, to purify his heart, to perfect his habits, to adorn his soul with all Christian virtues; in a word, to compose the state and frame of his mind for happiness, and to put himself in a due order for heaven. For these reasons it is Christian prudence to begin betimes, to run the way of GOD'S commandments, and not to defer that work to the declining part of life, which is the one business of the whole.

5. But if it be prudence, as to keep the commandments of GOD, so to keep them in the very best manner we can, what shall we think of those who serve GOD by halves, who halt between two masters, the almost Christians? Because this is so common a case, it may be proper to bestow some reflections upon it. I shall therefore consider more at large,

First, what it is that hinders their rising any higher than to be almost Christians. And

Secondly, the imprudence of this lame way of serving GOD, of being Christians by halves.

6. First, The general hindrance to our being more than almost Christians, is the corrupt perverseness of human nature: This it was that made the fair inclinations of King AGRIPPA proceed no farther than they did; than to extort from him that ingenuous confession, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Then, it seems, he was not absolutely persuaded, though he was inclining toward it. Poor AGRIPPA! He had heard ST. PAUL giving an account of his manner of life from his youth, and of his miraculous conversion to Christianity, with great plainness, modesty and simplicity, and was not a little affected with the discourse; especially with the conclusion, "King AGRIPPA, believest thou the Prophets I know that thou believest." This nearly touched him, and left a very sensible impression upon his heart. And yet there was soVne-thing more prevalent within him, that would not suffer him quite to yield. He had a good mind to be a Christian, but fear, interest and prejudice outweighed that inclination, and after some uncertain suspenses, the scale turned on the other side. And this is the case of too many: They have several good thoughts and purposes; but their thoughts and purposes are too much like the endeavors of those that are trying to wake out of a deep sleep, into which they sink back again, overcome by the dead weight that hangs upon them. There is a weight, an impediment in their will, that stops the wheels of virtuous action, so that there can be no motion, though the springs of religion bear ever so hard upon them. Sometimes indeed conscience works strongly, that she wants but little of gaining her point. But even that little, it seems, is too much; she is like a bowl thrown up against a steep bank, which it nimbly climbs, till it is

just about to lodge and settle at the top: But wanting some degrees of force to overcome the resistance, it cannot reach it, and rolls back again.

7. "Thou art not far from the kingdom of GOD," was just such a cast as this: And yet lackest thou one thing," was such another. These men's religion had carried them a good way, and they were well onward in their journey to heaven; but it tired, and grew faint in the latter stages of the road, / which was found either too narrow or too long, and made an eternal halt, when a little more resolution would have carried them through. The same thing we now see every day; there are many who have a liking to religion, who have had a good natural disposition, assisted by a religious education. Nor are they only inclined to religion, but partly practise it; they do many things, and forbear others. All goes on hopefully toward a thorough conversion; they are already past the most painful part of it, and are now upon the critical point; so that a grain or two more would turn the scale; insomuch, that there begins to be joy in heaven, and the angels are tuning their harps: Yet there wants a little more weight on the side of religion, for want of which the counterweight prevails against it; against reason, religion and divine grace together. They have indeed the workings of religion upon them; they feel several pangs of the new birth; but after all, they want strength to bring forth.

8. The imprudence of this lame way of serving GOD (which I was to show in the second place) appears first from this, that it is insufficient. Such a half religion can never hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary. Such men, it is true, are almost good; but almost to hit the mark is really to miss it.

For religion consists in an entire love of GOD, and an, effectual resolution to obey him. Even a bad man may love what is good in some degree, but not with an effectual, prevailing love. This therefore is what denominates a man good, when religion is the commanding bias of his soul. And none but those who are thus thoroughly good, are so good as to be fit for happiness. To make us capable of that, there must be a peculiar frame of mind, to effect which in us is the one business of religion. And if it does this only almost, and by halves, as it can never bring us to heaven, so neither if it could, would it be able to make us happy there.

9. This imperfect piety is farther condemned by Christian prudence as very absurd. If we did not intend to go through, why did we set out? If we did, why do we stop? If we think there is no reason in religion, why do we do any thing? But if we think there is, why do not we do enough? For the same reason that we do so much, why do not we do more? For either religion has truth on its side, or not. If not, why do we take so much labor needlessly? But if it has, why do we take so much labor in vain? It is, I own, a strange piece of even brutal indifference, to do nothing in order to our eternal happiness: And yet, methinks, to do a part only, has something in it more extravagant than the other. He that does nothing, whatever he loses besides, has yet no labor to lose. But to labor by halves, is to lose the same good, and all that we do in order to it. The Atheist and Libertine has something to pretend; but the half-religious has no excuse; since that very religion he has will condemn him as an inconsistent, unprincipled fool.

10. The last censure of Christian prudence upon the half-way state of piety, is, that it is very unhappy, I mean even in this world. The Almost Christian is the "double-minded man" ST. JAMES speaks of, who has two wills, one for GOD and another for the world, between which he variously fluctuates. Such an one is unstable in all his ways: "He is a mixed, doubtful, unsettled, wavering creature, never out of perplexities "and entanglements, always disconformable to himself, doing what he would not, and not doing what he would and should, never long satisfied with himself. He has indeed a kindness for religion, but he has a greater kindness for something else; so that his religion just serves to disturb the enjoyment of his lusts, as his lusts to deprive him of the comfort of his religion. Nor can he be perfectly at peace with himself, but by being thoroughly wicked or thoroughly good. So wicked as to "have his conscience seared with a hot iron," or so good as to act up to his principles. He must be of a single mind, one way or the other, before he can be at rest. And yet this double-mindedness is the state in which most men choose to live and die, having religion enough to disturb them in their sins, but not enough to engage them to part with them.

11. And now, methinks, I hear one saying within himself, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Alas! why not quite? Is it that we want the art of address, that we do not touch the right spring of your soul? But sure our cause has weight enough to bear itself out, and to supply any defect in the management of it. For is there not truth and reason enough in religion, to gain a reasonable creature: Or can any motive have a greater force or persuasion, than the joys of heaven and the pains of hell? Or do you question whether GOD be able to reward your entire love and complete obedience? If you indeed "believe that GOD is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," as even your indifferent way of serving Him seems to suppose, then you must needs think it wisdom, to "lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees;" to be heartily and thoroughly religious, and not to be guilty of so inconsistent a folly as to take some pains all your life for heaven, and yet go at last to hell.

12. Considering then the insufficiency, the absurdity, and the unhappiness of a half-religion, let us instantly labor "to fill up the things that are behind," that are wanting to the measure of our righteousness. Let us earnestly endeavor to bring ourselves under the full power and influence of religion, that it may have its due work upon our hearts and lives, that we may "be perfect, entire, and wanting nothing: "Always imploring the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, by the victorious sweetness of his divine grace, to give the last finishing to that holy birth, He is forming in us, that it may "come to a, perfect -nan, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Cmusr: "That so, according to the Apostle's wish, we may be both almost, and altogether Christians!

CHAPTER 3:

Of the subordinate Means that serve to assist us In keeping-the Commandments of GOD.

1. WE have seen that the immediate means to happiness are the commandments of GOD. We come now to consider the subordinate means to it, which serve to assist us in the keeping of those commandments. And these are of two sorts: Either such as are appointed and commanded by GOD, or such as are recommended by human prudence.

2. Of the first sort is prayer. This is a glorious means, to withdraw our thoughts and affections from sensible objects, and to fix them upon GOD and the things of heaven; To stir up in us a sense of our wants and infirmities, and to quicken our desires of what we pray for: To maintain a religious warmth in our minds, and to keep -up there a spirit of devotion, the flame of which would soon be extinct without the breathings of prayer to fan it, and give it motion: To nourish our communion with GOD, and make us continually mindful of Him," in whom we live, move, and have our being." It is also a key to open the storehouses of GOD'S treasures to us, whereby we may obtain a supply of all our wants, and particularly "grace to help in time of need," to enable us to resist all temptations.

3. A prudent Christian will therefore pray often: For temporal things conditionally, as not knowing whether, or how far these may be for his good, or serve as means to his end. But for spiritual, such as pardon of sin, and grace to leave it, he will pray not only with greater earnestness, but also absolutely, and without any condition, because he knows, that GOD" would have all men to be saved," to attain the happiness for which he made them; and that those (if he be not wanting to himself) are certain means to his salvation.

4. Reading of the Scriptures is the next means which GOD has ordained to assist us in keeping his commandments. And an excellent means it is, both to enlighten our understanding, and to compose our minds into a religious temper. " All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of GOD may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And therefore every prudent Christian gives all attendance to reading it. And that not out of curiosity, or for speculation only, but with a practical design, to learn and do the whole will of GOD. And accordingly he will not lay them aside, when he thinks he understands them, but will renew and continue his perusal of them, for his constant and greater edification. His delight will ever be in the law of the LORD, and in his law will he meditate _day and night.

5. A third means of religion appointed by GOD, is the hearing the word preached. This is a standing provision which GOD has made for the edification of his Church; therefore a prudent Christian, who never thinks himself too* wise to learn, or too good to be better, and who never omit& any means that may bring him nearer his end, is careful to pay his due attendance to it, humbly waiting for the grace' and blessing of GOD in the use of his own ordinance.

6. Neither will the Sacraments, fourthly, be ever undervalued or neglected by a prudent Christian, who never thinks himself either too wise or too good for any institution of GOD. As to the LORD's-supper in particular, he never omits any opportunity of receiving it, knowing the excellent ends for which it serves, and its great usefulness to serve them. It serves as a sensible image of the death of CHRIST, and of our spiritual communion with him; as a memorial of his atonement for our sins, actually applying it to ourselves. In short, it serves as a channel to convey all the blessings of GOD to us, and as a pledge to assure us of them. And in all this he admires the wisdom and goodness of GOD, in making this merciful provision for his Church, who, considering our frame, and how large a share sense has in our composition, was pleased, in condescension to our infirmity, to address himself to us by that weaker side of our nature; and lest, in such a crowd of sensible objects as we daily converse with, we should (as we are too apt) to be tempted to forget Him, was pleased, by those very objects, to bring us to himself, by making use of some of them as his remembrancers, and as steps whereby we might ascend to the contemplation of the most spiritual and heavenly mysteries.

7. Church-communion, in the last place, is an excellent means for the mutual edification of Christians; for the preservation of the Christian faith and doctrine, and for the encouragement of Christian practice. And since for these and the like reasons, GOD, by his SON JESUS CHJIIST, has erected and constituted that spiritual society called a Church, whereof the same JESUS CHRIST is the Head, as that is his body, according to the Apostle; Christian prudence obliges every man not to look upon himself only as a private or independent Christian that is at liberty to serve GOD as he pleases in his own solitary way, but as a member of this one Church, whereof CHRIST is the Head, and consequently bound to hold communion with it.

This therefore, a prudent Christian will be sure to do, and think it a great happiness and privilege to have such a help, to enjoy the communion of saints, and worship GOD in the assemblies of his people. From these he will by no means excommunicate himself: But as he is in spirit united to the whole Christian Church, so he actually communicates with that particular branch of it, whereof he is a member: And hereby he shows his union with the whole, in which he will be careful to make no schism; lest, by dividing from that Church whereof CHRIST is the Head, he be divided from CHRIST, his End as well as his Way.

CHAPTER 4:

The Conduct of a Prudent Christian, with regard to the Government of himself.

1. HITHERTO we have been conducting our prudent-Christian to his end, by the chief of the ways that lead to it, namely, by the direct and immediate means of happiness, first, the duties of the Divine law, and then by the means to those means, such of them in particular, as are of Divine appointment. For the application of which, it may now be convenient to draw a little nearer, and consider the conduct which a prudent Christian uses in the government of himself.

2. And first let us consider how a prudent Christian pursues improvement by the government of his senses. He does not study the pleasing of his senses. This indeed many make the great end of their lives, which are almost wholly devoted to the pursuit, and spent in the various entertainments of sensible pleasure; as if they thought (and perhaps some of them do) that their supreme happiness consisted in it. But this a prudent Christian will not do; for he knows we are already too much in love with sensible pleasure, the great disease of our nature, and therefore will not by indulging it inflame a passion which is already too violent. He finds that as the more we abstain from these pleasures, the more cold we grow to them, so by indulgence, our appetite acquires a new edge, and grows the more sharp and keen: He that drinks of this water shall not only thirst again, but the more he drinks, he shall thirst the more. He considers likewise, how entirely different from these, are the intellectual pleasures of heaven, and how apt the love of them is to indispose us for these, and in this sense" to alienate us from the life of GOD."

He is therefore so far from feasting his senses, (as the manner of the world is,) by all the variety of studied entertainments, that he endeavors by all manner of ways to mortify them, and instead of setting up for a soft, voluptuous life, (according to ST. PAUL'S advice to TIMOTHY,) "inures himself to hard hips, as a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST: Not indeed by any such rigid austerities, as would destroy or impair his health, but by such sparing use of and well-governed abstemiousness from, even those pleasures which are lawful in themselves, as may deaden his love to them, and make him more indifferent to the enjoyment of them.

4. He will likewise keep a strict guard over his senses themselves; as knowing they are the inlets of temptation, the landing ports of our spiritual enemies, and the feeble parts of our nature, which expose us to continual danger: Particularly, what can be more dangerous than an unguarded eye or ear, while there is every day so much to be seen and to be heard, to provoke to wickedness, and so little to encourage holiness. Over these therefore he keeps a constant guard, to prevent invasion and surprize, especially over the eye, the most dangerous of the two, as being concerned with more objects: Praying also to GOD, without whose keeping the city, the watchman waketh but in vain," to turn away his eyes, lest they behold vanity, and to quicken him in his ways;" that nothing he either sees or hears in this his pilgrimage, may either turn him out of it or hinder him in it.

We may, Secondly, observe, how a prudent Christian pursues improvement by the government of his understanding. Considering, in the first place, what an excellent faculty and great endowment understanding is, and for what great ends it was given him by GOD, he thinks himself concerned not to let it lie idle, but to employ and improve it as much as possible, that he may hereafter give a good account of his talent: But were no account of it to be given, yet considering himself farther as a traveler in his way to his end, and his understanding as a torch that is to light him in it, he would think it very proper to take care of it, and that not only to preserve it from going out, but to feed it with such supplies of oil, that it might shine the more brightly and clearly.

6. But yet as much as he is for improving his understanding, he does not affect universal knowledge, as well knowing the vanity of pretending to it, by one whose capacity is no greater and whose life is no longer: Neither is he for filling his head with little things, nor with such great things as do not conduce to his end, and whose impertinency to his business renders them as very trifles to him as the other: Nor will he apply himself to the study of vain and unprofitable sciences, nor yet of such theories as exceed the proportion of his understanding: But as he must be ignorant of great things, so he will not so much as endeavor to know such as are not to be comprehended: Indeed if GOD reveals them, he does not think their being above his understanding, any reason why they should not be believed. But though he believes them, yet he can see no cause, to engage his thoughts or employ his time in the search and study of such things, only to lose himself in unfathomable depths, to the neglect of other matters which he can comprehend, and is more concerned so to do. And for the same cause he declines prying into the hidden scenes of Providence, those secret things that belong to GOD, which, though not absolutely incomprehensible in themselves, yet being locked up in the womb of futurity, are, by that wall of partition, as inaccessible to us as the other.

7. The same wisdom directs him not to study such things as require great expense of time and labor to master them, unless they bring him in an advantage answerable to the time and pains which he bestows upon them. For as he has so little time, and so great an interest depending, he - cannot think it frugal to throw away a moment. Upon the same ground he does not regard what is in reputation, and in the vogue of the world passes for learning, but what is true and real knowledge, and fit to perfect the mind of man..And even in pursuing this he is on his guard, not suffering himself to be transported by an immoderate thirst of it: But as his inquiries into truth are modest, so he is discreet and select in making them, applying himself to those most which are of greatest importance, most serviceable to his moral conduct; especially to the knowledge of GOD and of himself, wherein is contained the sum of human wisdom.

8. In all his studies he takes care to avoid the two great disorders incident to studious men, curiosity and vainglory. Curiosity, which puts them upon useless inquiries, only to please themselves; and vain-glory, which puts them, on many dry and insipid studies, only to please and procure the admiration of others. Nor does he make any knowledge an end, but refers all to the great ends of virtue and happiness: In all his intellectual applications making this his one care, to love GOD, and to be loved by Him.

9. After the regulation of his understanding, the next work of a prudent Christian is, the government of his will and affections. These of themselves are in the utmost disorder, caused by the general corruption of our nature: And unless this is removed, no man can be either good here, or happy hereafter.

10. His first step toward this, is to teach his will to follow in all things, not natural inclination, but the will of GOD revealed to us in his word: For the will of GOD sways more with a prudent Christian than any inclination of his own, which he is ready at all times, and in all cases, to sacrifice to his duty; and his only care is to conform his will to the will and word of GOD, as knowing that GOD, being infinitely wise as well as good, cannot possibly command any thing, but what, upon the whole account, it is best for him to do. Most cheerfully therefore does he depose his own will from the throne, and sets up the will of GOD.

11. Nor is "he less obedient to the providential than to the written will of GOD, Not adhering to any private fancies, opinions or wishes of his own, he absolutely refers himself to GOD, to his gracious and all-wise disposal. He lodges all his concerns in his hands, and is willing he should choose for him; and when he does so, concluding it best that things should be as the Governor of the world would have them, he thankfully accepts his choice, and humbly acquiesces in the wisdom of his Providence: And accordingly, instead of cherishing any thought, or using any language of discontent, he is in all things ready to say with his LORD," Not as I will, but as thou wilt." LORD, thy will was an innocent will, and yet thou didst resign it. How much more should we resign our perverse and corrupt wills

CHAPTER 5:

A Persuasive to the Study of Christian Prudence, with some Advices relating to the Practice of it.

1. HAVING thus laid the principles of Christian prudence, what remains but to persuade men to the study of it And the first consideration I shall offer to recommend the study of this wisdom, is, That it is attainable. Many things employ the search of studious men, which, after all, they can never master, but must sit down, if not with a contented, yet with an unavoidable ignorance of. But it is not so with wisdom: The acquisition of this depends not upon great parts, but upon a willing mind. Speculation indeed is infinite, and the well of truth has no bottom, and besides," Many have nothing to draw with." But wisdom, like a fountain, lies open, and within common reach. Some

care and pains and diligence only it takes to drink of it; an easy price for so precious a treasure. Now this certainty of success is an encouraging motive to search after it in good earnest. Men may seek for silver, and not find it, and search for hid treasures, without being able to break in upon their dark retirements. And yet they search on: How much more should we search for wisdom, when we are sure not to be disappointed in our search

2. But may we not be so in our finding Many things are attainable by our labor, which are not worth our labor to attain. But wisdom is not of those; on the contrary, nothing is so well worth attaining. Wisdom it is that keeps the world in order, and makes living in it a blessing, that is the parent of laws, the foundation of government, and the great upholder and sweetener of all society. Wisdom it is that teaches a man how to obey, and how to govern even that ungovernable creature himself: To moderate his passions, to compose his manners, to behave well in all circumstances of life. In a word, that *, man to know GOD and himself, and by the shining paths of virtue leads him to everlasting glory and happiness.

3. Therefore it is that SOLOMON exhorts us with so passionate an earnestness." With all thy gettings, get wisdom." As much as to say, whatever thou gettest, or with the expense of all thou hast gotten, get wisdom, as being of infinitely more value than all. It is a pearl of so great price, that the merchant who finds it, will buy it with the price of all that he has. And a wise merchant he is who buys it even at this price, for it can never be bought too dear. Honor and greatness may; nay, and so may the whole world, if the price be a man's soul. But wisdom cannot; therefore again," Get wisdom, and with all thy gettings get understanding." If we get wisdom, it is no matter what else we lose. And if we lose it, it is no matter what else we get. And indeed it matters not what we get or lose, so we get that which directs us in the way to happiness, which giveth life to them that have it, and teaches them how to live.

4. Another consideration to persuade us to the serious study of wisdom, is this, that if we do not now apply ourselves to it, we shall hereafter earnestly wish we had. I know hardly any other study, the neglect of which we shall finally repent of. He that has not studied mathematics, suppose, though he may perhaps some time, while he lives, reflect upon himself with some blame for the neglect of such an accomplishment, yet when he comes toward the concluding scene of life, and that of eternity begins to open, I presume he will not then think this a neglect worth repenting of. And so as to other studies. But he who has not studied wisdom, will then most certainly wish he had, and think it the greatest gain, could he exchange all the sciences he is master of, for this one, the science of life. This is the science that receives our last and best approbation, when other things that make a greater show and noise, and which perhaps we liked better when we knew less, do not find so great a share in our esteem. Useless notions, and new systems, and fine-spun theories, will not always please us. The Jays will come when we shall say," We have no pleasure in them." But wisdom will relish with us to the very last, and more at last than ever. When other things leave us, wisdom will stay behind, and more than supply their loss: And when we have outlived the pleasures of the world, then will it be in the greatest esteem with us, as being the only thing of all our acquirements, whose possession and enjoyment too are immortal.

5. When the gaities and follies of life are over, (for folly will not always please,) whenever the more serious entertainments of manhood appear to us as more solemn titles; when covetousness itself, the last folly that forsakes us, because" it begins so late, that it often settles upon the dregs of life, as upon a firm and immoveable ground, when even this cleaving folly shall uncling and drop from us, when the world itself shall be a burden to us: Then shall the remembrance of wisdom be sweet unto us, and we shall delight in her conversation, and every step in her ways will give us more comfort than all the little things of the world. Those who have been strangers to wisdom before, will be ready enough to claim acquaintance with her then, and to say unto wisdom," Thou art my sister, and to call understanding their kinswoman." But she will not then be so forward to own them. And therefore happy is he that has contracted a friendship with her in the days of his youth and strength, that he may not be disowned by her in that hour wherein he most wants her favor; that he may not have wisdom then to learn, when he should be actually wise, and have the benefit and comfort of her light to guide him through the vale of the shadow of death. In order to which, we should always remember that excellent advice of ST. BERNARD,' To rejoice in those things when we are young, which we shall not repent of when we are old.'

6. I have now only to add a few prudential advices relating to the practice of a Christian life. Of which the first shall be that of the Apostle," To walk circumspectly," that is warily, and need fully, with all possible care, caution and exactness. This is such walking as shows we are duly apprehensive of our condition. The danger of which must be allowed to be exceedingly great, since, besides, our own corrupt nature, and the wickedness of the world that surrounds us, we have the prince of darkness for our professed enemy;" even our adversary the Devil who as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." He does not stay till the prey comes in his way, but seeks after it, but walks about seeking who is fit to be made a prey of; whose idleness or whose business, whose temper or constitution, whose age or whose carelessness may give him any advantage. He begins with us very early laying his siege against us in our very infancy. Then he tempts us with sensible objects, and easily increases our natural propensity to them. For reason is then in a dead sleep, and sense altogether awake, being in its greatest perfection, by reason of the fineness of the blood and spirits, and the tenderness of the parts, which easily yielding to the impression of sensible objects, endear them more and more to us, and so confirm that friendship with the world, which is enmity with GOD. This thoughtless age is succeeded by childhood and youth; and then indeed reason begins to awake, but so slowly, that we are all this time, as it were, between sleeping and waking; the weight still hangs upon our temples.

Our passions are much too strong for our weak reason to govern, which accordingly our enemy makes his advantage of and tempts us with the baits of sensuality; with those youthful lusts which it is then hard to fly. This boisterous season also blows over, and is followed by manhood. And now indeed reason is stronger and passion cooler, and so the Devil changes his former bait for that of pride and ambition, whereby himself fell, and wherewith he assaulted even the Son of GOD. Now he lifts us up to, and shows us the grandeur and glory of the

world, and tries to persuade us what a happiness it would be, could we make a part of that glittering scene. Well, but neither will this last always; our sun soon begins to decline, and old age comes on, the winter of our year, or rather the evening of our short day. And now our reason grows heavy and sleepy again, and our passions also flag with it, hang their wings, and make our flight nearer the earth, as not being able to bear up in the higher regions. We are now no longer fit for our former entertainments, and having seen what little dependance there is on the world, having lost some of our friends, and proved the insincerity of others, this experience, together with the natural sinking of our spirits, makes us grow timorous, jealous and distrustful, and solicitous to secure ourselves in this forlorn state, and so we stand fairly disposed for covetousness. And accordingly the Devil now draws us into this snare, which reigns the more absolute over us, as having us almost entirely to itself, without competition from other vices. Thus our adversary is always intent upon our ruin, meeting us at every turn of our life, and suiting his temptations to the several states and conditions of them. And therefore it highly concerns us to walk circumspectly, as knowing both the infinite worth of our souls, and the numberless hazards they are exposed to, from which (next to the grace of GOD) nothing but an extraordinary caution can secure them.

7. And because these hazards are chiefly from sensible objects, my next advice shall be, "To-walk by faith, not by sight;" to order your conversation, not by what you see of this world, but by what you believe of the next. "Not to look at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen; because the things that are seen are temporal," and so do not affect our final state: "But the things that are not seen are eternal," and so the proper objects of an happiness that is never to expire. A Christian then ought to keep his eye always fixed on his happiness; to walk continually in view of this his end, and have it before him as near as he can, in every action and word, in every deliberate step of his Christian progress: Not to content himself with having referred all he does to it once in general; but to renew and repeat the proposal of it, as often as conveniently he can. Beside the habitual reference of his actions to their end, let every prudent Christian be more and more diligent to have an actual regard to it, as far as is possible, in every step of his life. For the having before us that eternal weight of glory, that crown that fadeth not away, must needs quicken our devotion and inflame our zeal, and inspirit us with new life and vigor in the running our Christian course, and help us with ease to overcome all those vain impediments, which the world, the flesh and the Devil throw in our way. Nothing shall be able to separate us from our end, or turn us out of the right way to it, if we keep our eye intent upon it, and have it in our view all the way of our Christian walk. For indeed the excellence of it is so transcendent, that nothing of this world can stand together with it, or shine in its light, any more than a feeble star can shine in the presence of the mid-day sun. The greater light swallows up the less; we must lose the one before we can be dazzled with the other; we must intermit the view of our Chief Good, before any other can appear considerable enough to tempt us.

9. And now we are got into the right way, there is no better means of fixing ourselves there, than to keep toward the middle of it, pretty far within the lines, so as not to tread upon the edges. Not to go to the outside of what is lawful, but rather set ourselves in all our actions at the greatest distance from sin, by abstaining from all the appearances and beginnings of it. But chiefly from the beginnings. The full accomplishments of wickedness we have a horror of; but we have not the same dread of the beginnings, and of the things that have a tendency to gross crimes. So we are easily persuaded to begin; and when we have once made an entrance, the progress grows easier and easier: For the next degree, being but a degree beyond it, carries as little horror in it as the first; and so the next to that, being but a degree farther, carries the like appearance: And so the rest that follow, we measuring every degree, not (as we should do) by all the preceding ones which it contains, but only by the last, which it immediately exceeds, considering it only as a degree farther than that, and so as a small thing, till by degrees we slide unawares into the commission of those sins, which looked frightful, and would have choked us in the lump, but being thus taken by piece-meal are easily swallowed.

10. And no wonder, since the first liberties we take, the first approaches we make to any sin, inflame our passions, raise our appetites, which were before quiet, and increase our desires of the forbidden object; so that our task is now harder than it was at first; and we might much easier have forborne the whole, beginning and all, than forbear making a further progress when we have once begun. And why should we make our duty more difficult and painful than it is? Therefore the wisest way is, not to begin: That being true of all sin, which SOLOMON observes of strife, "The beginning of it is as when one letteth out water," which is easily prevented from running at first, but being once let out, the passage grows more open, and the stream more difficult to command. Therefore, says he, "Leave off contention before it be meddled with," that is, do not meddle with it at all, it being much easier to have nothing to do with it, than to govern yourself in it. They that once begin, are insensibly carried to do what at first they never designed, and then vainly complain that GOD did not preserve them from falling, when they placed their own feet on slippery ground.

11. To conclude. If we will be truly wise, let us set the Gospel and example of CHRIST before us, and endeavor to be wise in our generation, as the men of this world are in theirs, be as diligent in pursuing our true and great end, as they are in pursuing their false and little ones. They are intent upon the present, and solicitous to provide for the short future of an uncertain life. Let us be intent upon providing for that future life which will soon be present, and never past. For this purpose we should retire as much as we can conveniently from the world, and have as little to do with it; we should lay aside every weight and every incumbrance, and not be troubled about many things, that we may the more quietly and entirely attend upon the one thing needful. Not that I plead for a hermit's solitude, not understanding the agreement of such a state to human nature, nor what authority men have thus to bury themselves alive, and to excommunicate themselves from human society. But so much of solitude as disengages us from the affairs and incumbrances of the world, and places us out of the noise, hurry, and bustle of it and out of the way of its temptations, must certainly be of vastly great advantage to a truly Christian life. Being much abroad may teach us to know the world, but retirement only can teach us to know ourselves. For, to know ourselves, we must converse much with ourselves. Let us therefore retire, and when we are alone, let us remember that we are not alone, for GOD is with us. And while we think and act as in his presence, solitude has all the safety of company, without the temptations and interruptions. And here let us think much of eternity, and of our nearness to it, of the future judgment, and the two final sentences of that day, of the glorious things that are spoken of the city of GOD, and unspeakable misery of being for ever banished from his presence; and lastly, of the thoughts which we shall have of all these things when we come to die. Every man is wise then, and has a right sense of things: Let us endeavor to have the same now, as we shall then wish we had, which is the sum of all Christian prudence.

Reflections Upon The Conduct Of Human Life, By Mr. Norris

REFLECTIONS CONDUCT OF HUMAN LIFE; WITH REFERENCE TO LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE.

EXTRACTED FROM MR. NORRIS.

THE PREFACE.

SINCE the great happiness or misery of human life depends wholly upon the right or wrong conduct of it, he that shall point out any of its irregularities or mistakes, is a universal friend, a promoter of the public happiness. And the more severe his censure is, provided it be just, the more serviceable it may be.

Especially, if the irregularities he points out are not only important, frequent and inveterate, but such as he secret and unobserved, and have all along passed under the notion of excellencies. He that reflects upon such misconducts as these, obliges by his discovery as well as reproof.

This consideration has occasioned the following reflections upon the study of learning and knowledge; the greatest faults of which, by a kind of unaccountable superstition, are canonized for virtues.

The truth is, the light that divulges other miscarriages will be sure to hide these. For beside that they are visible only to a few. (Since none can judge of the faults of the learned without learning,) those few that do discern them, have seldom ingenuity enough to acknowledge them. For either they are so proud as not to be willing to own themselves to have been so long under a mistake; or so ill natured that they do not care others should be directed to a better way than they themselves have traveled in.

In the following reflections I have endeavored to mark out some of these less observed misconducts, wherewith I myself have been too long imposed on, and which after all my conviction (so deep are the impressions of early prejudice) I can hardly yet find power to correct. For education is the great bias of human life, and there is this double witchcraft in it, that it is a long time before a man can see any thing amiss in a way he is used to, and when he does, it is not very easy to change it.

I can easily divine how these reflections will be received by some of the rigid votaries of old learning. But if they are of service here and there to an ingenuous and unenslaved spirit, I shall not much regard the magisterial censures of those, whose great and long study has had no better effect upon them, than to make them too wise for conviction.

THE FIRST REFLECTION

Wherein the general Conduct of human Life is taxed, for placing Learning in such Things as are little or Nothing perfective of the Understanding.

1. As there are two faculties in man, understanding and will; so there is a double conduct of human life, intellectual and moral. The moral conduct of men has been continually exposed, ever since preaching and writing have been in the world. But it has fared otherwise with the intellectual, which stands not so fair a mark, nor has been so often hit. Not that it is really less faulty, but because its faultiness is less notorious, lies further in, and must be drawn forth into view by a chain of consequences, which few have either discernment enough to make, or patience enough to attend to.

2. The chief irregularities of it are three, respecting the end, the means, and the degree of affection.

First, The placing learning in such things as are little or nothing perfective of the understanding.

Secondly, The undue and irregular method of prosecuting what is really perfective of it; and

Thirdly, The too importunate pursuit of knowledge in general.

3. First, Men generally place learning in such things as are little or nothing perfective of the understanding. This, I confess, is a severe charge, as it fastens an imputation of folly upon the learned order; and not only so, but in that very thing wherein they think their wisdom consists. Learned men do indeed often, not only own, but affect ignorance in things beside their profession. But to censure them as defective in that one thing they pretend to, to make that their blind side where they think they see clearest, to maintain, that they are not only not really knowing, but that generally they do not so much as know what true knowledge is; this is so high a charge, that even those who may be convinced of the truth, will scarce forgive the boldness, of it.

4. That the truth of it may appear, I shall first briefly observe, what knowledge is perfective of the understanding; and then show, that the generality of the world place learning in that which is not so.

5. And, first, I grant the knowledge of all those truths is perfective of the understanding, which are the matter of those arts and sciences, that are built upon stable and im-moveable foundations, such as divinity, metaphysics, geometry, together with those unchangeable rules

and measures of reason and consequence, which lead us to all other knowledge, and are the subject of that art we term Logic. And accordingly I allow him to be a truly learned and knowing man, who has furnished his mind with bright and clear ideas, lodged them orderly and regularly in his head, and settled the relations and consequences of one to another. He that is able to think clearly, (for so much a man knows, as he understands distinctly, and no more,) to judge truly and solidly, and to reason dependently and consequentially.

6. But this is not the measure which the generality of the world has thought fit to proceed by. Learning is generally placed in a sort of knowledge, widely different from this. The world does not esteem him a learned man, whose learning has cleared his understanding, who is arrived at distinctness of conception, and is a thorough master of notion and discourse. No, it will cost great pains, great labor of mind, and closeness of thinking to attain to this. This therefore must not be learning, but something else must, that is easier to be attained, though little or nothing perfective of the understanding. And in such knowledge it is generally placed.

7. For, first, it is reckoned a notable point of learning to understand variety of languages. This alone gives a man a title to learning, without one grain of sense; and on the other side, let a man be an angel for notion and discourse, yet unless he can express the same thought in, variety of words, he may go for a rational, but will by no means be esteemed a learned man. Now is it not a strange thing, that so much stress should be laid on so very a trifle For what am I the better for being able to tell, what it is o'clock in twenty languages What does this signify to the perfection of my understanding Words are purely in order to sense; and are therefore of no farther value, than as they help either to learn or to communicate. Therefore, to affect them for themselves, is to turn the means into the end, than which nothing is more absurd. And yet this vain piece of pedantry has prevailed all the world over, and with some to that degree, that they have confounded ideas with words, and have made all science to terminate in the latter. Thus Ma. HOBBS makes reason to be nothing else, but Sequela Nommum, a well-ordered train of words.' Never certainly was a plainer argument of the great degeneracy of mankind. And though all the multipliers of tongues are not comprehended under this latter charge, yet it may concern them (o consider, how great a folly it must be to place learning in that, which is one of the greatest curses upon earth, and which shall utterly cease in heaven.

8. Again, it passes for an extraordinary part of learning to understand history; that, is, in other words, to know what a company of silly creatures called men, have been doing for almost these six thousand years. Now, what is my understanding the perfecter for this I deny not, that there are some matters of fact, as the more remarkable turns of ecclesiastical history, and the greater revolutions of the civil world, which are of moment to be known; because, by discovering to us the conduct of Divine Providence, they supply us with occasions of acknowledging and adoring the wisdom and goodness of GOD. Neither do I deny, that there are many other historical passages, which may be of moment to be known; though not as perfective of our understanding, but as touching our interest. And so it may be of moment to me to know, the clock has struck one, if I have made an assignation at that time; but sure the bare naked theory of the clock's having

struck one, will add but little to my intellectual perfection. The most trivial matter of fact in the world is worth knowing, if I have any concern depending upon it; and the greatest without that, is utterly insignificant. So that it is not from perfecting of our understanding, but from the relation they have to our interest, that these things-deserve to be known.

9. I would desire the great magnifiers of history only to answer me this one question. Suppose such and such matters of fact, in the knowing which they perhaps glory more, than the actors themselves did in the doing them, had never been done Suppose FABIUS had never weathered out HANNIBAL by delays, nor CYRUS taken Babylon by draining the river into the ditches: What diminution would this have been to the perfection of their understanding The}' cannot say it would have been any. And why then should the knowing them, now they are done, be reckoned an addition to it And yet we find it is so, and that men study these things, not only for their use, (that we allow,) but for their roc-re theory, placing learning in such hit-toy as hat, nothing to commend it, but only that it tells you, such and such things were done. Of this impertinent sort is the greatest part of the Roman and Grecian history; which, had not the world voted it for learning, would no more concern a man to know, than, that a bird has dropped a feather upon the Pyrenean mountains.

10. Again, it passes for a notable piece of learning to understand chronology: To be able to adjust the intervals and distances of time, when such a man flourished, when such an action was done, and the like. Now I deny not, but it may concern some to know these things, who have-any interest depending upon it. It may concern some to know, for instance, that there is a twofold date of the victory at Actium, the one reckoned from the fight there, the other from the taking of Alexandria. But however useful it may be to know this, yet certainly as to any intellectual perfection that accrues by it, it must needs be a very unedifying stuffage of the head; although it is so generally accounted a great accomplishment and enrichment of it.

11. There are many other things which the humor of the world has turned up for learning, "which ignorance will never be the better for, and which wisdom does not need. Thus it is counted learning to have tumbled over a multitude of books, especially if great ones, and old ones, and obscure ones; but most of all, if manuscripts, the recovery of one of which is reckoned so much added to the commonwealth of learning, as they call it. Hence a well-read man signifies the very same as a learned man, in most men's dictionaries; and by well-read they do not mean one that has read well, that has cleared and improved his understanding by his reading, but only one that has read much, though perhaps he has puzzled and confounded his notions by doing so. Thus again, it goes for learning, to be acquainted with men's opinions, especially of the ancients; to know that this or that philosopher held, what this or that author says, though perhaps lie sayb nothing but what is either absurd, or obviously true. What, for instance, can be more absurd, than that fancy of EMPEDOCLES, that there are two semicircles compassing the earth betwixt them, one of fire, the other of air; and that the former makes day, and the latter night And yet to know this is learning! What can be more obviously true, than that grave doctrine of ARISTOTLE, that privation must go before the introduction of the form in all generation Or, that a thing must lose one form, before it can take another And yet it is learning to know that he taught this! To know the thing is nothing; but to know that ARISTOTLE taught it, that is learning! Nay farther, though I am able to demonstrate the circulation of the blood, or the motion of the earth, yet I shall not be admitted into the order of the learned, unless I am able to tell, that COPERNICUS discovered the one, and HARVEY the other. So much more learned an achievement it is, to know opinions than things! And accordingly those are reckoned the most learned authors, who have given the greatest specimens of this kind of knowledge. Thus PICUS MIHANDULA is more admired for - his examination of the doctrine of the Pagans, than any of them were for what they delivered.

12. Now what an unreasonable imposition is this, that though a man can think and write like an angel himself, yet he must, not be accounted a man of learning, unless he can tell what every whimsical writer has said before him! And how hard will it fall upon those, whose lot is to breathe in the last ages of the world, who must be accountable for all the whims and extravagancies of so many centuries.' And yet this is made so great a part of learning, that the learning of most men lies in books rather than in things. And among authors, where one writes upon things, there are twenty write upon books. Nay, some carry this humor so far, that it is thought learning to know the very title of books and their editions, with the time and place when and where they were printed. And many there are who value themselves not a little on this mechanical faculty, though they know no more of what is in them than they do of what is written in the rolls of destiny.

13. From this placing of learning in the knowledge of books, proceeds that ridiculous vanity of multiplying quotations, which is also reckoned another piece of learning, though they are used so impertinently, that there can be no other end in them, but to show, that the author has read such a book. And yet it is no such convincing evidence of that neither. It being neither new nor difficult, for a man that is resolved upon it, to quote such authors as he never read nor saw. And were it not too odious a truth, I could name several of those author-mongers who pass for men of shrewd learning.

14. These and many other such things (for it were endless to reckon up all) are by the majority of the world voted for learning, and in these we spend our education, our study and our time, though they, are no way perfective of our understanding. So that in short, the charge of this reflection amounts to thus much, that learning is generally

placed in the knowledge of such things, as the intellectual perfection of man is little or nothing concerned in.

THE SECOND REFLECTION.

Wherein the general Conduct of Human Life is taxed for using- undue and Irregular Methods, in prosecuting what is really perfective of the Understanding.

1. IN THE preceding reflection the conduct of human life was. censured, for placing learning in what is not perfective of the understanding. In the present, it is charged with pursuing what is so, in an undue and irregular manner. The other was an error about the end; this is an error about the means: Which are the two hinges upon which all prudence and imprudence turn.

2. That the truth of this charge may appear, we are first to determine, what is the right method of prosecuting that learning, which is really perfective of the understanding. And this, no doubt, must be an application to Him," from whom every good and perfect gift descended!." This is the right and the only right method of inquiry after that truth which is perfective of our understanding. For GOD is the region of truth, and" in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." This is that great and universal oracle lodged in every man's breast, whereof the ancient Urim and Thummim was an expressive emblem. This we all may and must consult, if we would enrich our minds with such knowledge as is perfective of the understanding. This is the true method of being truly wise. And it is no other method than what we are advised to by the substantial wisdom of GOD." Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither. I am the light of the world: He that follows me, or (as the word more properly signifies) he that keepeth company with me, walketh not in darkness."

3. There are three ways of doing this; the first is, by attention; the second, by purity of heart and life; the third, by prayer. The first, attention, MALEBRANCHE calls the natural prayer of the soul to GOD for farther illumination. For indeed it is a silent address and application of the soul to the Fountain of light and truth; it is an interrogation of the Divine Oracle, the Eternal Word of GOD, and a patient waiting upon Him for an answer. It is, in a word, an act of intellectual devotion to the Father of Lights, and such as, if unfolded, bespeaks him in the words of the royal supplicant," Give me wisdom that sitteth by thy throne."

4. This is the same with thinking or meditating; and as it is the first, so it is the directest and most compendious method of science. For this is to go directly to the Springhead, to the lucid Fountain of Good. It is to fix the eye of the mind upon the intellectual sun, which must needs be the most ready way to be enlightened. The more heed-fully we attend to this, we shall not only discover the more, but also more clearly see what we discover. So a man that casts only a short careless glance upon the milky way, sees only a confused whiteness. But when he fixes his eye upon it, with steadiness and delay of application, he begins to discern it more distinctly, and a new star every moment rises under his inspection: And still the harder he looks, the more he discerns, till he is satiated with the brightness and multitude of light.

5. This was the method of the inventors of arts and sciences: They made their way by dint of thinking. This is the method that has been used ever since, by the greatest improvers of them; such as BACON, BOYLE, HARVEY, MALJSBRANCHE, &c. And we may safely prophesy, if ever any extraordinary advancement be made in them hereafter, it will be done by thinking.

6. The second way is, by purity of heart and life: For as vice not only proceeds from ignorance, but also causes it, by besotting and clouding the understanding; so purity not only proceeds from knowledge, but also produces it, making the soul see more clearly and distinctly. And the same method is recommended in Scripture," Wisdom," says the wise man," will not enter into a polluted spirit." So the angel to DANIEL," Many shall be purified and made white, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." To this purpose too is that of our LORD, above repeated;" He that followeth me, walk-eth not in darkness;" the purity of his heart is a light to his understanding.

7. But to represent this more clearly: There are two ways whereby purity of heart serves to the acquirement of knowledge; by natural efficacy, and by the Divine blessing. And first, by natural efficacy, either by clearing the medium, or by assisting the faculty. As to the former, we are assured, not only that the soul now sees through a medium, and that this medium is the body, but likewise that the grossness of this medium hinders the sight of the soul. Whence it follows, that whatever helps this medium, helps the sight of the soul. And this purity does; especially that eminent part of it which consists in charity and temperance. For first, it composes the passions, especially that of lust, by that the animal spirits, and by that the blood. For the motion of the passions ferments the spirits, and the fermentation of the

spirits agitates the blood, and by that agitation raises all the feculent and drossy parts of it, and makes it like a troubled fountain, thick and muddy. And therefore it is that men in any passion cannot reason so clearly, as when they are in more quiet and silence of spirit. But by purity all this disturbance is allayed, the passions are becalmed, the spirits fixed, the fountain of the blood cleared up, and so all the inner part of the glass, through which we see, becomes more bright and transparent, more apt to transmit the rays of light to the soul, which consequently sees more clearly through it.

8. But this is not all: For purity clears the outward part of the glass too. First, by consequence, because the finer the spirits and blood are, the finer will be the threads of the outward veil also. Then more directly; because temperance refines and subtilizes the texture of the body, and diminishes its bulk and grossness, and unloads the soul of a good part of that burden, which not only presses down her aspirations, but also hinders her sight.

9. And as purity thus clears the medium, so it also assists the faculty. And that by the same general way, by composing, the passions, which otherwise not only trouble and thicken the medium, but also divide and disperse the faculty. For the more things a man desires, the more he will be engaged to think on; and the more he thinks on at once, the more languid and confused will his conceptions be. But purity, by composing the passions, contracts the desires, and by contracting these, it contracts also the thoughts; whereby a man is reduced to a greater unity, simplicity and recollection of mind; and having but few thoughts to divide him, is the better able to think clearly.

10. Purity of heart serves to the acquirement of knowledge; secondly, by the Divine blessing. It invites not only the HOLY SPIRIT, but also the FATHER and the SON, even the whole Godhead, to come and dwell in the soul. This we are assured of from our LORD'S own mouth: "He that loves me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him." And again, "If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The chaste and good soul shall not only be loved by GOD, but be also of his council and privacy. This is the beloved disciple, who has the privilege to lean upon the bosom of his LORD, and to be admitted to his most secret communications. And therefore says the Psalmist, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him." And of ANANIAS, AZABIAS, and MISAEEL, who refused to defile themselves with the King's meat, it is said, "That GOD gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom."

11. The third and last way of consulting GOD is by prayer. This also is a method which the Scripture advises us to. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of GOD, who giveth to every man liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." And this we know was the method whereby the wisest of men obtained his unparalleled wisdom. For as wisdom was his choice, so the method of his seeking and gaining it was by prayer.

12. Thus have I designed, and by Scripture and reason proved, what is the right method of prosecuting that truth which is perfective of the understanding. And now I think there needs not many words to show, that as learning is commonly placed in what is not perfective of it, so what is so, is generally prosecuted by undue methods. For whereas the first method of acquiring it is by attention or thinking, this is generally so little regarded, that few men think less, for the most part, than they who are engaged in the professed study of knowledge. This they do not reckon any part of study, nor any progress in the stage of learning, but only a graver way of being idle. It is then only they study, when they are hanging their heads over an old musty folio, and stuffing their memories with grey sentences and venerable sayings. And thus they spend their time and their pains, and having scrambled through a company of books, (most of which perhaps were written to as little purpose as they are read,) they think themselves learned men, and the world is too often of their opinion, though they have not made themselves master of any sense or notion, nor are able to demonstrate one single truth' upon solid principles, and in a consequential process.

13. And this is the method not only of those who misplace learning, but also of the most of those who place it right. Even these do not generally think for it, but read for it; seek in not in their souls, but in books. I deny not that reading is one way to knowledge; but then it is only by accident, as it is a help to thinking. And therefore thinking is the only thing to be regarded even in reading; for reading, as such, is nothing. And then we read to most purpose, when we are thereby most enabled to think. So that thinking is the immediate end of reading, as understanding is of thinking. And yet this method is generally so much inverted, that the main stress is laid upon reading.

Nothing but read, read, as long as eyes and spectacles will hold; no matter whether the head be clear, so it be but full.

14. Again, whereas purity of heart and life is another method of attaining true knowledge, it is a sad as well as just observation, that this is not only neglected by those who sit down contentedly in ignorance, but also by the generality of those few that addict themselves to the improvement of their minds. Nay, these, in proportion to their number, seem more guilty in this respect than the others; and nothing is so common, as to see men of famed learning, who are yet very corrupt in their tempers and lives. Whence some have fancied learning an enemy to religion, and cried up ignorance as the mother of devotion. And though their conclusion be notoriously absurd, yet it must be owned, the ground on which they build it is too true. Men famed for learning are often as infamous for living; and many that study hard to furnish their heads, are yet very negligent in purifying their hearts: Not considering, that there is a moral as well as a natural communication between them; and that they are concerned to be pure in heart and life, not only upon the common account in order to happiness hereafter, but even in order to their own particular end here.

15. Then, lastly, whereas another method of learning is prayer; the generality of Students do not apply themselves to this at all. Pray indeed (it is to be hoped) they do for other things, which they think lie more out of their reach; but as for learning, they think they can compass this well enough by their own industry, and the help of good books, without being beholden to the assistance of heaven. But did they attentively consider, that GOD is Truth, it is not to be imagined they would be so indifferent in using prayer, or any of the preceding methods of consulting GOD for his own light.

Wherein the general Conduct of Human Life is taxed with too importunate a Pursuit of Knowledge in general.

1. HAVING passed the two first stages of our intellectual conduct, that of the end and that of the means, and reflected on the irregularities of each, I come now to the third and last, which consisteth in the choice of the object, or of the method to it, but in the degree of affection wherewith it is prosecuted. And this part of our conduct is as irregular and faulty, if not more so, than either of the former: And the fault of it is, a too importunate pursuit of knowledge in general.

2. This charge is of a larger extent than either of the preceding: Those concerning such only, as either misplace the object, or mistake the method of learning. But not only they who err in the placing of learning, or in the way to it, but even they who are right in both, come under this censure; they all agree in pursuing it too importunately.

3. In order to make out the truth of this charge, it will be necessary first to consider, how far it becomes man to employ himself in the prosecution of knowledge; and then it will be easy to determine, whether our general pursuit of it be immoderate or no. Now for the determination of the former, let us observe the present state of man, the posture wherein he now stands.

4. And, First, The utmost knowledge man can arrive at in this world, by his utmost endeavors, is very inconsiderable.

GOD indeed has given us reason enough to distinguish us from the brute creation, and we may improve it so far, as to distinguish ourselves from one another; And so one man may deserve to be called learned and knowing, in comparison of another that is less so. But absolutely speaking, the most that any or all of us either know or can know, is of little consideration. What we know of GOD is but little; for as the Apostle says, "We see through a glass darkly: "What we know of ourselves perhaps is less, and what we know of the world about us, is not much." We have seen but a few of GOD'S works,' and we understand yet fewer. There are almost an infinite number of things which we never so much as thought of: And of most things we Conceive very darkly and uncertainly; and there is not one thing from the greatest to the least, which we do or can understand thoroughly. Those that apply their whole study to any one thing, can never come to the end of that; for not only every science, but every particular of each has its unmeasurable depths and recesses. It is confessed by a great inquirer into the nature of antimony, (as it is related by MR. BOYLE,)' That it is impossible for one man to understand thoroughly that single mineral only.' And if a man cannot understand all of so little, how little must he understand of all Suppose farther, that all the knowledge of all the learned were put together, it would weigh but light. For what one art or science is there, that is brought to any tolerable perfection And if the common stock be so little, how small a pittance is it that must fall to every particular man's share And where is that man, who, after all his poring and studying, is able to answer all the questions, I will not say which GOD put to JOB, but which may be asked him by the next idiot he meets

5. It is superfluous, as well as endless, to display the particulars of our ignorance; though indeed, when all accounts are cast up, that will be found to be our best knowledge. This only in general, our life is so short, our progress in learning so slow, and learning itself so long and tedious, and what we do and can know so very little, that the Sceptics had much more reason to conclude from the disability of our faculties, and the slightness of our attainments, than from the uncertainty and instability of truth, that there is no knowledge.

6. But, Secondly, If it were possible for us to attain a considerable measure of knowledge, yet our life is so short and so encumbered, that we could make but little of the enjoyment of it. All the morning of our days JS spent in the preliminaries of learning, in mastering words and terms of art, wherein there is nothing but toil and drudgery. And before we can taste any of thy fruits of the tree of knowledge, before we can relish what is rational, our sun is got into the meridian, and then it presently begins to decline, and our learning with it. Our light, our strength, and our time, make haste to consume; nothing increases now but the shadows, that is, our ignorance and darkness of mind; and while we consider and look about us, the sun sets, and all is concluded in the dark shadow of death. But often the sun is intercepted by a cloud before it sets, and we live backward again, grow weak and childish, silly and forgetful, and unlearn faster than we learned. Or if it chance to shine bright to the last, then we grow too wise for ourselves, and reject the greatest part of what we had learned before, as idle and insignificant.

7. Thirdly, There is no necessity of being so wonderfully learned and knowing here. It is neither necessary, as enjoined by GOD, nor as a means to any considerable end. We can be good and we can be happy without it. And lest any advantages in our after-state should be alleged, this makes it "more unnecessary that any consideration besides. For though we are never so unlearned now, yet if we know enough to do our duty, we shall in a short time arrive at such a degree of knowledge as is requisite to our supreme perfection, to which our present learning cannot add, and which our present ignorance will not diminish. Perhaps not immediately upon our discharge from the body, though even there must be a vast enlargement of our understanding; but doubtless, when we are admitted to the vision of GOD, we shall then commence instantaneously wise and learned, and be fully possessed of the tree of knowledge, as well as of the tree of life. For then that glass, through which we now see darkly, shall be laid aside, and the field of truth shall be clearly displayed before us. And though even then there shall be degrees of knowledge, yet the variety of this dispensation shall not proceed by the degree of our knowledge in this life, but by another measure. For,

8. Fourthly. Though there is no necessity of our being so learned and knowing, yet there is of our being good and virtuous. This is necessary, both as commanded by GOD, and as a means of our final perfection: And besides, it is necessary, now, there being no other opportunity for it. If we do not know here, -we may know hereafter, and infallibly shall, if we are but good here; but if we are not good here, we shall neither be good, happy, nor knowing hereafter. The main opportunity for knowledge is after life; the only opportunity of being good is now: And if we take care to improve this, we are secure of the other; but if this is neglected, all is lost. This, therefore, is indispensably necessary; and it is the only thing that is so: And it is necessary now; necessary not only to our happiness in general, but also to our intellectual happiness in particular. For,

9. Lastly, Thus stands the case between GOD and man. Man was made in a state of innocence and perfection, in perfect favor and communion with GOD, his true good, and in a capacity so to continue. From this excellent state he willfully fell, and by his fall so disabled himself, that he could not, by his own strength, repent, and so provoked GOD, that though he could have repented, yet he could not have been pardoned without satisfaction made to the Divine justice. This satisfaction man was not able to make, nor any other creature for him.

Whereupon GOD in great mercy ordained a Mediator, his own SON, GOD and man, between himself and his lapsed creature, who, by the sacrifice of himself, should effect two things, answerable to the double necessity of man: First, make repentance available, which otherwise would not have been so; and, Secondly, merit grace for him, that he might be able to repent. And this is what is meant by the restoration or redemption of man, which thus far is universal and unconditional.

10. But still, notwithstanding all that this Mediator has done for him, man is only so far restored as to be put into a pardonable, reconcilable state: He is yet only in a capacity or possibility of pardon and reconciliation, which is then, and then only, reduced to act, when he truly believes, that is, with such a faith as is productive of all inward and outward holiness; with which he may, without which he cannot be saved, notwithstanding CHRIST has died to save him: For the design of his death was not to make holiness unnecessary, but to make it available; not to procure a privilege of being saved without it, but that we might be saved with it. If this qualification be wanting, we shall be so far from being any thing advantaged from the redemption purchased by our Mediator, that we shall be accountable for it, to the great aggravation both of our guilt and misery. It therefore highly concerns man to improve with all diligence this great and only opportunity, of adorning his mind with all Christian perfections; since, <with these, he may be happy in all his capacities, and without them, he shall not only fall into a state of unutterable misery, but be also accountable for the possibility he had of escaping it, for perversely neglecting so great salvation, so glorious an opportunity of being saved.

11. These things being premised concerning the present state of man: First, That he can know but very little; Secondly, That the enjoyment of that little in a short and encumbered life, is by no means answerable to the labor of acquiring it; Thirdly, That there is no necessity of such a deal of learning and knowledge, either as to this world or the next, and that ere long he shall have his fill of knowledge in the beatific vision, one glance whereof shall instruct him more than an eternal poring on books, and undistinguish the greatest doctor from the most ignorant peasant; Fourthly, That there is an absolute necessity of his being holy, this being the condition not only of his happiness in general, but also of the accomplishment of his understanding in particular, and that now is the only opportunity for it; Lastly, That the attainment of happiness upon this condition, was the purchase of his SAVIOR'S death, who has also merited grace for his assistance in the performance of it; which, if he neglect, he shall not only miss of happiness, but also be answerable for so dear an opportunity of gaining it. From these premises, it will, I think, follow with no less than mathematical evidence,

12. First. That knowledge is not the thing for which GOD designed man in this station, nor consequently the end of his bestowing upon him those intellectual powers which he has.

Secondly. That the end for which GOD did design man in this station, and the reason why he bestowed those powers upon him was, that he might so serve Him here, as to be rewarded with perfect knowledge hereafter; And, Thirdly, That the principal care and concern of man, both for his own interest, and out of compliance with the design of GOD, ought to be, to live a Christian life, to accomplish the moral part of his nature, to subdue his passions, to wean himself from the love of the world, to study purity of heart and life, in one word, "To perfect holiness in the fear and love of GOD;" and, in particular, that he ought to pursue knowledge no farther than as it is conducive to virtue.

13. This, therefore, is the measure to be always observed in our prosecution of knowledge. We are to study only, that we may be good, and consequently to prosecute such knowledge only as has an aptness to make us so, that which the Apostle calls, "The truth which is after godliness." Whatever knowledge we prosecute beside this, or further than it is conducive to this end, though it be, absolutely considered, never so excellent and perfective of our understanding, yet with respect to the present posture and station of man, it is a culpable curiosity, an unaccountable vanity, and only a more solemn and laborious way of being idle and impertinent.

14. And this will be found, if well examined, to be nothing different from the censure of the wise Preacher, "I gave my heart to know wisdom," says he, "and I perceived, that this also is vanity and vexation of spirit." Not that he now first applied himself to the study of wisdom. No, he had been inspired with that before, and by the help of it had discovered the vanity of all other things. But that wisdom which saw through all other things, did not as yet perceive the vanity of itself. He therefore now gave his heart to know wisdom, that is, to reflect upon it, and to consider whether this might be excepted from his general censure, and struck out of the scroll of vanities. And upon deep reflection, he found that it could not, and that even this also was as much a vanity as any of the rest. Not that this proposition is to be understood absolutely, but with respect to the present posture of man. Neither can it be understood of all knowledge even in this life; some knowledge being necessary to qualify him for happiness in the next. It must, therefore, be understood of all knowledge which contributes not to that great end. So that with these two necessary limitations, the sense of it is plainly this, that to man in this present juncture, all knowledge which does not contribute to the interest of his after-state, is vanity and vexation of spirit.

15. For to what purpose should we study so much, since after all we can know so little. Since our life is as much too short for enjoying that little knowledge we have, as for compassing what we would have; and withal, since there lies no manner of obligation or necessity upon us to do thus. But (which is what I would most of all inculcate) to what purpose imaginable should we be so vehement in the pursuit of learning, of any learning but what is of use to the conduct of life, considering these two things, First, That it is but to stay a little while, and we shall have all that knowledge gratis, which we so unsuccessfully drudge for here, to the neglect of more important exercises; and, Secondly, That there is such an absolute necessity of being good, and that this short uncertain life is the only time for it, which, if neglected, this great work must be undone for ever. Upon the former consideration, this studious bookish humor is like laying out a great sum of money to purchase an estate, which, after one weak, dropping life, will of course fall into hand. Upon the latter, it is as if a man that was riding post upon business of life and death, should, as he passes through a wood, stand still to listen to the singing of a nightingale, and so forget the only business of his journey.

16. It is most certain, the cases here supposed are as great instances of folly as can well be conceived. And yet (however it comes to pass that we are not sensible of it) it is equally certain that we do the very same, that we are too much concerned in the application; and that to most of us it may be truly said, "Thou art the man!"

17. For what difference is there between him who now labors and toils for that knowledge, which in a little time he shall be easily and fully possessed of, and him that dearly buys an estate, which would otherwise come to him after a short interval Only this; that he who buys the estate, though he might have spared his money, however gets what he laid it out for. His expense indeed was needless, but not in vain. Whereas he that drudges in the pursuit of knowledge, not only toils for that which in a short time he shall have, and in abundance, but which he cannot compass, and so undergoes a vain as well as needless labor.

18. Again, What difference is there between him, who when he is upon business of life and death, shall alight from his horse, and stand to hear a nightingale sing; and him who having an eternity of happiness to secure, and only this point of time to do it in, shall yet turn virtuoso, and set up for learning and curiosity It is true, the nightingale sings well, and it were worth while to stand still and hear her, were I disengaged from more concerning affairs; but not when I am upon life and death. And so knowledge is an excellent thing, and would deserve my study and time, had I any to spare; but not when I have so great an interest as that of my final state depending upon the good use of it. My business now is not to be learned, but to be good.

19. For is my life so long, am I so overstocked with time, or is my depending interest so little, or so easily secured, that I can find leisure for unnecessary curiosities Is this conduct agreeable to the present posture of man, whose entrance into this world, and whose whole stay in it, is purely in order to another state Or would any one imagine this to be the condition of man by such a conduct Shall a prisoner, who has but a few days allowed him to make a preparation for his trial, spend that little opportunity in cutting and carving, and such like mechanical contrivances Or would any one imagine such a man to be in such a condition, near a doubtful trial of life and death, whom coming into a prison he should find so employed And yet is there any thing more absurd in this, than to have a man, who has so great a concern upon his hands, as the preparing for eternity, all busy and taken up with quadrants and telescopes, furnaces, syphons, and air-pumps

20. When we would expose any signal impertinence, we commonly illustrate it by die example of ARCHIMEDES; who was busy in making mathematical figures on the sands of Syracuse, while the city was stormed by MARCELLUS, and so, though particular orders were given for his safety, lost his life by his unseasonable study. Now, I confess there was absurdity enough in this instance, to consign it over to posterity: But had ARCHIMEDES been a Christian, I should have said, that the main of his impertinence did not lie here, in being mathematically employed when the enemy was taking the city; but in laying out his thoughts and time in so unconcerning a study, while he had no less a concern upon him, than the securing his eternal interest, which must be done now or never. Nothing certainly is an impertinence if this be not, to hunt after knowledge in such a juncture as this!

21. Many other proceedings in the conduct of life, are condemned as vanity and impertinence, though not half so inconsistent with the character of man, nor so disagreeable to his present posture. The pens of moral writers have been all along employed against them who spent their short and uncertain lives, which ought to be spent in pursuing an infinitely higher interest, in gaping up and down after honor and preferments, in long and frequent attendances at court, in raising families, in getting estates, and the like. These are condemned not only for their particular viciousness, as crimes of ambition and covetousness, but for what they have all in common, as they are misspendings of time, and unconcerning employments.

22. Now I would fain know, whether any of these be more expensive of our time, more remote from the main business of life, and consequently more impertinent, than to, be busily employed in the niceties and curiosities of learning And whether a man that loiters away six weeks in court-attendances, be not every whit as unaccountably employed, as he that spends the same time in solving a mathematical question, as Mr. DBS CARTES in one of his epistles confesses himself to have done Why should the prosecution of learning be the only thing excepted from the vanities, and impertinences of life

23. And yet so it is. All other unconcerning employments are cried down merely for being so, as not consistent with the present state of man, with the character he now bears. This alone is not content with the reputation of innocence, but stands for positive merit and excellence. To say a man is a lover of knowledge, and a diligent inquirer after truth, is thought almost as great an encomium as you can give him; and the time spent in the study, though in the search of the most impertinent truth, is reckoned almost as laudably employed as that in the chapel. It is learning only that is allowed (so inconsistent with itself is human judgment) not only to divide, but to devour the greatest part of our short life; and that is the only thing which with credit and public allowance stands in competition with the study of virtue: Nay, by the most is preferred before it, who had rather be accounted learned than pious.

24. But is not this a strange competition We confess that knowledge is a glorious excellence. Yet rectitude of will is a far greater excellence than brightness of understanding; and to be good, is a more glorious perfection than to be wise and knowing, this being if not the only, certainly the principal difference between an angel and a Devil.' It is far better, (to use the expression of Mr. POIRET,) like an infant without much reasoning", to love much, than, like the Devil, to reason much without love.'

25. But suppose knowledge were a more glorious excellence than it is; suppose it were a greater perfection than virtue; yet still this competition would be utterly against reason; since we cannot have the former now in any measure, and shall have it hereafter without measure: But the latter we may have now, (for we may love much, though we cannot know much,) and cannot have it hereafter. Now the question is, whether we ought to be more solicitous for that intellectual perfection, which we cannot have here, and shall have hereafter; or that moral perfection which we may have here, and cannot have hereafter And I think we need not consult an oracle, or conjure up a spirit, to be resolved.

26. This consideration alone is sufficient to justify the measure we have prescribed for our intellectual conduct, that we ought to prosecute knowledge no farther than as it conduces to virtue; and consequently, that whenever we study to any other purpose, or in any other degree than this, we are unaccountably, impertinently, I may "add, sinfully employed. For this is the whole of man," To fear GOD and keep his commandments," the whole of man in this station particularly, and consequently this ought to be the scope of all his studies and endeavors.

27. And accordingly it is observable, that the Scripture, whenever it makes mention of wisdom, with any mark of commendation, always means by it either religion itself, or such knowledge as has a direct influence upon it. Remarkable to this purpose is the 28th chapter of JOB; where having run through several instances of natural knowledge, he adds, "But where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding" As much as to say, that in none of the other things mentioned, did consist the wisdom of man. Then it follows, "Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth says, It is not in me; and the sea says, It is not in me." Not in the depths of learning, nor in the recesses of speculation," Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living. Destruction and death say, We have heard of the fame thereof with our ears;" as much as to say, that after this life, and then only, unless perhaps about the hour of death, men begin to have a true sense and lively relish of this wisdom. But in the mean time," GOD understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof." And unto man he said," Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding!" To man he said: Had it been to another creature, suppose an angel, in a state of security and confirmation, he would perhaps have recommended for wisdom the study of nature, and the arcana of philosophy. But having to do with man, a probationary, unfixed creature, that shall be either happy or miserable eternally, according as he demeans himself in this short time of trial, the only wisdom he advises to such a creature in such a station, is to study religion and a good life.

28. From authority let us descend to example: And two I would particularly recommend, of men both eminently wise and learned; I mean MOSES and ST. PAUL. The latter professedly declares, "I determine to know nothing but JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified." And the former, complaining of the gross ignorance of his people, breaks out into this passionate wish: "O that they were wise.' that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

29. MOSES had been bred a scholar as well as a courtier, and was well instructed in all the secrets of philosophy. And besides the advantages of PHARAOH'S court, he had GOD himself for his Tutor; he had conversed personally with his Maker, and therefore most needs be supposed to know what was true wisdom. But he does not make it consist in courtly education, or the mysteries of philosophy; but in considering our latter end. He wishes that his people were wise; and to this end does not wish, that they were as well-bred, or as learned as himself, but only that they understood this, this one thing, that they would consider their latter end,. This he makes the summary and abstract of all wisdom. Not unlike PLATO, who defines philosophy,' the theory of death.'

30. And here, if a short digression may be dispensed with, I would observe, how much PLATO is in the right, and what an excellent part of wisdom it is, to consider death seriously- To make this distinctly appear, I shall show First, That the consideration of death is the most proper exercise for a wise man; and Secondly, That it is the most compendious way of making him wise that is not so.

31. First, It is the most proper exercise for a wise man. Wisdom consists in a due estimation of things; which then are duly estimated, when they are rated, both as they are in themselves, and as they are in relation to us. If they are great and extraordinary in themselves, they deserve to be considered for their own sakes; if they nearly relate to us, they deserve to be considered for ours. And on both these accounts, death and its consequences are highly deserving a wise man's thoughts.

32. For, First, they are in themselves great and extraordinary transactions, and as such, deserve the attentive consideration, even of a stander-by, of any other indifferent being, suppose an angel; even though he were no otherwise concerned in it, than as it is a great event, a noble and wonderful scene of Providence. On this single account, death is as fit a subject for the contemplation of a wise man, as any in nature.

33. Or if there be within the sphere of nature, things of a greater appearance, yet there is none wherein man is so nearly concerned: Since on this depends, his eternal happiness or ruin. Nothing deserves so much to be considered by him. Whether therefore we regard the greatness of the thing itself, or its greatness with respect to us, the consideration of death is as proper an exercise as a wise man can be employed in.

34. And as it is so fit an employment for him that is wise already, so, Secondly, it is the most compendious way of making him wise that is not so. For all wisdom is in order to happiness; and to be truly wise, is to be wise unto salvation. Whatever knowledge contributes not to this, is quite besides the mark. It is, as the Apostle calls it," Science falsely so called." The knowledge itself is vain, and the study of it impertinent.

35. Now the only way to happiness is a good life; and consequently all wisdom being in order to happiness, that is the true, and the only true wisdom, that serves to the promoting it. That therefore is the most compendious way of making a man wise, which soonest makes him good. And nothing does this so soon and so well, as the serious and habitual consideration of death. And therefore, says the wise man," Remember death and corruption, and keep the commandments: " The shortest compendium of holy living that ever was given. As if he had said, Many are the admonitions of wise and good men, for the moral conduct of life. But would you have a short and infallible direction Remember death and corruption. Do but remember this, and forget all other rules if you will, and your duty if you can.

36. And what is here remarked by one wise man, is consented to by all. Hence that common practice among the ancients, of placing sepulchres in their gardens, and of using that celebrated motto, Memento mori. Hence that modern as well as ancient custom, of putting emblems of mortality in churches and other public places: By all which is implied, that the consideration of death is the greatest security of a good life. Indeed what other considerations do by parts, this does at a blow. It at once defeats the world, the flesh, and the devil. For how can the world captivate him, who seriously considers that he is a stranger in it, and shall shortly leave it How can the flesh insnare him, who has his sepulchre in his eye, and reflects on the cold lodging he shall have there And how can the devil prevail on him, who remembers that he shall die, and then enter on an unchangeable state of happiness or misery, according as he has either resisted, or yielded to his temptations Of eo vast consequence is the constant thinking upon death, above all other, even practical meditation; and so great reason had MOSES for placing the wisdom of man in the consideration of his latter end.

37. But to return. I now persuade myself, that from the character of man, and his present circumstances, as well as from Divine authority, it evidently appears, that however natural our desire of knowledge is, this appetite is to be governed, as well as those that are sensual; that we ought to indulge it not, only so far as may tend to the conducting our lives, and the fitting us for that happiness which GOD has promised, not to the learned, but to the good: And that if it be gratified to any other purpose, or in any other measure than this, our curiosity is impertinent, our study immoderate, and the tree of knowledge still a forbidden plant.

38. And now having stated the measure of our affection to, and inquiry after learning and knowledge, it remains to be considered, how much it is observed in the general conduct of our studies. It is plain, it is not observed at all. For these two things are notorious: First, That very little of what is generally studied, has any tendency to living well here or. happily hereafter. And, Secondly, That these very studies which have no religious influence upon life, do yet devour the greatest part of it. The best and most of our time is devoted to dry learning; this we make the course of our study, the rest is only by the by. And it is well if what is practical or devotional, can find us at leisure upon a broken piece of a Sunday or holiday. The main current of our life runs in studies of another nature, that do not so much as glance one kind aspect upon good living. Nay, it is well if some of them do not hinder it. I am sure so great and so good a man as ST. AUSTIN thought so, who speaking of the institution and discipline of his youth, has these remarkable words, 'I learned in those things many useful words; but the same might have been learned in matters that are not vain: And that indeed is the safe way, wherein children ought to be trained up.

But woe unto thee, thou torrent of custom! Who is able to resist thee! How long will it be before thou art dried up How long wilt thou roll along the banks of EVE, into a great and formidable sea, which they can hardly pass over Have I not, in obedience to thee, read of JUPITER thundering and fornicating at the same time And yet, O thou hellish torrent, the sons of men are still tossed in thee, and are invited by rewards to learn these things! The pretence indeed is, that this is the way to learn words, and to get eloquence and the art of persuasion. As if we might not have known these words, golden stower, lap, the temple of heaven, without reading of JUPITER'S being made a precedent for whoring This immorality does not at all help the learning of the words: But the words greatly encourage the committing the immorality. Not that I find fault with the words themselves; they are pure and choice vessels: But with that wine of error, which in them is handed and commended to us by our sottish teachers. And yet unless we drank of it, we were beaten, nor had we any sober judge to appeal to. And yet, I, O my GOD, in whose presence I now securely make this recollection, willingly learnt these things, and like a wretch delighted in them, and for this I was called a good, hopeful boy.' By this you may see what the judgment of this holy and venerable person was in his private retirements, and at the most serious intervals of his life, concerning the general course of those studies, which draw out the first runnings of our age, and which are of so great credit and authority in the world, as to go under the name of ingenious and liberal education. You see he not only disapproves them, but reckons them among those sins and irregularities of his youth, whereof he thought himself obliged to make a particular confession in this his great penitential.

39. And here let me not be thought immodest, if upon great consideration and full conviction, I presume to tax the management of our public schools. Many miscarriages I might note; but I shall concern myself only with those, which the principles here laid down lead me to consider. And these we may comprehend under two general heads of complaint:

I. That they take up so much of our time.

II. That they teach us such frivolous and unprofitable things as they do.

In relation to the first, I cannot with any patience reflect, that out of so short a time as that of human life, consisting, it may be, of fifty or sixty years, (for where one lives longer, hundreds come short,) nineteen or twenty shall be spent between the dictionary and the lexicon, in hammering out a little Latin and Greek, and in learning a company of poetical fictions and fantastic stories. Were these things worth knowing, yet it is barbarous and inhuman, to make people spend so much of their little stock of time upon them. This is to make a cure of human ignorance, and to deal with the infirmities of the mind, as some ill surgeons do with the wounds of the body. If one were to judge of the life of man by the proportion of it spent at school, one would think the Antediluvian mark were not yet out, and that we had a prospect of at least nine hundred or a thousand years before us. The truth is, it is an intolerable abuse it should be so; and were the age as wise as it pretends to be, it would never suffer it; especially considering what late examples we have had of more compendious methods beyond the seas. It does not become me to project a scheme of school discipline; I leave this to abler heads. Only in the mean time I may venture to say, that the common way is a very great tax upon human life: so large a portion of which can very ill be spared, to be lavished away in the first elements of learning.

But the greatest complaint against these seminaries is, the frivolousness of the things they teach. Not only the spending so much time on the things they teach is blame-worthy, but their teaching such things at all. Setting opinion and fancy aside, what real improvement is it to the mind of a rational creature, to be overlaid with words and phrases, and to be full charged with poetical stories and dreams How many excellent and useful things might be learnt, while boys are thumbing and murdering HESIOD and HOMER, which then they do not understand, and which when they do, they will throw by and despise And that justly too: For of what signification is such stuff as this, to the accomplishment of a reasonable soul What improvement can it be to my understanding, to know the amours of PYRAMUS and THISBE, or of HEHO and LEANDER Do men retain any value for these things, when they grow up, or endeavor to preserve the memory of them And why must poor boys be condemned to the drudgery of learning what when they are men they must and will unlearn Why must they be forced with so great expense of time and labor, to learn such things as are of no standing use So far from that, they are dangerous, as well as unprofitable. For I appeal to the common sense and experience of mankind, whether it be not dangerous in the highest degree, to entertain the gay catching fancies of boys, with the amorous scenes of the poets Whether it be safe, to season their green imaginations with such images as are there painted to the life Is not this rather the direct way to corrupt them, to sow in their tender minds the seeds of impurity, to increase their inbred propensities to evil, and lay a standing foundation for debauchery Let any man but consider human nature as it comes down to us from ADAM, and tell me whether he thinks a boy is fit to be trusted with OVID I do not understand upon what principle, either of prudence or piety, such books as these should be read by any; but least of all by boys, whose soft minds are so susceptible of any ill impression. Far better were it they should continue ignorant, than that their understandings should be accomplished at the hazard of their morals; upon which such studies as these can derive no very wholesome influence.

And yet to these our youth is dedicated, and in these some of us employ our riper years; and when we die, this very thing makes one part of our funeral eulogy, that we were so diligent and indefatigable in our studies, and so inquisitive in the search of knowledge, perhaps that we procured an early interment by it; when, according to the

principles before laid down, we were as impertinently, though not so innocently employed all the while, as if we had been so long picking straws in Bedlam.

40. The sum of all this is: The measure of prosecuting learning and knowledge, is their usefulness to a good life. Consequently, all prosecution of them beyond or beside this end, is impertinent and immoderate. But such is the general prosecution of learning and knowledge, as is plain by appealing to the general conduct of study. It evidently follows, that the intellectual conduct of human life is justly chargeable with an immoderate and impertinent pursuit of knowledge.

THE CONCLUSION.

To WHAT a narrow compass, by virtue of the preceding reflections, are these three things reduced, which use to take up so large a room, namely: Learning itself, the method of learning, and, the desire, and prosecution of learning These indeed¹ are great retrenchments, but such as are just and necessary to the regulation of our intellectual conduct.

And now who can forbear making these two observations, (1.) That this bookish humor, which every where so prevails, is one of the spiritual diseases of mankind, one of the most malignant relics of original depravation: It carrying in it the very stamp and signature of ADAM'S transgression, which owed its birth to an inordinate desire of knowledge. 2. That those who have eyes, may in great measure spare them, and they who have not, should not much lament the want of them, upon account of learning.

For my own part, I am so thoroughly convinced of the certainty of the principles here laid down, that I look upon myself as not only under a particular obligation, but almost a necessity [^]of conducting my studies by them. The last of which has left such a deep impression upon me, that I now intend to follow the advice of the Heathen, (M^Aseus ANTONINUS, as I remember,) *, Rid thyself of the thirst after books; and to study nothing at all but what serves to the advancement of piety and a good life.

I have now spent about thirteen years in the most celebrated University in the world; in pursuing both such learning as the academical standard requires, and as my private genius inclined me to. But in truth, when I think on my past intellectual conduct, I am as little satisfied with it as with my moral; being very conscious, that the greatest part of my time has been employed in unconcerning curiosities, such as derive no degree of moral influence upon the soul that contemplates them.

But I have now a very different apprehension of things, and intend to spend my uncertain remainder of time, in studying only what makes for the moral improvement of my mind, and regulation of my life: Being not able to give an account, upon any rational and consistent principles, why I should study any thing else.

More particularly, I shall apply myself to read such books as are rather persuasive and instructive; such as warm, kindle, and enlarge the affections, and awaken the divine sense in the soul; as being convinced by every day's experience, that I have more need of heat than of light. Though were I for more light, still I think this would prove the best method of illumination, and that when all is done, the love of GOD is the best light of the soul. A man may indeed have knowledge without love; but he that loves, though he want sciences humanly acquired, yet he will know more than human wisdom can teach him, because he has that Master within him who teacheth man knowledge.

Concerning The Nature Of Future Happiness

CONJECTURES CONCERNING THE NATURE OF FUTURE HAPPINESS;

Translated from the French of MONS. BONNET, OF GENEVA.

TO THE READER.

DUBLIN, April 7, 1787.

I AM happy in communicating to men of sense in this kingdom, and at a very low price, one of the most sensible Tracts I ever read.

JOHN WESLEY.

CONJECTURES, &c.

SECTION 1:

IF a being, whose essence consisted in the union of two substances, were appointed to continue, he would continue as a mixed being, or he would be no longer the same being.

The doctrine of the resurrection, therefore, is an immediate consequence of the nature of man; it is a doctrine perfectly philosophical: those who would refer every thing to the soul, forget the man.

Man is endowed with memory, and this memory belongs to the brain; it is the foundation of the personality of man, and the treasury of his knowledge.

If the same person is appointed to continue, he must preserve the memory of things past, and retain a certain fund of acquired ideas.

It must follow then, that there is in man a seat of personality, which is out of the reach of the causes that are destructive of the present life. Revelation informs us that a spiritual body is- to succeed to the animal body. The opposition of the word spiritual to the word animal, shows sufficiently that the future body will be formed of a very refined substance. And this is proved likewise by the remarkable expressions which the philosophical Apostle has used, All I have said on the resurrection amounts to this, that" flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of GOD, neither can corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Cor. 15:)

The comparison which the same Apostle employs of a grain of corn, indicates also that the resurrection shall be only the development, more or less rapid, of the spiritual body, lodged from the first in the animal body, as the plan in the grain: " But some one will say, How can the dead rise And with what body will they come Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die."

This spiritual body destined to succeed the animal body, will doubtless differ from it not less by its organization, than by the matter of which it will be formed. In an abode so different, organs very different will be required. All the organs of the animal body, which have relation only to the present life, will doubtless be destroyed. Reason alone leads us to presume this; and revelation here, as in other respects, comes in aid to the efforts of reason. When revelation goes so far as to inform us that the stomach will be destroyed and sex abolished, it indicates to us the greatest changes in the material part of man. For in an organized whole, all the parts of which are so connected, what a prodigious change is supposed by the suppression of the organs of nutrition and generation

It is an important question, says an anonymous writer,*" Those who find fault with revelation for not having made the objects of faith sufficiently clear, do they know that the thing was possible Are they certain that the objects do not differ so much from terrestrial objects as not to be comprehensible by man Our present manner of knowing depends on our present constitution, and we know not the relation that this constitution bears to that which is to succeed it. We have no ideas but through the senses: It is by comparing sensible ideas with one another, it is by generalizing, that we acquire notions of different kinds. Our capacity of knowing therefore is limited by our senses; our senses by their structure; and this by the place which we occupy. We know, without doubt, of the life to come all that we can know here below; to give us more light into this future state, it seems it would have been necessary to change the present state. The time is not yet come for this change to take place: " We walk yet by faith, and not by sight." The dull animal that browses the herb, abstracts not. It distinguishes a tuft of grass from a clod of earth, and this knowledge is sufficient for its present state. It would acquire knowledge more elevated, it would attain to our sciences and our arts, if the essential conformation of its organs were changed; but then it would be no longer the same animal. Would you make the sublime theory of infinitude enter into the brain of a child This brain contains at present all the fibres necessary to the acquisition of this theory; but you cannot yet put them into action.

Every thing in the works of nature is done by degrees; a development, more or less slow, conducts all beings to the perfection that properly belongs to them. Our soul is only beginning to unfold itself; but this plant, so weak in its principles, so slow in its progress, will extend its roots and its branches into eternity.

The silence of revelation concerning the nature of our future state, is certainly a mark of its wisdom. The divine man, who taught mortal men a resurrection, was too good a philosopher to talk of music to the deaf, or colours to the blind.'

I will profit by the judicious advice of this writer: I will not forget that I am blind and deaf: I will not pronounce upon colours, nor upon sounds. Shall I, however, forget my present condition, if I hazard upon the nature of future happiness some light conjectures, which I shall deduce from some things which are known to me

What this writer says concerning the impossibility of our representing the nature of future happiness, is sound reasoning. The dull animal that crops the grass, does it abstract By this comparison, he shows us that man can no more conceive the true nature of future happiness, than the animal can conceive the intellectual pleasures of man. The dull animal that crops the grass, can it have any idea of our sciences and our arts Can the man, who is ignorant of so many things which belong to the world he does inhabit, form any idea of the things which belong to the world he only will inhabit

I think, therefore, that we know of the life to come, all that we can know here below; and that to give us more light upon the subject of this future state, our present state must, it seems, undergo some change.' This is very clear that we cannot arrive at the knowledge of objects, to which not only our present faculties bear no proportion, but which certainly suppose new faculties in order to their being apprehended or conceived. The most enlightened and penetrating of men, who should be without hearing, could he conceive the use of a trumpet

If, however, a thick cloud conceals this future happiness which our hearts pant after, from our most eager search, we may nevertheless perceive, though faintly, some of the principal sources from whence it will proceed.

SECTION 2:

MAN possesses three eminent powers, the power of knowing, of loving, and of acting. We conceive very clearly that these powers are capable of indefinite improvement. We observe them in their development, their progress, and their different effects. We contemplate with astonishment the admirable inventions to which they have given birth, and which demonstrate, in so striking a manner, the supreme elevation of man above all terrestrial beings.

It is, it seems, of the nature of goodness, as well as of wisdom, to perfect every thing that is capable of being perfected; but especially to perfect beings, who, possessing sentiment and intelligence, can taste the pleasure which accompanies the increase of their perfection.

But studying with some care the faculties of man, by observing their mutual dependence or that subordination which subjects them to one another, and to the action of their objects, we easily come to discover the natural means by which they unfold and perfect themselves here below. We may conceive, therefore, means analogous and more efficacious which may carry these faculties to a higher degree of perfection.

The degree of perfection to which men can attain upon earth, has a direct relation to the means of knowing and of acting which are given him; these means themselves have a direct relation to the world which he inhabits.

A more elevated state, therefore, of human faculties would not have had relation to this world, in which man was to pass his first moments of existence. But these faculties are capable of indefinite perfection, and we can easily conceive that some of the natural means which will one day perfect them, may exist in man even at present.

Thus, since man was called to inhabit successively two different worlds, his original constitution must include things relative to these two worlds, the animal body must have a direct relation to the first world, the spiritual body to the second.

SECTION 3:

Two principal means may perfect, in the world to come, all the faculties of man,

namely, senses more exquisite, and new senses. The senses are the first source of all our knowledge. Our most reflected and most abstract ideas are always derived from our sensible ideas. The mind creates nothing; but it operates incessantly upon the almost infinite multitude of different perceptions, which it acquires by the ministry of the senses.

From these operations of the mind, which always consist in comparisons, combinations, abstractions, proceed, by a natural generation, all the sciences and all the arts. The senses appointed to transmit to the mind the impressions of objects, have a relation to the objects; the eye has a relation to light, the ear to sound.

The relations which the senses have with their objects, the more perfect, numerous, and various they are; the more do they discover to the mind the qualities of objects, and the more are its perceptions of these qualities clear, lively, and complete. The more the sensible idea which the mind acquires of an object is lively and complete, the more distinct is the reflex idea which is formed from it. We conceive, without difficulty, that our present senses are susceptible of a degree of perfection much superior to what we know them to have here, and which astonishes us on certain subjects. We can even form to ourselves a pretty distinct idea of this increase of perfection, by the prodigious effects of optical and acoustic instruments.

Let us suppose ARISTOTLE observing a mite with our microscopes, or contemplating with our telescopes Jupiter and his moons, what surprise and delight would he not have felt! What shall not we too feel, when, clothed in a spiritual body, our senses shall have acquired all the perfection which they can receive from the beneficent Author of our being

We can imagine, if we please, that our eyes will then unite in themselves the qualities of microscopes and telescopes, and that they will accommodate themselves exactly to all distances; and how much superior will the glasses of these new perspectives be to those of which art boasts so much

One may apply to other senses what I have said of the sight. But perhaps the taste, which has so direct a relation to nutrition, will be suppressed or converted into some other sense of more extensive and elevated use.

How rapid would be the progress of our mathematical sciences, if we were enabled to discover the first principles of bodies, fluid or solid! We should then see by intuition, what we endeavor to foretell by the aid of reasoning and calculation; the more uncertain as our direct knowledge is more imperfect. What a numberless multitude of relations escape us, only because we cannot perceive the figure, the proportions, the arrangement of those infinitely small particles, upon which, however, depends the whole of the great edifice of nature.'

SECTION 4:

NEITHER is it very difficult for us to-conceive, that the germ of the spiritual body may contain at present the organic elements of new senses, which will not be unfolded till the resurrection.

These new senses will then discover to us in bodies the properties which must always remain unknown to us here. How many sensible qualities which we are yet ignorant of, and which we shall discover with astonishment! We know the different powers of nature, "only by means of their relation to the different senses upon which they exert their action. How many powers are there of which we do not even suspect the existence, because there is no relation between the ideas which we acquire by our five senses, and those which we shall be able to acquire by other senses Let us imagine a man who should be born with a perfect palsy upon three or four principal senses, and let us suppose natural causes which should give life and motion to these senses, and put them all into a proper state; what a crowd of perceptions, new, various, and unforeseen, would such a man acquire in a little time! What a prodigious increase of improvement would he gain in all his faculties!

These new senses, the infinitely small miniatures of which are enclosed in the seat of the soul, have a direct relation to that future world, our true country.

SECTION 5:

BUT the reason of man penetrates yet further than the planetary worlds: It raises itself to heaven where GOD dwells: It contemplates the august throne of the Ancient of Days: It beholds all the spheres rolling beneath his feet, and obeying the impulse which his powerful hand has given them: It hears the acclamations of all intelligent beings, and mixing its adorations and praises with the songs of these hierarchies, it cries in the deepest sentiments of self-annihilation," Glory be to GOD in the highest; good will towards man."

" Good will towards man!" Oh, the depth of the riches of the Divine goodness! It is not content to manifest itself to man upon earth in so many different and affecting ways, but will one day introduce him to the heavenly mansions. In our Father's house are many mansions; if it had not been so, his Son would not have said it. He is gone to prepare a place for us; He will return and take us with him, that where he shall be, we may be also. Where He shall be! Where the King of men and angels shall be! The Mediator of the new covenant; the Author and Finisher of the faith; He who has opened to us a new road, which leads to life; who has given us the power of entering into the holiest place; who has enabled us to approach the city of the living GOD, of the heavenly Jerusalem, of the heavenly host, of (JOD himself, who is Judge of all.

If the goodness of GOD has been pleased to adorn so richly the first abode of man; if He has scattered around him such great beauties; bestowed on him so many favors, heaped on him so many blessings; if all the parts of nature here below conspire to furnish to man inexhaustible sources of pleasure; what shall I say If this unspeakable goodness surrounds and embraces man on all sides, what will be the happiness He will bestow on him in the heavenly Jerusalem What will, be the beauties, the richness, and the variety of the magnificent spectacle that will be presented to him in the house of GOD, in that other universe where the self-existent Being gives to the celestial hierarchies the most august signs of his adorable presence! It will be in these eternal mansions, in the bosom of light, of perfection, and of happiness, that we shall read the general and particular history of Providence. Initiated then to a certain degree into the profound mysteries of the Divine government, laws and dispensations, we shall see with admiration the secret reasons of so many general and particular events which astonish and confound us, and cast us into doubts which philosophy does not always remove, but with respect to which, religion always gives us confidence.

We should meditate continually on the great Book which contains the destinies of worlds. Stopping at that page of it, which exhibits those of this little planet, so dear to our infancy, and the first monument of the paternal affections of the Creator in regard to man; we shall observe, not without surprise, the different revolutions which this little globe has undergone before it assumed its present form, and we shall follow it, with our eye, to those which it is destined to undergo in the progress of ages. But what will exhaust our admiration and gratitude, will be the wonders of that great redemption in which are yet so many things above our feeble comprehension, which have been the object of the research and profound meditation of Prophets, and into which the Angels have desired to look. A word in this page will retrace also our own history, and explain to us the reason and mode of those calamities, those trials, which often exercise here below the patience of the just man, purify his soul, heighten his virtues, and shake and cast down the feeble. ' Arrived at so superior a degree of knowledge, the origin of physical and moral' evil will no longer embarrass us; we shall contemplate them early in their cause, and in their most distant effects; and we shall gratefully acknowledge, from conviction, that every thing which GOD had made was good. On earth we observe only effects, and even these in a very superficial manner; all causes are hid from us: But then we shall see effects in their causes; consequences, in their principles; the history of individuals in that of the species; the history of the species in the history of the globe: " Now we see as through a glass darkly, but then we shall see face to face; and we shall know, in some sort, as we have been known." In short, as we shall attain to a

knowledge of the work, incomparably more complete and distinct, we shall also attain to a much more profound knowledge of the Maker. And how will this science, the most sublime, the most enlarged, and most desirable, or rather the only science, be continually perfecting itself by an intimate communion with the Eternal Source of all perfection!

SECTION 6:

OUR powers of affection are in reality very limited here below, imperfect, blind, and grossly interested. How much do all our affections partake of flesh and blood! How narrow all our hearts! How hardly do they enlarge themselves, and extend to mankind in general. The nature, indeed, of our constitution opposes the purification and enlargement of this faculty of love. With what difficulty does it reach with any strength to the Being supremely good!

Our wants, perpetually returning, attach us to the objects that are able to satisfy them. The circle of our affections hardly extends beyond these objects. It seems that our capacity of love is not sufficient to enable us to love what has not an immediate relation to us as individuals. Our self-love seeks only self, it sees and feels itself in all that surrounds us. Every thing that is agreeable renews it, and it is seldom sufficiently elevated to be strongly affected, with the sole pleasure of making others happy. There is always something earthly that mixes itself with our most delicate sentiments, and our most generous actions. Minds of sensibility, the greatest and most noble, necessarily retain something of the material part of their being. How much of it, especially, enters into that passion, so engaging and so terrible in its effects, which makes its power felt by all, and without which, the species would be no more!

Such is the nature here on earth of our power of goodwill towards others, such are its limits, its imperfections, its blemishes. But this power so excellent, so forcible, so fruitful in various effects, so expansible, encumbered at present with the bonds of the flesh, will one day be disengaged from them; and He who has made us to love him, and to love one another, will ennoble, will purify, and exalt all our desires, and make all our affections converge towards their greatest and noblest end.

When we shall have been clothed with that spiritual and glorious body, which faith expects, our will, perfected in proportion to our knowledge, will have such desires only, as are suited to the high elevation of our new being. It will tend continually to all good, to the true good, to the greatest good. All its determinations will have an object, and the best object. Order will be the immutable rule of its desires: And the Author of order, the centre of all its affections. As it will be calm and deliberate, because our knowledge will be distinct and very extensive, its inclinations will be constantly proportioned to the nature of things, and it will exert its love in just proportion to the perfection of every being. Knowledge will assign to every being its just value; it will form an exact scale of relative values; and the will, enlightened by knowledge, will no longer mistake the true worth of things, nor confound apparent with real good.

Delivered for ever from the corruptible part of our nature; clothed with incorruption; united to the light; our senses will no longer degrade our affections; our imagination no more corrupt our hearts; the grand and magnificent images it will continually offer, will animate and warm all our sentiments; our power of loving will exalt and display itself more and more, and the sphere of its activity will enlarge itself, embrace the intelligences of all orders, and centre itself in the supremely Beneficent Being. Our happiness will be increased by the pure and lively perception of the happiness of our fellow-creatures, and of the happiness of all sensible and intelligent beings. It will receive greater increase still, by the conscious and delightful sentiment of the approbation- and love of Him, who will be all in all; our hearts will burn continually with the beautiful fire of charity, of that celestial charity, which, after having scattered a few sparks here on earth, will brighten every part of the abodes of innocence and peace. "Charity will never fail."

SECTION 7:

THE force, as well as the capacity of our organs, is very limited here below. We cannot exercise them for any length of time, without the painful feeling of fatigue. We must encounter a continual resistance to convey ourselves, or rather to creep from one place to another. Our attention, that fine faculty, that decides concerning things in the intellectual life, our attention is wearied by being divided, and exhausted by being centred. Our memory retains with difficulty what is committed to it; it suffers daily losses; age and a thousand accidents threaten, injure, and destroy it. Our reason, the most valuable quality of our nature, depends in the last resort upon a few delicate fibres, which slight causes may, and sometimes do disorder. What shall I say more of our whole machine, so dear to us, and in which such prodigious art appears, is always near sinking under the weight, and by the continued action of its springs. It subsists only by external aid, and by a species of artifice. The principle of life is precisely the principle of death, and that which enables us to live, is in reality that which causes us to die.

The animal body is formed of very heterogeneous elements, the harmony of which, a multitude of small powers, tend perpetually to disturb. Some external elements must continually unite themselves with the primitive elements, in order to renew what intestine motion and transpiration is continually dissipating; the perpetual action of the vessels, necessary to the replacing of those elements, gradually injures the general economy of the machine, hardens the parts, which should continue supple, chokes up the passages, which should continue permeable, changes the respective disposition of the parts, and destroys at length the equilibrium between the weights and the springs.

The spiritual body, formed probably of elements analogous to those of light, will not require these daily reparations, which preserve and destroy the animal body. That glorious body which we are to put on, will subsist no doubt by the energy alone of its principles, and of the profound mechanism of its construction. It is probable, that this ethereal body will not be subject to the action of gravity, as the gross bodies are which we are acquainted with. It will obey with an astonishing facility all the volitions of the soul, and we shall transport ourselves from one world to another, with a celerity perhaps equal to that of light. Under this glorious economy we shall exercise all our faculties without fatigue; as the new organs in which the soul will display its motive force will be better proportioned to the energy of this force, and as they will no longer be subject to the influence of the causes which disturb and continually conspire against the present economy. Our attention will lay hold at the same time, and with equal force, of a greater number of objects more or less complicated; it will penetrate them thoroughly; distinguish all the particular impressions; discern the slightest resemblances, and differences, and deduce from them, without

effort, the most general results. Our genius, then, will be proportioned to our attention; for attention is the parent of genius. What has once taken hold of the memory will never be effaced; because the fibres to which it will be attached in this new economy, will not be exposed to an infinity of little internal impulses, which tend continually in this life to change the respective position of the elements of these delicate organs, and to destroy the directions which the objects have impressed on them. Our memory will enrich itself then without limits: It will incorporate with itself entire worlds, and present to the understanding, without alteration or confusion, the immense nomenclature of these worlds. What do I say It will not be simply a nomenclature: It will be the natural history general and particular of these worlds, the history of their revolutions, of their population, of their legislation, &c. And as the organs always correspond with the objects whose impressions they are to transmit to the " soul, it is to be presumed that the knowledge of so prodigious a number of objects, and so different in themselves, will depend on a set of organs infinitely superior to that which relates to our present economy. The signs of our ideas will be multiplied, diversified, and combined, in an exact relation to objects, of which they will be the symbolic representations; and the language or languages which we shall then possess, will have an expression, *, a richness, of which the languages we are now acquainted with can give but very faint images. Because we shall see things in a manner incomparably more perfect, therefore we shall also express them in a manner incomparably more perfect. We observe here below, that the perfection of languages corresponds to that of the understanding, and that the more the mind knows, the more it expresses: We observe also that language in its turn perfects knowledge; and the learned language of geometers, this beautiful language which possesses so high a degree of symbolic expression, may assist us in conceiving the possibility of a language truly universal, which we shall one day possess, and which probably is that of superior intelligences.

The animal body contains many things which have a direct relation only to the preservation of the individual or to that of the species. The spiritual body will contain things only which are relative to the increase of our perfection, intellectual and moral. This spiritual body will be in some sort an universal organ of knowledge and sentiment.

It will also be an universal instrument, by means of which we shall execute an infinity of things, of which we can at present form only very vague and confused ideas.

If the animal and terrestrial body, which death destroys, contains such great beauties; if the least of its parts can exhaust all the understanding and sagacity of the most able anatomist; what will be the beauties of this spiritual and celestial body, which shall succeed the perishable body What an anatomy that which shall employ itself upon the economy of this glorious body; which shall perceive the mechanism, the energies, and the design of all its parts; which shall perceive the physical relations of the new-economy to the old, and the more numerous and complicated relations of the new organs to the objects of the life to come!

SECTION 9:

THERE is among men here on earth, an almost infinite diversity of gifts, talents, knowledge, inclinations, &c, The scale of humanity rises through innumerable steps from the brute man to the thinking man. This progression will continue no doubt in the life to come, and will preserve the same essential relations: In other words, the progress which we shall make here in knowledge and in virtue will determine the point from whence we shall begin our progress in the other life, or the place we shall there occupy. What a powerful motive to excite us to grow continually in knowledge and in virtue!

All the moments of our individual existence are indissolubly connected one with another. We do not pass from one state to another state, without a sufficient reason. There are no leaps, properly so called. The subsequent state has always an adequate cause in the state which immediately preceded it. Death is not a break in the chain: It is the link which connects the two lives, or the two parts of the chain together. The judgment which the sovereign Judge shall make concerning us, will have its foundation in the degree of perfection intellectual and moral which we shall acquire upon earth; or, which is the same thing, in the use we shall have made of our faculties and of the talents which shall have been committed to us: " Of him to whom much has been given, much shall be required; and to him that has shall be given." What is, is. The Divine will does not change the nature of things; and in the plan which is in existence, vice cannot obtain the advantages of virtue.

It follows from these principles, which are derived from reason, that the degree of acquired perfection will determine, in the life to come, the degree of happiness or of glory which each individual shall enjoy- Revelation also gives its sanction to these philosophical principles. It establishes expressly this gradation of happiness or of glory, which the philosopher is unwearied in contemplating." There are bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial, but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another; there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and a different one of the stars, (for one star differed) from another star in glory, so also will it be at the resurrection." If it be judged that these remarkable words will not bear the interpretation I have given them, that declaration of Scripture, " that GOD will render to every, one according to his works," will be sufficient to prove that the degrees of future happiness will be as various as the degrees of virtue shall have been. Now how much do the degrees of virtue differ upon earth! How much does the virtue of the same individual increase by new efforts, or by re-iterated acts! Virtue is a habit: It is the habit of goodness.

There will therefore be a perpetual advance of all the individuals of humanity towards greater perfection or greater happiness; for one degree of acquired perfection will lead of itself to another degree. And because the distance between created beings, and the uncreated Being, between finite and infinite is infinite, they will tend continually towards supreme perfection, without ever arriving at it.

NARRATIVE OF THE LATE WORK OF GOD, AT AND NEAR NORTHAMPTON, IN NEW-ENGLAND.

EXTRACTED FROM Mr. EDWARDS' LETTER to Dr. COLEMAN, BY JOHN WESLEY, M.A.

1. THE Town of Northampton in New-England contains about two hundred families. After a more than ordinary licentiousness in the people here, a concern for religion began to revive, in the year 1729: But more observably in 1738; when there was a general reformation of outward disorders, which has continued ever since.

2. Soon after, a remarkable concern began to appear, in a little village, three miles from the town. From thence it spread to us in Spring 1734, and increased during the Summer. In Autumn, I proposed it to the young people, to spend the evenings in social religion; and to that end, to divide themselves into several companies, to meet in various parts of the town: Which was accordingly done, and the example afterwards imitated by elder people.

3. About this time I began to preach concerning "Justification by faith alone." This was attended with a very remarkable blessing: The people in general were deeply concerned, and began earnestly to seek acceptance with GOD, and salvation in the way of the Gospel. And then it was, in December, that the SPIRIT of GOD began wonderfully to work among us. A great and earnest concern about the things of GOD ran through all parts of the town. And the noise among the dry bones waxed louder and louder: All talk but of eternal things was laid aside. The conversation in all companies (unless so far as was necessary for the carrying on of worldly business) was wholly upon religion. The minds of people were strangely taken off from the world: It was treated as a thing of very little importance: Men followed their business, only as a part of their duty; the temptation now lying on that hand, to neglect worldly affairs, and to spend too much time in the immediate exercises of religion. And this thing was exceedingly misrepresented, by reports spread in distant parts of the land, as though the people here had wholly thrown by all business, and spent all their time in reading, hearing and prayer.

4. But though people did not ordinarily neglect their business, yet religion was with all sorts the great concern. The thing in their view was the kingdom of heaven, and every one appeared pressing into it. There was scarce a person in the town left unconcerned. The vainest and loosest of all, and those who were used to speak most slightly of inward religion, were now generally in deep convictions. And the work increased daily more: So that from day to day, for many months together, might be seen evident instances of sinners brought" out of darkness into marvelous light."

5. Hence there soon appeared a glorious alteration: So that in the Spring and Summer following, Anno 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of GOD. It never was so full of love, and joy, nor yet of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of GOD'S presence, almost in every house: Parents rejoicing over their children as new-born; husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands." The goings of GOD were then seen in his sanctuary: " Our public assemblies were beautiful: The congregation was alive in GOD'S service; every one earnestly intent on the work: Every hearer eager to drink in the word; the assembly in general from time-to time, in tears: Some weeping with sorrow and distress; others, with joy and love; and others, with pity and tender concern for the souls of their neighbors.

6. In all companies, on whatever occasions persons met, CHRIST was to be heard of and seen in the midst of them. Our young people, when together, were wont to spend the time, in talking of the dying love of CHRIST, the glorious excellency of his salvation, and his free grace to lost sinners. And even at weddings, there was now no discourse but of religion, and no appearance of any but spiritual mirth.

7. When this work of GOD began, others round about us seemed not to know what to make of it: And there were many that scoffed at and ridiculed it. But it was very observable of many who occasionally came among us, that what they saw here, soon cured them of such a temper. Strangers were generally surprised, to find things so much beyond what they had heard, and were wont to tell others, that the state of the town could not be conceived by those that had not seen it. And most of them went home with wounded hearts, and with such impressions as never wore off. There were many instances also of persons that came to town, on visits or on business, who had not been here long, before they partook of that shower of blessing and went home rejoicing; till at length the same work began evidently to appear in several other towns in the county.

8. In the month of March, the people in South-Hadley began to be seized with deep concern about the things of religion; which soon became universal: And the work of GOD has been very wonderful there; not much, if any thing, short of what it has been here, in proportion to the bigness of the place. About the same time it began to break forth in the West part of Suffield, and soon spread into all parts of the town. It next appeared at Sunderland, and soon overspread the town; and I believe was, for a season, not less remarkable than it was here. About the same time, it began to appear in a part of Deerfield, called Green-River, and afterwards filled the town, it began also to be manifest, in the South part of Hatfield, in a place called the Hill, and after that the whole town, in the second week in April, seemed to be seized, as it were at once, with concern about the things of GOD. There has been also a very general awakening at West-Springfield, and Long-Meadow; and in Enfield, there was for a time a general concern amongst some that before had been very loose persons. About the same time that this appeared at Enfield, the Rev. MR. BULL of Westfield informed me, that there had been a great alteration there, and that more had been done in one week than in seven years before. Something of this work likewise appeared in the first precinct in Springfield, principally in the North and South extremes of the Parish. And in Hadley old town, there gradually appeared so much of a work of GOD, as at another time would have been thought worthy of much notice. For a short time there was also a very great and general concern, of the like nature, at Northfield. And wherever this concern appeared, it seemed not to be in vain: But in every place GOD brought saving blessings with him, and his word, attended with his SPIRIT, returned not void. It might well be said at that time in all parts of the county, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows"

9. This remarkable "pouring out of the SPIRIT of GOD," which thus extended from one end to the other of this county, was not confined to it, but many places in Connecticut have partaken in the same mercy: The first parish in Windsor was thus blessed about the same time, while we had no knowledge of each other's circumstances. And something considerable of the same work began afterwards in East-Windsor, my

honored father's parish, which has in times past been a place favored with mercies of this nature, above any on this side of New-England, except Northampton.

10. There was also the last Spring and Summer a wonderful work of GOD carried on at Coventry. I had opportunity to converse with some of Coventry people, who gave me a very remarkable account of the surprising change that appeared in the most rude and vicious persons there. The like was also very great at the same time in a part of Lebanon, called the Crank, and at Durham; and likewise amongst many of the young people in the first precinct in Stratford.

Something of this work appeared in several other towns in those parts the last Autumn. And we have since been acquainted with something very remarkable of this nature at another parish in Stratford called Ripton, as also at a part of Guilford, at Mansfield, at Tolland, at Hebron, and at Bolton. There was also no small effusion of the SPIRIT of GOD in the North Parish, in Preston, in the congregation of the Rev. MR. LORD, who, with the Rev. MR. OWEN, of Groten, came up hither in May, the las-t year, on purpose to see the work of GOD here; and having heard various and contradictory accounts of it, were careful to inform and satisfy themselves. To that end they particularly conversed with many of our people, which they declared to be entirely to their satisfaction, and that the one half had not been told them. MR. LORD told me that, when he got home, he informed his congregation of what he had seen, and that it proved the beginning of the same work amongst them, which prevailed till there was a general awakening, and many persons remarkably converted.

11. But this shower of Divine blessing has been yet more extensive: There was no small degree of it in some parts of the Jerseys, as I was informed when I was at New-York, by some people of the Jerseys, whom I saw, especially in a place called the Mountains, under the Ministry of one MR. CROSS, in another place, under the ministry of MR. GILBERT TENNENT, and also at another place, under the ministry of a Dutch Minister, whose name, as I remember, was Mr. EELINGHOUSA.

12. This seems to have been a very extraordinary dispensation of Providence. GOD has in many respects gone beyond his usual and ordinary way. The work in this town, and some others about us, has been extraordinary on account of the universality of it, affecting all sorts, sober and vicious, high and low, rich and poor wise and unwise; it reached the most considerable families and persons, to all appearance, as much as others. In former stirrings of this nature, the bulk of the young people have been greatly affected; but old men and little children have been so now. Many of the last have, of their own accord, formed themselves into religious societies in different parts of the town. A loose careless person could scarcely find a companion in the whole neighborhood, and if there was any one that seemed to remain senseless or unconcerned, it was spoken of as a strange thing.

13. This dispensation has also appeared very extraordinary, in the numbers of those on whom we have reason to hope it has had a saving effect. We have now about six hundred and twenty communicants, which include almost all our adult persons. The Church \was very large before; but persons never thronged into it, as they do at the present time Our Sacraments are eight weeks asunder, and I received into our communion about an hundred before one sacrament, and four-score of them At one time, whose appearance, when they presented themselves together to make an open explicit profession of Christianity, was very affecting to the congregation. I am far from pretending to determine how many have lately been the subject of such mercy; but if I may be allowed to declare what appears probable in a thing of this nature, I hope more than three hundred souls were brought home to CHRIST in this town, in the space of half a year, and about the same number of males as females; which, by what I have heard MR. STODDABD say, has not been usual in years past, for he observed that in his time, many more women were converted than men. Those of our young people, that are on other accounts most considerable, are mostly, as I hope, truly pious. Those that were formerly looser, are generally, to all appearance, become true lovers of GOD and CHRIST. And I hope that by far the greater part of persons in this town, above sixteen years of age, have the saving knowledge of JESUS CHRIST; and so, by what I heard, I suppose it is in some other places, particularly at Sunderland and South Hadley.

14. This has also appeared to be a very extraordinary dispensation, in that the SPIRIT of GOD has extended his influences, both to elderly persons and those that are very young. It has been heretofore rarely heard that any were converted past middle age; but now we have the same. ground to think that many such have been savingly changed, as that others have been so in more early years. I suppose there were upwards of fifty persons in this town above forty years of age, and more than twenty of them above fifty, and about ten of them above sixty, and two of them above seventy years of age.

It has heretofore been looked on as strange, when they have been savingly wrought upon in their childhood; but now, near thirty were to appearance so wrought upon between ten and fourteen years of age, and two between nine and ten, and one of about four years of age; and because I suppose this last will be most difficultly believed, I will hereafter give a particular account of it. There are several numerous families, in which, we have reason to hope, that all the children are truly pious, and most of them lately become so: And there are very few houses in the whole town into which salvation has not lately come, in one or more instances. There are several negroes, that from what was seen in them then, and what is discernible in them since, appear to have been truly born again in the late remarkable season.

15. GOD has also seemed to go out of his usual way in the quickness of his work. It is wonderful that persons should be so suddenly, and yet so greatly changed. Many have been taken from a loose and careless way of living, and seized with strong convictions of their guilt and misery, and in a very little time old things have passed away, and all things have become new with them.

16. There is a great variety, as to the degree of fear and trouble that persons are in, before they obtain any comfortable evidences of pardon and acceptance. Some are from the beginning carried on with abundantly more hope: Some have had ten times less trouble of mind than others, in whom yet the issue seems to be the game. Some have had such a sense of the displeasure of GOD, and the great danger they were in of damnation, that they could not sleep at nights; and many have said that when they laid down, the thoughts of sleeping in such a condition have been frightful to them, and they have scarcely been free from terror while they were asleep, and have awaked with fear and distress still on their spirits: And often the concern that has been on their minds, has had a painful influence on their bodies, and given disturbance to animal nature.

17. The awful apprehensions persons have had of their misery, have for the most part been increasing, as they have approached to deliverance; though they often pass through many changes, in the frame of their mind: Sometimes they think themselves wholly senseless, and tear that the SPIRIT of GOD has left them, and that they are given up to a judicial hardness; yet they appear very deeply troubled with that fear, and are in great earnest to obtain convictions again.

Together with those fears, and that exercise of mind which is rational, and which they have just ground for, they have often suffered many needless distresses of thought, in which SATAN probably has a great hand; and sometimes the distemper of melancholy has been evidently mixed: One knows not how to deal with such persons; they turn every thing that is said to them the wrong way; and there is nothing that the Devil seems to make so great a handle of, unless it be the real corruption of the heart.

18. But it is remarkable, there has been far less of this mixture now than was wont to be in persons under awakenings at other times; yea, many that before had been exceedingly involved in such difficulties, seem now strangely to be set at liberty: Some that had for a long time been entangled with peculiar temptations, of one sort or other, and unprofitable and hurtful distresses, were soon helped over them, and convictions have been successfully carried on in the way to life. And thus SATAN seemed to be restrained, till towards the latter end, when GOD'S SPIRIT was about to withdraw.

Many under great awakenings were concerned, because they thought they were not more awakened, but sleeping upon the brink of hell: And the sense of the need they have to be awakened, grows upon them with their awakenings; so that they seem to themselves to be very senseless, when indeed most sensible. There have been some instances of persons that have had as great a sense of their danger and misery, as their natures could well subsist under, and yet they have expressed themselves much amazed at their own insensibility and sottishness, in such an extraordinary time as it then was.

Persons are frequently brought to the borders of despair a little before the day dawns in their souls: Some there have been who have had such a sense of GOD'S wrath for sin, that they have been overborne, and made to cry out, under an astonishing sense of their guilt, wondering that GOD suffers such guilty wretches to live upon earth, and that he doth not immediately send them to hell. And sometimes their guilt doth so glare them in the face, that they are in exceeding terror for fear that GOD will instantly do it. In others these terrors do not seem to be so sharp, when near comfort, as before; but they are led further into their own hearts, to a deeper sense of their own universal depravity and deadness in sin.

19. The corruption of the heart discovers itself various ways in the time of conviction; sometimes it appears in a great struggle, like something roused by an enemy, and SATAN, the old inhabitant, seems to exert himself, like a serpent disturbed and enraged. Many in such circumstances, have felt great envy towards those that are lately converted, and most of all towards their acquaintance and companions: Indeed some have felt many heart-rising's against GOD, and murmurings at his ways of dealing with mankind, and his dealings with themselves in particular. But it has been much insisted on, that persons should have the utmost dread of such thoughts, which tend exceedingly to quench the SPIRIT of GOD. And when such a spirit lies much prevailed, and persons have not earnestly strove against it, it has seemed to be exceedingly to the binder-ance of their souls: But in some other instances, where they have been much terrified at the sight of such wickedness in their hearts, GOD has brought good out of evil; and made it a means of convincing them of their own desperate sinfulness, and bringing them off from all self-confidence.

The drift of the SPIRIT of GOD herein has seemed evidently to be, to make way for a conviction of their absolute dependance on his sovereign power and grace, and the necessity of a Mediator, by leading them more and more to a sense of their exceeding wickedness, and guiltiness in his sight; and of the pollution, and insufficiency of their own righteousness; to show them that they can in no wise help themselves, and that GOD would be wholly just in rejecting them, and all that they do, and in casting them off for ever: Though there be a vast variety, as to the manner and distinctness of persons' convictions of these things. As they are more and more convinced of the corruption and wickedness of their hearts, they seem to themselves to grow worse and worse, harder and blinder, And more desperately wicked, instead of growing better. Under the sense which the SPIRIT of GOD gives them of their sinful-ness, they often think that they differ from all others; their hearts are ready to sink with the thought, that they are the worst of all, and that none ever obtained mercy that were so wicked as they.

At first, their consciences are commonly most exercised about their outward vicious course, or other acts of sin; but afterwards, they are more burdened with a sense of heart-sins, the dreadful corruption of their nature, their enmity against GOD, the pride of their hearts, their unbelief, their rejection of CHRIST, the stubbornness and obstinacy of their wills; and the like. In many, GOD makes much use of their own experience, in the course of their awakenings and endeavors after saving good, to convince them of their own vile emptiness and universal depravity.

20. Very often under the first awakenings, when they are brought to reflect on their past lives, and have a terrifying sense of GOD'S anger, they set themselves to walk more strictly, and confess their sins, and perform many religious duties, with a secret hope of appeasing GOD'S anger and making up for the sins they have committed: And oftentimes, at first setting out, their affections are moved and they are full of tears in their confessions and prayers, which they are ready to make very much of, as though they were some atonement, and had power to move correspondent affections in GOD too: And hence they are for a while big with expectation of what GOD will do for them; and conceive that they grow better a-pace, and shall soon be thoroughly converted. But these affections are but short lived, they quickly find that they fail, and then they think themselves to be grown worse again; they do not find such a prospect of being soon converted as they thought; instead of being nearer, they seem to be farther off; their hearts they think are grown harder, and by this means their fears of perishing greatly increase. But though they are disappointed, they renew their attempts again and again; and still as their attempts are multiplied, so are their disappointments; all fails, they see no token of having inclined GOD'S heart to them, they do not see that he hears their prayers at all, as they expected he would; and sometimes there have been great temptations arising hence to leave off seeking, and to yield up the case. And as they are still more terrified with fears of perishing, and their hopes of prevailing on GOD in a great measure fail, sometimes their religious affections have turned into heart-risings

seemed wholly careless and at ease, and in pursuit of vanity, while they had been bowed down with solicitude about their souls; yea, some had lived licentiously, and so continued till a little before they were converted, and grew up to a holy rejoicing in the infinite blessings GOD had bestowed upon them.

21. And whatever Minister has a like occasion to deal with souls, in a flock under such circumstances, he will soon find himself under a necessity greatly to insist upon it with them, that GOD is under no manner of obligation to show them mercy; and that a man can challenge nothing in justice from any thing he does before he has believed on JESUS CHRIST. It appears to me, that if I had taught those under trouble any other doctrine, I should have taken the direct course to have undone them; I should have directly crossed what was plainly the drift of the SPIRIT of GOD in his influences upon them; for if they had believed what I said, it would either have promoted carelessness, and so put an end to their awakenings; or blocked up their way to that humiliation before the Sovereign Disposer of life and death, whereby GOD is wont to prepare us for his consolations: And I have found no discourses more remarkably blessed, than those in which the doctrine of GOD'S just liberty, with regard to answering the prayers, or succeeding the pains of mere natural men, continuing such, have been insisted on. I never found so much immediate fruit, of any discourses I have preached, as of some from those words, "That every mouth may be stopped;" (Rom. 3: 19;) endeavoring to show from thence, that it would be just with GOD were he to cast us off for ever.

22. Commonly the first thing that appears after men have been much awakened, is a conviction of the justice of GOD in their condemnation, in a sense of their own exceeding sinfulness, and the vileness of all their performances: In giving an account of this, they expressed themselves very variously; some, that they saw that GOD was a Sovereign, and might receive others and reject them; some, that they were convinced that GOD might justly bestow mercy on every person in the town, and on every person in the world, and damn themselves to all eternity; some, that they see that GOD may justly have no regard to all the pains they have taken, and all the prayers they have made; some, that they see that if they should seek, and take the utmost pains all their lives, GOD might justly cast them into hell at last, because all their labors, prayers, and tears cannot make an atonement for the least sin, nor merit any blessing at the hands of GOD; some have declared themselves to be in the hands of GOD, that he can, and may dispose of them just as he pleases; some, that GOD may glorify himself in their damnation, and they wonder that GOD has suffered them to live so long, and has not cast them into hell long ago.

Some are brought to this conviction by a great sense of their sinfulness in general, that they are such vile wicked creatures in heart and life. Others have the oins of their lives in an extraordinary manner set before them, multitudes of them coming just then fresh to their memory, and being set before them with their aggravations. Some have their minds especially fixed on some particular wicked practice they have indulged; others, on the corruption of their hearts. Some are deeply convinced by a view they have of the horrid ness of some particular exercises of corruption, in the time of their awakening, whereby the enmity of the heart against GOD has been manifested; and others, by a sense of the sin of unbelief, the opposition of their hearts to the way of salvation by CHRIST, and their obstinacy in rejecting him and his grace.

23. There is a great deal of difference as to persons' distinctness here. Some have not so clear a sight of GOD'S justice in their condemnation; but yet mention things that plainly imply it. They acknowledge GOD to be just in his threatenings, and that they are deserving of nothing: And many times, though they had not a sight of it at the beginning, they have very clear discoveries of it afterwards, with great humblings in the dust before GOD.

Commonly persons' minds immediately before this discovery of God's justice are exceeding restless, and in a kind of struggle and tumult, and sometimes in mere anguish; but generally, as soon as they have this conviction, it brings their minds to a calm composure. And most frequently, though not always, then the pressing weight upon their spirits is taken away, and a general hope arises that some time or other GOD will be gracious, even before any distinct discoveries of mercy. And often they then come to a conclusion within themselves, that they will lie at GOD'S feet and wait his time.

24. In many, the first conviction of the justice of GOD in their condemnation, which they take particular notice of, and probably the first distinct conviction of it that they have does not appear to be forced by mere terrors and convictions; for there is in it a sort of complacency of soul, in the attribute of GOD'S justice, as displayed in his threatenings of eternal damnation to sinners. Sometimes at the discovery of it, they can scarce forbear crying out, 'It is Just! Some express themselves, that they see the glory of GOD would shine bright in their own condemnation; and they are ready to think that if they are damned, they could take part with GOD against themselves, and glorify his justice therein. And when it is thus, they commonly have some evident sense of free and all-sufficient grace, though they give no distinct account of it; but it is manifest, by that degree of hope and encouragement that they then conceive, though they were never so sensible of their own vileness.

Some, when in such circumstances, have felt that sense of the excellency of GOD'S justice, against such sinfulness as theirs was, and have had such a submission of mind, together with an exceeding loathing of their own unworthi-ness, and a kind of indignation against themselves, that they have called it a willingness to be damned, though it must be owned they had not clear ideas of damnation, nor does any word in the Bible require such self-denial as this. But the truth is, as some have more clearly expressed it, salvation appeared' too good for them; they were worthy of nothing but condemnation, and they could not tell how to think of salvation's being bestowed upon them, fearing it was inconsistent with the glory of GOD'S majesty, which they had so much contemned and affronted.'

24. That calm of spirit which some have found after their distress, continued some time before any special manifestation of the favor of GOD. But in others often the comfortable view of a merciful GOD, and a sufficient Redeemer, immediately followed. And in several, the first sight of their just desert of hell, and of GOD'S love, were so near, they seemed to go together.

These gracious discoveries are in many respects very various; more frequently CHRIST is distinctly made the object of the mind, in his all-sufficiency and willingness to save sinners: But some have their thoughts more especially fixed on GOD, in some of his glorious attributes manifested in the Gospel, and shining forth in the face of CHRIST. Some view the all-sufficiency of the mercy and grace of GOD; some

chiefly the infinite power of GOD, and his ability to save them, and to do all things for them; and some look most at the truth and faithfulness of GOD. In some, the truth and certainty of the Gospel in general is the first joyful discovery they have; in others, the certain truth of some particular promises; in some, the grace and sincerity of GOD in his invitations, very commonly in some particular invitation. Some are struck with the glory and wonderful-ness of the dying love of CHRIST; and some with the sufficiency and preciousness of his blood, as offered to make an atonement for sin; and others with the value and glory of his obedience and righteousness. In some, the excellency and loveliness of CHRIST chiefly engages their thoughts; in some, his Divinity, that he is indeed "the SON of the living GOD;" and in others, the excellency of the way of salvation by CHRIST, and the suitableness of it to their necessities.

25. Some are thus convinced of the truth of the Gospel in general, and that the Scriptures are the word of GOD: Others have their minds more especially fixed on the great doctrine of the Gospel, some particular truths that they are meditating on; or are in a special manner convinced of the Divinity of the things they are reading of, in some portion of Scripture. Some have such convictions in a much more remarkable manner than others. - And some that never had a special sense of the certainty of divine things impressed upon them with such inward evidence, have yet very clear exercises of grace, that is, of love to GOD, repentance and holiness. And if they be more particularly examined, they appear plainly to have a firm persuasion of the reality of divine things, such as they had not before. But those that have the most clear discoveries of divine truth, have them not always in the same degree. In a dull frame, things appear dim to what they did before: And though there still remains an habitual strong persuasion, yet not so as to exclude temptations to unbelief, and all possibility of doubting, as before: But then at particular times, by GOD'S help, the sense of things revives, like fire that lay hid in ashes.

25. I suppose the grounds of such a conviction of the truth of divine things to be just and rational, but yet in some GOD makes use of their own reason much more sensibly than in others. Oftentimes persons have (so far as could be judged) received the first saving conviction from reasoning which they have heard from the pulpit; and often in the course of reasoning, which they are led into in their own meditations.

The arguments are the same that they have heard hundreds of times; but the force of the arguments, and their conviction by them, is altogether new; they come with a new and before unexperienced power: Before they heard it was so, and they allowed it to be so; but now they see it to be so indeed. Things now look exceeding plain to them, and they wonder that they did not see them before.

They are so greatly taken with their new discovery, and things appear so plain and so rational to them, that they are often at first ready to think they can convince all men, and are apt to engage in talk with every one they meet with, almost to this end; and when they are disappointed, are ready to wonder that their reasonings make no more impression.

26. They often speak of things of religion as seeming new to them; that preaching is a new thing; that it seems to them they never heard preaching before; that the Bible is a new book: Because they see them in a new light. Here was a remarkable instance of an aged woman of above seventy years, who reading in the New Testament, concerning CHRIST'S sufferings for sinners, seemed to be astonished at what she read, as at a thing that was quite new to her, insomuch that at first, before she had time, to turn her thoughts, she wondered within herself she had never heard of it before; but then immediately recollected that she had often heard of it, and read it, but never till now saw it as a thing real; and then cast in her mind, how wonderful this was, that the SON of GOD should undergo such things for sinners, and how she had spent her time in ungrateful sinning against so good a GOD, and such a Savior; though she was a person, as to what was visible, of a very blameless and inoffensive life. And she was so overcome by those considerations, that her nature was ready to fail. Those that were about her, and knew not what was the matter, were surprised, and thought she was a dying.

27. Many have spoken much of their hearts being drawn out in love to GOD and CHRIST, and their minds being wrapped up in delightful contemplation of the glory and wonderful grace of GOD, and the excellency and dying love of JESUS CHRIST, and of their souls going forth in desires after GOD and CHRIST. Several of our young children have expressed much of this, and have manifested a willingness to leave father and mother, and all things in the world, to go to be with CHRIST. Some persons have had such desires after CHRIST, as to take away their natural strength. Some have been so overcome with a sense of his love to such poor, wretched, and unworthy creatures, as to weaken the body. Several persons have had so great a sense of the glory of GOD, and excellency of CHRIST, that nature and life have seemed almost to sink under it; and in all probability, if GOD had showed them a little more of himself, it would have dissolved their frame. And their sense of their own exceeding littleness and vileness, has been in proportion to their light and joy.

Such persons have commonly appeared with none of the -assuming, and self-conceited, and self-sufficient airs of enthusiasts; but exceedingly the contrary; being eminent for meekness, modesty, self-diffidence, and a low opinion of themselves: None are so sensible of their need of instruction, and so eager to receive it, as some of them; nor so ready to think others better than themselves. And generally they have manifested a longing to lie low, and in the dust before GOD; withal complaining of their not being able to lie low enough.

They speak much of the inexpressibleness of what they experience, how their words fail, so that they can in no wise declare it: Of the superlative excellency of that delight of soul, which they sometimes enjoy; how a little of it is sufficient to pay them for all the pains and trouble they have gone through in seeking salvation: And of the sense which these spiritual views give them of the vanity of earthly enjoyments, how mean and worthless all these things appear to them.

28. Many, while their minds have been filled with spiritual delights, have as it were forgot their food; their bodily appetite has failed, while their minds have been entertained with "meat to eat that others knew not of." And the light and comfort they enjoy, gives a new relish to their common blessings, and cause all things about them to appear beautiful, sweet, and pleasant to them. All things abroad, the sun, moon, and stars, the clouds and sky, the heavens and earth, appear as it were with a cast of divine glory and sweetness upon them. But the supreme attention of their minds is to the glorious excellencies of GOD and CHRIST, which they have in view; a ravishing sense of GOD'S love accompanying a sense of his excellency; and of the faithfulness of GOD'S promises, as they respect the future eternal enjoyment of GOD.

The joy that many of them speak of, as that to which none is to be paralleled, is that which they find when they are lowest in the dust, emptied most of themselves, and as it were annihilating themselves before GOD, when they are nothing, and GOD is all, are seeing their own unworthiness, depending not at all on themselves, but alone on CHRIST, and ascribing all glory to GOD: Then their souls are most in the enjoyment of satisfying rest; excepting that, at such times, they apprehend themselves to be not sufficiently self-abased; for then above all times do they long to be lower. Some speak much of the exquisite sweetness and rest of soul that is to be found in resignation to GOD, and humble submission to his will. Many express earnest longings to praise GOD but at the same time complain they cannot praise him as they would do, and they want to have others help them in praising Him: They want to have every one praise-GOD, and are ready to call upon every thing to praise Him. They express a longing desire to live to GOD'S glory, and to do something to his honor; but at the same time cry out of their insufficiency and barrenness, that they are poor impotent creatures, can do nothing of themselves, and are utterly insufficient to glorify their Creator and Redeemer.

29. While GOD was so remarkably present amongst us by his SPIRIT, there was no book so delighted in as the Bible; especially the book of Psalms, the Prophecy of Isaiah, and the New Testament. Some, by reason of their esteem and love to GOD'S Word, have at some times been greatly and wonderfully affected at the sight of a Bible: And then also, there was no time so prized as the Lord's-day, and no place in this world so desired as GOD'S house. Our converts remarkably appeared united in dear affection to one another, and many have expressed much of that love which they felt to all mankind; and particularly to those that had been least friendly to them. Never, I believe, was so much done in confessing injuries, and making up differences as the last year. Persons, after their own conversion, have commonly expressed an exceeding desire for the conversion of others: Some have thought that they should be willing to die for the conversion of any soul, though of one of the meanest of their fellow-creatures, or of their worst enemies; and many have indeed been in great distress with desires and longings for it. This work of GOD had also a good effect to unite the people's affections to their Minister.

There are some persons that I have been acquainted with but more especially two, that have been swallowed up exceedingly with a sense of the awful greatness and majesty of GOD; and both of them told me to this purpose, that if they, in the time of it, had the least fear that they were not at peace with this so great a GOD, they should instantly have died.

30. But there is an endless variety in the particular manner and circumstances in which persons are wrought on; and an opportunity of seeing so much of such a work of GOD, will show that GOD is further from confining Himself to certain steps, and a particular method in his work on souls, than some imagine. I believe it has occasioned some amongst us, that were before too ready to make their own experiences a rule to others, to be less censorious, and this is an excellent advantage indeed: That this variety both has displayed the * manifoldness and unsearchableness of the wisdom of GOD, and wrought more charity among his people.

31. I think the main ground of doubts and fears in persons, after their conversion, has been that they have found so much corruption remaining in their hearts. At first their souls are all alive, their hearts are fixed, and their affections flowing; they live above the world, and meet with but little difficulty in religious exercises. And they are ready to think it will always be so: Though they are truly abased under a sense of their vileness, by reason of former sin, yet they are not then sufficiently sensible what corruption still remains in their hearts; and therefore are surprised when they find that they begin to be dull and dead, to be troubled with wandering thoughts in the time of public and private worship, and to be utterly unable to keep themselves from them: Also when they find themselves unaffected at seasons in which, they think, there is the greatest occasion to be affected; and when they feel worldly dispositions working in them, and it may be pride, envy, or stirrings of revenge; their hearts are almost sunk with the disappointment; and they are ready presently to think that all this they have met with is nothing, and that they are mere hypocrites.

They are ready to argue, that if GOD had indeed done such great things for them, such ingratitude would be inconsistent with it. They cry out of the hardness and wickedness of their hearts; and say there is so much corruption, that it seems to them impossible that there should be any goodness there: And many of them seem to be more sensible how corrupt their hearts are, than ever they were before they had faith. But in truth, the case is, that now they feel the pain of their own wounds; they have a watchful eye upon their hearts that they did not use to have; they take more notice what sin is there, and sin is now no more burdensome to them; they strive more against it, and feel more of the strength of it.

They are surprised that they should find themselves so different from the idea that they generally had entertained of believers; for though faith be indeed of a far more excellent nature than they imagined; yet, those that believe have much more remaining corruption than they thought. They never realized it, that persons were wont to meet with difficulties, after they were once converted. But on a return of the influences of the SPIRIT of GOD, the light breaks through the cloud, and doubting and darkness vanish away. Persons are often revived by religious conversation: While they are talking of divine things, or ever they are aware, their souls are carried away into holy exercises with abundant pleasure. And often while they are relating their present experiences, the same experiences are renewed. Sometimes they have scriptures, one after another, coming to their minds, to answer their scruples, and unravel their difficulties, exceeding apposite and proper to their circumstances; by which means their darkness is scattered; and often before any new remarkable comforts, especially after a long continued deadness, there are renewed humblings, in a great sense of their own exceeding vileness and unworthiness, as before their first comforts were bestowed.

32. Many in the country have entertained a mean thought of this great work, from what they have heard of impressions made on persons' imaginations. But there have been exceeding great misrepresentations, and innumerable false reports, concerning that matter. It is not, that I know of, the opinion of any one person in the town, "that any weight is to be laid on any thing seen with the bodily eye: I know the contrary to be a received and established principle amongst us. I cannot say that there have been no instances of persons that have been ready to give too much heed to useless imagination; but they have been easily corrected, and it will not be wondered at, that a congregation should" need a guide in such cases, to assist them in distinguishing wheat from chaff. But such impressions on the imagination as have been more usual, seem to me to be no other than what is to be expected in human nature in such circumstances, and what is the natural result of impressions on the heart.

I do not suppose that they themselves imagined that they saw any thing with their bodily eyes; but only have had within them ideas strongly impressed, and, as it were, lively pictures in their minds: As for instance, some when in great terrors, through fear of hell, have had lively ideas of a dreadful furnace. When some were greatly moved with a sense of the excellency of CHRIST, together with a sense of his glorious spiritual perfections, there has risen in the mind an idea of one of glorious majesty, and of a sweet and gracious aspect: And some, when greatly affected with CHRIST'S death, had at the same time a lively idea of CHRIST hanging upon the cross, and of his blood running from his wounds; which things will not be wondered at by them that have observed how strong affections about temporal matters will excite lively ideas of different things in the mind.

There have indeed been some few instances, of impressions on persons' imaginations, that have been mysterious to me, and I have been at a loss about them; for though it has been exceeding evident to me by many things that appeared in them, both then (when they related them) and afterwards, that they indeed had a great sense of the spiritual excellency of divine things accompanying them; yet I have not been able well to satisfy myself, whether their imaginary ideas have been more than could naturally arise from the spiritual sense of things. However, I have used the utmost caution in such cases; and great care has been taken both in public and in private to teach persons the difference between what is spiritual and what is imaginary. I have often warned persons not to lay the stress of their hope on any ideas of any outward glory, or any external thing whatsoever, and have met with no opposition in such instructions. But it is not strange if some weaker persons, in giving an account of their experiences, have not so prudently distinguished between the spiritual and imaginary part; which those that have not been well affected to religion, might take advantage of.

33. But to give a clearer idea of the nature and manner of the operations of GOD'S SPIRIT, in this wonderful effusion of it, I would give an account of two particular instances. The first is an adult person, a young woman, whose name was ABIGAIL HUTCHINSON. I pitch upon her especially, because she is now dead, and so it may be more fit to speak freely of her than of living instances; though I am under far greater disadvantages, on other accounts, to give a full and clear narrative of her experiences, nor can any account be given but what has been retained in the memories of her near friends, and some others, of what they have heard her express in her life-time.

She was of a rational, understanding family; there could be nothing in her education that tended to enthusiasm, but rather to the centrally extreme. She was, before her conversion, to the observation of her neighbors, of a sober and inoffensive conversation; and was a still, quiet, reserved, person. She had long been infirm of body; but her infirmity had never been observed at all to incline her to be notional or fanciful, or to occasion any thing of religious melancholy. She was under awakenings scarcely a week, before there seemed to be plain evidence of her being savingly changed.

She was first awakened in the winter, on a Monday, by something she heard her brother say of the necessity of being in good earnest in seeking CHRIST, together with the news of the conversion of another young woman. This news wrought much upon her, and stirred up a spirit of envy in her towards this young woman, whom she thought very unworthy of being distinguished from others by such a mercy; but withal it engaged her in a firm resolution to do her utmost to obtain the same blessing; and considering with herself what course she should take, she thought she had not a sufficient knowledge of the principles of religion: Whereupon she resolved thoroughly to search the Scriptures; and accordingly immediately began at the beginning of the Bible, intending to read it through. She continued thus till Thursday; and then there was a sudden alteration, by a great increase of her concern, in an extraordinary sense of her own sinfulness, particularly the sinfulness of her nature, and wickedness of her heart, which came upon her (as she expressed it) as a flash of lightning, and struck her into an exceeding terror. Upon which she left off reading the Bible in course as she had begun, and turned to the New Testament, to see if she could find some relief for her distressed soul.

34. Her great terror, she said, was, she had sinned against GOD. Her distress grew more and more for three days; until, as she said, she saw nothing but blackness of darkness before her, and her very flesh trembled for fear of GOD'S wrath. She wondered and was astonished at herself, that she had been so concerned for her body, and had applied so often to physicians to heal that, and had neglected her soul. Her sinfulness appeared with a very awful aspect to her, especially in three things, namely, Her original sin, her sin of murmuring at GOD'S providence, in the weakness she had been under, and in want of duty to her parents, though others had looked upon her to excel in dutifulness. On Saturday, she was so earnestly engaged in reading the Bible and other books, that she continued in it, searching for something to relieve her, till her eyes were so dim, that she could not know the letters. Whilst she was thus engaged in reading, prayer, and other religious exercises, she thought of these words of CHRIST, wherein He warns us not to be "as the Heathen," that "think they shall be heard for their much speaking;" which, she said, led her to see that she had trusted to her own prayers and religious performances, and now she was put to a nonplus, and knew not which way to turn herself, or where to seek relief.

While her mind was in this posture, her heart, she said, seemed to fly to the Minister for refuge, hoping that he could give her some relief. She came the same day to her brother, with the countenance of a person in distress, expostulating with him, why he had not told her more of her sinfulness, and earnestly inquiring of him what she should do. She seemed that day to feel in herself an enmity against the Bible, which greatly affrighted her. Her sense of her own exceeding sinfulness continued increasing from Thursday till Monday; and she gave this account of it, that it had been an opinion, which till now she had entertained, that she was not guilty of ADAM'S sin; but that now she saw she was guilty of that sin, and all over defiled by it; and that the sin which she brought into the world with her, was alone sufficient to condemn her.

35. On the Sabbath-day she was so ill that her friends thought it not best that she should go to public worship, of which she seemed very desirous: But when she went to bed on Sabbath-day night, she took up a resolution that she would the next morning go to the Minister. As she awaked on Monday morning, a little before day, she wondered within herself at the calm she felt in her mind, which was of that kind which she never felt before. As she thought of this, such words as these were in her mind: "The words 'of the LORD are pure words, health to the soul, and marrow to the bones: "And then these words," To be blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth from all sin;" which were accompanied with a lively sense of the excellency of CHRIST, and his sufficiency to satisfy for the sins of the whole world. She then thought of that expression, "It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun;" which words then seemed to her to be very applicable to JESUS CHRIST. By these things her mind was exceeding full of joy. She told her brother in the morning that she had seen (that is, by faith)

CHRIST the last night, and that she had really thought that she had not knowledge enough to be converted; but, says she, GOD can make it quite easy.' On Monday she felt all day a constant sweetness in her soul. She had a repetition of the same discoveries of CHRIST three mornings together, that she had on Monday morning, and much in the same manner, at each time, waking a little before day; but brighter and brighter every time.

36. At the last time on Wednesday morning, while in the enjoyment of a spiritual view of CHRIST'S glory and fullness, her soul was filled with distress for unbelievers, to consider what a miserable condition they were in: And she felt in herself a strong inclination immediately to go forth to warn sinners; and proposed it the next day to her brother to assist her in going from house to house; but her brother restrained her, telling her of the unsuitableness of such a method. She told one of her sisters that day, that she loved all mankind, but especially the people of GOD. Her sister asked her, why she loved all mankind She replied, ' Because GOD had made them.' After this, there happened to come into the shop where she was at work, three persons that were thought to be lately converted. Her seeing them as they stepped in, so drew forth her love to them, that it overcame her, and he almost fainted: And when they began to talk of the things of religion, it was more than she could bear; they were obliged to cease on that account. It was a very frequent thing with her to be overcome with a flow of affection to them that she thought godly, in conversation with them, and sometimes only at the sight of them. 48. She had many extraordinary discoveries of the glory of GOD and CHRIST; sometimes in some particular attributes, and sometimes in many. She gave an account that once, as those four words passed through her mind, Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, and Truth, her soul was filled with a sense of the glory of each of these Divine attributes, but especially the last; ' Truth (said she) sunk the deepest.' And therefore, as these words passed, this was repeated, Truth, Truth! Her mind was so swallowed up with a sense of the glory of GOD'S truth, and other perfections, that she said, it seemed as though her life was going; and that she saw it was easy with GOD to take away her life by discoveries of himself. Soon after this she went to a private religious meeting, and her mind was full of a sense and view of the glory of GOD all the time; and when the exercise was ended, some asked her concerning what she had experienced: And she began to give them an account; but as she was relating it, she received such a sense of the same things, that her strength failed, and they were obliged to take her, and lay her upon the bed. Afterwards she was greatly affected, and rejoiced with these words, " Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

37. She had several days together a sweet sense of the loveliness of CHRIST in his meekness, which disposed her continually to be repeating over these words, " Meek and lowly in heart; meek and lowly in heart." She once expressed herself to one of her sisters, to this purpose, that she had continued " whole days and whole nights," in a constant ravishing view of the glory of GOD and CHRIST, having enjoyed as much as her life could bear. Once, as her brother was speaking of the dying love of CHRIST, she told him that she had such a sense of it, that the mere mentioning it was ready to overcome her.

Once, when she came to me, she told how at such, that, the thought she saw as much of GOD, and had as much joy and pleasure as was possible in this life, and that yet afterwards GOD discovered himself far more abundantly, and she saw the same things more clearly, and in another and far more excellent and delightful manner, and was filled with a more exceeding sweetness. She likewise gave me such an account of the sense she once had from day to day of the glory of CHRIST, and of GOD, in his various attributes, that it seemed to me she dwelt for days together in a kind of beatific vision of God; and seemed to have an immediate intercourse with him, as a child with a father: And at the same time, she appeared most remote from any high thought of herself, and of her own sufficiency; but was like a little child, and expressed a great desire to be instructed, telling them that she longed very often to come to me for instruction, and wanted to live at my house, that I might tell her her duty. 50. She often expressed a sense of the glory of GOD appearing in the trees, and growth of the fields, and other works of GOD'S hands. She told her sister that lived near the heart of the town, that she once thought it a pleasant thing to live in the middle of the town, ' But now (says she) I think it much more pleasant to sit and see the wind blowing the trees, and to behold in the country what GOD has made.1 She had sometimes the powerful breathings of the SPIRIT of GOD on her soul, while reading the Scripture, and would express a sense that she had of the certain truth and Divinity thereof. She sometimes would appear with a pleasant smile on her countenance; and when her sister took notice of it, and asked why she smiled, she replied, ' I am brim-full of a sweet feeling within!' She often used to express how good and sweet it was to lie low before GOD, and the lower (says she) the better: And that it was pleasant to think of lying in the dust, all the days of her life, mourning for sin. She was wont to manifest a great sense of her own meanness and dependance. She often expressed an exceeding compassion, and pitiful love, which she found in her heart towards persons that knew not CHRIST; which was sometimes so strong, that as she was passing by such in the streets, or those that she feared were such, she would be overcome by the sight of them. She once said, that she longed to have the world saved, she wanted, as it were, to pull them all to her; she could not bear to have one lost.

38. She had great longings to die, that she might be with CHRIST; which increased till she thought she did not know how to be patient to wait till GOD'S time should come. But once, when she felt those longings, she thought with herself, If I long to die, why do I go to Physicians Whence she concluded that her longings for death were not well regulated. After this she often put it to herself, Which she should choose, whether to live or to die, to be sick or to be well; and she found she could not tell, till at last, she found herself disposed to say these words, I am quite willing to live, and quite willing to die; quite willing to be sick, and quite willing to be well; and quite willing for any thing that GOD will bring upon me! And then, said she, I felt myself perfectly easy, in a full submission to the will of GOD. She then lamented much, that she had been so eager in her longings for death, as it argued want of resignation to GOD. She seemed henceforward to continue in this resigned frame till death.

After this her illness increased upon her: And once, after she had spent the greater part of the night in extreme pain, she awaked out of a little sleep with these words in her heart and mouth; ' I am willing to suffer for CHRIST'S sake, I am willing to spend and be spent for CHRIST'S sake, I am willing to spend my life, even my very life for CHRIST'S sake!' And though she had an extraordinary resignation, with respect to life or death, yet the thoughts of death were exceeding sweet to her. At a time when her brother was reading in JOB, concerning worms feeding on the dead body, she appeared with a pleasant smile, and being inquired of about it, she said, it was sweet to her to think of her being in such circumstances. At another time, when her brother mentioned the danger there seemed to be that the illness she then labored under, might be an occasion of her death, it filled her with joy that almost overcame her. At another time, when she met a company following a corpse to the grave, she said, it was sweet to her to think, that they would in a little time follow her in like manner.

39. Her illness in the latter part of it was seated much in her throat; and swelling inwardly, filled up the pipe, so that she could swallow nothing but what was perfectly liquid, and but very little of that, and with great and long stragglings and stranglings, that which she took in, flying out at her nostrils, till she at last could swallow nothing at all. She had a raging appetite to food, so that she told her sister, when talking with her about her circumstances, that the worst bit she threw to her swine would be sweet to her; but when she saw that she could not swallow it, she seemed to be as perfectly contented without it, as if she had no appetite to it. Others were greatly moved to see what she underwent, and were filled with admiration at her unexampled patience. At a time when she was striving ill vain to get down a little food, something liquid, and was very much spent with it, she looked upon her sister with a smile, saying, 'O sister, this is for my good P At another time, when her sister was speaking of what she underwent, she told her, that she lived an heaven upon earth for all that. She used sometimes to say to her sister, under her extreme sufferings, 'It is good to be so.' Her sister once asked her, why she said so: 'Why (says she) because GOD would have it so: It is best that things should be as GOD would have them: It looks best to me.' After her confinement, as they were leading her from the bed to the door, she seemed overcome by the sight of things abroad, as showing forth the glory of the Being that made them. As she lay on her death-bed, she would often say these words, 'GOD is my Friend f And once looking upon her sister with a smile, said, 'O sister, how good it is! How sweet and comfortable it is to consider, and think of heavenly things.

She expressed, on her death-bed, an exceeding longing, both for persons in a natural state, that they might be converted, and for believers that they might see and know more of GOD. And when those that looked on themselves as unbelievers came to see her, she would be greatly moved with compassionate affection. The same week that she died, when she was in distressing circumstances as to her body, some of the neighbors that came to see her, asked if she was willing to die She replied, that she was quite willing either to live or die; she was willing to be in pain, she was willing to be so always as she was then, if that was the will of GOD: She willed what GOD willed. They asked her, whether she was willing to die that night She answered, 'Yes, if it be GOD'S will.' And seemed to speak all with that perfect composure of spirit, and with such a cheerful and pleasant countenance, that it filled them with admiration.

40. She was very weak a considerable time before she died, having pined away with famine and thirst, so that her flesh seemed to be dried upon her bones; and therefore could say but little, and manifested her mind very much by signs. She said she had matter enough to fill up all her time with talk, if she had but strength. A few days before her death, some asked her, Whether she was afraid to die; she answered to this purpose, 'That she had not the least degree of fear of death.'" They asked her why she would be so confident She answered, 'If I should say otherwise, I should speak contrary to what I know. There is,' says she, 'indeed a dark entry, that looks something dark, but on the other side there appears such a bright shining light, that I cannot be afraid f She said, not long before she died, that she used to be afraid how she should grapple with death;' but,' says she, GOD has showed me that he can make it easy in great pain.' Several days before she died, she could scarcely say any but just Yes or No, to questions that were asked her, for she seemed to be dying for three days together; but seemed to continue in a sweet composure of soul, without interruption, to the last, and died as a person that went to sleep, without any struggling, about noon, on Friday, June 27, 1743.

I proceed to the other instance. Her name is PHEBE BARTLET, daughter of WILLIAM BARTLET. I shall give the account as I took it from the mouths of her parents, whose veracity none that know them doubt of.

She was born in March, in the year 1731. About the latter end of 4pnl, or beginning of May, 1735, she was greatly affected by the talk of her brother, who had been converted a little before, at about eleven years of age, and then seriously talked to her about the great things of religion. Her parents did not know of it at that time, and were not wont, in the counsels they gave to their children, particularly to direct themselves to her, by reason of her being so young, and as they supposed, not capable of understanding. But after her brother had talked to her, they observed her very earnestly to listen to the advice they gave to the other children: And she was observed very constantly to retire, several times in a day, for secret prayer. She grew more and more engaged in religion, and was more frequent in her closet; till at last she was wont to visit it five or six times in a day; and was so engaged in' it, that nothing would at any time divert her, either by putting it out of her thoughts, or otherwise engaging her inclinations.

40. She once of her own accord spake of her unsuccessfulness, in that she could not find GOD. But on Thursday, the last day of July, about the middle of the day, the child being in the closet, where she used to retire, her mother heard her speaking aloud; which was unusual, and never had been observed before; and her voice seemed to be as of one exceeding importunate; but her mother could distinctly hear only these words, (spoken in her childish manner, but with extraordinary earnestness,) 'Pray, blessed LORD, give me salvation.' I pray, beg, pardon all my sins!' When the child had done prayer, she came out of the closet, and came and sat down by her mother, and cried out aloud. Her mother earnestly asked her several times, what the matter was, before she would make any answer; but she continued exceedingly crying, and writhing her body to and fro, like one in anguish of spirit. Her mother then asked her whether she was afraid that GOD would not give her salvation. She then answered, 'Yes, I am afraid I shall go to hell!' Her mother then endeavored to quiet her, and told her she would not have her cry, she must be a good girl and pray every day, and she hoped GOD would give her salvation. But this did not quiet her at all; but she continued thus earnestly crying, and began to smile, and presently said with a smiling countenance, 'Mother, the kingdom of heaven is come to me!' Her mother was surprised at the sudden alteration, and at the speech; and knew not what to make of it, but at first said nothing to her. The child presently spake again, and said, 'There is another come to me, and there is another, there are three;' and being asked what she meant, she answered, 'One is, Thy will be done, and there is another, Enjoy him for ever;' by which it seems that when the child said 'There are three come to me,' she meant three passages of the Catechism that came to her mind.

41. After the child had said this, she retired again into her closet; and her mother went over to her brother's, who was next neighbor; and when she came back, the child, being come out of the closet, meets her mother with this cheerful speech, 'I can find GOD now.'" referring to what she had before complained of, that she could not find GOD. Then the child spoke again, and said, 'I love GOD!' her mother asked her, how well she loved GOD, whether she loved GOD better than her little sister RACHEL. She answered, 'Yes, better than any thing!' Then her eldest sister, referring to her saying 'she could find GOD now/ asked her where she could find GOD She answered, 'In heaven.' Why, said she, have you been in heaven? No,' said the child. By this it seems not to have been any imagination of anything seen with bodily eyes, that she called GOD, when she said, 'I can find GOD now.' Her mother asked her whether she was afraid of going to hell, and that had made her cry. She answered, 'Yes, I was; but now I shall not.' Her mother asked her whether she thought that GOD had given her

salvation: She answered, ' Yes.' Her mother asked her when She answered, ' To-day.' She appeared all that afternoon exceeding joyful. One of the neighbors asked her, how she felt herself She answered, ' I feel better than ever I did.' The neighbor asked her, what made her feel better: She answered, ' GOD makes me.' That evening as she lay a-bed, she called one of her little cousins that was present in the room, as having something to say to him; and when he came, she told him, that heaven was better than earth. The next day being Friday, her mother asking her her Catechism, asked her what GtID made her for She answered, ' to serve him;' and added, ' every one should serve GOD, and get CHRIST.'

42. The same day the elder children, when they came home from school, seemed much affected with the change in PHEBE: And her sister ABIGAIL standing by, her mother took occasion to counsel her, now to improve her time, to prepare for another world: On which PHEBE burst out in tears, and cried out ' Poor NABBY Her -mother told her she would not have her cry, she hoped that GOD would give NABBY salvation; but that did not quiet her, but she continued earnestly crying for some time; and when she had in a measure ceased, her sister EUNICE being by her, she burst out again, and cried, ' Poor EUNICE!' and cried exceedingly; and when she had almost done, she went into another room, and there looked upon her sister NAOMI; and burst out again, crying, ' Poor AMY!*' Her mother was greatly affected, and knew not what to say. One of the neighbors coming in a little after, asked her what she had cried for. See seemed at first backward to tell the reason; her mother told her she might tell that person; upon which she said, she cried because she was afraid they would go to hell.

43. At night a Minister, that was occasionally in the study at the house, and talked considerably with her, of the things of religion; and after he was gone she sat leaning on the table, with tears running out of her eyes: And being asked what made her cry, she said it was thinking about GOD. The next day being Saturday, she seemed during great part of the day to be in a very affectionate frame, had four turns of crying, and seemed to endeavor to curb herself, and hide her tears, and was very backward to talk of the occasion of it. On the Sabbath day she was asked whether she believed in GOD; she answered, ' Yes:' And being told that CHRIST was the SON of GOD, she made ready answer, and said, ' I know it.'

From this time there has appeared a very remarkable change in the child: She has been very strict upon the Sabbath; and seems to long for the Sabbath-day before it comes, and will often in the week time be inquiring how long it is to the Sabbath-day, and must have the days particularly counted over that are between, before she will be contented. And she seems to love GOD'S house, and is very eager to go thither: Her mother once asked her why she had such a mind to go whether it was to see fine folks She said, ' No, it was to hear MK. EDWARDS preach.1" When she is in the place of worship, she is very far from spending her time there as children at her age usually do, but appears with deep attention. She also appears very desirous at all opportunities to go to private religious meetings; and is very still and attentive at home, in prayer-time, and has appeared affected in time of family-prayer. She seems to delight much in hearing religious conversation: When I once was there with some others that were strangers, and talked to her something of religion, she seemed more than ordinarily attentive; and when we were gone, she looked out very wistfully after us, and said, - I wish they would come again!' Her mother asked her "why Says she," I love to hear them talk!

44. She seems to have very much of the fear of GOD before her eyes, and an extraordinary dread of sin; of which her mother mentioned the following remarkable instance. Some time in August, the last year, she went w ith some bigger children, to get some plums in a neighbor's lot, knowing nothing of any harm in what she did; but when she brought some of the plums into the house, her mother mildly reproved her, and told her that she must not get plums without leave, because it was sin: GOD had'commanded her not to steal. The child seemed greatly surprised, and burst out into tears, and cried out, ' I won't have these plums!' and turning to her sister EUNICE, very earnestly said to her, ' Why did you ask me to go to that plum-tree r I should not have gone if you had not asked me.' The other children did not seem to be much affected or concerned; but there was no pacifying PHEBE. Her mother told her she might go and ask leave, and then it would not be sin for her to eat them; and sent one of the children to that end; and when she returned, her mother told her the owner had given leave, now she might eat them, and it would not be stealing. This stilled her a little while; but presently she broke out again into an exceeding fit of crying: Her mother asked her what made her cry again Why she cried now, since they had asked leave What it was that troubled her now And asked her several times very earnestly, before she made any answer; but at last said, it was, because it was sin. She continued a considerable time crying; and said she would not go again if EUNICE asked her an hundred times; and she retained her aversion to that fruit for a considerable time, under the remembrance of her former sin.

45. She at some times appears greatly affected and delighted with texts of Scripture that come to her mind. Particularly, about the beginning of November, the last year, that text came to her mind," Behold I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3: 21.) She spoke of it to those of the family, with great appearance of joy, a smiling countenance, and elevation of voice; and afterwards she went into another room, where her mother overheard her talking very earnestly to the children about it, and particularly heard her say to them, three or four times over, with an air of exceeding joy and admiration, ' Why, it is to sup with GOD.' At some time about the middle of the Winter, very late in the night, when all were a-bed, her mother perceived that she was awake, and heard her, as though she was weeping. She called to her, and asked her what was the matter. She answered with a low voice, so that her mother could not hear what she said; but thinking it might be occasioned by some spiritual affection, said no more to her; but perceived her to lie awake, and to continue in the same frame for a considerable time. The next morning, she asked her whether she did not cry the last night The child answered, Yes, I did cry a little, for I was thinking about GOD and CHRIST, and they loved me.' Her mother asked her whether to think of GOD and CHRIST'S loving her made her cry She answered, ' Yes, it does, sometimes."

46. She has often manifested a great concern for the good of other souls; and has been wont many times affectionately to counsel the other children. Once about the latter end of September, the last year, when she and some others of the children were in a room by themselves, a husking Indian corn, the child after a while came out and sat by the fire. Her mother took notice that she appeared with a more than ordinary serious and pensive countenance. At last she broke silence, and said, I have been talking to NABBY and EUNICE. Her mother asked her what she had said to them' Why,' said she, ' I told them they must pray, and prepare to die, that they had but a little while to live in this world, and they must be always ready.' When NABBY came out, her mother asked her whether she had said that to them' Yes,' said she, ' she said that, and a great deal more.' At other times, the child took her opportunities to talk to the other children about the great concern of their souls; sometimes, so as to set them into tears. She was once exceeding importunate with her mother to go with her

sister NAOMI to pray: Her mother endeavored to put her off. but she pulled her by the sleeve, and seemed as if she would by no means be denied. At last her mother told her, that AMY must go and pray herself; but, 'says the child, she will not go;' and persisted earnestly to beg of her mother to go with her.

She has manifested great love to her Minister: Particularly when I returned from ray long journey for my health, the last fall, when she heard of it, she appeared very joyful at the news, and told the children of it, with an elevated voice, as the most joyful tidings; repeating it over and over, 'MR. EDWARDS is come home! MR. EDWARDS is come home!' She still continues very constant in secret prayer, so far as can be observed, (for she seems to have no desire that others should observe her when she retires, but seems to be a child of a reserved temper,) and every night before she goes to bed, will say her catechism, and will by no means miss it: She never forgot it but once, and then, after she was a-bed, thought of it, and cried out in tears, 'I have not said my catechism!' and would not be quieted till her mother asked her the catechism as she lay in bed. She sometimes appears to be in doubt about the condition of her soul: But at other times seems to have no doubt, but when asked replies without hesitation.

47. In the former part of this great work of GOD amongst us, till it got to its height, we seemed to be wonderfully blessed in all respects. SATAN (as has been already observed) seemed to be unusually restrained: Persons that before had been involved in melancholy, seemed to be as it were waked out of it; and those that had been entangled with extraordinary temptations, were wonderfully set at liberty; and not only so, but it was the most remarkable time of health that ever I knew since I have been in the town. But after this it seemed to be otherwise. When this work of GOD appeared to be at its greatest height, a poor weak man that belongs to the town, being in great spiritual trouble, was hurried to cut his throat, and made an attempt, but did not do it effectually. He after this continued a considerable time exceedingly overwhelmed with melancholy, but has now of a long time been delivered by the light of GOD'S countenance lifted up upon him.

48. In the latter part of May, it began to be very sensible that the SPIRIT of GOD was gradually withdrawing from us, and after this time SATAN seemed to be more let loose, and raged in a dreadful manner. The first instance wherein it appeared, was a person's putting an end to his own life, by cutting his throat. He was a gentleman of more than common understanding, of strict morals, religious in his behaviour, and an useful honorable person in the town; but was of a family that are exceeding prone to melancholy, and his mother was killed with it. The news of this extraordinarily affected the minds of the people here, and struck them as it were with astonishment. After this, multitudes in this, and other towns, seemed to have it strongly suggested to them, and pressed upon them, to do as this person had done. And many that seemed to be under no melancholy, nor were under any special trouble of mind, yet had it urged upon them, as if somebody had spoke to them, 'Cut your own throat, now is a good opportunity. Now; now!' So that they were obliged to fight with all their might to resist jt, and yet no reason suggested to them why they should do it.

49. After these things the instances of conversion were rare in comparison of what they had been, (though that remarkable instance of the little child was after this,) and the SPIRIT of GOD appeared sensibly withdrawing from all parts of the country: But religion remained here, and I believe in some other places, the main subject of conversation, for several months. And there were some turns, wherein GOD'S work seemed something to revive, and we were ready to hope that all was going to be renewed again; yet in the main there was a gradual decline of that general, engaged, lively spirit in religion, which had been before. But as to those that have been thought to be converted among us, in this time, they generally seem to be persons that ha\c had an abiding change wrought on them I have had particular acquaintance with many of them since, and they appear to have a new sense of things, new apprehensions and views of GOD, of the Divine attributes, and JESUS CHRIST, and the great things of the Gospel: They have a new sense of the truth of them, and they affect them in a new manner; though it is very far from being always alike with them: They feel an inward ardour and burning of heart, the like to which they never experienced before: They have new appetites, new breathings and pantings of heart," and groanings that cannot be uttered." There is a new kind of inward labor and struggle of soul towards heaven and holiness.

50. Some that before were very rough in their temper and manners seem to be remarkably softened and sweetened. And some have had their' souls exceedingly filled, and overwhelmed with light, love, and comfort, long since the work of GOD has ceased to be so remarkably carried on in a general way: And there is still a great deal of religious conversation, amongst young and old; a religious disposition is still maintained amongst our people, by their upholding frequent private religious meetings, and ail sorts are generally worshipping GOD at such meetings, on Sabbath nights, and in the evening after our public lecture. Many children in the town do still keep up such meetings among themselves. I know of no one young persons in the town that has returned to their former looseness or extravagancy in any respect; but we still remain a reformed people, and GOD has evidently made us a new people.

I cannot say there has been no instance of any one person that has carried himself so, that others should justly be offended; nor am I so vain as to imagine that we have not been mistaken concerning any, or that there are none that pass amongst us for sheep, who are indeed wolves in sheep's clothing; who probably may some time or other discover themselves by their fruits. We are not so pure, but that we have great cause to be humbled and ashamed that we are so impure; nor so religious but that those that watch for our halting, may see things in us, whence they may take occasion to reproach us and religion. But in the main, there has been a great and marvelous work of conversion and sanctification among the people here.

51. Yet a great part of the country have not received the most favorable thoughts of this affair; and to this day many retain a jealousy concerning it, and prejudice against it: I have reason to think that the meanness and weakness of the instrument, that has been made use of in this town, has prejudiced many against it: But yet this circumstance of this great work of GOD, is analogous to other circumstances of it; GOD has so ordered the manner of it in many respects, as remarkably to show it to be his own peculiar work, and to secure the glory of it wholly to his own Almighty power, and Sovereign grace. And whatever the circumstances and means have been, yet so has it pleased GOD to work! And we are evidently a people blessed of the LORD! And here, in this corner of the world, GOD dwells, and manifests his glory.

The Present Revival Of Religion, By John Edwards, Part I-II

THOUGHTS

CONCERNING

THE PRESENT REVIVAL OF RELIGION

IN

BY JONATHAN EDWARDS, A. M.

Pastor of the Church of Christ, at Northampton

PART 1:

Showing that the Work that has of late been going on in this Land, is a glorious Work of GOD.

THE error of those who have had ill thoughts of the great religious operation on the minds of men, that has been of late in New-England, seems fundamentally to lie in three things: First, In judging of this work a priori. Secondly, In not taking the Holy Scriptures as a whole rule whereby to judge of such operations. Thirdly, In not justly distinguishing the good from the bad.

I. They have greatly erred in the way in which they have gone about to try this work, whether it be a work of the SPIRIT of GOD or not, namely, in judging of it a priori; from the way that it began, the instruments that have been employed, and the methods that have been taken in carrying it on. Whereas, if we duly consider, such a work is not to be judged of a priori, but a posteriori. We are to observe the effect wrought; and if upon examination, it be found agreeable to the word of GOD, we are bound, without more ado, to rest in it as GOD'S work; and shall be rebuked for our arrogance, if we refuse so to do till GOD shall explain to us how he has brought this effect to pass, or why he has made use of such and such means in doing it. Those texts are enough to cause us with trembling to forbear such a way of judging of a work of GOD'S SPIRIT, "Who has directed the SPIRIT of the LORD, or being his Counselor has taught him With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding" (Isaiah xl. 13, 14.) "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." (John 3: 8.) We hear the sound, we perceive the effect, and from thence we judge that the wind does indeed blow; without waiting, first to be satisfied what should be the cause of its blowing from such a part of the heavens, and how it comes to pass that it should blow in such a manner, at such a time. To judge a priori, is a wrong way of judging of any of the works of GOD. We are not to resolve that we will first be satisfied how GOD brought this or the other effect to pass, and why he made it thus, or why it has pleased him to use such and such means, before we will acknowledge his work. This is too much for the clay to take upon it with respect to the potter. "GOD gives no account of his matters: His judgments are a great deep: He has his way in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known. And who shall teach GOD knowledge, or enjoin him his way, or say unto him, What doest thou We know not what is the way of the SPIRIT, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so we know not the works of GOD who maketh all." No wonder therefore if those that go this forbidden way, in judging of the present work, are perplexed and confounded.

Indeed GOD has not taken that course, nor made use of those means, to begin and carry on this great work, which men in their wisdom would have thought most advisable, if he had asked their counsel. But the great GOD has wrought like himself; so as very much to show his own glory, and cast contempt on all that strength, wisdom, prudence and sufficiency that men have been wont to glory in; in Fulfillment

of that,â€• The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.â€• (Isa. 2: 17.) GOD doth thus, intermingling so many stumbling-blocks with his work; in suffering so much of human weakness to appear; and in ordering so many things, that are mysterious to men's wisdom: In pouring out his SPIRIT chiefly on the common people, and admitting them nearer to himself than the great, the honorable, the rich, and the learned; agreeable to that prophecy,â€• The LORD also shall save the tents of JUDAH first, that the glory of the house of DAVID, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do not magnify themselves against JUDAH.â€• (Zech. 12: 7.) Those that dwelt in the tents of JUDAH were the people that dwelt in the country, and were of inferior rank; the inhabitants of Jerusalem were the citizens, the men of wealth and figure; and Jerusalem also was the habitation or resort of the Priests and Levites, and the Officers and Judges The house of DAVID were the highest rank of all, the royal family, and the great men that were round the King.â€•It is evident, by the context, that this prophecy has respect to something further than the saving the people out of the Babylonish captivity.

GOD in this work has begun at the lower end, and has made use of the weak and foolish things of the world to carry it on. Of the Ministers that have been chiefly employed, some have been mere babes in age and standing, and some of them such as have not been so high in reputation among their fellows as many others. And GOD has suffered their infirmities to appear in the sight of others, soâ€• as much to displease them; and at the same time it has pleased GOD greatly to succeed them, while he has not so succeeded others that are reputed vastly their superiors. Yea, there is reason to think that it has pleased GOD to make use of the infirmities of some that he has succeeded; as particularly their imprudent and rash zeal, to chastise the deadness, negligence, earthly mindedness and vanity that have been found among Ministers in the late times, wherein Ministers and people have sunk into such a deep sleep. These things in Ministers of the Gospel, that go forth as the Ambassadors of CHRIST, and have the care of immortal souls, are extremely abominable to GOD; vastly more hateful in his sight than all the imprudence and intemperate heats, wildness and distraction (as some call it) of these zealous Preachers. A supine carelessness, or -worldly spirit in a Minister of the Gospel, is the worst distraction in the sight of GOD. GOD may also make use of the censoriousness of some Preachers, the more to humble and purify some of his own children that have been wrongfully censured, and to fit them for more eminent service.

II. Another fundamental error of those that do not acknowledge the Divinity of this work is, not taking the Holy Scriptures as a -whole, and sufficient rule to judge of such things by. They that have one consistent rule to judge by, may come to some clear determination; but they that have half a dozen different rules to make the thing they would judge of agree to, instead of justly and clearly determining, do but perplex and darken themselves and others.

They will indeed make some use of Scripture, so far as they think it serves their turn; but do not make use of it alone, as a rule sufficient by itself. They made as much or more use of other things, wide from it, to judge of this work by. As particularly,

1. Some make philosophy, instead of the Holy Scriptures, their rule of judging of this work; particularly the philosophical notions they entertain of the nature of the soul, its faculties and affections.â€™ There is but little sober solid religion,' say they,â€™ in this work; it is little else but flash and noise. Religion now-a-days all runs out into transports and high flights of the passions and affections. In their philosophy, the affections of the soul are something not appertaining to the noblest part of the soul, but the meanest principles that it has; that belong to man as partaking of animal nature, and what he has in common with the brute creation, rather than any thing whereby he is conformed to angels and pure spirits.

But I cannot but think that these gentlemen labor under great mistakes, both in their philosophy and divinity. It is true, distinction must be made in the affections or passions. Some are much more solid than others. There are many exercises of the affections that are little to be depended on; and often there is a great deal that appertains to them, which is very much owing to the constitution and frame of the body; and that which more especially obtains the name of passion, is nothing solid or substantial. But it is false philosophy to suppose this is the case with all great and high affections; and false divinity to suppose that religious affections do not appertain to the substance and essence of Christianity. On the contrary, the very life and soul of all true religion consists in them.

All will allow that true holiness has its seat chiefly in the heart; not the head. It follows, that it consists chiefly in holy affections. For the things of religion take place in men's hearts, no further than they are affected with them The informing of the understanding is all vain, any further than it affects the heart, or, which is the same thing, has influence on the affections.

Those gentlemen, that make light of these raised affections in religion, will doubtless allow that true religion or holiness, as it has its seat in the heart, is capable of very high degrees, and high exercises in the soul. As for instance, they will doubtless allow that the holiness of the heart is capable of being raised to an hundred times as great a degree of strength as it is in the most eminent saint on earth, or to be exerted in an hundred times so strong and vigorous exercises of the heart; and yet be true religion or holiness still. Now therefore I would

ask, by what name they will call these high exercises of the heart Are they not high affections What can they consist in, but in high acts of love; strong and vigorous exercises of benevolence and complacence; strong desires after GOD, yea, those very same high and raised affections that before they made light of, as worthy of little regard

I suppose further, that all allow there is nothing but solid religion in heaven; but that there, religion and holiness are raised to an exceeding great height, to strong, exalted exercises of heart. Now, what other kinds of such exceeding strong and high exercises of the heart, or of holiness as it has its seat in their hearts, can we devise for them, but only holy affections, high degrees of love to GOD, rejoicing in GOD, admiring of GOD—Therefore these things, in the angels in heaven, are not to be despised by the name of great heats and transports of the passions.

And it will doubtless be yet farther allowed, that the more eminent the saints are on earth, the more they are like the saints in heaven, that is, (by what has been just now observed,) the more they have of high or raised affections.

If we take the Scriptures, for our whole rule, then the greater and higher are the exercises. of love to GOD, long-nigh after GOD, delight in the children of GOD, love to mankind, brokenness of heart, abhorrence of sin, and self-abhorrence for sin; exulting and glorying in GOD; so much the higher is CHRIST'S religion, or that virtue which he and his Apostles taught, raised in the soul.

But it is a stumbling to some, that religious affections should be so violent (as they express it) in some persons: They are therefore ready to doubt whether it can be the SPIRIT of GOD, or whether this vehemence be not rather a sign of an evil spirit. But, what is represented in Scripture as more powerful in its effects, than the SPIRIT of GOD, which is therefore called— the power of the Highest.— (Luke \. 35.) And it is said to operate in the minds of men with the exceeding greatness of Divine power, and— according to the working of GOD'S mighty power.— (Eph. \. 19,) So in 2 Tim. \, 7, the SPIRIT of GOD is called— the SPIRIT of power, and love, and of a sound mind.— And the SPIRIT is represented by a mighty wind, and by fire; things most powerful in their operation.

2. Many are guilty of not taking the Holy Scriptures as a sufficient and whole rule, whereby to judge of this work, whether it be the work of GOD; in that they judge by those things which the Scripture does not give as any signs or marks whereby to judge one way or the other, namely, The effects thaj; religious exercises and affections of mind have upon the body. Scripture rules respect the state of the mind, and persons' moral conduct, and voluntary behavior; and not the physical state of the body. The design of the Scripture is to teach us divinity, and not physic and anatomy. Ministers are made the watchmen of men's souls, and not their bodies; and therefore the great rule which GOD has committed into their hands, is to make them Divines, and not Physicians. CHRIST knew what instructions and rules his Church would stand in need of, better than we do; and, if he had seen it needful in order to the Church's safety, he doubtless would have given Ministers rules to judge of bodily effects: and would have told them how the pulse should beat under such and such exercises -of the mind; when men should look pale, and when they should shed tears; when they should tremble, and whether or no they should ever te faint or cry out; or whether the body should ever be put into convulsions: He would have put some book into their hands, to make them Anatomists and Physicians: But he has not done it, because he did not see it to be needful. He judged, that if Ministers did their duty as overseers of the state of men's souls, and of their voluntary conduct, according to the rules he had given, his Church would be well provided for. And therefore those Ministers of CHRIST, and overseers of souls, that busy themselves, and are full of concern, about the involuntary motions of the fluids and solids of men's bodies, when nothing appears but that the state of their minds, and their behavior-is good, and agreeable to GOD'S word; I say, such Ministers go out of the place that CHRIST has set them in, and leave their proper business, as much as if they should undertake to tell who are under the influence of the SPIRIT by their looks, or their gait. I cannot see how the Devil is like to get any advantage against us, if we do but thoroughly do our duty with respect to those two things, namely, the state of persons' minds, and their moral conduct, seeing that they be agreeable to the rules that CHRIST has given us. If things are but kept right in these respects, our fears and suspicions arising from extraordinary bodily effects seem wholly groundless.

The most specious thing that is alleged against these, is, That the body is impaired, and health injured; and that it is hard to think that GOD, in the merciful influences of his SPIRIT on men, would wound their bodies, and impair their health. But if it were so commonly, (which I do not suppose it is,) that persons received a lasting wound to their health by extraordinary impressions made upon their minds; yet it is too much for us to determine that GOD shall never bring an outward calamity, in bestowing a vastly greater spiritual good. JACOB in wrestling with GOD, at the same time that he received the blessing from GOD, suffered a great outward calamity from his hand; GOD impaired his body, so that he never got over it as long as he lived: He gave him the blessing, but sent him away— halting on his thigh,— and he went lame all his life after. And yet this is not mentioned as if it were any diminution of the great mercv of GOD to him, when GOD blessed him, and he received his name ISRAEL, because— as a Prince he had power with GOD, and had prevailed.—

But, say some, The operations of the SPIRIT of GOD are of a benign nature. True: Yet it has been a thing allowed, till now, that there is such a thing as being sick of love to CHRIST, or having the bodily strength weakened by strong and vigorous exercises of love to him. And however kind to human nature the influences of the SPIRIT of GOD are, yet no body doubts but that Divine and eternal things, as they may be discovered, would overpower the nature of man in its present state; and that therefore the body, in its present weakness, is not fitted for the views and pleasures of heaven: Yea, that if GOD did discover but a little of that which is seen by the angels in heaven, our frail natures would sink under it. Let us rationally consider what we profess to believe of the infinite greatness of the things of GOD, the Divine wrath, the Divine glory, the infinite love and grace in JESUS CHRIST, and the vastness and infinite importance of the things of eternity. How reasonable then is it to suppose, that if it please GOD to withdraw the veil, and give a view of the great things, of another world in their transcendent and infinite greatness, human nature, that is as the grass, a shaking leaf, a weak withering flower, should totter under such a discovery. Such a bubble is too weak to bear the weight of a view of things that are so vast. Alas! What is dust and ashes, that it should support itself under the view of the awful wrath or infinite glory of JEHOVAH! No wonder therefore that it is said, "No man can see me and live." That external glory and majesty of CHRIST which DANIEL saw, when "there remained no strength in him, and his comeliness was turned in him into corruption" (Dan. \. 6, 7, 8;) and which the Apostle JOHN saw, when he "fell at his feet as dead;" was but a shadow of that spiritual glory and majesty of CHRIST, which will be manifested in another world, and which is sometimes, in some degree, manifested to "the soul in this world, by the influences of the SPIRIT of GOD. And, if the beholding the shadow of this majesty and glory did so overpower human nature, is it unreasonable to suppose that a sight of the glory itself, should have as powerful an effect. The Prophet HABAKKUK, speaking of the awful manifestations GOD made of His majesty and wrath, at the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness, and at Mount Sinai, where He gave the law; and of the impression GOD caused it to have upon him, to the end that he might be saved from that wrath, and "rest in the day of trouble;" says, "When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones, I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble." (Hab. 3: 16.) Which is much such an effect as the discovery of the same majesty and wrath, has had on many in these days; and to the same purposes, namely, to give them "rest in the day of trouble," and save them from that wrath. The Psalmist also speaks of such an effect as I have often seen on persons under religious affections: "I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for thy commandments." (Psalm cxix. 131.)

GOD is pleased sometimes, in dealing spiritual blessings to his people, to exceed the capacity of the vessel in its present scantiness; so that he does not only fill it full, but he makes their "cup to run over;" and pours out a blessing, in such a manner and measure that there is not room to receive it. He gives them riches more than they can carry away; as he did to JEHOSHAPHAT and his people in a time of great favor, in answer to earnest prayer, when the people blessed the LORD in the valley of Berachah. (Chron. 20: 25, 26.) It has been with the disciples of CHRIST, for a long time, a time of great emptiness upon spiritual accounts: They have gone hungry, and have been toiling in vain, during a dark season: A time of night with the church of GOD; as it was with the disciples of old, when they have toiled all night and caught nothing. "But now, the morning being come, JESUS appears to his disciples, and takes a compassionate notice of their wants, and says to them, "Children, have ye any meat?" and gives some of them such abundance, that they are not able to draw their net; yea, so that their net breaks, and their vessel is over-loaded, and begins to sink.

We cannot determine that GOD never shall give persons such a discovery of Himself, as even to take away their lives. It is supposed by many Divines, that MOSES'S life was taken away after this manner; and this has also been supposed of some other saints. Yea, I see no sure grounds to determine, that GOD shall never make such strong impressions on the mind by his SPIRIT, as shall be an occasion of so impairing the frame of the body, and particularly that part of the body, the brain, that persons shall be deprived of the use of reason. As it is too much for us to say, that GOD will not bring an outward calamity in bestowing spiritual blessings; so it is too much for us to determine how great an outward calamity he will bring. If GOD gives great discoveries of himself, and love to him, the benefit is infinitely greater than the calamity, though the life should presently be taken away; yea, though the soul should not immediately be taken, but lie some years in a deep sleep, and then be taken to heaven: Or, which is much the same thing, though it be deprived of the use of its faculties, and be unactive and unserviceable, as if it lay in a deep sleep for some years, and then should pass into glory.

We cannot determine how great a calamity distraction is, when considered with all its consequences, and all that might have been consequent if the distraction had not happened; nor indeed whether (thus considered) it be any calamity at all, or whether it be not a mercy, by preventing some great sin, or some more dreadful thing, if it had not been. It is a great fault in us to limit a sovereign, all-wise GOD, whose judgments are a great deep, and his "ways past finding out," where he has not limited himself, and in things concerning which he has not told us what his way shall be. It is remarkable, considering in what multitudes, and to how great a degree, the frame of the body has been overpowered of late, that persons' lives have notwithstanding been preserved, and that the instance of those that have been deprived of reason have been so very few.

3. Another thing that some make their rule to judge of this work by, instead of the Holy Scriptures, is history, or former observation. These err two ways: First, If there be any thing new and extraordinary in the circumstances of this work, that was not observed in former times, that is a rule with them to reject it. Herein they make that their rule, that GOD has not made so; and limit GOD, where he has not limited himself. And this is especially unreasonable in this case. For whosoever has well weighed the mysterious methods of Divine Wisdom, in the progress of the work of redemption, from the first promise of the seed of the woman to this time, may easily observe that it has all along been GOD'S manner to open new scenes, and to bring forth to view things new and wonderful, such as "eye has not seen, nor ear heard." As the old creation was carried on through six days, and appeared all complete, settled in a state of rest on the seventh; so the new creation, which is immensely the greatest work, is carried on in a gradual progress, from the fall of man, to the consummation of all

things. And as, in the progress of the old creation, there were still new things accomplished; new wonders appeared every day in the sight of the angels, the spectators of that work; new scenes were opened, things that they had not seen before, till the whole was finished; so it is in the progress of the new creation. So that that promise, "For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear; neither has the eye seen, O GOD, besides thee, what he has prepared for him that waiteth for him;" (Isaiah lxiv. 4;) though it had a glorious Fulfillment in the days of CHRIST and the Apostles, as the words are applied, (1 Cor. ii, 9,) yet it always remains to be Fulfilled, in things that are yet behind, till the new creation is finished, at CHRIST'S delivering up the kingdom to his FATHER.

And besides, those things in this work, that have been chiefly complained of as new, are not so new as has been generally imagined: Though they have been much more frequent lately, in proportion to the uncommon degree, extent and swiftness, and other extraordinary circumstances of the work, yet they are not new in their kind; but are things of the same nature as have been found in the church of GOD before, from time to time.

We have a remarkable instance in Mr. BOLTON, that noted Minister of the Church of England, who being awakened by the preaching of the famous MR. PERKINS, in the University of Cambridge, was subject to such terrors as threw him to the ground, and caused him to roar with anguish; and the pangs of the new birth in him were such that he lay pale and without sense, like one dead. And we have another in the life of MR. GEORGE THOSSK, written by himself, of terrors occasioned by the awakenings of conscience, so overpowering the body, as to deprive him, for some time, of the use of reason.

Yea, such extraordinary external effects of inward impressions have not only been found in here and there a single person, but there have also before now been times wherein they have appeared in congregations, in many at once. So in the year 1625, in the West of Scotland, it was a frequent thing for many to be so seized with terror in hearing of the word, by the SPIRIT of GOD convincing them of sin, that they fell down, and were carried out of the church. Many in France also were so wonderfully affected with the preaching of the Gospel, in the time of those famous Divines, FARREL and VIRET, that for a time they could not follow their secular business: And many in Ireland, in the year 1628, were so filled with Divine comforts, that they made but little use of either meat, drink, or sleep, and professed they did not feel the need thereof.

Great outcries under awakenings were also frequently heard of, in former times, in this country, as some aged persons now living do testify: I think fit here to insert a testimony of my honored father, of what he remembers formerly to have heard.

' I well remember, that one MR. ALEXANDER ALLAN, a Scots gentleman of good credit, that dwelt formerly in this town, showed me a letter that came from Scotland, that gave an account of a sermon preached in the city of Edinburgh (as I remember) in the time of the sitting of the General Assembly of Divines in that kingdom, which so affected the people, that there was a great and loud cry made throughout the Assembly. I have also been credibly informed, that it was a common thing, when the famous MR. JOHN ROGERS, of Dedham in England, was preaching, for some of his hearers to cry out: And by what I have heard, I conclude that it was usual for many that heard that awakening Preacher of GOD'S word, to make a great cry in the congregation.

There have been instances also before now, of persons crying out in transports of Divine joy in New-England.. We have an instance in Captain CLAP'S Memoirs, not of a silly woman or child, but a man of solid understanding, that, in a high transport of spiritual joy, was made to cry out aloud on his bed. His words (p. 9.) are, "GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT did witness with my spirit, that I was a child of GOD; and did fill my heart and soul with such assurance that CHRIST was mine, as to make me cry out upon my bed, with a loud voice, He is come, he is come!"

There has, before now, been both crying out and falling down, in this town, under awakenings of conscience, and also in some of the neighboring towns. In one of them, more than seven years ago, were a great number together that cried out and fell down under convictions. And the REV. MR. WILLIAMS, of Deerfield, gave me an account of an aged man in that town, many years before that, that being awakened by his preaching, cried out aloud in the congregation. There have been many instances in this and some neighboring town, before now, of persons fainting with joyful discoveries made to their souls; once several together in this town. And there also formerly have been several instances here of persons' flesh waxing cold and benumbed, and their hands clinched; yea, their bodies being set into convulsions, being overpowered with a strong sense of the astonishingly great and excellent things of GOD and the eternal world.

Another way that some err, in making history and former observations their rule to judge of this work, instead of the Holy Scriptures, is in comparing some external accidental circumstances of this work, with what has appeared sometimes in enthusiasts; and as they find an

agreement in these, so they reject the whole work, concluding it to be enthusiasm. So some external appearances that were found amongst the French Prophets, have been of late trumped up with great assurance and triumph.

4. I would propose it to be considered, whether some, instead of making the Scriptures their only rule to judge of this work, do not make their own experience the rule, and reject such things, because they never felt them themselves. Are there not many that have entertained suspicions, if not peremptory condemnations, of those extreme terrors, and those great discoveries of the glorious perfections of GOD, and of the beauty and love of CHRIST; and such vehement affections, such high transports of love and joy, and exercises of mind, that have such great effects on persons' bodies, merely, or chiefly, because they knew nothing about them by experience Persons are very ready to be suspicious of what they have not felt them-1 selves. It is to be feared many good men have been guilty of this error; which yet does not make it the less unreasonable. And perhaps there are some that upon this ground do not only reject these extraordinary things, but all such conviction of sin, and such discoveries of the glory of GOD, and excellency of CHRIST, and inward conviction of the truth of the Gospel, by the immediate influence of the SPIRIT of GOD, as are necessary to salvation.

III. Another fundamental error of those that reject this work is, their not duly distinguishing the good from the bad, and so rejecting the work in general, for the sake of some things, which are accidental to it, that are evil. They, look (for more in men that are subject to the operations of a good SPIRIT, than is justly to be expected from them, in this imperfect state and dark world, where so much blindness remains in the best. When any profess to have received light and comforts from heaven, and to have had communion with GOD, many are ready to expect that now they appear like angels, and not still like poor, feeble, blind and sinful worms. That so much corruption is left in the hearts of GOD'S own children, was always a stumbling-block to the world; but it will not be wondered at, by those that are duly mindful of two things: First, the word of GOD, which teaches us the state of Christians in this world: And, Secondly, their own heart, at least if they have any grace, and have experience of its conflicts with corruption. If all our conduct, both open and secret, should be known, and our hearts laid open to the world; how should we be, even ready to flee from the light of the sun, and hide ourselves from the view of mankind And what great allowances should we need that others should make for us

Perhaps much greater than we are willing to make for others. The great weakness of the bigger part of mankind, in any affair that is new and uncommon, appears in not distinguishing, but either approving or condemning all in the lump. They that highly approve of the affair in general, cannot bear to have any thing at all found fault with: And, on the other hand, those that fasten their eyes upon some things that are amiss, at once reject the whole. But it is rash and unjust, when we proceed thus in judging either of a particular person, or a people, or of such an affair as the present influence on the minds of the people of this land. Yet so it is'. Many, if they see any thing ill in a particular person, will at once brand him as an hypocrite. And, if there be two or three of a people or society, that behave themselves irregularly, the whole must bear the blame of it. If there be a few, though it may not be above one in an hundred, that had a show of being the happy partakers of the benefits of this work, who prove naught in the end, the whole work must be rejected on their account; and those in general, that make the like profession, must be condemned for their sakes.

2. So careful are some persons lest this work should be defended, that now they will hardly allow, that the influences of the SPIRIT of GOD on the heart can so much as indirectly, and accidentally, be the occasion of sin.â€”Thus far is true, that this influence will not be an occasion of the increase of the corruption of the heart in general, but of the weakening of it: Yet there is nothing unreasonable in supposing, that, at the same time it weakens corruption in general, it may be an occasion of the turning what is left into a new channel, and so of there being more of some certain kinds of the exercise of corruption than there was before; as that which tends to hinder and stop the course of a stream, if it do not do it wholly, may give a new course to so much of the water as gets by the obstacle. The influences of the SPIRIT, for instance, may be an occasion of new ways of the exercise of pride. This was not doubted of, till now it is found to be needful to maintain the war against this work.

But I suppose all will allow, that the influences of the SPIRIT of GOD, yea, and a high degree of love to GOD, is consistent with these two things, namely, a considerable degree of remaining corruption, and also many errors of judgment in matters of religion, and in matters of practice., And this is all that need to be allowed, in order to its being demonstratively evident, that even love to GOD may accidentally move a person to that which is contrary to the will of GOD. For a high degree of love to GOD will strongly move a person to do that which he believes to be agreeable to GOD'S will; and therefore, if he be mistaken, and be persuaded that is agreeable to the will of GOD, which indeed is contrary to it, then his love will accidentally, but strongly, incline him to that which is indeed contrary to the will of GOD.

3. Farther: True disciples of CHRIST may have a great deal of- false zeal, such as the disciples had of old, when they would have fire called for from heaven to come down on the Samaritans, because they did not receive them. And even so great a saint as MOSES, who conversed with GOD, as a man with his friend, and concerning whom GOD gives his testimony, that he was very meek, above any man upon the face of the earth, yet may be rash and sinful in his zeal, so as to speak unadvisedly with his lips. Yea, men, in those very things wherein they are influenced by a pious principle, yet, through error and want of due consideration, may be very rash with their zeal. It was a truly good SPIRIT that animated that excellent generation of ISRAEL that was in JOSHUA'S time, in that affair that we have an account of

in the 22d Chapter of Joshua; and yet they were rash and heady with their zeal, to go about to gather all Israel to go up furiously to war with their brethren of of opinion about smaller matters, unclean meats, holy days, and holy places, and their civil intercourse and communication with their heathen neighbors! And how much did vain jangling and disputing prevail, under the name of religious zeal! (2 Tim. 6: 4, 5; 2: 16; and Tit. 3: 9.) What a task had the Apostles to keep them within bounds, and maintain good order in the churches! How often are they mentioning their irregularities! The prevailing of such like disorders seems to have been the special occasion of writing many of their epistles. The church in that great effusion of the SPIRIT that was then, was under the care of infallible guides, that watched over them day and night; but yet so prone were they through the corruption of nature to get out of the way, that irregularity and confusion rose to a very great height, even in the Apostles' life-time, and under their eye. And though some of the Apostles lived long to settle the state of things, yet, presently after they were dead, the Christian church ran into many superstitions and childish notions and practices.

And let any wise person that has not, in the midst of dispute, got beyond the calmness of consideration, impartially consider to what lengths, we may reasonably suppose, many of the primitive Christians would have gone, if they had had no inspired guides; and whether it is not probable that the church of Corinth in particular, would in a little time have broken to pieces, and dissolved in a state of the utmost confusion! And yet this would have been no evidence that there had not been a glorious work of the SPIRIT in that city. But as for us, we have no infallible Apostle to rectify disorders, and reclaim us when we are wandering; but they that are got into a wrong path continue to wander, till experience of the mischievous issue convinces them of their error.

6. If we look over this affair, and seriously weigh it in its circumstances, it may easily be accounted for, how many should run into great errors, and just such errors as they have. It is known, that some, that have been great instruments to promote this work, have been very young; and how natural is it for such as are themselves newly awakened out of sleep, and have a new and wonderful scene opened to them; who have in view the reality, the vastness, and infinite importance and nearness of spiritual and eternal things; and at the same time see the world asleep about them, who have not the advantage of age and experience, and have had but little opportunity to study divinity, or to converse with aged experienced Christians and Divines: I say, how natural is it for such to fall into many errors with respect to the state of mankind, and with respect to the methods of their relief Is it any wonder that they have not at once learned how to make all the allowances that are to be made, and that they do not at once find out that method of dealing with the world, that is adapted to the mysterious state and nature of mankind Is it any wonder that they cannot at once foresee what the consequences of things will be, what evils are to be guarded against, and what difficulties are like to arise, that are to be provided for

We have long been in a strange stupor: The influences of the SPIRIT of GOD upon the heart have been but little felt, and the nature of them but little; so that they are in many respects new to great numbers of those that have lately fallen under them.. And is it any wonder if they that never before had experience of the supernatural influence of the Divine SPIRIT upon their souls, and never were instructed in the nature of these influences, do not so well know how to distinguish one impression from another, and so insensibly run into enthusiasm, taking every strong impression to be Divine How natural is it to suppose, that among the multitudes of illiterate people, (most of which are in their youth,) who find themselves so wonderfully changed, and brought into such new, and before (to them) almost unheard-of circumstances, many should pass wrong judgments of both persons and things that are about them; and that, now they behold them in such a new light, they should go further from the judgment they were wont to make of them than they ought, and pass from one extreme to another And why should it be thought strange, that those that scarce ever heard of any such thing as pouring out of the SPIRIT of GOD before; or, if they did, had no notion of it, do not know how to behave themselves in such a new and strange state of things

When these persons are extraordinarily affected with a fresh discovery of the greatness of the Divine Being, the infinite importance of eternal things, and the dreadful danger and madness of mankind, together with a great sense of GOD'S kindness and love to them; no wonder that they know not how to sit still, and forbear speaking and acting with uncommon earnestness and vigor. And if they be not persons of more than common steadiness and discretion, or have not some person of wisdom to direct them, it is a wonder if they do not proceed without due caution, and do things that are irregular.

7. Censuring others is the worst disease, with which this affair has been attended: But yet such a time is indeed a time of great temptation to it. When there has been such great and long-continued deadness, and many are brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace, in so extraordinary a manner, and filled with such uncommon degrees of light, it is natural for such to form their notions of a state of grace wholly from what they experience.

Though censoriousness be a thing that is very sinful, yet it is not found in hypocrites only: JOB'S three friends seem to have been eminently holy men, who yet censured the best man on earth, very positively determining that he was an unconverted man; yea, JOB himself, that particularly excelled in a humble, meek, and patient spirit, was guilty of bitterly censuring his three friends, as wicked, vile hypocrites: "He teareth me in his wrath who hateth me, he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me: They have gaped upon me with their mouth." "GOD has delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked." (Job 16: 9,10, 11.) And again, "Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the

hypocrite: The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. But as for you all, do you return and come now, for I cannot find one wise man (that is, one good man) among you. (Job 17: 8, 9, 10.).

Thus, I think, the errors and irregularities that attend this work may be accounted for, from the consideration of the weakness and common corruption of mankind; together with the circumstances of the work, though we should suppose it to be the work of GOD. And it would not be a just objection in any to say, If these impressions are from GOD, why does not the same SPIRIT give strength of understanding and capacity in proportion, to those persons that are the subjects of them; so that strong affections may not, through their error, drive them to an irregular conduct For I do not know that GOD has any where obliged himself to do it. The end of the influences of GOD'S SPIRIT is, to make men wise to salvation; and he has also appointed means for our gaining such degrees of other knowledge, as we need, to conduct ourselves regularly, which means should be carefully used; but the end of the influence of the SPIRIT & God is not to increase men's natural capacities, nor has GOD obliged himself immediately to increase civil prudence in proportion to the degree of spiritual light.

8. If we consider the errors that attend this work, not only as from man and his infirmity, but also as from GOD, and by his permission and disposal, they are not strange, though it be, as to the substance, a work of GOD. If GOD intends this great revival of religion to be the dawning of an happy state of his Church, it may be an instance of the Divine Wisdom, in the beginning of it, to suffer so many irregularities in conduct. For it will be very likely to be of excellent benefit to his Church, in the continuance and progress of the work. Their experience, in the first setting out, of the mischievous consequences of these errors, may be a happy defense to them afterwards, for many generations. As when DAVID and all ISRAEL went about to bring back the Ark, after it had been long absent; they at first sought not the LORD after the due order, and they smarted for their error: But this put them upon more thoroughly acquainting themselves with the will of GOD, and seeking and serving him with greater circumspection: And the consequence was glorious, namely, their seeking GOD in such a manner as was accepted of him; and the Ark of GOD ascending into the heights of Zion, with those great and extraordinary rejoicings of the King and all the people, without any frown or rebuke from GOD intermixed; and GOD'S dwelling thenceforward in the midst of the people.

And it is very analogous to the manner of GOD'S dealing with his people, to permit a great deal of infirmity to appear, in the beginning of a glorious work of his grace, to humble them, and fit them for that prosperity He is about to advance them to, and the more to secure to himself the honor of such a glorious work. For, by man's exceeding weakness, it is evident that GOD does not lay the foundation of it in man's strength or wisdom.

And as we need not wonder at the errors that attend this work, if we look at the hand of men that are guilty of them, and the hand of GOD in permitting them; so neither, if we consider the hand that SATAN has in them. For as this work is much greater than any other that has ever been in New-England, so no wonder that the Devil is more alarmed and enraged, and exerts himself more vigorously against it, and does more powerfully endeavor to tempt and mislead those that are the subjects or promoters of it.

Whatever imprudences there have been, and whatever irregularities; whatever vehemence of the passions, and heats of the imagination; whatever error in judgment and indiscreet zeal; and whatever outcries, and faintings, and agitations of body; yet it is manifest and notorious, that there has been of late a very uncommon influence upon the minds of very many people, that has been attended with the following effects; namely, a great increase of seriousness and sober consideration of the things of the eternal world; a disposition to hearken to any thing that is said of things of this nature, with attention and affection; a disposition to hear matters of religion with solemnity, and as matters of great importance; a disposition to make these things the subject of conversation; and a great disposition to hear the word of GOD preached, to take all opportunities in order to it; and to attend on the public worship of GOD, and all external duties of religion, in a more solemn and decent manner. Multitudes of vain, thoughtless persons are quite changed, and become serious and considerate: There is a vast increase of concern for the salvation of the soul, and of that inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" The hearts of multitudes have been greatly taken off from the things of the world, its profits, pleasures and honors; and have been made sensible of the pernicious consequences of sin, and what a dreadful thing it is to lie under the displeasure of GOD: They have also been awakened to a sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the reality of another world: They are more afraid of sin, more careful to know what is contrary to the will of GOD, that they may avoid it; and what he requires of them that they may do it; more watchful over their own hearts, earnestly desirous of being informed what are the means for their salvation, and diligent in the use of those that GOD has appointed in order to it. Many very stupid, senseless sinners, have been greatly awakened. There is a strange alteration amongst young people: By a powerful influence on their minds, they have been brought to forsake those things, as it were at once, that they were extremely fond of, and that they seemed to place the happiness of their lives in, and which nothing before could induce them to forsake; as their vain company, night walking, their mirth and jollity, their impure language and lewd songs: In vain did Ministers preach against those things before, and in vain were laws made to restrain them, and in vain was all the vigilance of Magistrates and civil officers; but now they have dropped them as it were of themselves. And there is a great alteration amongst old and young as to drinking, profane speaking, and extravagance in apparel. Many notoriously vicious persons have been reformed and become externally new creatures: Some that are wealthy, and of a fashionable, gay education, that seemed to have their minds swallowed up with the show and pleasures of the world, have relinquished these vanities, and become serious, mortified and humble in their conversation. It is astonishing to see the alteration that is in some places, where before was no appearance of religion: And now they are transformed into another sort of people; and are, as it were, gone to a new

world: Their thoughts, and their talk, and their concern, affections and inquiries, are now about the favor of GOD, an interest in CHRIST, and a spiritual blessedness, and acceptance and happiness in a future world. And, through the greater part of New England, the Holy Bible is in much greater esteem and use than it used to be: The great things that are contained in it, are much more the subjects of meditation and conversation; and other books of piety have been abundantly more in use. The LORD's-day is more religiously observed; And abundance has been lately done at making up differences, and confessing faults one to another, and making restitution; probably more within these two years, than was done in thirty years before. And surprising has been the power of that SPIRIT that has been poured out on the land, to destroy old grudges, and make up long-continued breaches, and to bring those that seemed to be irreconcilable, to embrace each other in a sincere and entire amity.

Great numbers have been brought to a deep sense of their own sinfulness and vileness; the sinfulness of their lives, the heinousness of their disregard of the authority of the great GOD, and the heinousness of their living in contempt of a Savior: And many persons have had such a sense of their own sinfulness, that they thought themselves to be the worst of all, and that none ever was so vile as they. And so far as we are worthy to be credited one by another, in what we say, (and persons of good understanding and sound mind, and known and experienced probity, have a right to be believed by their neighbors, when they speak of things that fall under their observation and experience,) multitudes have lately been brought to an affiance and sweet rest of soul in CHRIST, as a glorious Savior, a strong Rock and high Tower; accompanied with a sensible, strong and sweet love to GOD, far surpassing all earthly pleasures; and a rest of soul in Him, as a Portion and the Fountain of all good; attended with an abhorrence of sin, and earnest longings after more holiness and conformity to GOD, with a sense of the great need of God's help in order to holiness of life; together with a most dear love to all that are supposed to be the children of GOD, and a love to mankind in general, and a most tender compassion for the souls of sinners, and earnest desires of the advancement of CHRIST'S kingdom.

And many little children have been remarkably enlightened, their hearts wonderfully affected and enlarged, and their mouths opened, in a manner far beyond their years, to the just astonishment of those that heard them: Some of these are still greatly affected with the glory of Divine things, and the excellence and love of the Redeemer, having their hearts filled with love to and joy in Him, and continuing serious and pious in their behavior.

9. And now let us consider. "Is it not strange that, in a Christian country, there should be any at a loss whose work this is, whether the work of GOD or of the Devil? Is it not a shame to New-England, that such a work should be doubted of here? Need we look over the histories of all past times, to see if there be not some circumstances and external appearances that attend this work, that have been formerly found amongst enthusiasts? Whether the Montanists had not great transports of joy, and whether the French Prophets had not agitations of body? Blessed be GOD! He does not put us to the toil of such inquiries. We need not say, "Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring us down something whereby to judge of this work? Nor does GOD send us beyond the seas, nor into past ages, to obtain a rule that shall satisfy us: But we have a rule near at hand, a sacred book that GOD himself has put into our hands, with clear and infallible marks sufficient to resolve us; which book we must reject, not only in some particular passages, but in the substance of it, if we reject such a work, as not being the work of GOD. The whole tenor of the Gospel proves it; all the notion of religion that the Scripture gives us confirms it."

I suppose there is scarcely a Minister in this land, but has prayed that GOD would pour out his SPIRIT, work in reformation and revival of religion, and turn us from our intemperance, profaneness, uncleanness, worldliness and other sins; and we have kept, from year to year, days of public fasting and prayer to GOD, to humble ourselves for our sins, and to seek of GOD forgiveness and reformation: And now, when so great and extensive a reformation is so suddenly and wonderfully accomplished, in those very things that we have sought to GOD for, shall we not acknowledge it? And that because (although indeed there be such a work, attended with all these glorious effects, yet) the work is attended with a mixture of error and imprudencies; because some persons are carried away with impressions, and are indiscreet, and too censorious with their zeal; and because there are high transports of religious affections; and because of some effects on persons' bodies that we do not understand

10. Those that are waiting for the fruits, in order to determine whether this be the work of GOD or no, would do well to consider two things; 1. What they are waiting for: Whether it be not this; To have this influence that is on the minds of people over, and then to see how they will behave themselves? That is, to have grace subside, and persons grow cold and dead; and then to see whether they will behave themselves with that exactness and brightness of conversation, that is to be expected of lively Christians. There are many that will not be satisfied with any exactness now; for they lay it to their heat of zeal, as they call it; they are waiting to see whether they will carry themselves as well when these affections are over: That is, they are waiting to have persons sicken and lose their strength, that they may see whether they will then behave themselves like healthy strong men. I would desire that they would also consider whether they be not waiting for more than is reasonably to be expected, supposing this to be really a great work of GOD? Do not they expect fewer instances of apostasy, and evidences of hypocrisy, in those that for the present seemed to be under the influences of the SPIRIT, than were after that great out-pouring of the SPIRIT in the Apostles' days? And do not they stand prepared to make a mighty argument of it against this work, if there should be half so many? And, 2. They would do well to consider how long they will wait to see the good fruit of this work, before they will determine in favor of it. Is not their waiting unlimited? The visible fruit that is to be expected of a pouring out of the SPIRIT of GOD on a country, is a visible-

reformation in that country: What reformation has lately been brought to pass by this work, has been before observed; and has it not continued long enough already, to give reasonable satisfaction Surely it is unreasonable that our expectations and demands should be unlimited, and our waiting without any bounds.

11. As there is the clearest evidence, from those things that have been observed, that this is the work of GOD; so it is evident that it is a very great and wonderful, and exceeding glorious work of GOD. This is certain, that it is a great and wonderful event, a strange revolution, an unexpected, surprising' overturning of things, suddenly brought to pass; such as never has been seen in New-England, and scarce ever has been heard of in any land. Who that saw the state of things in New-England a few years ago, the state that it was settled in, and the way that we had been so long going on in, would have thought that in so little a time there would be such a change

Such a work is, in its nature, the most glorious of any work of GOD whatsoever, and is always so spoken of in Scripture. It is the work of redemption (the great end of all other works of GOD, and of which the work of creation was but a shadow) in the event, success and end of it: It is the work of new creation, that is infinitely more glorious than the old. I am bold to say, that the work of GOD in the conversion of one soul, is a more glorious work of GOD than the creation of the whole material universe. It is the most glorious of GOD'S works, as it above all others manifests the glory of GOD; as it shows the exceeding greatness of GOD'S power, and the glory and riches of his grace; wherein CHRIST has the most glorious triumph over his enemies, and wherein GOD is most exalted: And it is a work above all others glorious, as it concerns the happiness of mankind; more happiness and a greater benefit to man, is the fruit of each single drop of such a* shower, than all the temporal good of the most happy revolution in a land or nation amounts to, or all that a people could gain by the conquest of the world.

And as this work is very glorious in its nature, so it is in the extent of it; being in this respect vastly beyond any that ever was known in New England. There has formerly sometimes been a remarkable awakening, in some particular congregation: But now GOD has brought to pass a new thing, he has wrought a great work of this nature, that has extended from one end of the land to the other, besides what has been wrought in other British Colonies in America.

The work is very glorious in the great numbers that have been turned from sin to GOD. How high, in honor, and great reward of their labors, have some eminent persons signified that they should esteem it, if they should be made the instruments of the conversion of but one soul No greater event than that is thought worthy of great notice in heaven, amongst the hosts of glorious angels, who rejoice and sing on such an occasion: And when there are many thousands converted, shall it be esteemed worth but little notice, and be mentioned with coldness and indifference here on earth, by those among whom such a work is wrought

The work has been very glorious and wonderful in many circumstances of it, wherein GOD has in an uncommon manner made his power conspicuous; as in the extraordinary degrees of awakening, the suddenness of conversions in innumerable instances, in whom though the work was quick, yet the thing wrought is manifestly durable. How common a thing has it been for great part of a congregation to be at once moved by a mighty invisible power; and for six, eight or ten souls to be converted to GOD at once, in whom the visible change still continues How great an alteration has been made in some populous towns, the change still abiding And how many very vicious persons have been wrought upon, so as to become visibly new creatures GOD has, also made his hand very visible, and his work glorious, in the many little children that have been wrought upon, any one of which formerly would have been thought, so remarkable, as to be worthy to be recorded, and published through the land work is exceeding glorious in the high attain of Christians, in the extraordinary degrees of light, love and Spiritual joy, that GOD has bestowed upon great multitudes, In this respect too, the land in all parts has abounded with, such instances, any one of which, if they had happened formerly, would have been thought worthy to be taken notice of throughout the British dominions. The New Jerusalem in this respect has begun to come down from heaven, and perhaps never were more of the prelibations of heaven's glory given upon earth,

There being a great many errors and irregularities mixed with this work of GOD, arising from our weakness, darkness and corruption, does not hinder it from being very glorious. Our follies and sins that we mix, do in some respects manifest the glory of it: The glory of Divine power and grace is set off with the greater lustre, by what appears at the same time of the weakness of the earthen vessel. It is GOD'S pleasure that there should be something remarkably to manifest the weakness and unworthiness of the subject, at the same time that he displays the excellency of his power and riches of his grace. And I doubt not but some of those things that make us here to look on this work with a displeased countenance, do heighten the songs of the angels, when they praise GOD and the Lamb for the glory of GOD'S all-sufficiency, and the efficacy of CHRIST'S redemption.

Showing the Obligation that all are under to acknowledge, rejoice in. and promote this Work.

1. THERE are many things in the Word of GOD, which show that when GOD remarkably appears for his church, and against his enemies, it is a most dangerous thing to be slow and backward to acknowledge GOD in the work. CHRIST'S people are in Scripture represented as his army; he is the LORD of hosts, or armies; he is the Captain of the host of the LORD, the Captain of his people's salvation: And therefore it may well be highly resented, if they do not resort to him when he orders his banner to be displayed; if they refuse to follow him when he blows the trumpet, and gloriously appears going forth against his enemies. GOD expects that every living soul should have his attention roused on such an occasion, should cheerfully yield to the call, and needfully and diligently obey it: "All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth the trumpet, hear ye." (Isa. lxviii. 3) How severe is the martial law in such a case, when any of an army refuses to obey the sound of the trumpet, and follow his General to the battle! GOD at such a time appears in peculiar manifestations of his glory; and therefore to lie still, and refuse to follow GOD, will be resented as a high contempt of him.

At a time when GOD manifests himself in such a work for his church, there is no such thing as being neuters; there is a necessity of being either for or against the King that then gloriously appears. So it was when CHRIST came down from heaven in his incarnation, and appeared on earth in his human presence; there was no such thing as being neither on his side nor against him: Those that sat still and said nothing, and did not declare for him, and come and join with him, after he, by his word and works, had given sufficient evidence who he was, were justly looked upon as his enemies; as CHRIST says, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattered abroad." (Matt. 12: 30.) So it is in a time when CHRIST is remarkably spiritually present, as well as when he is bodily present; and when he comes to carry on the work of redemption in the application of it, as well as when he reveals and purchases. If a King should come into one of his provinces that had been oppressed by its foes, where some of his subjects had fallen off to the enemy, and joined with them against their lawful Sovereign; I say, the lawful Sovereign himself should come into the province, and should ride forth there against his enemies, and should call upon all that were on his side to come and gather themselves to him; there would be no such thing in such a case, as standing neuter. They that lay still and stayed at a distance, would undoubtedly be looked upon and treated as rebels. So in the day of battle, when two armies join, there is not such thing for any present as being of Neither party: All must be on one side or the other; and they, that are not found with the Conqueror in such a case, must expect to fall with the rest of his enemies.

2. When GOD manifests himself with such glorious power, he appears especially determined to put honor upon his SON, and to Fulfill his oath, that he would "make every knee to bow, and every tongue to confess him." Such a day is a day of his power, wherein he shall rule in the midst of his enemies; these especially are the times wherein GOD declares his firm decree, that his SON shall "reign on his holy hill of Zion: And therefore those that at such a time do not kiss the SON, as he then appears in the glory of his Majesty, expose themselves to perish from the way, and to be dashed in pieces with a rod of iron."

It always is so, that when CHRIST is in a peculiar manner manifested by a glorious work of GOD in his church, as a foundation and a sanctuary for some, he is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to others. They that continue long to be offended at such a work of CHRIST, stumble at CHRIST, and are offended in him. But how dangerous is it to continue always stumbling at such a work, for ever doubting of it, and forbearing fully to acknowledge it, and give GOD the glory of it! Such persons are in danger to go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared and taken, and to have CHRIST "a stone of stumbling" to them that shall be an occasion of their ruin.

The Prophet ISAIAH (Chap. 29: 14) speaks of GOD'S proceeding to do a marvelous work, that which should stumble and confound the wise and prudent, which the Apostle, in Acts 13: 41, applies to the glorious work of salvation wrought in those days by the redemption of CHRIST. The Prophet in the context of that place, (Isa. xxix,) speaking of the same thing, and of the Prophets and Rulers and Seers, those wise and prudent, whose eyes GOD had closed, says to them, Verse 9, "Stay yourselves and wonder." I leave it to others to consider whether it be not natural to interpret it thus, "Wonder at this, marvelous work; let it be a strange thing, a great mystery that you know not what to make of, and that you are very slow and backward to acknowledge, long delaying to come to a determination concerning it." And what persons are in danger of, that are thus slow to acknowledge GOD in such a work, we learn by that of the Apostle, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in nowise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

3. The church is called upon greatly to rejoice, when at any time CHRIST remarkably appears, to enlarge his own kingdoms and to deliver poor souls out of the pit wherein there is no water. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation. (Zech. 9: 9,10, 11.) CHRIST was pleased to give a typical representation of such an event, in his solemn entry into Jerusalem, which was a type of the church or daughter of Zion, there spoken of, probably intending it as a figure of that great actual Fulfillment of this prophecy, that was to be. After his ascension. When he made this his solemn entry into

Jerusalem, and the whole multitude of the disciples were rejoicing and praising GOD with loud voices, for all the mighty works that they had seen, the Pharisees said, *, Master, rebuke thy disciples;â€• but we are told, â€œHe answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry outâ€• (Lidte xix. 39, 40.) Signifying that if CHRIST'S disciples should be unaffected on such an occasion, and should not appear openly to acknowledge and rejoice in the glory of God, it would manifest such a fearful hardness of heart, that die very stones would condemn them. Should not this make those consider who have held their peace so long, since CHRIST has so wonderfully manifested his glory \$n., this, mighty work of his SPIRIT, and so many of his disciples have been rejoicing and praising GOD with loud voices!

4. The great danger of not joining with GOD'S people at the, glorious day is also represented, Isa. xl. 12: â€œ For the nation wild kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.â€• .

Most of the great temporal deliverances that were wrought for ISRAEL of old, as expositors observe, were typical of the great spiritual works of GOD for the salvation of men's souls, and the prosperity of his Church, in the days of the Gospel; and especially did they represent that greatest of all GOD'S â€œworks of actual salvation, that shall be in the latter days; which is, above all others, the appointed time, and proper season of actual redemption of men's souls. But it may be observed, that if any appeared to oppose GOD'S work in those great temporal deliverances; or if there were any of his people, that on such occasions lay still, and stood at a distance, and did not arise and acknowledge GOD in his work, and appear to promote it, it was what in a remarkable manner incensed GOD'S anger, and brought his curse upon such persons.

So, when GOD wrought that great work of bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, (which was a type of GOD'S delivering his Church out of the spiritual Egypt,) how highly did GOD resent it, when the Israelites appeared as opposers in that affair And how dreadfully did he curse them for itâ€™â€œ And the LORD said unto MOSES, write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of JOSHUA; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of AMALEK from under heaven. And MOSES built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-Nissi. For he said, Because the LORD will have war with AMALEK from generation to generation.â€• (Exod. 17: 14, 15, 16.) And how highly did GOD resent it in the Moabites and Ammonites, that they did not lend an helping handâ€• An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation, shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: Because they met you not with bread and water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt.11 (Dent xxii. 3, 4.)

5. That was a glorious work of God that he wrought for Israel, when he delivered them from the Canaanites, by the hand of DEBORAH and BARAK: Which makes DEBORAH exultingly to say,â€• O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength!â€• (Judges 5: 31.) CHRIST with his heavenly host was engaged in that battle; and therefore it is said, (verse 20,)â€• They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against SISERA.â€• The work of GOD therefore, in this victory and deliverance wrought for Israel, was a type of that victory and deliverance which he will accomplish for his Church in that great battle, that last conflict that the Church shall have with her open enemies, as appears by Rev. 16: ifj, speaking of that great battle.â€• Andâ€• he gathered them together into a place, called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon,â€• that is, the mountain of Megiddo; alluding to the place where the battle was fought with the host of SISERA;â€• The Kings came and fought, the Kings of Canaan in Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo.â€• (Judges 5: 19.) Which can signify nothing else than that this battle, which CHRIST and his Church shall have with their enemies, is the anti-type of the battle that was fought there But what a dreadful curse did some of Israel bring upon them- selves, by lying still at that time, and not putting to an helping handâ€• 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.â€• (Judges 5: 28.) It seems the inhabitants of Meroz were unbelieving concerning this great work, nor would they hearken to DEBORAH'S pretences, nor did it enter into them that such a poor defenceless company â€œ should ever prevail against those that were so mighty; they did not-acknowledge the hand of GOD, and therefore stood at a distance, and did nothing to promote the work: But what a bitter curse did they bring upon themselves by it!

It is very probable that one great reason why the inhabitants of Meroz were so unbelieving concerning this work, was, that they argued a priori; they did not like the beginning of it, it being a woman that first led the way, and had the chief conduct in the affair; nor could they believe that such despicable instruments, as a company of unarmed slaves were ever like to effect so great a thing; and pride and unbelief wrought together, in not being willing to follow DEBORAH to the battle.

6. It was another glorious work of GOD that he wrought in the victory obtained by GIDEON over the Midianites and Amalekites, and the children of the East, when they came up like grasshoppers, a multitude that could not be numbered. This also was a remarkable type of the victory of CHRIST and his Church over his enemies; as is evident by the manner of it, which was not by human sword or bow, but only by blowing of trumpets, and by lights in earthen vessels. We read that, on this occasion, GIDEON called the people together to help in this great affair; and that accordingly great numbers resorted to him, and came to the help of the LORD. (Judges 7: 23, 24.) But there were some that were unbelieving, and would not acknowledge the hand of GOD in that work. They were the inhabitants of Succoth and Penuel. GIDEON desired their help, when he was pursuing after ZEBA and ZALMUNNA; but they despised his pretences, and his confidence of

the Loan's being on his side, to deliver those two great Princes into the hands of such a despicable company as he and his three hundred men. God proceeded in this work in a way that was exceeding cross to their pride. And they also refused to own the work, because they argued, a priori; they could not believe that God would do such great things by such a despicable instrument, one of such a poor, mean family in MANASSEH, and he the least in his father's house; and the company that was with him appeared very wretched, being but three hundred men, and they weak and faint. But we see how they suffered for their folly. "GIDEON," when he returned from the victory, "took them, and taught them with the briers and thorns of the wilderness, and beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city." (Judges viii.) This in all probability GIDEON did, as directed by the Angel of the Loin, that is, CHRIST, that first called him, and sent him forth in this battle, and instructed and directed him in the whole affair.

At the return of the Ark of God to dwell in Zion, in the midst of the land of Israel, after it had been long absent, first in the land of the Philistines, and then in Kirjath jearim, we have an account that all the people from Shihor, of Egypt, even unto the entering in of Hemath, gathered together, to assist in that great affair; and that all Israel "brought up the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, with shouting and with sound of cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps." (1 Chron. 13: 2, 5, and 15: 28.) And not only the men, but the women of Israel, the daughters of Zion, appeared as publicly joining in the praises and rejoicings that were on that occasion. (2 Sam. 6: 19.) But we read of one of DAVID'S wives, even MICHAL, SAUL'S daughter, who did not appear with others to rejoice and praise GOD, but kept away, and stood at a distance, as disaffected, and disliking the management; she despised and ridiculed the transports and extraordinary manifestations of joy that then were; and curse that she brought upon herself by it was that of -beingâ€ barren to the day of her death. Let this be a warning to us: Let us take heed, in this day of the bringing up of the Ark of God, we do not show ourselves to be the children of rebellious SAUL, by our standing aloof, not joining, in praise, and disliking and despising the joys and affections, of God's people, because they are to so high a degree;- and'iso bring the curse of perpetual barrenness upon-our souls.

And that we may be warned not to continue doubting and unbelieving concerning this work, because of the extraordinary degree of it, and the suddenness and swiftness of the accomplishment of the great things that pertain to it; let us consider the example of the unbelieving LORD in Samaria, The Prophet ELISHA foretold that the great famine in Samaria should, in one day, be turned into an extraordinary plenty; but the work was too great: and too sudden for him, to believe: Says he, "If the LORD should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" And the curse that he brought upon himself by it was, that he "saw it with bweyes; and. did not eat thereof;" but miserably perished,

trodden doyen as the mire of the streets, when others were feasting and rejoicing. (2 Kings 7:)

When GOD redeemed his people from their Babylonish captivity, and they rebuilt Jerusalem, it was, as is universally owned, a remarkable type of the spiritual redemption of GOD'S Church; and particularly, of the Christian Church from spiritual Jerusalem, in the latter days. But we read of some that opposed the Jews in that affair, that weakened their hands, and despised their hope: "What do these feeble Jews say," will they fortify themselves will they make an end in a day will they receive the stones out, out. of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone-wall." Let not us be in any measure like them, lest it be said to us, as NEHEMIAH said to them, "We his servants will arise and build; but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem."

If Ministers preach never so God doctrine, and are never so painful and laborious in their work, yet if, at such a time as this, they show their people that they are not well affected to this work, they will do their people a great deal more hurt than God: For the very fame of such a work of GOD, if their people were suffered to believe it to be his work, would be likely to have a greater influence upon their minds, to animate them in religion, than all their labors: And besides, their Ministers' opinion will not only beget in them a suspicion of the work they hear of abroad, whereby the mighty hand of God), that appears in it, does its influence upon their minds; but it will also tend to create suspicion; of everything of the like nature, that shall appear among themselves, as being something of the same distemper that is become so epidemical in the land; and that is, in effect, to create a suspicion of all vital religion, and to put the people upon talking against it, and discouraging it, wherever it appears, and knocking it in the head as fast as it rises. And we that are Ministers, by looking on this work from year to year with a displeased countenance, keep the sheep from their pasture, instead of doing the part of shepherds to them, by feeding them; and our people had a great deal better be without any

settled Minister at all, at such a time as this.

We that are in this sacred office had need to take heed what we do, and how we behave ourselves at this time. If we hinder and stand in the Sway of the work of GOD, whose business above all others it is to promote it, how can we expect to partake of the glorious benefits of it Those awful words of CHRIST to the Jewish teachers, should be considered by us: "Woe unto you, for you shut up the kingdoms of

heaven; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in.â€• (Matt. 23: 13.) If we keep the sheep from their pasture, how shall we answer to the great Shepherd, that has bought the flock with his precious blood, and has committed the care of them to us I would humbly desire of every Minister that has thus long remained disaffected to this work, and- has had contemptible thoughts of it, to consider whether he has not hitherto been, like MICHAEL, without any child, or at least in a great measure barren and unsuccessful in his work I pray GOD it may not be a perpetual barrenness, as hers was.

Ministers should especially take heed of a spirit of envy towards other Ministers, whom GOD is pleased to make more use of to carry on his work than they; and that they, o not, from such a spirit, reproach some preachers, that have the true spirit, as though they were influenced by a false spirit, or were bereft of reason, and were mad, or were proud, false pretenders, and deserved to be put in prison, or the stocks, as disturbers of the peace; lest they expose themselves to the curse of SHEMAIAH the Nehelamite, who envied the Prophet JEREMIAH, and in this manner reviled him, in his letter to ZEPHANIAH the Priest, 41 The LORD has made thee Priest in the stead of JEHOIDA the Priest, that ye should be Officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a Prophet, that thou shouldst put him in prison, and in the stocks. Now therefore, why bast thou not reprov'd JEREMIAS of Anathoth, which maketh himself a Prophet to youâ€• (Jer. 29: 26, 27.) His curse is denounced in the 32d verse, GO Therefore, thus says the LORD, Behold, I Will punish SHEYIAIAH the Nehelamite, and his seed He shall not have a man to dwell among his people, neither shall he behold the God that I will do for my people, says the LORD, because he has taught rebellion against

the LORD.â€•

It is our wisest way, fully, and without reluctance, to bow to the great GOD in this work, and to be entirely resigned to him, with respect to the manner in which he carries it on, and the instruments he is pleased to make us of; not sullenly to refuse to acknowledge the work, in the full glory of it, because we have not had so great a hand in promoting it, or shared so largely in the blessings of it as some others; and not to refuse to give all that honor, that belongs to others as instruments, because they are young, or are upon other accounts much inferior to ourselves and many others, and may appear to us very unworthy that GOD should put so much honor upon, them. If God has a design of carrying on this work, every one, whether he be great or small, must either bow to it, or be broken before it. It may be expected that God's hand will be upon every thing that is high, and stiff, and strong in opposition; as in Isaiah 2: 12, 13, 14, 15: â€œ For the day of the LORD of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low; and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the frills that are lifted tip, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall.â€•

But not only Ministers, but every living soul, is now obliged to arise and acknowledge GOD in his work-, and put to his hand to promote it, as they would not expose themselves to GOD's curse. All sorts of persons through out the whole congregation of Israel, great and small, rich and poor, men and women, helped to build the tabernacle in the wilderness; some in one way, others in another, each one according to his capacity: â€œ Every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing.â€• All sorts contributed, and all sorts were employed in that affair, both men and women. And thus it ought to be in this day of building the tabernacle of GOD; with such a willing and cheerful heart ought every man, woman, and child, to do something to promote this work: Those that have not onyx-stones, or are not able to bring gold or silver, yet may bring goat's hair.

We have an account, how that all sorts assisted in the rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, not only the proper inhabitants of Jerusalem, but those that dwelt in other parts of the land. And we have an account of one and another, that he repaired, over against his house,â€• and of one that repaired â€œ over against his chamber.â€• So now, at this time of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, every one ought to promote the work of God within his own sphere, and by doing what belongs to him, in the place GOD has set him. Men in a private capacity may repair over against their houses; and even those that have not the government of, families, and have but a part of a house belonging to them, should repair each one over against his chamber And every one should be engaged to do the utmost that lies_ in his power, laboring with the utmost watchfulness, care and diligence, with united hearts, and united strength, and the greatest readiness, to assist one another in this work; as GOD's people rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem, who were so diligent in the work, that they wroughtâ€• from break of day till the stars appeared,â€• and did not so much as put of their clothes in the night; and wrought with that care and watchfulness, that â€œ with one hand they wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon;â€• and were so well united in it, that they took care that one should stand ready with a trumpet in his hand, that, if any were assaulted in one part, those in the other parts, at the sound of the trumpet, might resort to them, and help them.

We should take heed that at this day we be not like the Gadarenes, who, when CHRIST came into their country, in the exercise of his glorious power, triumphing over a legion of Devils, were all alarmed, because they lost their swine by it; and â€œ a whole multitude of the country came, and besought him to depart out of their coasts.â€• They loved their swine better than JESUS CHRIST; and had rather have a legion of Devils in their country with their herd of swine, than JESUS CHRIST without them.

Instead of coming to the help of the LORD, we shall actually fight against Him, if we are abundant in insisting on the blemishes of the work, so as to manifest that we are more forward to take notice of what is amiss; than what is God and glorious in the work. Not but that the errors that are committed ought to be observed and lamented, and the most probable means used to have them amended; but an insisting much upon them, as though it were a pleasing theme, or speaking of them with heat of spirit, or with ridicule, or an air of contempt, rather than grief for them, has no tendency to correct the errors; but to darken the glory of GOD's power and grace, and to beget jealousies and ill thoughts in the minds of others. Whatever errors many zealous persons have run into, yet if the work, in the substance of it, be the work of God, then it is a joyful day indeed; it is so in heaven, and ought to be so among GOD'S people on earth. It is a day of great rejoicing with CHRIST himself, the God Shepherd, when he finds his sheep that was lost. If we therefore are Fart, offends, it should be a day of great rejoicing with us. If, re viewed things in a just light, so great an event as the conversion of such a multitude of sinners, would engage our attention much more than all the imprudencies and irregularities that have been; our hearts would be swallowed up with the the glory of this event, and we should have no great disposition to attend to any thing else. The imprudences and errors of poor feeble worms do not hinder great rejoicing, in the angels of GOD, over so many poor sinners that have repented; and it will be an argument of something very ill, if they prevent our rejoicing.

GOD doubtless now expects, that all sorts of persons in New-England, Ministers and people, high and low, rich and poor, old and young, should take great notice of his hand in this mighty work of his grace, and should appear to acknowledge his glory in it, and greatly to rejoice in it, every one doing his utmost, in the place that GOD has set them in, to promote it. And God, according to his wonderful patience, seems to be still waiting, to give us opportunity thus to acknowledge and honor him: But, if we funnily. refuse, there is not the least reason to expect any other: than that' his awful curse will pursue us, and that the pourings out of his wrath will be proportionable to the pourings out of his grace, which we have despised.

The Present Revival Of Religion, By John Edwards, Part III-IV

PART 3:

Shortly Instances, wherein the Subjects, or Promoter of this Work, have been injuriously blamed.

In treating of the methods to be taken to promote this work; I would, 1. Take notice, wherein fault has been found. with the conduct of the subjects, or promoters of it, beyond just cause. 2. I would show what things ought to be corrected or avoided. And, 3. What ought to be done to, promote it, first, I would take notice of some things, at which Wenoel's been-taken without or beyond just cause.

1. One thing that has been complained of, is, Ministers addressing themselves to the affections of their hearers, and [striving to](#) raise their passions, rather by, earnestness in voice and gesture, than by clear reasoning: By which means, it, is objected, the affections are moved, without a proportional enlightening of the understanding.

To which I would say, I am far from thinking that it is not very profitable for Ministers, in their preaching, to explain the doctrines of religion, unravel the difficulties that attend them, to confirm them with strength of reason and argumentation, and also to observe some method and order herein: Yet I believe the objection made, of affections raised without enlightening the understanding, is, in a great measure, built on a mistake, and confused notions that some have, about the nature and cause of the affections, and the manner in which they depend on the understanding. all affections are raised either by light in the understanding, or by some error and delusion in the understanding: For all affections certainly arise from some apprehension in the understanding; and that apprehension must either be agreeable to truth, or not: If it be an apprehension agreeable to truth, then it is light in the understanding: Therefore the thing to be inquired is, Whether the apprehensions of Divine things, that are raised in people's minds by these affectionate Preachers, be apprehensions that are agreeable to truth, or whether they are mistakes If the former, then the affections are raised the way they should be, namely, by informing the mind, or conveying light to the understanding. They go away with a wrong notion, that think those Preachers cannot affect their hearers by enlightening their understandings, who do not do it by such a distinct handling of doctrinal points, as depends on human discipline, or the strength of reason, and tends to enlarge their hearers learning, and speculative knowledge in divinity. The manner of preaching without this, may tend very much to set Divine things in a right view, and to give the hearers

much apprehensions of them as are agreeable to truth, and such impressions on their hearts as are answerable to the real nature of things.

And not only the words spoken, but the manner of speaking, has a great tendency to this. An affectionate way of preaching about the great things of religion, has no tendency to beget false apprehensions of them; but a much greater to beget true apprehensions of them, than a moderate, dull, indifferent way of speaking. Affection and earnestness in the manner of delivery, if it be very great indeed, yet if it be agreeable to the nature of the subject, not beyond proportion to its importance, and there be no appearance of its being feigned or forced, has so much the greater tendency to beget true apprehensions in the minds. of the hearers, of the subject spoken of, and so to enlighten the understanding: And that, for this reason, That such a manner of speaking of those things does, in fact, truly. represent them. If the subject be worthy of very great affection, then a speaking of it with very great affection is the truest-representation of it, and therefore has most tendency to beget true ideas of it. Nor are Ministers to be blamed for, raising the affections of their hearers too high, if that which they are affected with be worthy of affection, and. their affections are not raised beyond a proportion to importance or worthiness.

I know it has long been fashionable to despise an earnest a pathetic way of preaching; and they only have been valued as preachers, that have shown the greatest extent of learning, and strength. of reason, and correctness of method and language: But -I humbly conceive it has been for want of understanding or duly considering human nature, that such, preaching: has been thought to have the greatest tendency, to answer the ends of preaching. And the experience of the present and past ages abundantly confirms the same. Speculative knowledge in divinity is not what is so much needed by our people, as something else. Men may abound in this sort of light, -and have no heat: How much has there. been of this sort of knowledge in this age Was there ever-an age, wherein strength and penetration of extent of learning, exactness of distinction, correctness, style, and clearness of expression, did so abound Yet; was there ever an age, wherein there has been so: little sense of the evil of sin, so little love to God, heavenly-mindedness and holiness of life, among the professors of the true religion Our people do not so much need to have. their heads stored, as to have their hearts touched; and they stand in the greatest need of that sort of preaching that has the greatest tendency to do this.

Those texts, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like: a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and' the house of JACOB their sins;" (Isa. lviii. 1;) and, "Thus says the LORD God, Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say Alas!, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel!," (Ezek. 6: 11,) will justify a great degree of pathos, of zeal and fervency in preaching the word of GOD: They may indeed be abused; but, let us interpret them how we will, they at least imply, that a most affectionate and earnest manner of delivery, in many cases, becomes a Preacher of God's word.

2. Another thing that some Ministers have been blamed for, I think unjustly, is speaking terror to them that are already under great terrors. Indeed if they go about to terrify persons with that which is not true, or to affright them by representing their case worse than it is, or in any respect otherwise than it is, they are to be condemned; but if they terrify them only by still holding forth more light, and giving them to understand more of the truth of their case, they are altogether to be justified. When sinners are awakened by the SPIRIT of GOD, it is by light imparted to the conscience, enabling them to see their case as it is; and, if more light be let in, it will terrify them more: But Ministers are not therefore to be blamed, that they endeavor to hold forth more light to the conscience, and do not rather alleviate the pain they are tinders, by intercepting and obstructing the light that shines already. 'Tis by should we be afraid to bring persons, that are in an infinitely miserable condition, into the light, for fear it should terrify them. The more we bring sinners into the light, while the light is terrible to them, the more likely it is that by and by the light will be joyful to them. The ease, peace and comfort, that natural men enjoy, have their foundation in darkness and blindness; therefore as that darkness vanishes, and light comes in, their peace vanishes, and they are terrified: But that is no God argument why we should endeavor to hold their darkness, that we may uphold their comfort. The truth is, as long as men do not savingly believe, however strict and laborious they may be in religion, they have the wrath of God abiding on them; they are his enemies, and the children of the Devil: And, seeing this is the truth, they should be told so, that they may be sensible what their case indeed is.

To blame a Minister for thus declaring the truth to those who are under awakenings, and not immediately administering comfort to them, is like blaming a surgeon because when he has begun to thrust in his lancet, whereby his

patient shrinks and cries out with anguish, he is so cruel that he will not stay his hand, but goes on to thrust it in further, till he comes to the core of the wound. Such a compassionate physician, who, as soon as his patient began to cry, should withdraw his hand, and immediately apply a plaster to skin over the wound, and leave the core untouched, would heal the hurt slightly, crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

Indeed something else besides terror is to be preached to them-whose consciences are awakened; the Gospel is to be preached to them. Sinners, at the same time that they are told how miserable their case is, should be earnestly invited-to come and accept of a Savior: But this is to allow them to escape from the misery of the condition they are now in, not to make them think it is less miserable than it is or at all to abate their uneasiness and distress, while they are in it; that would be the way to fasten them in it, and notto excite them to flee from it. Comfort in one sense, is to be held forth to sinners under awakenings of conscience, comfort is to be offered to them in CHRIST, on condition of their fleeing from their present miserable to him but comfort is not to be administered to them, in their present state, as any thing that they, have now any title to. "No comfort is to be administered to them, from anything in them, any of their qualifications, prayers or other performances, past, present or future; but Ministers shield in such cases, strive to their utmost to take all such comforts from them. A person that sees himself ready to sink in the Hell, is ready to strive, some way or other, to lay God under some obligation to him; but he is to be beaten off from every thing of that nature, though it greatly increases his terror, to see himself wholly destitute, on every side, of any refuge or any thing of his own to lay hold of; as a man that sees himself in danger of drowning, is in terror, and endeavors to catch hold on every twig within his reach, and he that pulls away those twigs from him increases his terror; yet if they are insufficient to save him, and by being in his way prevent his looking to that which will save him, to pull them away is necessary to save his life.

If sinners are in distress, from any mistake they are under, that is to be removed: For instance, if they are in terror, from an apprehension that they have committed the unpardonable sin, such terrors have no tendency to do them any good; for they are from- temptation, not from conviction: But that terror which arises from conviction, or a sight of truth, is to be increased; for those that are most awakened, have great remaining stupidity; they have a sense of but little of that which is; and it is from remaining blindness and darkness that they see no more, and that remaining blindness is a disease that we ought to endeavor to cure. I am not afraid to tell sinners, that are most sensible of their misery, that their case is indeed as miserable as they think it to be, and a thousand times more so; for this is the truth. Some may be ready to say, that though it be the truth, yet it seems not to be seasonable then: But it seems to me, such truth is never more seasonable than at such a time, when CHRIST is beginning to open the eyes of conscience. Ministers ought to act as co-workers with him; to take that opportunity, and to the utmost to improve that advantage; and when the light has begun to shine, then to remove all obstacles, and use all proper means that it may come in more fully. And experience abundantly shows, that to take this course is not of an hurtful tendency; I have seen, in very many instances, the happy effects of, it; and never knew any ill consequence, in case of real conviction, and when distress has only been from thence.

I know of but one case wherein the truth ought to be with-held from sinners in distress of conscience, and that is the case of melancholy: And it is not to be with-held from them then, because the truth tends to do them hurt, but because, if we speak the truth to them, sometimes they will be led into error by it, through that strange disposition there is in them to take things wrong; unless it be spoken with abundance of caution and prudence, and consideration, of their-disposition and circumstances. But the most awful truth of God's word ought not to be with-held from public, assemblies, because it may happen that some such gesses-may be it; any more than the Bible is to be with-held: from the Christian world, because it is manifest there are many who exceedingly abuse the awful things contained in, the Scripture, to their own wounding.

What has, more especially raised a loud cry against some Preachers is their frightening poor children with talk of Hell and damnation. 'But if those that complain of this, really believe that all are by nature the children of wrath, and heirs Hell; such a cry betrays great weakness and inconsideration.' As innocent as children seem to be to us, yet, they are without CHRIST, they are not so in God's sight; but are in a most miserable condition, as well as grown persons; and they are naturally very senseless and stupid, being born as the wild ass's colt. Why then should we conceal the truth from them Will those children that little, been dealt tenderly with in this respect, and lived and died indispensable of their misery till they come to feel it in Hell- saved-thank their parents for their tenderness, in not fitting; and know what they were in danger of If parents' love towards their children was not blind, it would affect them much more to see them exposed to eternal burnings, and yet senseless, than to see them suffer the distress of that awakening that is necessary in order to their escape from them.' A child that has a dangerous wound may need the painful lancet, as well as grown persons; and that would be' a foolish. pity, in such a case, that should hold back the lancet, and throwaway the life.-I have seen the happy, effects, of dealing plainly with children in the concerns of their souls, without sparing them at all, in many instances; and never knew any ill consequence of it, in any one instance.

3. Another thing that has been blamed is, having so frequent religious meetings, and spending so much time in religion. And indeed, there are none of the externals of religion but what are capable of excess. But yet, this objection of persons spending too much time in religion, has been in the general groundless. Though worldly business must be done, and persons ought not to neglect the business of their particular callings; yet it is to the honor of God, that a people should be so much in outward acts of religion, as to show a great engagedness of mind in it, as the main business of life: And especially at a time when God appears unusually present with a people in wonderful works of power and mercy. And as to the grand objection of "Six days shalt thou labor;" all that the objectors themselves understand by it is, that we may follow our secular labors in those six days, and ought to be diligent in them: Not but sometimes we may turn from them, even within those six days, to keep a day of fasting or thanksgiving; and that more frequently or rarely, as God's providence and the state of things shall call us.

But if the matter be justly considered, it will be found, that the country has lost no time from their temporal affairs by the late revival of religion, but rather gained time; and that more time has been saved from idleness and unprofitable visits, vain talk, and needless diversions, than has been spent in extraordinary religion; and probably five times as much has been saved in persons' estates, at the tavern, and in their apparel, as has been spent by religious meetings.

That the great complaint that is made against so much time spent in religion, cannot be in general from a real concern the God may be honored, is very manifest from this, that there is a much more zealous outcry made against this extraordinary religion, than was before against so much time spent in taverns, vain company, night-walking, and other things, which both waited our time and substance, and injured our moral virtue.

I confess that when I hear a great crying out in a congregation, in the manner that I have heard it, when those things are spoken that are worthy of their being greatly affected by, I rejoice in it, much more than merely in an appearance of solemn attention, and a show of affection by weeping; and that because, when there have been those outcries, I have found from time to time a much greater and more excellent effect. To rejoice that the work of GOD is carried on calmly, without much ado, is in effect to rejoice that it is carried on with less power, or that, there is not so much of the influence of God's SPIRIT. For though the degree of the influence of the SPIRIT of GOD, on particular persons, is by no means to be judged of by, the degree of external appearances, because of the different constitutions, tempers and circumstances of men; yet, if there be a very powerful influence of the SPIRIT on a mixed multitude, it will cause some way or other a great visible commotion.

And as to Ministers aiming at such effects; I suppose one aim at it any otherwise, than as they strive to raise the affections of their hearers to such an height as often appears therein and if those affections are God, and it be found by experience, that such a degree of them commonly has a God effect,: I think they are to be justified in so doing.

5. Again, some Ministers have been blamed for keeping, persons together, that have been under great affections, which have appeared in such extraordinary outward manifestations. Many think this promotes confusion; that persons in such circumstances do but discompose each other's minds, and disturb the minds of others; that therefore it is best they should- be dispersed; and that when any in a congregation are so seized, that they cannot forbear outward manifestations of it, they should be removed, that others may not be diverted.

But I cannot. but think that those that thus object, go upon quite wrong notions of things: For though persons ought to take heed that they do not make an ado without necessity; yet the unavoidable manifestations of strong religious -affections are found by experience to have an excellent and durable effect: And so to contrive and order things, that others may have opportunity and advantage to observe them, has been found to be blessed, as a great means to promote the work of God; and to prevent their being in the way of observation, is to prevent the effect of that which God makes use of as a principal. means of carrying on his work at such a time, namely, example; which is often spoken of in Scripture, as one of the chief means by which GOD would carry on his work in the time of the prosperity of religion in the latter days. In Zech. 9: 15, 16, those that in the latter days should be filled in an extraordinary manner with the HOLY SPIRIT, so as to appear in outward manifestations, and making a noise, are spoken of as those that God, in these uncommon circumstances, will set up to the view of others, as a prize or ensign, by their example to animate others, as men gather about an ensign, and run for a prize, or a crown, set up in their view. The words are, "And they shall drink and make a noise as through wine, and they shall be -filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. And the-LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. " Whereas those that make this objection, instead of suffering this prize or ensign to be in public view, are for having it removed, and hid in some corner.

6. Another thing that gives great disgust to many, is the disposition that persons show, under great elections, to speak so much, and, with such earnestness and vehemence, to be setting forth the greatness and importance of eternal things; and to be so passionately warning, inviting, and in treating others.

I am far from thinking that such a disposition should be wholly without any limits or regulation: But yet it seems to me, that such a disposition in general is what both reason and. Scripture will justify. Those that are offended at such things, as though they were unreasonable, are not just Upon examination will probably be found, that they have one rule of reasoning about temporal things, and another about spiritual things. They will not at all wonder, if a person on some very great and affecting occasion, of extraordinary danger, or great joy, As disposed to speak much, and with great earnestness, especially to those to whom he is united in the bonds of dear affection. And therefore, if they were just, why would they not allow it in spiritual things- And much more in them, agreeable to their vastly greater importance, and more affecting nature

That a very great sense of the importance of the things of religion, and the danger sinners are in, should sometimes cause an almost insuperable disposition to warn others, is agreeable to Jer. 6: 10, 11. "To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: Behold, the word of the Loan is unto them a reproach; they have no delighting it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad; and upon the assembly of the young men together; for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged, with him: that is full of days." But it is said by some, that the people who are the subjects of this work, when they get together, several in a room talking at the-same time, make a noise just like a company drunken persons. On which I would observe, that it is foretold that GOD's people should do so, in that fore mentioned place, (Zech. 9: 15, 16, 17,) which I shall now take mdr1a particular notice of. The words are as follows: "The LORD of hosts shall defend them, and they shall devour and subdue With sling-stones, and they shall drink and make a noise through wine,. and they shall be filled like bowls, *, corners of the altar; And the Loan their God she& ealvei them) in: that day as the flock of his people; for the to shall be as thee stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. For how great is his Godness, and how great-is his-beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." The words are very remarkable.: Here. it is foretold, that at the time when (CHRIST shall set up an universal kingdom upon earth, (verse 20,) the-children- of Zion shall drink, till they are filled like the vessels of thee sanctuary: And, if we would know what they shall be thus filled with, the prophecy explains itself; they shall be filled as the vessels of the sanctuary that contained the drink-offering, which was wine. And yet the words imply, that it shall not literally be wine, but that they shall be filled with that, which the wine of the drink-offering represented, or was a type of, which is the HOLY SPIRIT, as well, as the blood of CHRIST, that new wine that is drunk in our Heavenly FATHER's kingdom: They shall be filled with the SPIRIT, which the Apostle sets in opposition to a being drunk with wine. (Eph. 5: 18.) It is here foretold, that the children of Zion, in the latter days, should be filled with that which should make them cheerful, and cause them to make a noise as through wine, and by which they that are thus filled shall be as the stones of a crown lifted up as an ensign upon God's land, being made joyful in the extraordinary manifestations of the beauty and love of CHRIST; as it follows, "How great is his Godness I and how great is his beauty!" And it is further remarkable, "that it is here foretold, it should be thus especially amongst young people; Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." It would be ridiculous to understand this of literal bread and wine: without doubt, the same spiritual blessings are signified by bread and wine here, which were represented by bread and wine, and;ire signified by the bread and vine in the LORD's Supper. One of the marginal readings is, "shall make the young men to speak;" which is agreeable to that in Canticles, of the "best wines causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak."

We ought not to be like the unbelieving Jews in CHRIST'S time, who were disgusted both with crying out with distress, and with joy. When the poor blind man cried out before all the multitude, "JESUS, thou SON of DAVID, have mercy on me!" and continued instantly thus

doing; "the multitude rebuked him that he should hold his tongue." (Mark 10: 46, 47, 48; and Luke 18: 38, 39.) They looked upon it to be a very indecent noise that he made; a thing very ill becoming him, to cause his voice to be heard so much, and so loud. And when CHRIST made his solemn entry into Jerusalem, the whole multitude of the Disciples, of all sorts, especially young people, began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. But the Pharisees said to CHRIST, Master, rebuke thy disciples." They did not understand such great transports of joy; it seemed to them a very unsuitable and indecent noise and clamor that they made, a confused uproar, many crying out together, as though they were out of their wits; they wondered that CHRIST would tolerate it. But what says CHRIST? "I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

7. Another thing that some have found fault with, is so much singing in religious meetings. Objecting against such a thing as this, seems to arise from a suspicion already established of this work: They doubt of the pretended extraordinary love and joy that attend this work, and so find fault-with the manifestations of them. If they thought persons had truly an extraordinary degree of Divine love, and heavenly rejoicing in GOD, I suppose they would not wonder at their having a disposition to be much in praise. They will not object against the saints and angels in heaven singing praises and hallelujahs to God, without ceasing day or night; - and therefore doubtless will allow that the more the, saints on earth are like them in their dispositions, the more they will be disposed to do like them.

But what is more especially found fault with in the singing that is now practiced, is, making use of hymns of human composure. And I am far from thinking that the book of Psalms should be thrown by in our public worship, but that it should always be used in the Christian Church to the end of, the world: But I know of no obligation we are under to confine ourselves to it. And it is really- needful that we should have some other songs besides the Psalms of DAVID. It is unreasonable to suppose that the Christian Church should forever, in her praises of God and the Lamb, be confined only to the words of the Old Testament, wherein all the greatest and most glorious things of the Gospel, that are infinitely the greatest subjects of her praise, are spoken of under a veil, and not so much as the name of our glorious Redeemer ever mentioned, but in some dark figure, or as hid under some type.

PART 4:

Showing what things are to be corrected or avoided, in promoting this Work.

HAVING thus observed some instances wherein the conduct of those that have appeared to be the subjects of this work, or have been zealous to promote it, has been objected against without or beyond just cause: I proceed now in the Place, to show what things ought to be corrected or avoided.

1. If we look back into the history of the Church of God, we may observe it has been a common device of the Devil to upset a revival of religion, when he can keep men quiet no longer, then to drive them to excesses and extravagancies. He holds them back as long as he can; but when he can do it no longer, then he will push them on, and, if possible, run them upon their heads. And it has been by this means chiefly that he has been successful, in several instances, to overthrow promising beginnings: Yea, the principal means by which he was successful, by degrees to upset that grand religious revival of the world, that was in the primitive ages of Christianity, and in a manner to overthrow the Christian Church through the earth, and to make way for and bring on the great anti-Christian apostasy, that masterpiece of all the Devil's works, was to employ the indiscreet zeal of Christians, to drive them into those three extremes of enthusiasm, superstition, and severity towards opposers; which should be an everlasting warning to the Christian Church.

Though the Devil will do his diligence to stir up the open enemies of religion, yet, in a time of revival of religion, his main strength is tried with the friends of it; in his attempts upon them, to mislead them. And one truly zealous person, in the time of such an event, that seems to have a great hand in the affair, and draws the eyes of many upon him, may do more (through SATAN'S being too subtle for him) to hinder the work, than a hundred great, and strong, and open opposers.

The errors of the friends of the work of GOD, and especially of the great promoters of it, give vast advantage to the enemies of such a work. Indeed there are many things that are no errors, but are only duties faithfully done, that wound- such persons more than real errors: But yet one real error gives opposers as much advantage, and hinders and clogs the-work as much as ten supposed ones. - Real errors do not fret acid gall the enemies of religion so much as those wings, that are strictly right; but they encourage them more, they give them liberty, and open a gap for them; so that some who before kept their enmity burning in their Own bowels, and durst not show themselves, will on such an occasion take courage, and give themselves vent; and their rage will be like that of an enemy let loose; and those that My

still before,- having nothing to say but what they would, be ashamed of, when they have such a weapon put into their will fight with all their violence. And indeed, the enemies of religion would not know what to do for weapons to fight with, were it not for the errors of the friends of it. And besides, in real errors, things that are truly disagreeable the rule of God's word, we cannot expect that GOD will appear on our side, as if our errors were only supposed ones.

Since therefore the errors of the friends and promoters of such a glorious work are of such dreadful consequence; and seeing the Devil, is so assiduous and subtle in his attempts with them, and has thereby been so successful to overthrow religion heretofore; certainly such persons ought to be exceeding circumspect and vigilant, diffident and jealous of themselves, and humbly dependent on the guidance of the God Shepherd. "Be sober, and watch unto prayer." (1 Pet. 4: 7.) - "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about." (Chap. 5: 8.) For persons to go on resolutely, in a kind of heat and vehemence, despising admonition and correction, is directly contrary to the import of these words, "Be sober, be vigilant."

2. It is a mistake I have observed in some, by which they have been greatly exposed, that they think they are in no danger of being misled by the Devil, because they are near to GOD; and so have no jealous eye upon themselves, and neglect vigilance and circumspection. They say, they do not think that God will leave them to dishonor him, as long as they keep near to him. And I believe so. too, as long as they keep near to God in that respect, that they maintain an universal diligent watch, and avoid sin and snares with diffidence in themselves, and humble dependence and prayerfulness: But not merely because they are near to God, in that respect, that they are now receiving refreshing views of him; if at the same time they are not. jealous over their own hearts, by reason of its remaining blindness and a subtle adversary.- It is a grand error for persons to think they are out of danger. even in their highest spiritual joy. However highly we may be favored with Divine comforts, yet, as long as we are in the world, we are in the enemies' country; and therefore that direction of CHRIST to his disciples is never out of date; "Watch and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all, these things, and to stand before the SON of MAN." (Luke 21: 36.) For though GOD stands ready to protect his people, especially those that are near to him; yet he expects great care and labor of all, and that we should put on the whole armour of God, that we may stand in the evil day: And whatever spiritual privileges we are raised to, we have no warrant to expect protection in any other way; for GOD has appointed this whole life, as a state of labor, to be all as a race or battle; the state wherein we shall have no need of watching and fighting is reserved for another world. I have known it in abundance of instances, that the Devil has come in very remarkably, even in the midst of the most exalted frames: It may seem a great mystery that it should be so; but it is no greater mystery than that CHRIST should be carried into the wilderness, immediately after the heavens had been opened to him, and the HOLY GHOST descended like a dove upon him, and he heard that joyful voice from the FATHER, "This is my beloved SON, in whom I am well pleased." In like manner a Christian is oftentimes carried into a wilderness, presently after heaven has been as it were opened to the soul, and the HOLY GHOST has descended upon it like a dove, and God has been sweetly owning the believer, and testifying his favor to him as his beloved child.

It is therefore a great error in some, that they are fixed in their way, in things that others account errors, and will not hearken to admonition and counsel, but are confident they are in the right, because they have great degrees of the SPIRIT of GOD. There were some such in the Apostles "days. The Apostle PAUL, writing to the Corinthians, was sensible that some of them would not be easily convinced that they had been in any error, because they looked upon themselves as spiritual, or full of the SPIRIT of God. But, says he, If any man think himself to be a Prophet," or spiritual, "let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandment, of the LORD; hut if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." (1 Cor. 14::37, 38

And although' those that are spiritual amongst us have no infallible Apostle to admonish them, yet let me in treat them, to weigh what may be said to them by one that is their hearty and' fervent friend, concerning the errors that have been committed, or that we may be exposed to, in methods or practices that have been, or may be, fallen into, by the zealous friends or promoters of this great work of God.

3. In speaking of the errors that have been, or that we are in danger of, I would,

First, Take notice- of the causes whence the errors that attend a great revival of religion usually arise; and, of some errors that arise from each of those causes. Secondly. Observe some errors that have been owing to the influence of several of those causes conjunctly.

As to the first of these, the errors that attend a great revival of religion usually arise from these three things; Undiscerned spiritual pride. 2. Wrong principles. Ignorance of SATAN'S devices.

The first and worst cause of errors, in such a state things, is spiritual pride. This is the main door by which the Devil comes in. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit, to darken the mind and mislead the judgment. This is the main handle by which the Devil has hold of religious persons, and the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces, to clog and hinder a work of GOD. It is by this that the mind defends itself in other errors, and guards itself against light, by which it might be corrected and reclaimed. The spiritually proud man is full of light already, he does not need instruction, and is ready to despise the offer of it.

I know that many things are injuriously laid to the pride of those that are zealous in the cause of God. Then any person appears zealous in religion, exerts himself more than others do, or seems to be distinguished with success, ten to one but those that are about him will suspect (whether they have cause or no) that he is very proud of his Godness, and that he affects to have it thought that nobody is so God as he. Those that are themselves cold and dead, and especially such as never had any experience of the power of godliness on their own hearts, are ready to entertain such thoughts of the best Christians, which arises from a secret enmity against vital piety.

But then zealous Christians should take heed that this do not prove a snare to them, and the Devil do not take advantage from it, to blind their eyes from beholding what is indeed in their hearts, and make them think, because they are charged with pride wrongfully, in many things, that therefore it is so in every thing. Alas! how much pride have the best of us in our hearts! It is the worst part of the body of sin and death: It is the first sin that ever entered into the universe, and the last that is rooted out.

The corruption of nature may all be resolved into two things, pride and worldly-mindedness, the Devil and the Beast:- These are the two pillars of DAGON's temple, on which the whole house leans. But the former of these is every way the worst part; it is the first-born son of the Devil, and his image in the heart of man chiefly consists in it; it is the last thing in a sinner that is overcome by continuation an order to conversion; and it is most like the Devil its father, in a serpentine deceitfulness; it lies deepest; and it is most active, most ready secretly to mix itself with every thing.

It takes occasion to arise from every thing; it perverts and, abuses every thing, and even the exercises of real, and real humility, as an occasion to exert itself: It is a sin that has, as it were, many lives; if you kill it, it will live still; if you mortify and suppress it in one shape; it rises in another; if you think it is all gone, it is there still: There are a great many kinds of it, that lie in different forms and shapes, one under another. We had need therefore to have the greatest watch imaginable over our hearts with respect to this matter, and to cry most earnestly to the great Searcher of hearts for his help. He that trusts his own heart is a fool."

Spiritual pride in its own nature is so secret, that it is not so well discerned by immediate intuition on the thing itself, as by the fruits of it; some of which I would mention, together with the contrary fruits of humility.

Spiritual pride disposes to speak of other persons' sins, their enmity against GOD and his people, the miserable delusion of hypocrites and their enmity against vital piety, and the deadness of some Christians, with bitterness, or with laughter and levity, and an air of contempt; whereas humility disposes, either to be silent about them, or to speak of them with grief and pity.

Spiritual pride is apt to suspect others; whereas a humble man is most jealous of himself; he is so suspicious of nothing in the world as he is of his own heart. He has so much to do at home, and sees so much evil in his own heart, and is so concerned about it, that he is not apt to be very busy with others' hearts he complains most of himself, and cries out of his own coldness, and is ready to hope that there is nobody but what has more love and thankfulness to GOD than he.

In a contrariety to this, it has been the manner in some places, or at least the manner of some persons, to speak of almost every thing that they see amiss in others, in the most harsh, severe and terrible language. It is frequent with them to say of others' opinions or conductor advice, or of their coldness, their silence, their caution, their prudence, that they are from the Devil, or from Hell; that such a thing is devilish, or hellish, or cursed, and that such persons are serving the-Devil, or the Devil is in them; so that the words Devil- and Hell are almost continually in their mouths. And such kind of language they will commonly use, not only towards wicked men, but towards them that they themselves allow to be the true children of God, and also towards ministers and others that are much their superiors. And they look upon it as a virtue and high attainment thus to behave themselves. "O, say they, we must be plain and bold for CHRIST, we must declare war against, sin wherever we see it, we must not mince the matter in the cause of GOD, and when speaking for CHRIST.' And to speak the more tenderly, because that which is amiss is seen in a superior, they look upon as very mean for a

follower of CHRIST when speaking in the cause of his Master.

What a strange device of the Devil is here, to overthrow all Christian meekness and gentleness, and even all show and appearance of it; under a Bloke of high sanctity and zeal and boldness for CHRIST! And it is a remarkable instance of the weakness of the human mind, and how much too cunning the Devil is for us!

The grand defense of this way of talking is, that they say no more than what is true, and that true Christians know it to be true, and therefore will not be offended, to hear such expressions. It is only (say they) hypocrites, that are provoked and feel their enmity rise on such an occasion. But it is a grand mistake to think that we may commonly use concerning one another all such language as is according to strict truth. It is really true, that every kind of sin, and every degree of it, is devilish and from hell, and is cursed, - hellish, and condemned or damned. But shall a child therefore from **time to** time, use such language concerning an eminently holy father or mother, as, that the Devil is in them; that, they have such and such devilish cursed dispositions; that they commit every day hundreds of hellish, damned acts; and that they are cursed dogs, hell-hounds and devils And shall the meanest of the people, be. justified, in using such language concerning Magistrates, or eminent Ministers I hope nobody has gone to this height: But the same pretences of boldness, and declared war against sin, will as we¹¹ justify these things, as the things they are actually made use of to justify. If we proceed in such a manner, what a face will be introduced upon the, church of CHRIST! What a sound hall we bring into the house of GOD, into the family of his. dear children! How far off shall we soon banish that lovely appearance of humility, sweetness, gentleness, mutual honor, benevolence, complacence, and an esteem of others above themselves, which ought to clothe the children of GOD all over! Not but that Christians should watch over one another, and in any wise reprove one another, **and do** it plainly and faithfully; but it does not thence follow that dear brethren in the family of God, in rebuking one another, should use worse language than MICHAEL the Archangel durst use when rebuking the Devil himself.

Christians, that are but fellow worms, ought at least to treat one another with as much humility and gentleness as CHRIST, that is infinitely above them, treats them. But how did CHRIST treat his disciples when they were so cold towards him, and so regardless of him, at the time when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and he in a dismal agony was crying and sweating blood for them One would think then was a proper time, if ever, to have reprov'd them for a devilish, hellish, cursed and damned slothfulness and deadness. But after what manner does CHRIST reprove them Behold his astonishing gentleness! What, could ye not watch with me one hour The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And how did he treat PETER when he was ashamed of his Master, while he was made-a mocking-stock and a spitting-stock for him Why, he looked upon him with a look of love, and melted his heart.

Again, spiritual pride often disposes persons to singularity in external appearance, to affect a singular way of speaking, to use a different sort of dialect from others, or to be singular in voice, or air of countenance or behavior: But he that is humble, though he will be firm to his duty, however singular he is in it; yet delights not in singularity, for singularity's sake; but on the contrary is disposed to become all things to all men, and to yield to others, and conform to them and please them, in every thing but sin. Spiritual pride commonly occasions a certain stiffness and inflexibility in persons, in their own judgment and their own ways; whereas the humble person, though he be inflexible in his duty and in those things wherein GOD's honor is concerned; and with regard to temptation to those things he apprehends to be sinful, though in never so small a degree, he is like a brazen wall; yet in other things lie is of a pliable disposition, ready to pay deference to others' opinions, to comply with their inclinations, and has a heart that is tender and flexible, like a little child.

Spiritual pride disposes persons to affect separation, to stand at a distance from others, as better than they; but on the contrary, the humble Christian is ready to look upon himself as not worthy that others should be united to him: And though he will not be a companion with one that is visibly CHRIST'S enemy, yet his universal benevolence delights in union with his fellow creatures, and will maintain it as much as he possibly can, without giving open countenance to iniquity, or wounding his own

soul.

The humble Christian is as it were clothed with lowliness, mildness, meekness, gentleness of spirit and behavior, and with a soft, sweet, condescending, winning air and- deportment; these things are just like garments to him, he is" clothed with humility, he puts on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering."

Humility has no such thing as, roughness, or contempt, or fierceness, or bitterness in its nature; it makes a person RIO a little' child, harmless and innocent, and that none to be afraid of; or like a lamb, destitute of all bitterness, wrath, anger and clamor.

With such a spirit as this ought especially zealous Ministers of the Gospel to be clothed, and those that GOD is pleased to employ as instruments of promoting his work ought indeed to be thorough in preaching the word of God without mincing the matter at all; in handling the sword of the SPIRIT, as the Ministers of the LORD of Hosts, they ought not to be mild and gentle, they are not to be gentle and moderate in searching and, awakening the conscience, but should be sons of thunder. The word of GOD, which is in itself sharper than any two-edged sword, ought not to be sheathed by them, but so used that its sharp edges may have their full effect, even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow; (provided they do it without judging particular persons, leaving it to conscience and the SPIRIT of GOD to make the application;) but all their conversation should savor of nothing but lowliness and God-will, love and pity to all mankind so that such a spirit should be like a sweet odor diffused around them wherever they go, or like a light shining about them, their faces should as it were shine with it; they should be like lions to guilty consciences, but like lambs to men's persons. This would have no tendency to prevent the awakening of men's consciences, but on the contrary would have a very great tendency to awaken them; it would make way for the sharp sword to enter; it would remove the obstacles, and make a naked breast for the arrow.

Yea, the amiable conversation of such Ministers, in itself would terrify the consciences of men, as well as their terrible preaching; both would co-operate, one with another, to subdue the hard; and bring down the proud heart. If there had been constantly and universally observable such a behavior as this in itinerant Preachers, it would have terrified the consciences of sinners ten times as much as all the invectives and censorious talk there has been concerning particular persons. These things have rather stupified sinners' consciences; they take them up, and make use of them as a shield, wherewith to defend themselves from the sharp arrows of the word that are shot by these preachers: The enemies of the present work have been glad of these things with all their hearts. Many of the most bitter of them are probably such as in the beginning of this work had their consciences something galled and terrified with it; but these errors are the things they chiefly make use of to heal the sore that was made in their consciences.

Spiritual pride takes great notice of opposition and injuries received, and is apt to be often speaking of them, and to be much in taking notice of the aggravations of them, either with an air of bitterness or contempt: Whereas humility disposes a person to be like his LORD, when reviled, dumb, not opening his mouth, but committing himself in silence to Him that judgeth righteously. The humble Christian, the more clamorous and furious the world is against him, the more silent and still will he be; unless it be in his closet, and there he will not be still. Our blessed LORD seems never to have been so silent, as when the world compassed him round, reproaching, buffeting and spitting on him, with loud and virulent outcries.

There has been too much talk of late, among many of the friends of religion, about opposition and persecution. It becomes the followers of the Lamb of GOD, when the world is in an uproar about them, and full of clamor against them, not to raise another noise to answer it, but to be still and quiet. It is not beautiful, at such a time, to have pulpits and conversation ring with the sound of Persecution, Persecution, or with abundant talk about Pharisees, carnal persecutors, and the seed of the serpent.

Meekness and, quietness among GOD'S people, when opposed and reviled, would be the surest way to have GOD remarkably appear for their defense. Nothing is so effectual, bring God down from heaven in defense of his people, as their patience under sufferings. When CHRIST "girds his sword upon his thigh, with his glory and majesty, and it shall ride prosperously, his right hand teaching the terrible things, it is because of truth and meekness, all righteousness." (Psalm xlv. 3, 4.) "GOD will cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth shall fear and be still, and God will arise to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth." (Psalm lxxvii.) And thus it is that we expect to have CHRIST appear for us, if under all reproaches we are loaded with, we behaved ourselves with a lamb-like meekness and gentleness: But if our spirits are raised, and we are vehement and noisy with our complaints, this will be to take upon us our own defense, and GOD will leave it with us, to vindicate our cause as well as we can; yea, if we go on in a way of bitterness, and high censuring, it will be the way to have him rebuke us, and put us to shame before our enemies.

Here some may be ready to say, "It is not in our own cause that we are thus vehement, but in the cause of God and the Apostle directed the primitive Christians to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." But how was it that the primitive Christians contended earnestly for the faith They defended the truth with a holy conversation, but gave their reasons with meekness and fear: They contended earnestly for the faith, yea, they resisted unto blood, striving against sin; but the blood that was shed in this earnest strife, was their own blood, and not the blood of their enemies- It was "in the cause of GOD" that PETER was so fierce, and drew his sword, and began to smite with it; but CHRIST bids him put up his sword again, that they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. They are the greatest conquerors in a time of persecution, who bear it with the greatest meekness and patience.

Another effect of spiritual pride is a certain self-confident boldness before GOD and men. Thus some, in their great rejoicings before GOD, have not rejoiced with a reverential trembling, in a proper sense of the majesty of GOD, and the awful distance between GOD and them. And there has also been an improper boldness before men; which is a great error, and quite contrary to Scripture. There is a fear of

reverence that is due to some men. "Fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." (Rom. 13: 7.) And there is a fear of modesty and shamefacedness in inferiors towards superiors, - that is amiable, and required by Christian rules. While they behold 'Our chaste conversation, coupled with fear. In like manner also, chat women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety." (1 Tim. 2: 9.) And the Apostle means, that modesty, or shamefacedness, and reverence towards men, ought to have some place, even in our religious communication one with another. The same is also evident by I Pet. 3: 15: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." It is well if that very fear and shamefacedness, which the Apostle recommends, has not sometimes been condemned, under the name of a cursed fear of man.

It is beautiful for persons, when they are at prayer as the mouth of others, to make GOD their only fear and their dread, and to be wholly forgetful of men that are present, who, let them be great or small, are nothing in the presence of the great GOD. And it is beautiful for a Minister, when he speaks in the name of the LORD of Hosts, to be bold, and put off all fear of men. And it is beautiful in private Christians, though they are women and children, to be bold in professing the faith of CHRIST, and in the practice of all religion, and, in owning God's hand in the work of his, power and grace, without any fear of men, though they should be reproached as fools and madmen, and frowned upon by great men, and cast off by parents and all the world. But for private Christians, women and others, to - instruct, and exhort, with a like sort of boldness as becomes a Minister when preaching, is not beautiful.

Another effect of spiritual pride is, assuming: It makes it natural to persons so to act and speak, as though it in a special manner belonged to them to be taken notice of, and regarded. It is very natural to a person that is much under the influence of it, to take all the respect that is paid him: If others show a disposition to yield him the deference of a preceptor, he is open to it, and freely admits it; yea, it is natural for him to expect such treatment, and to take much notice of it if he fails of it, and to have an ill opinion of others that do not pay him that which he looks upon as his prerogative. He is apt to clothe himself with a judicial and dogmatical air in conversation, and to take it upon him, as what belongs to him, to give forth his sentence, and to determine and decide. Whereas humility vaunteth not itself." and is apt to prefer others in honor." One under the influence of spiritual pride, naturally puts on the airs of a master: Whereas one that is humble, naturally has on the air of a disciple; his voice is, "What shall I do? What shall I do, that I may live more to God's honor? What shall I do with this wicked heart? He is ready to receive instruction from any body, agreeable to James 1: 19: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." The humble Christian thinks he wants help from everybody; whereas he that is proud, thinks every body wants his help. Christian humility intreats and beseeches; spiritual pride affects to command, and warn with authority.

There ought to be the utmost watchfulness against all such appearances of spiritual pride, in all that profess to have been the subjects of this work, and especially in the promoters of it, but above all, in itinerant Preachers: The most eminent gifts, and highest tokens of God's favor will not excuse them. Alas! what is man at his best estate! What is the most highly favored Christian, or the most successful Minister, that he should now think he is sufficient for something, and somebody to be regarded; and that he should go forth, and act among his fellow creatures as if he were wise, and strong, and God

They whom GOD has made use of, as it were, to bring up his people out of Egypt, as he did of Moses, should take heed that they do not provoke GOD, as Moses did. The fruits of Moses's unbelief, which provoked GOD to shut him out of Canaan, were chiefly these two; First, His mingling bitterness with his zeal. He had a great zeal for GOD, and he could not bear to see the intolerable stiff neckedness of the people, that they did not acknowledge the work of God, and were not convinced by all his wonders they had seen: But human passion was mingled with his zeal: "They angered him also at the waters of strife; so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his SPIRIT, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips." (Psalm cvi. 32, 33.) "Hear now, ye rebels," says he, with bitterness of language. Secondly, He assumed too much to himself; "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock?" His temptations indeed were very great; for he had had great discoveries of God, who had made him the instrument of great good to his Church. And they were now too strong for him: Which surely should make our young Ministers exceeding careful, and distrustful of themselves. Alas! how far are we from having the strength of 'holy, meek, aged Moses! And the temptation at this time is exceeding great to both those errors that MOSES was guilty of: To bitterness and corrupt passion with zeal; there is so much unreasonable opposition made against this glorious work, and so much stiff-neckedness manifested in multitudes of this generation, notwithstanding all the wonderful works of GOD.

And there is also great temptation to an assuming behavior: When a Minister is greatly blessed from time to time, and so draws the eyes of the multitude upon him, and he sees himself flocked after, and resorted to as an oracle, and people are ready to adore him, and to offer sacrifice to him, as it was with PAUL and BARNABAS at Lystra, it is almost impossible for a man to avoid taking upon him the airs of a master, or some extraordinary person; a man had need to have much Divine assistance, to resist the temptation. But the greater our dangers are, the more ought to be our watchfulness and prayer, and diffidence of ourselves. And we should take warning by GIDEON, who after GOD had favored him, and made him the instrument for deliverance for his people, at length made a god the spoils of his enemies, which became a snare to him and, to his house.

There has been in some, that I believe are true friends of religion, too much appearance of pride, in their treatment of those that they looked upon to be carnal men; and particularly unrefusing to enter into any discourse or reasoning with this. Indeed, to spend a great deal of time in jangling about religion, is not the way to propagate it; and some are so dreadfully set against this work, that it is a dismal task to dispute with them; all that one can say is utterly in vain: I have found it so by experience. But yet we ought to be very careful that we do not refuse to discourse with men, with any appearance of a supercilious neglect, as though we counted them not worthy to be regarded; on the contrary, we should condescend to carnal men, as CHRIST has condescended to us, to bear with our unteachableness and stupidity, and still to follow us with instructions, line upon line, and precept upon precept, saying, "Come, let us reason together;" setting light before us, and using all manner of arguments with us, and waiting upon such dull scholars, as it were hoping that we should receive light.

We should be ready with meekness and calmness, without hot disputing, to give our reasons why we think this work is the work of GOD, to carnal men when they ask us, and not turn them by as not worthy to be talked with; as the Apostle directed the primitive Christians to be ready to give a reason of the Christian faith and hope to the enemies of Christianity. And we ought not to condemn all reasoning about things of religion under the name of carnal reason. For my part, I desire no better than that those that oppose this work should come fairly to submit to have the cause betwixt us tried by strict reasoning.

One qualification that the Scripture speaks of once and again, as requisite in a Minister, is, that he should be apt to teach." (1 Tim. 3: 2.) And the Apostle seems to explain what he means by it, in 2 Tim. 2: 24, 25; or at least expresses one thing he intends by it, namely That a Minister should be ready meekly to condescend to, and instruct opposers: "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."

Secondly. Another thing from whence errors in conduct, that attend such a revival of religion, do arise, is wrong principles.

One of these is, that whatsoever is found to be of present benefit ought to be practiced, without looking to future consequences. Some persons seem to think that it sufficiently justifies any thing that they say or do, that it is found to be for their present edification, and the edification of those that are with them; and therefore they think they should not concern themselves about consequences, but leave them with GOD. Indeed, things that are in themselves our duty, being required by absolute commands of GOD, must be done, and future consequences left with God; our discretion takes no place here; but in other things we are to be governed by discretion, and must not only look at the present God, but our view must be extensive, and we must look at the consequences of things. It is the duty of Ministers especially to exercise this discretion: In things wherein they are not determined by an absolute rule, and that are not enjoined them by a wisdom superior to their own, CHRIST has left them with that general rule, That they should exercise the utmost wisdom in pursuing that which, upon the best view of the consequences of things, will tend most to the advancement of his kingdom. This is implied in those words of CHRIST to his disciples, when he sent them forth, "Be ye wise as serpents;" (Matt. 10: 16.) The Scriptures always represent the work of a Gospel Minister by those employments that require a wise foresight of, and provision for, future consequences. So it is compared to the business of a steward, a business that in an eminent manner requires forecast, and a wise laying in of provision for the supply of the needs of the family. So it is compared to the business of a husband that almost wholly consists in those things that are with a view to the future fruits and consequences of his labor. So the work of the Ministry is compared to that of a wise builder or architect, who has a long reach and comprehensive view; and for whom it is necessary, that, when he begins a building, lie should have at once a view of the whole frame, and all the future parts of the structure, even to the pinnacle, that all may fitly be framed together. So it is compared to the business of a trader or merchant, a business: that exceedingly requires forecast, and, without it, is never like to be followed with any success. It is also compared to the business of a soldier, that goes to war, which is a business that perhaps, above any other, requires great foresight, and a wise provision for future events and consequences.

And particularly Ministers ought not to be careless how much they rule the minds of those they esteem natural men, or how great an uproar they raise in the carnal world. This certainly is not to follow the example of ST. PAUL, who though he would not depart from his duty to please carnal men; yet, wherein he might with a God conscience, did exceedingly lay out himself to please them, and if possible to avoid raising in the multitude, prejudices, oppositions, and tumults against the Gospel; and looked upon it, that it was of great consequence that it should be, if possible, avoided: "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of GOD: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." (1 Cor. 10: 32, 33.) Yea, he declares, that he made himself a kind of a servant to all sorts of men, conforming to their customs and various humors in every thing wherein he might, even in things that were very burdensome to him, that he might not fright men away from Christianity, and cause them to stand as it were armed against it; but on the contrary, if possible, might with condescension and friendship win and draw them to it. And agreeable hereto are the directions he gives to others, both Ministers and people: So he directs the Christian Romans, "Go not to please themselves, but every one please his neighbor, for his God to edification;" (Rom. 15:1, 2;) and to follow after the things that make for peace." (Chap. 14: 19.) And he presses it in terms exceedingly strong, "If it be possible, as much as Beth Ill you, live peaceably with all men." (Rom. 12: 18.) And he directs Ministers to endeavor, if possible, to gain opposers by a meek condescending treatment, avoiding all appearance of strife or fierceness. (2 Tim. 2: 0-4, 25, 26.) To the like purpose the same Apostle directs Christians to "walk in wisdom towards them that are without;" (Eph. 4: 5;) and to avoid giving offence to others, if we can, "that our God may not be evil spoken of." (Rom. 14: 16.) So that it is evident the most zealous and most successful propagator of vital religion that ever was, looked upon it to be of

great consequence to endeavor, as much as possible, by all the methods of lawful meekness and gentleness, to avoid raising the prejudice and opposition of the world against religion. When we have done our utmost, there will be opposition enough against vital religion, against which the carnal mind of man has such an enmity, as in the Apostle's days, though he took so much pains to please men, yet, because he was faithful in his work, persecution almost every where was raised against him.

I know there is naturally a great enmity in the heart of man against vital religion; and I believe there would have been a great deal of opposition against this glorious work of GOD, if the subjects and promoters of it had behaved themselves never so agreeably to Christian rules; and I believe, if this work goes on and spreads much in the world, some to begin to shake kingdoms and nations, it will dreadfully stir up the rage of earth and hell, and will put the world into the greatest uproar that ever it was in since it stood I believe SATAN'S dying struggles will be the most want: "But yet I believe a great deal might be done to restrain, this opposition, by a God conformity to that of the Apostle James" Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge let him show out of a God conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom." (James 3: 13.)

Under this head of carelessness of consequences, it maybe proper to say something of introducing things new and strange, and that have a tendency by their novelty to shock and surprise people. Nothing can be more evident from the New Testament, than that such things ought to be done, with great caution and moderation, to avoid the offence that may be thereby given, and the prejudices that might be raised, to hinder the progress of religion; yea, that it ought to be -thus in things that are God and excellent, provided they are not of the nature of absolute duty, which though they may appear to be innovations, yet cannot be neglected without disobedience to the commands of GOD. What great caution did the Apostles use in introducing things that were new, and abolishing things that were old How gradually were the ceremonial performances of the law of Moses abolished among the Christian Jews And how long did even the Apostle PAUL himself conform to those ceremonies, which he calls weak and beggarly elements So it seems to have been very gradually that the Jewish Sabbath was abolished, and the Christian Sabbath introduced. Thus strictly did the Apostles observe the rule that their blessed Master gave them, of not putting new wine into old bottles, lest they should burst the bottles, and lose the wine. And how did CHRIST himself, while on earth, forbear so plainly to teach his disciples the great doctrines of Christianity concerning his satisfaction, and the nature and manner of a sinner's justification and reconciliation with God

Because, in that infant state, their minds were not prepared for such

instructions; and therefore the more clear and full revelation of these things was reserved for the time when they should be enlightened and strengthened by the SPIRIT after his ascension; "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the SPIRIT of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John 16: 12, 13.) 11 And with many such parables spoke he the word unto them, as they were able to bear it." (Mark 4: 33.) These things might be enough to convince any one, that does not think himself wiser than CHRIST and his Apostles, that great prudence and caution should be used in introducing things into the Church of GOD, that are very uncommon, though in themselves they may be very excellent, lest by our rashness and imprudent haste we hinder religion more than we help it.

Persons that are influenced by an indiscreet zeal, are always in too much haste; they are impatient of delays, and therefore are for jumping to the uppermost step first All their strength is employed in advancing the building in height, without taking care proportionably to enlarge the bottom: Or they are for putting on the cupola before they come to it, or before the lower parts of the building are done; which tends at once to put a stop to the building, and hinder it ever being a complete structure. Many that are thus imprudent and hasty with their zeal, have a real appetite for that which is God; but are like children that are impatient to wait for the fruit till the proper season of it. And oftentimes in their haste they overshoot their mark, and frustrate their own end; they put that which they would obtain further out of reach, and confirm that which they would remove. We are now just as it were beginning to recover out of a dreadful disease that--we have been long under; and to feed a man recovering - from a fever with strong meat at once, is the ready way to kill him. It is a vain- prejudice that some have lately imbibed against such rules of prudence and moderation: They will be forced to come to them at last; they will find themselves that they, are not able to maintain their cause without them; and, if they will not hearken before, experience will convince them at last, when it will be too late for them to rectify their mistake.

Another erroneous principle, that has been an occasion some confusion, is, that external order in matters of religion is but little to be regarded; It is spoken lightly of, under the names of ceremonies and dead forms, and is probably~ the more despised by some, because their opposers it yet so much upon it, and because they are so continually ring from them the cry of disorder and confusion. It is objected against the importance of external order, that GOD does not look at the outward form, but at the heart. But that is a weak argument against its importance, that true godliness does not consist in it; for it may be equally made use of against all the outward means of grace whatsoever. Thine godliness does not consist in ink and paper; but yet that will be a foolish objection against -the importance of ink and paper in religion, when without it we could not have the `Word of GOD. If any external means at all are needful, any outward' actions of a public nature, or wherein God's people are jointly concerned, without doubt external order-is needful: The management of an external affair

that is public, or wherein a multitude is concerned, without order, is in every thing found impossible. without order there can be no general direction of a multitude to any particular designed end; their purposes will cross one another, and they will not help, but hinder one another.

A multitude cannot act in union one with another without order; confusion separates and divides them. If a multitude would help one another in any affair, they must unite themselves one to another in a regular subordination of members, in some measure as it is in the natural body; by this means they will be in some capacity to act with united strength And thus CHRIST has appointed that it should be in the visible Church. (I Cor. 12: 14; Rom- 12: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.)

Zeal without order will do but little, or at least it will be effectual but a little while. Let a company, that are very zealous against the enemy, go forth to war without any manner of order, every one rushing forward as his zeal shall drive him, all in confusion; if they gain something at first onset, by surprising the enemy, yet how soon do they come to nothing Order is one of the most necessary of all external means of the spiritual good of GOD'S Church, and therefore it is requisite even in heaven itself, where there is the least need of any external means of grace. And the necessity of it, in order to the carrying on any design wherein a multitude are concerned, is so great, that even the Devils in hell are driven to something of it, that they may carry on the designs of their kingdom. And it is very observable, that those kinds of irrational creatures for whom it is needful that they should act in union, and join a multitude together, to carry on any work for their preservation, do, by a wonderful instinct, observe and maintain a most regular and exact order among themselves. And order in the visible Church is not only necessary to the Church's prosperity, but is absolutely necessary to its defense; without it, it is like a city without walls, and can be in no capacity to defend itself from any kind of mischief: And so, however it be an external thing, yet is not to be despised on that account; for though it be not the food of souls, yet it is in some respect their defense. The people of Holland would be very foolish to despise the dikes that keep out the sea from overwhelming them, under the names of dead stones, and vile earth, because the matter of which they are built is not good to eat.

12. Thus I have considered the two first of those three causes of error in conduct that were"" mentioned; I come now to the

Third and last cause of the errors of those that have appeared to be the subjects or zealous promoters of this work, namely, A being ignorant or unobservant of some particular things, by which the Devil has special advantage.

And here I would particularly take notice, (1.) Of some things with respect to the inward experiences of Christians. And, (2.) Something with regard to the external effect of experiences. There are three things I would take notice of with regard to the experiences of Christians, by which the Devil has many advantages against us.

The First thing is the mixture there is in the experiences of Christians; whereby when they have truly spiritual discoveries and exercises, they have something mixed with them besides what is spiritual. The beam of light, as it comes from the Fountain of light upon our hearts, is pure; but as it is reflected thence, it is mixed: The seed as sent from heaven, and planted in the heart, is pure; but, as it springs up out of the heart, is impure: Yea, there is commonly a much greater mixture than persons seem to have any imagination of. I have often thought that the experiences of Christians are very frequently us it is with some sorts of fruits, that are enveloped in several coverings of thick shells, which are thrown away by him that gathers the fruit, and but a very small part of the whole bulk is the pure kernel that is good to eat.

The things, of all which there is frequently some mixture, even with great and high experiences, are these three: Human or natural affection and passions; Impressions on the imagination; and a degree of Self-righteousness or spiritual pride. There is very often with that which is spiritual, a great mixture of that affection or passion which arises from natural principles; so that nature has a very great hand in those vehement motions and flights of the passions that appear. Hence the same degrees of Divine communications shall have different effects, in persons of different natural tempers. And sometimes there is not only a mixture of that which is common and natural, but even that which is animal, which is in a great measure from the body, and is properly the result of the animal frame. So, -in that love that Christians have one to another, very often there is a great mixture of what arises from common and natural principles; yea, there may be a mixture of natural love to the opposite sex. So zeal, though it be an excellent virtue, a heavenly flame, when it is pure, as it is exercised in those who are little sanctified, and little humbled, is very apt to be mixed with human passion, yea, with corrupt, hateful affections, pride and bitterness.

15. Another thing that is often mixed with what is spiritual in the experiences of Christians, are impressions on the imagination; whereby persons, together with a spiritual understanding of Divine things, and a strong sense of their excellency or great importance, have strongly

impressed on their minds external ideas or images of things. A degree of imagination in such a case, as I have observed elsewhere, _ is unavoidable, and necessarily arises from human nature, as constituted in the present state; and a degree of imagination is really useful, and often of great benefit; but, when it is in too great a degree, it becomes an impure mixture that is prejudicial. And it greatly contributes to the other kind of mixture mentioned before, namely, of natural affections and passions.

Another thing that is often mixed with the experiences of Christians, which is the worst mixture of all, is self-righteousness or spiritual pride. This is often mixed with the joys of Christians: The joy that they have is not purely the joy of faith, or a rejoicing in CHRIST JESUS, but is partly a rejoicing in themselves. There is often in their elevations a looking upon themselves, and a viewing their own high attainments; they rejoice partly because they are taken with their own experiences, and great discoveries; and this heightens all their passions, and especially those effects that are more external. There is a much greater mixture of these things in the experiences of some Christians than others; in some the mixture is so great, as very much to obscure and hide the beauty of grace in them, like a thick smoke that hinders all the shining of the fire.

These things we ought to be well aware of, that we may know what to countenance, and what to discourage; otherwise SATAN will have a vast advantage against us, for he works itt the corrupt mixture. Sometimes for want of persons' distinguishing the ore from the pure metal those experiences are most admired by the persons themselves that are the subjects of them, and by others, that are not the most excellent. The great external effects, and vehemence of the passions, and violent agitations of the animal spirits, are sometimes much owing to the corrupt mixture. I have observed a great difference among those that are disposed to be earnestly talking to those that are about them: Some insist moat on what they behold in GOD and CHRIST, the glory of the Divine perfections, CHRIST'S wonderful condescension and grace, their own unworthiness, and the infinite obligations they themselves, and others, are under to love and serve God; others almost wholly on their own high privileges, their assurance of GOD'S love and favor, and the weakness and wickedness of opposers, and how much they are above their reach. The latter may have muck of the presence of GOD, but their experiences are not so solid and unmixed as the former. And there is a great deal of difference in persons' earnestness in their talk and behavior: In some" it seems to come indeed from the fullness of their hearts, and from the great sense they have of the certainty and infinite greatness of eternal things, attended with all appearances of great humility; but in others, their earnestness seems to arise from a great mixture of human passion, and an intemperate agitation of the spirits, which appears by their earnestness and vehemence not being proportioned to the nature of the subject they insist on; but they are violent in every thing they say, as much when they are talking of things of smaller importance, as when speaking of things of greater weight. And there have been spine few instances of a more extraordinary nature still, even of persons finding themselves constrained to cry out from an unaccountable kind of bodily pressure, without any extraordinary view of any thing in their minds, or sense of any thing upon their hearts; wherein probably there was the immediate hand of the Devil. 16. Another thing by which the Devil has great advantage, is the unheeded defects there sometimes are in the experiences of true Christians, and those high affections, wherein there is much that is truly good.

What I now have respect to is something diverse from that defect or imperfection of degree which is in every holy disposition and exercise; what I aim at is, experiences being defective in some particular thing that ought to be in them; which though it be not such a defect as renders them utterly vain, and altogether abominable to GOD, yet is such a defect as maims and deforms the experience: The essence of truly Christian experiences is not wanting, but yet that is wanting that is very needful m order to the proper beauty of the image of CHRIST in such a person's experiences; things are very much out of due proportion: There is indeed much of some things; but at the same time there is so little of some other things that should be, that the defect very much deforms the Christian.

When this deficiency and disproportion is great, it is not only a great deformity in itself, but has many ill consequences, it gives the Devil great advantage, and leaves a door open for corruption, and exposes, to very unlovely actions, and issues oftentimes in the great wounding of the soul.

For the better understanding of this matter, we may observe, that GOD, in the revelation that he has made of himself by JESUS CHRIST, has taken care to give a proportional manifestation of two kinds of excellencies or perfections of his nature, namely, Those that tend to possess us with awe and reverence; and those that tend to draw and encourage us: By the one, He appears as an infinitely great, holy, and heart-searching Judge; by the other, as a gentle and gracious Father, and a loving Friend: By the one, he is a pure, searching, and burning flame; by the other, a sweet, refreshing light. These two kinds of attributes are admirably tempered together in the revelation of the Gospel: There is a proportional manifestation of justice and mercy, holiness and grace, authority and condescension. GOD has thus ordered, that his diverse excellencies, as he reveals himself in the face of JESUS CHRIST, should have a proportionable manifestation.

He knew it to be of great consequence, that our apprehensions of these diverse perfections of his nature should be duly proportioned one to another: A defect on the one hand, namely, having much of a discovery of his love and grace, without a. proportionable discovery of his awful majesty, and his holy and searching purity, would tend to spiritual pride, carnal confidence, and presumption; and a defect on the one hand, namely, having much of a discovery of his holy majesty, without a proportional discovery of his grace, tends to unbelief, a sinful

fearfulness and spirit of bondage. And herein chiefly consists that deficiency of experiences that I am now speaking of; The revelation GOD has made of himself in his word, is perfect; but the light and communications we have, are not perfect, but many ways exceedingly imperfect and maimed. There is a great difference among Christians in this respect; some have much more general discoveries than others, who are upon many accounts the most amiable Christians. Christians may have experiences that are very high, and yet there may be very much of this deficiency and disproportion: Their high experiences are truly from the SPIRIT of GOD; but sin comes in by the defect, (as indeed all sin is originally from a defective, primitive cause,) and in such a case, high discoveries, at the Same time that they are enjoyed, may be, and sometimes are, the occasion of- sin: And many times the SPIRIT of GOD is quenched by this means, and GOD punishes the pride and presumption that rises, by bringing such darkness, and suffering such horrid temptations, as are enough to make one's hair stand an end to hear them. Christians, therefore, should diligently observe their own hearts, and should pray to GOD that he would give them experiences, in which one thing may bear a proportion to another, that GOD may be honored, and their souls edified thereby; and Ministers should have an eye to this, in their private dealings with the souls of their people.

It is chiefly from such a defect of experiences that some things have arisen that have been pretty common of late; as talking of Divine things, and expressing Divine joys with laughing, or a light behavior. The proper cause of this has been, that odious defect in their experience, whereby there has been wanting a sense of the awful majesty of GOD as present with them, and their vileness before him, proportionable to the sense they have had of GOD'S grace, and the love of CHRIST. And the same is true in many cases of persons' unsuitable boldness, their disposition to speak with intemperate zeal, and many other things that sometimes appear in Christians under great religious affections.

And sometimes the vehement motion of the animal spirits, is owing to experiences being thus partial. I have known in several instances, that persons have been greatly affected with the dying love of CHRIST, and the happiness of the enjoyment of Him in heaven, and their animal spirits have been in great emotion; but in the midst of it a deep sense of the awful majesty of GOD, has at once composed them, and quieted animal nature, without diminishing their comfort, but only had made it of a better and more solid nature; when they have had a sense both of the majesty and grace of GOD, one thing has as it were balanced another, and caused a more happy sedateness and composure of body and mind.

From these things, we may learn how to judge of experiences, and to estimate their goodness. Those are not always the best experiences that are attended with the most vehement motions of the animal spirits, or that have the greatest effects on the body; nor are they always the best that do most dispose persons to abound in talk, and to speak in the most vehement manner, (though these things often arise from the greatness of spiritual experiences:) But those are the most excellent experiences that are qualified as follows: (1.) That have the least mixture, or are the most purely spiritual. (2.) That are the least deficient and partial, in which the diverse things that appertain to Christian experience are proportional one to another. And, (3.) That are raised to the highest degree: It is no matter how high they are raised, if they are qualified as before mentioned. Experiences, thus qualified, will be attended with the most amiable behavior, will bring forth the most solid and sweet fruits, and will be the most durable, and have the greatest effect on the abiding temper of the soul.

If GOD is pleased to carry on this work, and it should prove to be the dawning of a general revival of the Christian Church, the time will come when the experiences of Christians shall be much more generally thus qualified. Their discoveries will be in a much higher degree; but yet so ordered, of an infinitely wise GOD, that they shall not have so great an effect, in proportion, on the body, and will be less, oppressive to nature; and that the outward manifestations will rather be like those that were in STEPHEN, when he was full of the HOLY GHOST, when "all that sat in the Council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Their inward fullness of the SPIRIT of GOD, in his Divine, amiable, and sweet influences, shall as it were shine forth in an heavenly aspect, and manner of speech and behavior. But,

17. There is another thing concerning the experiences of Christians, of which it is of yet greater importance we should be aware, than either of the preceding, and that is, the degenerating of experiences. What I mean, is, something diverse from the mere decay of experiences, or their gradually vanishing, by persons losing their sense of things: It is persons' experiences growing by degrees worse and worse in their kind, more and more partial and deficient; in which things are more out of due proportion, and also have more and more of a corrupt mixture; the spiritual part decreases, and the other useless and hurtful parts greatly increase. There is such a thing, and it is very frequent: I have seen it in very many instances; and great are the mischiefs that have risen through want of being more aware of it.

There is commonly, as I observed before, in high experiences, besides that which is spiritual, a mixture of three things, namely, natural affections, workings of imagination, and self-righteousness or spiritual pride. Now it often happens to pass, that through persons not distinguishing the wheat from the chaff, and for want of watchfulness and humble jealousy of themselves, and laying great weight on the natural and imaginary part, that part grows, and the spiritual part decreases; the Devil sets in, and works in the corrupt part, and cherishes it to his utmost; till at length the experiences of those who began well, come to little but violent motions of carnal affections, great heat of imagination, a great degree of enthusiasm, and swelling of spiritual pride: Like some fruits which bud, blossom and kernel well, but

afterwards are blasted with an excess of moisture; so that though the bulk is monstrously great, yet there is little but what is useless and unwholesome. It is probable, that many of the heresies that have arisen, and sects that have appeared in the Christian world, with wild enthusiastical notions and practices, began at first by this means, that it was such a degenerating of experiences that first gave rise to them.

There is nothing in the world that does so much expose to this degenerating of experience-), as> an unheeded spiritual pride, persons being conceited of their own stock, without an humble, daily, and continual dependence on GOD. This above all things promotes this degeneracy of experiences, because it grieves and quenches the SPIRIT of the Lamb of GOD, kills the spiritual, and cherishes the natural part, inflames the carnal affections, and heats the imagination.

The unhappy person that is the subject of such a degeneracy, for the most part, is not sensible of his own calamity; but because he finds himself still violently moved, thinks himself fuller of the SPIRIT of GOD than ever. But indeed it is with him, as the Apostle says of the Galatians,â€• Having begun in the SPIRIT, they are made perfect by the flesh." (Gal. 3: 3.)

By the mixture there is of common affection with love to GOD, the love of true Christians is liable to degenerate, and to be more and more built on the supposition of being his high and peculiar favorites. So the joy of Christians, by reason of the mixture there is with spiritual joy, is liable to degenerate, and to come to that at last, as to be but little else but joy in a person's own supposed eminency. So zeal, that at first might be in great part spiritual, yet through the mixture there is, in a long continuance of opposition and controversy, may degenerate more and more into human passion, and may come to bitterness, and even to a degree of hatred. And so love to brethren may by degrees come to little else but fondness for a party; yea, through a mixture of a natural love to the opposite sex, may degenerate more and more. Certainly the mutual embraces and kisses of persons of different sexes, under the notion of Christian love, are utterly to be disallowed, as having the most direct tendency to turn Christian love into brutish lust. I should also think it adviseable, that meetings of young people, of both sexes, in the evening, by themselves, without a Minister, or any elder people amongst them, for religious exercises, should be avoided: For though for the present, while their minds are greatly solemnized with lively impressions, and a deep sense of Divine things, there may appear no ill consequences; yet we must look to the farther end of things, and guard against future dangers.

The defect there sometimes is in the experiences of Christians, exposes them to degenerate, as well as the mixture that they have. Maimed experiences sometimes become more and more so: The mind being wholly intent upon those things that are in view, and those that are most wanting being neglected, there is less and less of them, and so the gap for corruption to come in grows wider and wider. And commonly both these causes of the degenerating of experiences operate together.

We had need to be â€• jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy," as the Apostle was over the Christian Corinthians, â€• lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled EVE through his subtilty, so our minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in CHRIST."

18. Thus I have taken notice of some things with regard to the inward experiences of Christians, by which SATAN has an advantage. I now proceed in the Second place, to take notice of something with regard to the external effects of experiences, which also gives SATAN an advantage. Though it would be unreasonable, and prejudicial to the interest of religion, to frown upon all these extraordinary external effects and manifestations of great religious affections, (for a measure of them is natural, necessary and beautiful, and the effect in no wise disproportioned to the spiritual cause, and is of great benefit to religion,) yet I think they err who think that these things should be wholly unlimited, and that all should be encouraged in going to the utmost length that they feel themselves inclined to: There ought to be a gentle restraint held upon these things, and there should be a prudent care taken of persons in such circumstances, and they should be moderately advised at proper seasons, not to make more ado than there is need of, but rather to hold a restraint upon their inclinations; otherwise extraordinary outward effects will grow upon them, they will be more and more natural and unavoidable, and the outward show will increase, without any increase of the internal cause; persons will find themselves under a kind of necessity of making a great ado, with less and less affection of soul, till at length almost any slight emotion will set them going; and they will be more and more violent and boisterous, and will grow louder and louder, till their actions and behavior become indeed very absurd. These things experience proves.

19. Thus I have taken more notice of the more general causes whence the errors that have attended this great revival of religion have risen, and under each head have observed some particular errors that have flowed from these fountains. I now proceed, as I proposed, in the Second place, to take notice of some particular errors that have risen from several of these causes; in some perhaps they have been chiefly owing to one, in others to another, and in others to several, or all conjoint. And here the, First thing I would take notice of is, censuring others.

It is the worst disease that has attended this work. The manner of many has been, when they first enter into conversation with any person, to discern him, or to fix a judgment of him, from his manner of talking of things of religion, whether he be experimentally acquainted with vital piety or not. So, when they have heard any Minister pray or preach, their first work has been to observe, whether he prays like one that feels the saving power of GOD'S SPIRIT in his heart, and whether he preaches like one that knows what he says. It has been so much the way in some places, that by new converts do not know but it is their duty to do so. When once persons yield to such a notion, they quickly grow very discerning in their own apprehension: And, when they have passed their censure, every thing seems to confirm it; they see more and more in the person God they have censured, that seems to them to show plainly that he is an unconverted man. And, if the person censured be a Minister, every thing in his public performances seems dead; yea, it seems worse and worse to them, his preaching grows more and more intolerable. When the SPIRIT of God was wonderfully poured out in this place more than even years ago, and all the town seemed to be alive and full of GOD, there was no such notion or humor prevailing: When Ministers preached here, as very many did at that time, young and old, our people did not go about to discern whether they were men of experience or not, nor did any such thing enter into their hearts; but the business of every one was to listen to what was said, and apply it to his own heart. And scarcely ever did any Minister preach here, but his preaching did some remarkable service.

20. One thing that has been supposed to be sufficient warrant for openly censuring Ministers, is their opposing this work of GOD that has been lately carried on in the land. And there can be no doubt but that opposition may be such, as to render either Ministers or people truly scandalous; and that Ministers hereby may utterly defeat the design of their ministry. Nor should I think that any person had power to oblige me to attend the ministry of one who did from time to time plainly preach against this work, or speak reproachfully of it in his public performances, after all Christian methods had been used for a remedy, and to no purpose.

But as to determining how far opposing this work is consistent with a state of grace, or how far, and for how long time, some persons of experience may oppose it, through prejudices they have received from the errors that have been mixed with this work, or through some peculiar disadvantages they are under, this is a difficult thing: I have seen that which abundantly convinces me that the business is too high for me; I am glad that GOD has not committed it to me; I can joyfully leave it in his hands. We may represent it as exceeding dangerous to oppose this work, for this we have good warrant in the word of GOD; but I know of no necessity we are under to determine whether it be possible for those that are guilty of it to be in a state of grace or no. Blessed be his name, that He has not laid such a temptation in the way of my pride. I know that, in order to be fit for this business, I must not only be vastly more knowing, but more humble than I am.

This bitter root of censoriousness must be totally rooted out, if we would prepare the way of the LORD. It has nourished many other things contrary to the humility, meekness and Jove of the Gospel. The minds of many have received an unhappy turn, in some respects, with their religion: There is a certain point or sharpness, a disposition to a kind of warmth, that does not savor of that meek, lamb-like, sweet disposition, that becomes Christians: Many have now been so long habituated to it, that they do not know how to get out of it; but we must get out of it; the point and sharpness must be blunted, and we must learn another way of manifesting our zeal for GOD.

21. One thing more I would take notice of, before I conclude this part. I believe it to have been one fruit of the joyful influences of the SPIRIT of GOD that have been lately given, that there has appeared such a disposition to sing praise to GOD; not only in solemn meetings, but when Christians occasionally meet together at each other's houses. But the mismanagement I have respect to, is the getting into a way of performing it without that reverence and solemnity with which all open acts of divine worship ought to be attended. It may be two or three in a room are singing hymns of praise to GOD, others talking at the same time, others about their work, with little more appearance of regard to what is doing, than if some were only singing a common song. There is danger, if such things are continued, of its coming to that by degrees, that a mere nothing be made, of this duty, to the great violation of the third commandment. Let Christians abound as much as they will in this holy, heavenly exercise, in GOD house, and in their own houses; but, when it is performed, let it be performed as an holy act, wherein they have immediately and visibly to do with GOD.

What a poor, blind, weak and miserable creature is man, at his best estate! We are like helpless sheep; the Devil is too subtle for us: What is our strength! What is our wisdom! How ready are we to go astray! How easily are we drawn aside into, innumerable snares, while we in the mean time are bold and confident, and doubt not but we are right and safe. We are foolish sheep, in the midst of subtle serpents and cruel wolves, and do not know it. O how unfit are we to be left to ourselves. And how much do we stand in need of the wisdom, the power, the condescension, patience, forgiveness and gentleness of our good Shepherd!

The Present Revival Of Religion, By John Edwards, Part V

PART 5:

Showing positively what ought to be done to promote this Work.

1. IN considering the means of promoting this work of GOD, I have already observed some instances wherein there has been needless objecting and complaining; and have also taken notice of many things that ought to be amended. I now proceed, in the

Third and last place, to show positively what ought to be done to promote this work. The obligations that all are under, with one consent, to do their utmost, were observed before. I hope that some, upon reading what was said under that head, will be ready to say, 'What shall we do' To such I would now offer my thoughts, in answer to such an inquiry.

And that which I think we ought to set ourselves about, in the first place, is to remove stumbling-blocks. When GOD is revealed as about to come, gloriously to set up his kingdom in the world, this is proclaimed, "Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert an highway for our GOD." (Isa. xl. 3.) And again, "Cast ye up, cast ye up; prepare the way; take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people." (Isa. lvii. 14.) And, "Go through, go through the gates; prepare you the way of the people; cast up, cast up the high-way; gather but the stones." (Isa. lxii. 10.)

And, in order to this, there must be a confessing of faults on both sides: For undoubtedly many are the faults that have been committed. There is hardly any duty more mortifying to the pride of man; but it must be done. Repentance is, in a peculiar manner, a proper duty, when the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And if GOD does now loudly call upon us to repent, then he also calls to make proper manifestations of our repentance. I am persuaded that those that have openly opposed this work, or have from time to time spoken lightly of it, cannot be excused in the sight of GOD, without openly confessing their fault therein; especially if they be Ministers. If they have, either directly Or indirectly, opposed this work, or in public or private prejudiced their people against it; if hereafter they shall be convinced it is of GOD, they ought by no means to palliate the matter, and excuse themselves, and pretend that they always thought so, and that it was only Such and such imprudences they objected against: But they ought deeply to declare their conviction, and condemn themselves for what they have done; for it is CHRIST that they have spoken against in speaking lightly of, and prejudicing others against this work; yea, worse than that, it is the HOLY GHOST. And though they have done it ignorantly, and in unbelief, yet, when they find out who it is that they have opposed, undoubtedly GOD will hold them bound publicly to confess it.

On the other side, if those that have been zealous to promote this work have in any of the fore mentioned instances gone out of the way, and done that which is contrary to Christian rules, whereby they have openly injured others, and so wounded religion, they must publicly confess it, as they would gather out the stones, and prepare the way of GOD'S people. They who have laid great stumbling-blocks in others' way by their open transgression, are bound to remove them by their open repentance.

Some probably will object, that the opposers will take advantage by this to insult both them and religion. And indeed, to the shame of some, they have taken advantage by such things. But if there are some imbibed enemies of religion, that stand ready to improve every thing to its disadvantage, yet that ought not to hinder an enjoined Christian duty; open repentance, after a fault openly committed. To stand it out, to avoid such an inconvenience, is to do evil to prevent evil. And besides, the danger of an evil consequence is much greater on the other side: To commit sin, and then stand in it, is what will give the enemy the greatest advantage. For Christians to act like Christians, in openly humbling themselves when they have openly offended, in the end brings the greatest honor to CHRIST and religion; and in this way are persons most likely to have GOD appear for them.

2. Again, at such a time as this, GOD does especially call us to meekness and mutual forbearance: Let your moderation be known unto all men: The LORD is at hand. For us to be judging one another, and behaving with fierceness and bitterness, when He who is the Searcher of all hearts, to whom we must all give an account, appears so remarkably present, is exceedingly unsuitable. Our business at such a time should be at home, searching ourselves, and taking heed to our own behavior. If there be glorious prosperity to the church of GOD approaching, those that arc; the meek Till have the largest share in it: For, when GOD remarkably arise to execute judgment, it is to save all the meek of the earth.

Those therefore that have been zealous for this work, and have erred with their zeal, ought not to be treated with bitterness. There is abundant reason to think, that most of them are children of GOD: And as to those things wherein we see them to be in an error, we have reason to say as the Apostle, "If any are otherwise minded, GOD shall reveal even this unto them." (Psalm 3: 15.) Their errors should not be made use of by us to excite indignation towards them, but should influence all of us that hope we are children of GOD, to humble ourselves, and become more entirely dependent on the LORD JESUS. And those Ministers that have been judged, and injuriously dealt with, will do the part of CHRIST'S disciples, not to judge and revile again, but to receive such injuries with meekness and forbearance, and make an improvement of them, more strictly examining their hearts and ways, and committing themselves to GOD. We have not yet seen the end of things; nor do we know who will be most honored of GOD in the issue." Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof; and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit." (Eccl. 7: 8.)

Contrary to this is each party's stigmatizing the other with odious names, which tends greatly to widen and perpetuate the breach. Such distinguishing names of reproach do as it were divide us into two armies drawn up in battle array, ready to fight one with another; which greatly hinders the work of GOD.

3. And as such a time does especially require the exercise of forbearance one towards another; so does it the exercise of great patience in waiting on GOD, under any special difficulties and disadvantages they may be under. The beginning of a revival of religion will necessarily be attended with many difficulties of this nature; many parts of the reviving church will, for a while, be under great disadvantages, by what

remains of the old disease. We cannot expect that, after a long time of degeneracy and depravity, things should all come right at once: And to be over hasty and violent in such a case, being resolved to have every thing rectified, or else to separate, is the way to hinder things coming right at all, and to break all in pieces. Not but the case may be such as to allow of no delay, without violation of absolute commands of GOD: But otherwise, though the difficulty may be very great, another course should be taken. We should have recourse directly to the throne of grace, to represent our difficulties before the great Shepherd of the sheep; and when we have done, should wait patiently upon him who in his time will appear for our deliverance: But if, instead of that, we are impatient, and take the work into our own hands, we dishonor GOD, and have reason to fear that he will leave us to manage our affairs for ourselves.

4. What has been mentioned hitherto has relation to the behavior we are obliged to, as we would prevent the hindrances of the work; but, besides these, there are things that must be done, more directly to advance it And here it concerns every one to look into his own heart, and see that the work be promoted in his own soul.

And though I judge not those that have opposed it, yet I would entreat them to leave off concerning themselves so much about others and look into their own souls, and see to it that they experience a true, saving work of the SPIRIT of GOD. If they do not, how can they have any heart to be busily and fiercely engaged about the mistakes of others I would beseech them seriously to weigh the matter with respect to this work, and consider whether, if the Scriptures are the word of GOD, the work that has been described in the first part of this treatise must not needs be, as to the substance of it, the work of GOD, and the flourishing of that religion that is taught by CHRIST and his Apostles; and whether any good medium can be found, between owning this work, and being a Deist. I would now humbly invite them to come and join with us, and be on our side; and, if I had the authority of Mosss, I would say to them as he did to HOBAB," We are journp_yn)g unto the place, of which the LORD said, I will give it you; come thou with us, and we will do thee good: For the LOBD has spoken good concerning Israel." (Numb. 10: 29.)

As the benefit of improving such a season is extraordinary great, so is the danger of neglecting or misemploying it. For as such a time is a time of great favor to those that are partakers of the blessing, so it is always a time of remarkable vengeance to others. So in Isaiah lxi. 2, the same that is called" the acceptable year of the LORD," is called also," the day of vengeance of our GOD." So it is foretold, that at the beginning of the glorious times of the Christian church, as" the hand of the LORD is known towards his servants, so shall his indignation towards his enemies." (/*. lvi. 14.) There is no time like such a time for the increase of guilt, and desperate hardening of the heart; which is the most awful fruit of divine wrath that can be inflicted on any mortal. So that a time of great grace and pouring out of the SPIBIT, and the fruits of Divine mercy, is ever also a time of pouring out Divine Vengeance on those that neglect and misemploy such a season.

3. The present revival of religion has an awful aspect Upon those that are advanced in years. It has been chiefly amongst those that are young. And* indeed commonly, Vhen GOD has begun any great work, he has taken the young people, and has cast off the old and stiff-necked generation. There was a remarkable pouring out of the SPIRIT of GOD on the children of Israel in the Wilderness, on their younger generation, their little ones that they said should be a prey, the generation that entered into Canaan with JOSHUA. That generation seems to have been the most excellent generation that ever was in the church of Israel. There is no generation, of which there isso much good and so little hurt spoken in Scripture. In that generation that were under twenty years when they went out of Egypt, was that kindness of youth, and love of espousals, spoken of, Jer. 2: 2, 3. But the old generation were passed by, and remained obstinate and stiff-necked, and unconvinced by all GOD'S wondrous works that they beheld. Let the old generation in this land take warning from hence, and take heed that they do not continue for ever objecting, murmuring and caviling against the work of GOD, lest while GOD is bringing their children into a land flowing with milk and honey, he should swear in his wrath concerning them, th'at their carcasses shall fall in the wilderness.

So when GOD had a design of great mercy to the Jews, in bringing them out of the Babylonish captivity, there was a blessed pouring out of the SPIRIT upon them in Babylon, and a spirit of prayer, to cry earnestly to GOD for mercy: But it was not upon the old generation that were carried captive. The captivity continued just long enough for them to waste away and die in their captivity. The old generation, and heads of families would not hearken to the repeated warnings of the Prophet; but he had greater success among the young people, as appears by Jer. 6: JO, 11: "To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they

may hear Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: Behold the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. Therefore I am foil of the fury of the LOUD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it put upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of the young men together: For even the husband with the wife (that is, the heads of families, and parents of these children) shall be taken, the aged, with him that is full of days." Yet, blessed be GOD! there arc some of the elder people that have been made partakers of this work: And those that are most awakened by these warnings of GOD'S word, will be most likely to be made partakers hereafter.

6. But above all others, does it concern us that are Ministers, to see that we are partakers of this work, that we have experience of the saving operations of the same SPIRIT which is now poured out on the land. How melancholy is the case when it is otherwise! For one to stand at the head of a congregation, as representing CHRIS i and speaking in hi-, stead, and to act the part of a shepherd and guide to a people, when many are under great awakenings, and many filled with Divine light, love and joy; to undertake to instruct, and lead them all, under these various circumstances; to be put to it, continually to play the hypocrite, and force the airs of a saint in preaching; and from time to time in private conversation, and particular dealing with souls, to undertake to judge of their circumstances; to talk with those that come to him, as if he knew what they said; to try1 to talk with persons of experience, as if he had experience as well as they; to force a joyful countenance and manner of speech, when there is nothing in the heart: What sorrowful work is here! O how miserably must such a person feel! What a wretched slavery is this! What pains must such a Minister use to conceal himself! And how weak are his hands! Besides the infinite provocation of the Most High GOD, and displeasure of his LORD and Master, there is reason from the Scripture to conclude, that no sort of men will bow so low in hell as ungodly Ministers; for every thing spoken of in Scripture, as that which aggravates guilt, and heightens Divine wrath, meets in them.

And what great disadvantages are unholy Ministers under, to oppose any irregularities, or imprudences, or intemperate zeal, when they are conscious to themselves that they have no true zeal at all! If enthusiasm and wildness comes in like a flood, what poor instruments are such Ministers to withstand it With what courage can they open their mouths, when they look inward, and consider how it is with them

We that are Ministers not only have need to experience the saving influence of the SPIRIT of GOD upon our heart, but we need a double portion of the SPIRIT of GOD at such a time as this: We had need to be as full of light as a glass is, that -is held out in the sun; and, with respect to love and zeal, to be like the angels, that are a flame of fire. The times extremely require a fullness of the Divine SPIRIT in Ministers, and we ought to give ourselves no rest till we have obtained it. And, in order to this, I should think Ministers, above all persons, ought to be much in secret prayer and fasting, and also much in praying and fasting one with another. It seems to me, it would be becoming our circumstances, if Ministers in a neighborhood would often meet together, and spend days in fasting and fervent prayer among themselves, earnestly seeking for extraordinary supplies of Divine grace; and also if, on their occasional visits one to another, instead of spending their time in sitting and smoking, and in diverting, or worldly, unprofitable conversation, telling news, and making their remarks on this and the other trifling subject, they would spend their time in prayer together, and religious conference. How much do many of the common people shame many of us that are in the work of the Ministry, in these respects Surely we do not behave ourselves like Christian Ministers, like ambassadors of CHRIST! And, while we condemn zealous persons for censuring Ministers, it ought-not to be without deep reflections upon ourselves; for indeed we do very much to provoke censoriousness, and lay a great temptation before others. And if we can prove that they transgress the Scripture-rule, yet our indignation should be chiefly against ourselves.

7. Two things that are exceeding needful in Ministers who would advance the kingdom of CHRIST, are zeal and resolution. The power of these is greater than can well be imagined: A man of but an ordinary capacity will do more with them, than one of ten times the parts and learning without them. More may be done with them in a few days, or at least weeks, than can be done without them in many years. The very sight or appearance of a thoroughly engaged spirit, together with a fearless courage and unyielding resolution, in any person that has undertaken the managing any affair amongst mankind, goes a great way towards accomplishing the effect. But \while we are cold and heartless, and only go on in an old formal round, we shall never do any great matters. Our misery is want of zeal and courage Hei)ce often, when any thing very considerable- that is new is proposed to be done for the advancement of religion, many difficulties are found out, many objections started, and it is put off from one to another; but nobody does any thing. And after this manner good designs have often failed, and sunk as soon as proposed.

Zeal and courage will do much in persons of but ordinary capacity; but especially if joined with great abilities. If some great men that have Appeared in our nation had engaged in the Christian cause with zeal and fervor, with the blessing of GOD, they would have turned the world upside down. We have many Ministers in the land that do not want abilities; they are persons of parts and learning; they should consider how much they might do for CHRIST, and how glorious a reward they might receive, if they had in their hearts an heavenly warmth and heat, proportional to their light.

8. And though it may be thought that I go out of my proper sphere, to intermeddle in the affairs of the Colleges; yet I will take the liberty of an Englishman, (that speaks his mind freely concerning public affairs,) and the liberty of a Minister of CHRIST, (who doubtless may speak his mind as freely about things that concern the kingdom of his LORD,) to give my opinion, in some things, with respect to those societies; the main design of which is to train up persons, and fit them for the work of the Ministry. And I would say in general, care should be taken that those societies should be so regulated, as to. be in fact nurseries of piety. Otherwise they are fundamentally ruined and undone as to their main design and most essential end. They ought to be so constituted, that vice and idleness should have no living¹ there: These are not to be suffered in societies whose main design is, to train up youth in Christian knowledge and eminent piety, to fit them to be Pastors of the flock of the blessed JESUS. I have had some acquaintance with the affairs of a College; and I cannot but think that it is practicable so to constitute such societies, that there should be no being there, without being virtuous, serious and diligent. It seems to me to be a reproach to the land, that ever it should be so with our Colleges, that, instead of being places of the greatest advantages for true piety, one cannot send a child thither without great dan- > ger of his being infected as to his morals. It is perfectly intolerable; and any thing should be done, rather than it should be so. If we pretend to have any Colleges at all, under a notion of training up youth for the Ministry, there should be some way found out that should certainly prevent its being thus. To have societies for bringing persons up to be Ambassadors of JESUS CHRIST, and to have them places of so much infection, is the greatest nonsense and absurdity imaginable.

And as thorough and effectual care should be taken, that vice and idleness be not tolerated in these Societies; so certainly the design of them requires that extraordinary means should be used in them for training up the students in vital religion, and experimental and practical godliness; so that they should be holy Societies, and the very place be as it the many difficulties with which it is clogged, and the distressing circumstances that some parts of GOD'S Church are now under in this land.

So is GOD'S will, that the prayers of his saints should be one great means of carrying on the designs of CHRIST'S kingdom in the world. When GOD has something very great to accomplish for his Church, it is his will that there should precede the extraordinary prayers of his people; as is manifest by Ezek. xxxvi. 37." I will yet, for this, be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." And when GOD is about to accomplish great things for his Church, he will begin by remarkably pouring out the SPIRIT of grace and supplication. (Zech. 12: 10.) If we are not to expect that the Devil should go out of a particular person, without extraordinary prayer, or" prayer and fasting;" how much less should we expect to have him cast out of the land, and the world, without it

I am sensible much has been done in duties of this nature, but not M) much as GOD in his Providence calls for. I should think the people of GOD in this land, at such a time as this is, would be in the way of their duty, to do three times as much at fasting and prayer as they do; not only for the pouring out of the SPIRIT on those towns or places whereto they belong, but that GOD would appear for his Church, carry on his work in the land, and in the world, and Fulfill the things he has spoken of in his word, that his Church has been so long wishing and waiting for. "They that make mention of the LORD ought not to" keep silence," and should" give GOD no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." (Isa. lxii. 6,7.) Before the first great pouring out of the SPIRIT of GOD on the Christian Church, the Church of GOD gave themselves to incessant prayer. (Acts 1: 13, 14) There is a time wherein GOD will wonderfully appear for the

deliverance of his Church from all her enemies, when he will" avenge his own elect: " And CHRIST reveals that this will be in answer to their incessant prayers, or " crying day and night." (Luke 18: 7.) In Israel, the" day of Atonement," which, was their great day of fasting and prayer, preceded and made way for the glorious and joyful" feast of tabernacles." When CHRIST is mystically born into the world, to rule over all nations, it will be in consequence of the Church's" crying, and travailing in birth, and being pained to be delivered." One thing here intended, doubtless is, her crying and agonizing in prayer.

9. GOD seems now, at this very time, to be waiting for this from us. When GOD is about to bestow some great blessing on his Church, it is often his manner so to order things in his Providence, as to show his Church their great need of it, and so put them upon crying earnestly to him for it And let us consider GOD'S present dispensations towards his Church in this land: A glorious work of his grace has been begun; and GOD has, of late, suffered innumerable difficulties to arise, that do in a great measure clog and hinder it, and bring many of GOD'S children into great distress. And yet he does not wholly forsake the work of his hand; there are remarkable tokens of his presence still to be seen; as though he was not forward to forsake us, and (if I may so say) as though he had a mind to carry on his work; but only was waiting for something that he expected in us, as requisite in order to it. And we have great reason to think, one thing at least is, that we should further acknowledge the greatness and necessity of such a mercy, and our dependence on GOD for it, in earnest and importunate prayers to him.

There is no way that Christians in a private capacity can do so much to promote the work of GOD, and advance the kingdom of CHRIST, as by prayer. By this, even women, children, and servants, may have a public influence. Let persons be never so weak, and never so mean, and under never so poor advantages, to do much for CHRIST, and the souls of men, otherwise; yet, if they have the SPIRIT of grace and supplication, they have power with Him that has the government of the whole world: And so a poor man in his cottage may have a blessed influence all over the world. GOD is (if I may so say) at the command of the prayer of faith; and in this respect, as it were, under the power of his people;" as Princes, they have power with GOD, and prevail." Though they may be private persons, their prayers are put up in the name of a Mediator, that is, a public person, being the Head of whole Church, and the LORD of the universe: And if they have a great sense of the importance of eternal things, and concern for the souls of men, though they are not Preachers, they may go in their earnestness and agonies of soul, and pour out their souls before One that is able to do all things. They have a great High-Priest, through whom they may come boldly at all times, and may i vent themselves before the GOD that heareth prayer.

If the people of GOD, instead of spending time in fruitless disputing, and talking about opposers, and animadverting upon the unreasonableness of their talk and behaviour, would be more silent in this way, and open their mouths much before GOD, they would be more in the way of a blessing. And if some, that have been complaining of their Minister, had said and acted less before men, and had applied themselves with all their might to cry to GOD for their Ministers, had, as it were, risen and stormed heaven with their incessant prayers for them, they would have been much more in the way of success.

GOD in his Providence appearing in the present state of things, does especially call on his people, to be very much in praying to him for the pouring out of the SPIRIT upon Ministers in the land. For though it is not for us to determine concerning particular Ministers, how much they have of the SPIRIT of GOD; yet in the general it is apparent, there is, at this day, need of very great degrees of the presence of GOD with the Ministry, much greater degrees of it than have hitherto been granted, for themselves, and for the Church of GOD.

Such a method of keeping a fast as this, has several times been proved, namely; in the forenoon, after the duties of the family and closet, as early as might be, all the people of the congregation have gathered in their particular religious societies; companies of men by themselves, and companies

of women by themselves; young men by themselves, and young women by themselves; and companies of children in all parts of the town, by themselves, as many as were capable of social religious exercises; the boys by themselves, and girls by themselves: And about the middle of the day, at an appointed hour, all have met together in the House of GOD, to offer up public prayers, and to hear a sermon suitable to the occasion: And then, they have retired from the House of GOD again into their private societies, and spent the remaining part of the day in praying together there, excepting so much as was requisite for the duties of the family and closet in their own houses. And it has been found to be of great benefit to assist and engage the minds of the people in the duties of the day.

10. One thing more I would mention concerning fasting and prayer, wherein I think there has been a neglect in Ministers; and that is, that although they much insist on the duty of secret prayer in their preaching, yet little is said about secret fasting. It is a duty recommended by our SAVIOUK to his followers, just in like manner as secret prayer is. Though I do not suppose that secret fasting is to be practiced in a stated manner, as secret prayer; yet it seems to me, it is a duty that all Christians should practice, and frequently practice. There are many occasions, of both a spiritual and temporal nature, that properly require it; and there are many particular mercies, that we desire for ourselves or friends, which it would be proper in this manner to seek of GOD.

Another thing I would mention, which is of still greater importance, and that is the duty that is incumbent upon GOD'S people, to take heed, that while they abound in external duties of devotion, such as praying, hearing, singing, there be a proportionable care to abound in Moral Duties, such as acts of righteousness, truth, meekness, forgiveness, and love towards our neighbour; which are of much greater importance in the sight of GOD than all the externals of his worship: This, our Savior was particularly careful that men should be well aware of: " But go ye, and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." (Matt. 9: 13.) And, chap. 12: 7." If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."

The internal principles of the worship of GOD, or the worship of the heart, in the love and fear of GOD, trust in GOD, and resignation to GOD, are the most important of all duties of religion; for therein consists the essence of all religion. But of this inward religion there are two sorts of external manifestations or expressions: The one sort are outward acts of worship, such as meeting in religious assemblies, attending outward institutions, and honoring GOD with gestures, as bowing, or kneeling before him, or with words, in speaking honorably of him, in prayer, praise, or religious conference: The other sort are the expressions of our love to GOD, by obeying his moral commands, of

self-denial, righteousness, meekness and Christian love, in our behaviour among men. And the latter arc of vastly the greatest importance in the Christian life; GOD makes little account of the former, in comparison of them; they are abundantly more insisted on by the Prophets in the Old Testament, and CHRIST and his Apostles in the New. When these two kinds of duties are spoken of together, the latter are evermore greatly preferred: Isa. 1: 12, to the 18th, and Amos 5: 21, &c. Mic. 6: 7, 8. Isa. lviii. 5, 6, 7. Zech. 7: ten first verses. Jer. li. seven first verses. Matt, xv, 3. &c. Often, when the times were very corrupt in Israel, the people abounded in the former kind of duties, but were at such times always notoriously deficient in the latter; as the Prophets complain, Isa. lviii. four first verses, Jer. 6: 15, compared with verse 20. Hypocrites and self-righteous persons do much more commonly abound in the former kind of duties than the latter; as CHRIST remarks of the Pharisees, Matt, 23: 14, 25, and 34. When the Scripture directs us to "show our faith by our works," it is principally the latter sort are intended; Jam. 2: from ver. 8 to the end, I John 2: 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. And we are to be judged, at the last day, especially by these latter sort of work; as is evident by the account we have of the day of judgment in the 25th of Mat. External acts of worship, in words and gestures, and outward forms, are of little use, but as they are a profession of inward worship: They are not so properly showing our religion by our deeds; they are only a showing our religion by words or outward profession. But he that shows religion in the other sort of duties, shows it in something more than a profession of words, he shows it in deeds.

And though deeds may be hypocritical, as well as words; yet in themselves they are of greater importance, for they are much more profitable to ourselves and our neighbor. We cannot express our love to GOD by doing any thing that is profitable to GOD; GOD would therefore have us do it in those things that are profitable to our neighbors, whom he has constituted his receivers: Our goodness extends not to GOD. but to our fellow Christians. The latter sort of duties put greater honor upon GOD, because there is greater self-denial in them. The external acts of worship, consisting in bodily gestures, words and sounds, are the cheapest part of religion, and least contrary to our lusts. The difficulty of thorough external religion, does not lie in them. Let wicked men enjoy their covetousness, their pride, their malice, envy and revenge, their sensuality and voluptuousness, amongst men, and they will be willing to compound the matter with GOD, and submit to what forms of worship you please, and as many as you please; as is manifest in the Jews of old, the Pharisees in CHRIST'S time, and the Papists and Mahometans at this day.

At a time when there is an appearance of the approach of any glorious revival of GOD'S church, GOD does especially call his people to the practice of moral duties." Thus says the LORD, keep ye judgment, and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed." (Isa. lvi. 1.) So when JOHN preached that "the kingdom of heaven was at hand," and cried to the people, "Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make his paths straight," as we have an account, Luke 3: 4, the people asked him,

"What they should do" He answers, "He that has two coats, let him impart to him that has none; and he that has meat, let him do likewise." The publicans said, "What shall we do" He answers, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." And the soldiers asked him, "What shall we do" He replies, "Do violence to no man; neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." (Verse 10, 11, 12, 13, 14)

11. GOD'S people, at such a time as this, ought especially to abound in deeds of charity, or almsgiving. We generally, in these days, seem to fall far below the true spirit and practice of Christianity with regard to this duty.—At a time when GOD is so liberal of spiritual things, we ought not to be sparing of our temporal things. So far as I can judge by the Scripture, there is no external duty whatsoever, by which persons will be so much in the way, not only of receiving temporal benefits, but also spiritual blessings, the influences of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT in the heart, in Divine discoveries, and spiritual consolations. I think it would be unreasonable to understand those promises made to this duty, in the 58th Chapter of Isaiah, in a sense exclusive of spiritual discoveries and comforts: "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily: And thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am: If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the LOUD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: And thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." (Isa. lviii. 7, &c.) So, that giving to the poor is the way to receive spiritual blessings, is manifest by Psalm cxii. 4

Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. A good man showeth favor, and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved for ever; the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: His heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established; he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. He has dispersed, he has given to the poor; his horn shall be exalted with honor."

12. Some may object, that for persons to do deeds of charity in hope of obtaining spiritual blessings, would seem to show a self-righteous spirit, as though they would offer something to GOD to purchase these favors. But if this be a good objection, it may be made against every duty whatsoever. All external duties of the first table will be excluded by it, as well as those of the second. These have as direct a tendency to raise self-righteous persons' expectations of receiving something from GOD, on account of them, as those; and on some accounts more, for these duties are more immediately offered to GOD, and therefore persons are more ready to expect something from GOD for them. But no duty is to be neglected for fear of making a righteousness of it. And I have always observed, those that are most exact in external duties of the first table, and slack as to those of the second, are the most self-righteous.

If GOD'S people in this land were once brought to abound in such deeds of love, as much as in praying, hearing, singing, and religious meetings and conference, it would be a most blessed omen: There is nothing would have a greater tendency to bring the GOD of love down from heaven; so amiable would be the sight in the eyes of our loving and exalted Redeemer, that it would soon, as it were, fetch him down from his throne, to set up his tabernacle with men. I do not remember ever to have read of any remarkable pouring out of the SPIRIT, that continued any long time, but what was attended with an abounding of this duty. So we know it was in the Apostles' days: And so in the late remarkable revival of religion in Saxony, which began by the labors of the famous Professor FRANCK, and has now been carried on for above thirty years, and has spread its happy influences into many parts of the world; it was begun, and has been carried on, by a wonderful practice of this duty. And it is foretold, that GOD'S people shall abound in this duty, in the time of the great effusion of the SPIRIT

in the latter days: "The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful.—But the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand."

Thus I have (by the help of GOD) finished what was proposed. I have taken the more pains in it, because it appears to me that now GOD is giving us the most happy season to attempt an universal reformation, that ever was given in New-England. And it is a thousand pities, that we should fail of that which would be so glorious, for want of our being sensible of our opportunity, or being aware of those things that tend to hinder it, or by taking improper courses to obtain it, or not being sensible in what way GOD expects we should seek it. If it should please GOD to bless any means for the convincing the country of his hand in this work, and bringing them fully and freely to acknowledge his glorious power and grace in it, and engage with one heart and soul, and by due methods to endeavor to promote it, it would be a dispensation of Divine providence that would have a most glorious aspect, happily signifying the approach of great and glorious things to the Church of GOD, and justly causing us to hope that CHRIST would speedily come to set up his kingdom of light, holiness, peace and joy on earth, as is foretold in his word. Amen; even so: Come, LORD JESUS!

The Present Revival Of Religion, By John Edwards, Distinguished Marks

THE DISTINGUISHING MARKS,

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 4: 1,

1. THE Apostolical age was an age of the greatest outpouring of the SPIRIT of GOD that ever was. And that both as to the extraordinary gifts of the SPIRIT, and also to 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 then abound: The Devil mimicking, both the ordinary and extraordinary influences of the SPIRIT of GOD. This made it necessary that the Church of CHRIST should be furnished with some certain rules and distinguishing marks, by which she might proceed safely in judging of spirits, and distinguishing the true from the false. The giving such rules is the design of this chapter, where we have this matter expressly treated of. The Apostle here, of set purpose, undertakes to supply the Church of GOD with such marks of the true SPIRIT, as may be plain and safe, and surely distinguishing, 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 said in this chapter, is no more taken notice of at this time, when that which is so remarkable appears; such an uncommon operation on the minds of the people; and there is such a variety of opinions concerning it, and so much talk about the work of the SPIRIT.

2. The Apostle is led to discourse on this subject by an occasional mention of the indwelling of the SPIRIT, as the sure evidence of an interest in CHRIST, in the last verse of the foregoing chapter." He that keepeth his commandments dwells in Him, and He in him; and hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the SPIRIT which He has given us." Whence we may infer, that his design in this chapter 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.

3. 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 exhorts the Christians he writes to, to care in this matter. And, 1. Here is the duty of trying the spirits urged, with a caution annexed, against over credulousness: " Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of GOD." The necessity of this duty is bound from this, that there were any counterfeits," because many false Prophets, were gone out into the world." And these did not only pretend to have the SPIRIT of GOD in his extraordinary gifts, but also to be eminently holy persons: To have much of his ordinary influences on their hearts. We are therefore to look upon these words as a direction to try their pretences to the SPIRIT of GOD, in both these respects.

4. After the Apostle had thus warned Christians, with respect to the trial of spirits, he immediately proceeds to give them rules, by which they may safely proceed in judging of every thing that has the pretext of being either the ordinary, or extraordinary work of the Satan- of GOD. My design therefore is to show what are the true, certain, and distinguishing evidences of a work of the SPIRIT of GOD, by which we may proceed safely in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see in others.

5. And here I would observe, that we are to take the Scriptures as our guide in this and in all cases. This is the standing rule which GOD has given to his Church, to guide them in all things, relating to their souls. And doubtless that SPIRIT that dictated 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 seeing He has done this, in the chapter wherein is the text; and done it more particularly and fully than any where else; in my present discourse I shall go no where else for marks of the trial of the spirits, but shall confine myself to those that I find here.

But before I proceed particularly to speak to these things, I would prepare my way by first observing negatively, in some instances, what are not signs that we are to judge of a work by, whether it be the work of the SPIRIT of GOD or no. And especially, what are no evidences that a work that is wrought amongst a people, is not the work of the SPIRIT of GOD.

6. First, Nothing can certainly be concluded from this, That the work that appears is carried on in a way very unusual and extraordinary. It is no sign that a work not the work of the SPIRIT of GOD, that is carried on in such a way as the same SPIRIT heretofore has not been wont to carry on his work; provided the variety or difference be such, as may still be comprehended within the limits of those rules which the Scriptures have given to distinguish a work of the SPIRIT of GOD by. What we have been used to, or what the Church of GOD has been used to, is not a rule by which we are to judge, whether a work be the work of GOD, because there may be new and extraordinary works of GOD. GOD has heretofore wrought in an extraordinary manner; he has brought those things to pass that have been 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 still new things to accomplish, things that 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 a work of the SPIRIT of GOD, if it be no deviation from the rule that GOD has given, to judge of a work of his SPIRIT by. The SPIRIT of GOD is sovereign in his operations; and we know that he uses a great variety: And we cannot tell how great a variety he may make use of, within the compass of the rules he himself has fixed. We ought not to limit GOD where he has not limited himself. If a work be never so different from what has formerly been, yet if it agrees in those things that the word of GOD has given us, as the distinguishing signs of a work of his SPIRIT, that is sufficient to determine us in its favor.

7. Therefore it is not reasonable to determine that a work is not the work of GOD'S 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 it, or extraordinary views of the certainty and glory of Divine tidings; and are proportionally moved with very extraordinary affections of fear and sorrow, desire, Joy and joy: Or if the change that seems to be made in persons be very sudden, and

the work carried on with very unusual swiftness, and the persons that are thus strangely affected are very many, and many of them are very young; and also be very unusual in many other circumstances, not infringing upon Scripture marks of a work of the SPIRIT; these things are no argument that the work is not a work of the SPIRIT of GOD.

The extraordinary degree of influence, if in its nature it be agreeable to the rules and marks given in Scripture, is rather an argument in its favor; for by how much the higher degree that is in, which is in its nature agreeable to the rule, so much the more is there of conformity to the rule, and so much the more evident is that conformity.

8. There is a great aptness in persons to doubt of things that are strange; especially, it is difficult for elderly persons to think that to be right, which they have been never used to, and have not heard of in the days of their fathers.

But if it be a good argument that a work is not from GOD, because it is very unusual, then it always was so, and was so in the Apostles' days. For the work of the SPIRIT of GOD that was wrought then, was carried on in a manner, that in very many respects was altogether new. There were such things then, as neither the Jews then living, nor their fathers, had ever seen or heard. Yea, such as never had been since the world stood: The work was carried on with more visible and remarkable power than ever had been before; never were there seen before such mighty and wonderful effects of the SPIRIT of GOD, in such sudden changes, and such great engagedness and zeal in such multitudes; such a great and sudden alteration in towns, cities, and countries; such a swift progress, and vast extent of the work.

And we have reason from Scripture prophecy to suppose, that at the commencement of the last and greatest out-pouring of the SPIRIT of GOD, 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 Isaiah lxxvi. 8, "Who has heard such a thing Who has 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, GOD will be about to bring to pass by it.

9. Secondly, 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 the minds of persons are under, is not to be judged of one way or the other, whether it be from the SPIRIT of GOD or no, 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 nature of divine and eternal things, and the nature of man, and the laws of the union between soul and body; how 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 suppose, that the misery of hell is 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 than 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. We need not then wonder, that when persons have a very great sense of that which is so amazingly dreadful, and also a great view of their own wickedness and GOD'S anger, things seem to them to forebode immediate destruction.

We see the nature of man to be such, that when he is in danger of some calamity that is very terrible to him, he is ready upon every occasion to think that now it is coming; as 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 long 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 thou thread was breaking; now this minute he should be swallowed up in these 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, whom at the same time they see to be exceedingly provoked! No wonder they are ready to expect every moment when this angry GOD will let them drop; and no wonder they cry out of their misery; and no wonder that the wrath of GOD, when manifested but a little to the soul, overbears human strength.

10. So it may easily be accounted for, how a true sense of the glorious excellency of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and of his dying love, should be such as to overcome the bodily strength. We all 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 in heaven enjoy, 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.

11. But some object against such extraordinary appearances, that we have no instances of them recorded in the New Testament. If this should be allowed, I see no force in the objection, since neither reason, nor any rule of Scripture excludes such things. 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 argue thus, is, because these are easily accounted for, from what we know of the nature of man, and from what the Scriptures inform us in general, concerning the nature of eternal things, and the nature of the convictions of GOD'S SPIRIT; so there is no need that any thing should be said in particular concerning these eternal, circumstantial effects.

But though they are not particularly recorded, yet there is great reason to think, from the general accounts we have, that it could not be otherwise; and that that great outpouring of the SPIRIT which then was, was not wholly without those extraordinary effects on persons'

bodies. The Jailor, 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 appear a designed putting himself into a posture of supplication; for he seems not to have said any thing 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, 30.) The Psalmist gives account of himself crying out aloud; and of a great weakening of his body, under convictions, and a sense of the guilt of sin: "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." (Psalm xxxii. 3, 4.)

12. We read of the disciples, (Matt. 14: 26,) that when they saw CHRIST coming to them in a storm, and took him for some terrible enemy, they cried out from fear: Why therefore should it be thought strange, that persons should cry out for fear, when GOD appears to them as their terrible enemy, and they see themselves in danger of being swallowed up in the bottomless gulf of eternal misery!

13. It is a weak objection, that the impressions enthusiasts are under, have been wont to have a great effect on their bodies. That the Quakers used to tremble, is no argument that PAUL, and the Jailor 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 that argue from hence, are going in the dark. They know not what ground they go upon, nor what rule they go by. The root and cause of things is to be looked at, and the nature of the operations and affections that persons' minds are under, are what

are to be inquired into, and examined by the rule of GOD'S word, and not the motions of the blood and animal spirits.

14. Thirdly. It is no argument that an operation on the minds of a people, is not the work of the SPIRIT of GOD, that it occasions a great ado, and a great deal of noise about religion. For though true religion does not delight in the applause of men, yet such is human nature, that it is morally impossible there should be a great and general concern, and engagedness of mind amongst a people, and yet but little said or done, that should be publicly observable; or that it should not cause a 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 eternal things are so great, and of such Vast concern, that there is great absurdity in men's being but moderately moved by them. 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.

15. Indeed CHRIST says, "The kingdom of GOD cometh not with observation: " (Luke 17: 20.) That is, not with outward and visible pomp. And yet it shall not be set up in the world, on the ruins of SATAN'S kingdom, without a mighty change in the state of things; to the observation and astonishment of the whole world. This is declared in the prophecies of Scripture, and by CHRIST himself in the very place, in his own explanation of those very words, "For as the lightning that lighteneth out of one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day." (Luke 17: 24.) 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 should be open and public, in the sight of the whole world, like lightning that cannot be hid, but glares in every one's eyes, and shines from one side of heaven to the other.

Accordingly 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 and ado every where. What a mighty opposition was there in Jerusalem, on occasion of that great effusion of the SPIRIT there! And so what great ado in Samaria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and other places; the affair filled the whole world with noise, and gave occasion to some to say of the Apostles, that "they had turned the world upside down." (Acts 17: 6.)

16. Fourthly. 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 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 affection, about those things that are invisible. Yea, it would be strange if there should not. We cannot think of things invisible, without a degree of imagination. I dare appeal to any man, whether he is able to fix his thoughts on CHRIST, or the things of another world, without imaginary ideas attending his meditations And the more engaged the mind is, the more lively and strong will the imaginary idea ordinarily be; especially when the contemplation is attended with any thing of surprise. As when the view a person has is new, and takes strong hold of the passions, either fear or joy; and when the change is sudden, from a contrary extreme, as from that which was extremely dreadful, to that which is extremely 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.

17. As GOD has given us such a faculty as the imagination, and has so made us, that we cannot think of things spiritual and invisible, without some exercise of this faculty, so it appears to me that this is really helpful to the other faculties of the mind, when a proper use is made of it, though often, when the imagination is strong, and the other faculties weak, it over-bears them. And it appears to me manifest in many instances, that GOD has made use of this faculty to truly Divine purposes; especially in some that are more ignorant: He seems to condescend to their circumstances, and deals with them as babes: As of old he instructed his Church while in a state of ignorance and minority, by types and outward representations. I can see nothing unreasonable in such a supposition. Let others that have much occasion to deal with souls in spiritual concerns, judge whether experience do not confirm it.

18. Fifthly. It is no sign that a work wrought on the minds of people is not from the SPIRIT of GOD, that example is made use of, as a great means of it. It is surely no argument that an effect is not from GOD, that means are made use of in producing it; and it is no more an argument, that this means is made use of, than if it was any other means. It is agreeable to Scripture that persons should be influenced by

one another's good examples: The Scripture directs us to set good examples to that end; (Matt. 5: 16; 1 Pet. 3: 1; 1 Tim. 4: 12; Tit. 2: 7;) and also directs us to be influenced by the good examples that others set, and to follow them. (2 Cor. viii. 1—7; Heb. 6: 12; Phil. 3: 17; 1 Cor. 4: 16, and Chap. xi. 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 the work of GOD, that GOD'S own means are made use of to effect it.

19. And as this is a scriptural way of carrying on GOD'S work, 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 tend to enlighten their minds. But the same thing may be signified by actions, and that more fully and effectually. Words are of no use, but as they convey our ideas to others; and this, actions, in some cases, may do 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 one effects and stirs up another; or that persons are greatly affected by seeing others so; yea, though the impression that is made upon them should be only by seeing the tokens of extraordinary affection in others, without - hearing them say one word. There may be a language efficient in their behavior only, to convey their minds to others, and to signify to them the sense of things they have, more than can possibly be done by words. If a person should see another under some extreme bodily torment, he might receive much more convincing evidence what he suffered, by his actions in his misery, than he could do by the words of a relator. In like manner, he might receive a greater idea of any thing that is delightful, from the behavior of one that is in actual) enjoyment, than by the narration of another. I desire this matter may be examined by the strictest reason.

20. There never was yet a great revival of religion, but that example had a main hand in it. So it was in the time of the Reformation, and so it evidently was in that great out-pouring of the SPIRIT that was in the Apostles' days, in Jerusalem, and Samaria, and Ephesus, and other parts of the world; as will be more 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: 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." (1 Thess. \. 1, 8.)

And it is foretold, that the work of GOD should be carried on very much 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;" 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 says 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." (Zech. viii. 21, 22, 23.)

21. Sixthly. It is no sign that a work that is wrought amongst a people is not from the SPIRIT of GOD,' That many that seem to be the subjects of it, are guilty of great imprudences and irregularities in their conduct.' It is no wonder at all, that in a mixed multitude of all sorts, wise and unwise, young and old, who are under strong impressions of mind, there are many that behave themselves imprudently. There are but few that know how to conduct them under vehement affections of any kind; to do so, requires a great deal of discretion, and strength, and steadiness of mind. A thousand imprudences will not prove a work, not to be the work of the SPIRIT of GOD; yea, if there be not only imprudences, but many things prevailing that are irregular, and really contrary to the rule 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. We have a remarkable instance in the New Testament, of a people that partook largely of that great effusion of the SPIRIT, among whom there nevertheless abounded imprudences and irregularities; and that is the Corinthians. There is scarce any Church more celebrated in the New Testament for being blessed with large measures of the SPIRIT of GOD; yet what manifold imprudences, yea, sinful irregularities, and strange confusion, did they run into, at the LORD'S Supper, in other parts of public worship, in contention about their teachers, and even in the exercise of their extraordinary gifts, though they spake and acted by the immediate inspiration of the SPIRIT of GOD.

22. Nay, if we see great imprudences, and even sinful irregularities in some, that are employed as great instruments to carry on the work, it will not prove it not to be the work, of GOD. The Apostle PETER himself, 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; " 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." (Gal. 2: 11, 12, 13.) Now if the great pillar of the Christian Church was guilty of such an irregularity, is it any wonder if other lesser instruments should be guilty of many irregularities

23. And here in particular, it is no evidence that a work is not the work of GOD, if many that are the subjects of it, or instruments to carry it on, are guilty of too great a forwardness to censure others as unconverted, either not duly apprehending the latitude the SPIRIT of GOD uses in the methods of his operations, or for want of making due allowance for that infirmity and corruption that may be left in the hearts of true believers.

It is observable that there never was a time of great reformation, a spirit of zeal in the church of GOD, but that it has- been attended with irregularity, 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, both parties condemning one another, while ST. PAUL had charity for both: " 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 the way of extolling some Ministers, and censuring others, and were puffed up for one against another: But yet these things were no

sign that the work then carried on was not the work of GOD. After this, when religion was still flourishing in the world, and a spirit of eminent holiness prevailed, the zeal of Christians ran out into a very improper severity, in the exercise of church discipline towards delinquents. And in that glorious revival of religion, in the time of 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 were guilty of severely censuring others that differed from them in opinion.

24. Seventhly, Nor are' many errors in judgment, and some delusions of SATAN intermixed with the work, any argument that the work, in general, is not the work of the SPIRIT of GOD. 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 delusion of the Devil. And this is no more a paradox, than many other things that are true of real believers in the present state, where grace dwells with so much corruption remaining for a while together in the same heart. Many good men have undoubtedly, in this and other ages, exposed themselves to grievous 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.

25. Eighthly, If some' 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 a great revival of religion, but what has been attended with many such things: Instances of this nature in the Apostles' days were innumerable, both of those that fell away into gross heresies, and also vile practices. And they were not only private Christians, but teachers, and officers, and eminent persons in the Christian church; and some of whom GOD had endowed with miraculous gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT.

An instance of tint, nature was. NICHOLAS, one of the seven Deacons, who was, looked upon by the Christian-, in Jerusalem as a man full of the HOLY GHOST, and was chosen out of the multitude of Christians to that office for that reason; (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 Nicolaitans. (Rev. 2: 6, and 15.)

So in the time of the Reformation from Popery, how great was the number of those that for a while seemed to join with the Reformers, that 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 that for a while seemed to partake of it, have fallen off into whimsical and extravagant errors, boasting of high degrees of spirituality, and condemning others as carnal. Thus it was with the Gnostics in the Apostles' time; and thus it was with several sects of Anabaptists in the time of the Reformation. And some of the leaders of those wild enthusiasts, had been for a while highly esteemed by the first Reformers. And so in the beginning of New-England, when vital piety flourished, such 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 carried on.

26. Ninthly, It is no argument that a work is not from the SPIRIT of GOD,' That it is 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 dreadful and never-ending torments, which multitudes are in danger of, and which the greater part of men in Christian countries do actually, from generation to generation, fall into, for want of a sense of the terribleness of it, and their danger, and so neglecting to take due care to avoid it; why then is it not proper for those that have the care of souls should take great pains to make men sensible of it Why should not they 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 possible 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 that 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 here, whether this is not the very course they would take in case of any great temporary calamity If any of you that are heads of families saw one of your children in a house that was all on fire, that seemed insensible of its danger, and neglected to escape after you had often called to it, would you go on to speak in a cold and indifferent manner Would not you cry aloud and represent the danger it was in, and the folly in delaying, in the most lively manner you were capable of 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 It is not the way of mankind, in temporal affairs of great moment, that require earnest heed and great haste, to speak to others of their danger, and warn them but a little; and when they do it at all, in a cold indifferent manner: Nature teaches men otherwise. If then we that have the care of souls, knew what hell was, had seen the state of the damned, or, by any other means, became sensible how dreadful their case was; and at the same time knew that the greater part of men went thither, and saw our hearers in imminent danger, and yet insensible of their danger; it would be morally impossible for us to avoid most earnestly setting before them the dreadfulness of that misery they were in danger of, and warning them to fly from it.

27. 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; yet (if we look on language as a communication of our minds to others) they contradict themselves; for actions, as I observed before, have a language as well, is words And at the same time that such a Preacher's words represent, the sinner's state as infinitely dreadful, if his behavior and manner of speaking contradict it, he deserts his own purpose; for the language of his actions is much more effectual than the bare signification of his words.

Not that I think the law only should be preached: Minister may preach other things too little. The Gospel is to be preached as well as the Law, and the Law is to be preached to make way for the Gospel. So that a Minister ought not to insist so much on the terrors of the Law as to forget his end, 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.

Indeed some talk of it as an unreasonable thing to think to fright persons to heaven. But I think it is a reasonable thing to endeavor to fright persons away from hell, that stand upon the brink of it, and are just ready to fall into it, and are senseless of their danger. It is 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, that there is good reason for, though it be very great, is not to be spoken against under any such name.

28. Having thus 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 proceed in the Second place, 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 by the Apostle in this chapter, 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 which I find them in the chapter.

I. First, when the SPIRIT that is at work amongst a people is observed to raise their esteem of that that was born of the Virgin, and was crucified without the gates at Jerusalem; and to confirm their minds in the truth of what the Gospel declares, of his being the SON of GOD, and the Savior of men: It is a sure sign that that Spirit is of GOD. This sign the Apostle gives us in the 2d and 3d verses." Hereby know ye the SPIRIT of GOD; every Spirit that confesses that JESUS CHRIST is come in the flesh, is of GOD; and every spirit that confesses 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 did and suffered those things that are recorded of him, but that that person was CHRIST, that is, the SON of GOD, the Anointed of GOD to be the LORD and Savior. That thus much is implied, 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 dwells 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 than merely allowing: It implies an establishing a thing by testimony, and declaring it with esteem and affection; so Matt. 10: 32," Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my FATHER which is in heaven." "I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." (Rom. 16: 9.) And" that every tongue may confess that JESUS CHRIST is LORD, to the glory of GOD the FATHER." (Phil. 2: 11.) And that this is the force of the expression here, is confirmed by that other place in the same Epistle, in the next chapter, at the 1st verse," Whosoever believeth that JESUS is the CHRIST, is born of GOD; and every one that loves him that begat, loves him also that is begotten of him." And by that parallel place of ST. PAUL, where we have the same rule given to distinguish the true SPIRIT from all counterfeits," Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the SPIRIT of GOD calls 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." (1 Cor. 12: 15.)

So that if the SPIRIT which is at work among a people, is plainly observed to work after that manner, as to convince them of CHRIST, and lead them to CHRIST; to confirm their minds in the belief that he is the SON of GOD, and was sent of GOD to save sinners, and that he is the only Savior, and that they stand in great need of him; and to beget in them higher*thoughts of him than they used to have, and to incline their affection more to him; it is a sure sign that it is the true and right SPIRIT.

29. But the words of the Apostle are remarkable; the Person the SPIRIT gives testimony to, and to whom he raises their esteem, must be that JESUS that appeared in the flesh, and not another CHRIST in his stead; nor any mystical, fantastical CHRIST within, which diminishes their esteem of and dependance 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' Savior of men. He mortally hates the doctrine of his redemption; he never would go about to beget in men more honorable thoughts of him, and so to incline them more to fear 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. He that heightens men's esteem of the glorious MICHAEL, that Prince of the Angels, is not the spirit of the Dragon that is at war with him.

30. 2: When the SPIRIT that is at work operates against the interest of SATAN'S kingdom, which lies in 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 is given 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 it is evident the Apostle is still coin-paring those that are influenced by the two opposite kinds of spirits, the true and the false, and showing the difference; the one are of GOD, and overcome the spirit of the world; the other are of the world, and speak and savor 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 of the world, we learn by his own words in the 3d Chapter." 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 sin, all the corruptions and lusts of men, and all those acts and objects by which they are gratified. In these things lies the interest of his kingdom, who is" the spirit that is in the world."

So that we may safely determine, the spirit which works after such a manner, as to lessen men's esteem of the pleasures, profits and honors of the world, to take off their hearts from these things; and to engage them in a deep concern about eternal happiness; which puts them upon earnest seeking the kingdom of GOD and his righteousness, and convinces them of the dreadfulness of sin; I say, the Spirit that operates after such a manner, must needs be the SPIRIT of GOD.

It is not to be supposed that SATAN would go about to convince men of sin, and awaken the conscience. It can no way serve his end, to make the candle of the LORD shine the brighter, and to open the mouth of that Vicegerent of GOD in the soul. Would the Devil, when he is about to establish men in sin, awaken the conscience to see the dreadfulness of it, make them exceedingly sensible of their misery by

reason of their past sins, and their great need of deliverance from the guilt of them, and 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 careful to guard against them What do those men do with their reason, who suppose that the SPIRIT that operates thus, is the spirit of the Devil

31. Possibly some may say, that the Devil may awaken men's consciences to deceive them, and make them think they are of GOD, while indeed they are in the gall of bitterness. But to this it may be replied, that the man that 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 man's own guilt, the less likely is he to rest in his own righteousness, or to be pacified with shadows. A man that has been thoroughly terrified with a sense of his danger and misery, is not easily flattered and made to believe himself safe, without good grounds.

To awaken conscience, and convince of the evil of sin, cannot then tend to establish sin, but certainly tends to make way for sin and SATAN'S being cast out. Therefore this is a good argument that the Spirit that operates thus, cannot be the spirit of the Devil; if CHRIST knew how to argue, who told the Pharisees, that supposed the SPIRIT he wrought by 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, earnestly concerned for their eternal salvation, sensible of their need of GOD'S help, and engaged to seek it in the use of the means that GOD has appointed, we may certainly conclude this is from the SPIRIT of GOD; whatever effects this concern has on their bodies; though it causes them to cry out aloud, or to shriek, or to faint, or though it throws 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.

32. That Spirit which 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 of him to teach the world, and to deliver that doctrine, those instructions that are to be their rule; therefore he that knoweth GOD, heareth us, &c.

The Apostle's argument equally reaches all that, in the same sense," are of GOD;" that is, all those whom GOD appointed 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. The Devil never would go about 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 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." It is GOD'S own direction to discover their delusions," And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits:—To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. viii. 19, 20.) The Devil does not say the banic 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 hatred towards that holy book, the Bible: He has done all that has been in his power to extinguish that light, and to draw men off from it: He knows that it is 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 sore and strong sword, with which GOD punishes Leviathan, that crooked serpent. It is that sharp sword that we read of," that proceeds out of the mouth of him that sat on the horse," (Rev. six. 15,) 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; and consequently is enraged against the Bible, and hates every word in it; and therefore we may be sure that he never will go about to raise persons' esteem of it, or affection to it. And accordingly we see it to be common in enthusiasts, to depreciate this written rule, and set up some other rule above it.

33. 4: Another rule to judge of spirits may be drawn from those opposite compellations given to the two 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. And therefore, if we see that a spirit operates as a SPIRIT of Truth, leading persons to truth, convincing them of those things that are true, we may safely determine it to be a right and true SPIRIT. As for instance, if we observe that the SPIRIT which is at work, makes men more sensible than they used to be, that there is a GOD, and that he is a great GOD, and a just GOD; and makes them more to realize it, that they must die, that life is short, and very uncertain; that there is another world; that they have immortal souls, and that they must give account of themselves to GOD; if it convinces them that they are exceeding sinful by nature and by practice; and that they are helpless in themselves; and confirms them in other things that are agreeable to sound doctrine; the Spirit that works thus, operates as a SPIRIT of Truth: He represents things as they are indeed: He brings men to the light; and we may conclude, that it is not the spirit of darkness that doth thus discover and manifest the truth.

34. 5: 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 loves is horn of GOD, and knoweth God: He that loves 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 dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us: Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his SPIRIT." In these verses Jove 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 two last verses of the foregoing chapter, and in the 16th verse of this. Therefore this last mark 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 two last verses; and of love to men, as arising from love to GOD, in these two last verses. Therefore, when the SPIRIT that is at work amongst a people, works in them a delightful sense of the excellency of JESUS CHRIST; representing him as the Chief among ten thousand, altogether lovely, and makes him precious to the soul; winning and drawing the heart with 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, as verses 9, 10: " In this was manifested the love of GOD towards us, because that GOD sent his only begotten 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 verse 16: " And we have known, and believed the love that GOD has to us." And verse 19: " We love him, because he first loved us: " When the SPIRIT excites to love on these motives, and makes the soul to long after GOD and CHRIST, and to live so as to please and honor them; and also 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 other souls; and causes a delight in those that appear as the children of GOD, and followers of CHRIST: When a Spirit operates after this manner, there is the highest evidence of a true and Divine SPIRIT.

35. Indeed there is a counterfeit of love, that often appears amongst those that are led by a spirit of delusion. But sufficient is said in this passage of truly Christian love, to distinguish it from all such counterfeits. It is love that arises from an apprehension of the wonderful riches of GOD'S love to us, through CHRIST JESUS; attended with a sense of our own unworthiness, and a renunciation of all our own excellency and righteousness. See verses 9, 10, 11, and 19. The surest character of true Divine love, is, that it is an humble love." Charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up." (1 Cor. 13: 4.) When therefore we see love in persons, attended with a sense of their own littleness, vileness, weakness, and utter insufficiency; and so with 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.

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.

36. Thus I have spoken particularly to the several marks the Apostle gives of a work of the true SPIRIT. There are some of these things the Devil would not do if he could: Thus, he would not awaken the conscience, and make men sensible of their miserable state by nature, by reason of sin, and of their great need of a Savior. And he would not confirm men in a belief that JESUS is the SON of GOD, and the Savior of sinners, or raise their value or 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 hearken to them, or make much use of them; nor would he go about to show men the truth, in things that concern their souls; to undeceive them, and lead them out of darkness into light, and give them a view of things as they are indeed. 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; nor could he if he would: These things are as contrary as possible to his nature. And therefore, when there is an extraordinary influence 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 employed, whatever methods are taken to promote it; whatever means a sovereign GOD, whose judgments are a great deep, makes use of to carry it on; and whatever motions there may be of the animal spirits, or whatever effects may be wrought on men's bodies. These marks, that the Apostle has given, are sufficient to stand alone, and support themselves: And wherever they are, they plainly show the finger of GOD, and are sufficient to outweigh a thousand such objections, as many make from oddities, irregularities, and errors in conduct, and the delusions and scandals of some seeming believers.

37. But here some may object what the Apostle says, in the 2 Cor. 11: 13, 14." 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 SPIRIT from the false spirit, in those false apostles and false prophets the Apostle speaks of, 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: "—" There are many gone out into the world that are Ministers of the Devil, that 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 spirit, under such a crafty disguise.' Those false prophets ST. JOHN speaks of, are doubtless the same sort of men with those false apostles, and deceitful workers, that ST. PAUL speaks of, in whom the Devil was transformed into an angel of light: " And therefore we may be sure that these marks the Apostle gives, are especially adapted to distinguish between the true Spirit, and the Devil transformed into an angel of light, because they are given for that end. That is the Apostle's declared purpose, to give marks by which the true Spirit may be distinguished from that sort of counterfeits.

38. Having thus done 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. 1: From what has been said, I will venture to draw this inference, namely, ' That the extraordinary influence that has lately appeared on the minds of the people abroad in this land, causing in them an uncommon concern about the things of religion, is undoubtedly, in 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, namely, ' facts and rules. The rules of the word of GOD we have 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 that have had opportunity to observe.

As to this work that has lately been carried on in the land, there are so many things concerning it that are notorious, as, unless the Apostle JOHN was out in his rules, are sufficient to determine it to be, in general, the work of GOD. It is notorious that the SPIRIT that is at work, takes off persons' minds from the vanities of the world, engages them in a deep concern about eternal happiness, puts them upon earnestly seeking their salvation, and convinces them of the dreadfulfulness of sin, and of their own guilty and miserable state by nature. It is notorious that 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 endeavor to obtain his favor. It is notorious that it puts them upon a more diligent improvement of the means of grace which GOD has appointed. It is also notorious, that, in general, it works in persons a greater regard to the word of GOD, and desire of hearing and reading of it. And it is notoriously manifest, that the SPIRIT 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 and just GOD, whom they are accountable to, and that they stand in great need of a Savior. It is furthermore notonous, that this SPIRIT makes persons more sensible of the value of that JESUS that was crucified, and their need of him; and that it puts them upon earnestly seeking an interest in him. It cannot be but these things. should be apparent to people in general through the land; for these things are not done in a corner. The work that has been wrought, has not been confined to a few towns, in some remote parts of the land, but has been carried on in many places, and in the principal and most populous, and public places in it. And it has now been continued for a considerable time, so that there has been a great deal of opportunity to observe the manner of the work.

39. And here I would observe, that the nature and tendency of a spirit that is at work, may be determined with much greater certainty, 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. But when the work is spread over great part of a country, in places distant one from another, among people of all sorts, and all ages, and in multitudes of persons, of sound mind, good understanding, and known integrity; there would be the greatest absurdity in supposing that, by all the observation that can be made, for many months together, by those that are most intimate with them in these affairs, and have long been acquainted with them, still it cannot be determined what kind of influence the operation they are under, has upon people's minds; whether it tends to awaken their consciences, or to stupify them; to incline them more to seek their salvation, or neglect it; whether it confirms them in a belief of the Scriptures, or leads them to Deism; and so in other things. There is probably no particular person here present, that thinks himself to have a right to be treated as one of common sense, and veracity, but what would think himself abused, if he should declare to others, that' he had altered his mind in tfaese and those particulars; he now found himself convinced of the truth of this or that, that formerly he did not believe;' if those he made such a profession to would not believe him, though they had long been conversant with him, and though he persisted in this profession for many months together, and nothing appeared in him but what agreed thereto. But much more unreasonable it would be, when such professions are made, not by a particular person only, but by great numbers of people, to suppose that they all agree in professing what indeed they do not feel in their souls.

40. Those in whom have been uncommon appearances, whence have arisen the main objections to this work, have been of two sorts; either those that have been in great distress, in an apprehension of their sin and misery; or those that have been overcome with a 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 by all that could be observed, their distress has arisen from real proper conviction. 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 has 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 impossible to avoid them. Generally those that have been in these agonies have appeared to be in the perfect exercise of their reason; and such of them as were able to speak, have been well able to give an account of the circumstances of their minds, and the cause of their distress, in the time of it, and well able to remember, and give an account afterwards. I have known a very few instances of those, that 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. It is not truth only that distresses them, but many vain shadows and notions. Some in their great distress have not been able to give an account of themselves, or to explain the manner and cause of their trouble to others. But this will not be at all wondered at, by those who have had much to do with souls under spiritual difficulties. Some things that they are sensible of, are altogether new to them, their ideas and inward sensations are new, and what they therefore know not how to accommodate language to, or to find words to express. And some who at first say, they know not what was the matter with them, on being particularly examined, have been able to represent their case, though of themselves they could not find expressions so to do.

41. Some say the terrors they think such persons are in, that have such effects on their bodies, is only a fright. But certainly there ought to be a distinction made, between a very great fear, and extreme distress, arising from an apprehension of some dreadful truth, that is a cause fully proportional to such an effect, and a needless causeless fright; which is of two kinds; (1.) either when persons are terrified with that which is not the truth; (of this I have seen very few, unless in case of melancholy;) or (2.) when persons are under a childish fright, only from some terrible outward appearance, and a general notion thence arising, that there is something or other terrible, they know not what; without having in their minds the apprehension of any particular terrible truth whatsoever. Of such a kind of fright I have seen very little appearance, either among old or young.

Those that are in such extremity, commonly express a great sense of their exceeding wickedness, of their great guilt in the sight of GOD; and the dreadfulfulness of the punishment that sin exposes to. Very often they have a lively idea of the horrible pit of eternal misery; and at the same time the wrath of GOD appears amazingly terrible to them: GOD appearing to them so much provoked, they are apprehensive he will not bear with them any longer; but will now forthwith send them down to the dreadful pit they have in view. Very many, in the midst of their extremity, have been brought to an extraordinary sense of their fully deserving that wrath and destruction, which is then before their eyes; and at the same time that they feared every moment it would be executed upon them, they have been greatly convinced it would be altogether just that it should. And very often some text of Scripture, to that effect, has been set home upon their minds, whereby their minds have been calmed, and 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 a kind of submission to a just GOD; but their bodily strength much spent; and sometimes their lives, to appearance, almost gone.

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 self-abasement; drawing forth their hearts after the Redeemer and desires to lie in the dust before him; and wishing that others might behold and embrace him; and longings to live to his glory: but 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 it used to act in those that were converted formerly ^ except that in many, light and comfort have been in a higher degree. Many very young children have been thus wrought upon. There have been some instances very much like those demoniacs, of whom we read, that "when the Devil had cried with a loud voice, and rent them sore, he came out of them." (Matt, 1: 26, and 9: 26.) 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 some have been in such distress, and it has passed off, and no deliverance at all has followed. 42. Some object against it, as great confusion, when there is a number together, in such circumstances; 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 duly directed to their end, so that the order and the due connection of means being broken, they fail of their end: But conviction and conversion of sinners is the end of religious means. Not but I think persons should endeavor to refrain from such outward manifestations, in the time of the solemn worship. But if GOD is pleased to convince the consciences of persons, so that they cannot avoid great outward manifestations, even to the 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 in a 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 the breaking the order of the means, by obtaining the end to which that order is directed: He that is going a journey to fetch a treasure, need not be sorry that he is stopped, by meeting the treasure in the midst of his journey.

Besides those that are overcome with conviction and distress, I have seen many that 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 vile-ness attending it, with all expressions and appearances of the greatest abasement and abhorrence of themselves: And many have been even overcome with pity to the souls of others, and longing for their salvation.

43. As to the imprudences and irregularities that have been, it is not at all to be wondered at, that a reformation, after a long-continued, and almost universal deadness, should at first be attended with such things. 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 true, for a while; which hardened the unbelieving Egyptians, and made them to doubt of the Divinity of the whole work. When day light first appears after a night of darkness, we must expect to have darkness mixed with light, for a while, and not have perfect day, and the sun risen at once. The fruits of the earth are green before they are ripe, and come to their perfection gradually; and so CHRIST tells us is the kingdom of GOD: "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, then the full corn in the ear." (Mark 4: 26—28.)

The imprudences and errors that have attended this work, are the less to be wondered at, if it be considered, that it is chiefly young persons that have been the subjects of it. And doubtless it has been one occasion of much of the misconduct there has been, that in many places, people who are the subjects of this work of GOD'S SPIRIT, see plainly that their Ministers have an ill opinion of the work; and therefore, with just reason, dare not apply themselves to them as their guides in this work; and so are without guides: And no wonder that when a people are as sheep without a shepherd, they wander out of the way. A people, in such circumstances especially, 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 favor the work, and rejoice in it, yet it is not to be expected that either people or Ministers should know so well how to conduct thorny. I live in Mich an extraordinary state of things, while it is new, and what they never had any experience of before, as they may, after they have had experience and time, to see the tendency, consequences, and issue of things.

44. 2: Let us all be hence warned, 'By no means to oppose, or do any thing, in the least to hinder that work that has lately been carried on in the land.

The example of the Jews in CHRIST'S and the Apostles' times, is enough to beget in those that do not acknowledge this work a great jealousy of themselves, and to make them exceedingly cautious of what they say or do. CHRIST then was in the world, and the world knew him not: He came to his own, by profession, and his own received him not. That coming of CHRIST had been much spoken of in Scripture, and had been long expected; and yet because CHRIST came in a manner that they did not expect, they would not own him, but opposed him, counted him a madman, and the SPIRIT that he wrought by the spirit of the Devil. They stood and wondered at the great things that were done; but yet they met with so many stumbling-blocks, that they finally would not acknowledge him. And when the SPIRIT of GOD came to be so wonderfully poured out in the Apostles' days, they looked upon it to be 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 Isaiah 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 of them that had been in reputation for religion and piety, had a great spite against the work, because they saw it tended to diminish their honor, and to reproach their formality and lukewarmness. Yea, some maliciously and openly opposed and reproached the work of the SPIRIT of GOD, and called it the work of the Devil.

There is another coming of CHRIST, a spiritual coming, to set up his kingdom in the world, that is as much spoken of in Scripture prophecy, as that first coming of CHRIST was, that has been long expected by the Church of GOD; and we have reason to think will be, in many respects, parallel with the other. And certainly, that low state that the visible Church of GOD has lately been sunk into, 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. Whether the work that is now wrought, be the beginning of that great coming of CHRIST to set up his kingdom, that is so much spoken of, or no; yet 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 for persons to continue long to refuse to acknowledge CHRIST in the work, especially those that are set to be teachers in his Church, will be in like manner provoking to GOD, as it was in the Jews of old, to refuse to acknowledge CHRIST; and that, 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.

45. Those that 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 would 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.' 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, as that was theirs, while it gave light to GOD'S Israel.

I would pray those that quiet themselves with that, that they proceed on a principle of prudence, and are waiting to see what the issue of things will be, and what fruits men will bring forth in their lives and conversations, would consider, whether this will justify a long refraining from acknowledging CHRIST, when he appears so wonderfully in the land. It is probable that many of those that are thus waiting, know not what they are waiting for: If they wait to see a work of GOD without difficulties and stumbling-blocks, that will be like the fool waiting at the river side to have all the water run by. A work of GOD without stumbling-blocks is never to be expected: " It must needs 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 it is with the Word of GOD; they are full of those things that seem strange, and inconsistent, and difficult to the 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 snare to many. The Prophet HOSEA, in the last chapter of his prophecy, speaking of a glorious revival of religion in GOD'S Church, when GOD" would be as the dew unto Israel, and he should grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon," 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. Particularly, we probably shall see more instances of apostasy 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 persons' dispositions and spiritual' sense. Those that are now wait-iag- to see the issue of this work, think they shall be better able to determine by and by; but they are probably, many of them 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 their unbelief.

46. It is to be wondered at, that those who have doubted of the work that 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, and narrowly observing them, and diligently inquiring into them; not contenting themselves only 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 reports of others, have ventured to speak slightly of these things That caution of an unbelieving Jew, might teach them more prudence: " 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." (Acts 5: 38, 39.)

47. Third and last place, to apply myself to those that are the friends of this work, who have been partakers of it, or are zealous to promote it. Let me earnestly exhort such' to give diligent heed to themselves, to avoid all errors and misconduct, and whatsoever may darken and obscure the work, and give occasion to those that 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 that strict care and watch over himself, that both his preaching and behavior 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 him." (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 behave ourselves innocently and prudently. We must expect that the great enemy of this work will try his utmost with us; and he will especially triumph if he can prevail against any of us: He knows it will do more to further his interest, than if he prevailed against an 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, self-diffidence, and an entire dependence on our LORD, will be our best defense. Let us therefore maintain the strictest watch against spiritual pride, or a being lifted up with extraordinary experiences and comforts. We had need after such favors, in a special manner, to keep a strict and jealous eye upon our own hearts, lest there should arise high thoughts of ourselves, as being now peculiar favorites 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. GOD saw that the Apostle PAUL himself 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 first sin that ever entered into the universe, and it 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 lust whatsoever. It is ready to mix with every thing; and nothing is so hateful to GOD, and contrary to the spirit of the Gospel: And there is no one sin that does so much let in the Devil into the hearts of men, and expose them to his delusions. I have seen it in many instances. The Devil has come in at this door, presently after some extraordinary communion with GOD, and has woefully deluded and led them astray till GOD has mercifully opened their eyes: And they themselves have afterwards been sensible, that it was pride that betrayed them.

48. Some of the true friends of the work of GOD'S SPIRIT have erred in giving too much heed to impulses and strong impressions of their minds. These impressions, if they are truly from the SPIRIT of GOD, are of a quite different nature from the gracious influences of the SPIRIT of GOD on the heart. They are of the nature of the extraordinary gifts of the SPIRIT, which the Apostle distinguishes from the grace of the SPIRIT. (1 Cor. 13:)

But his ordinary gracious influences are by far the most excellent and glorious, as the Apostle largely shows in the 1 Cor., beginning with the 31st verse of the 12th Chapter, where, 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," that is, 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 that which is in the grace of the SPIRIT, which summarily consists in charity, or Divine love. 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 does not consist in the extraordinary gifts of the SPIRIT: This, and not those, is that influence of the SPIRIT of GOD, which GOD bestows only on his dear children: He has sometimes thrown out the other to dogs and swine, as he did to BALAAM, SAUL, and JUDAS. Many wicked men at the day of 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 working miracles, but their eminent holiness. The grace that was in their hearts, was a thousand times more their dignity and honor, than their miraculous gifts. 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, "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." (Luke 11: 27, 28.)

49. The ordinary sanctifying influences of the SPIRIT of GOD, are the end of all extraordinary gifts, as the Apostle shows. (Eph. 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 state of the Church on earth most like the state of the Church in heaven, where prophecy and tongues, and other miraculous gifts cease, and are vanished away, and GOD communicates his SPIRIT only in that more excellent way that the Apostle speaks of, namely, 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 the nearest of any to its perfect state in heaven, so perhaps it will be like it in this, that all extraordinary gifts shall have ceased and vanished away; and all those stars and moons, with the reflected light they gave in the night, or a more dark season, shall be swallowed up in the sun of Divine love. The Apostle speaks of those 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 above its childish state, and should entirely vanish, when the Church should come to the state of manhood." 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." (1 Cor. 13: 11.)

For my part, I had rather enjoy the sweet influences of the SPIRIT, showing CHRIST'S infinite grace, and dying love, drawing from the holy exercises of faith, and humble joy in GOD, one quarter of an hour, than to have prophetic visions and revelations for a whole year. It appears to me much more probable that GOD should give such revelations to his saints in the dark times of Popery, than now in the approach of the most glorious and perfect state of his Church on earth. It does not appear, 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 intreat 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 presently after, yea, in the midst of 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: For I have known such impressions fail, and prove vain by the event, in some instances attended with all these circumstances.

50. Neither let us despise human learning. They that say human learning is of little or no use in the work of the Ministry, do not consider what they say; if they did, they would not say it. By human learning I mean, and suppose others mean, the improvement of the common knowledge which men have, 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 that a grown man has, more than a little child, is of no use; and so that 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 any understanding knowing man of thirty years of age. If adult persons have greater ability and advantage to do service, because they have more human 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, namely, study; and that this is of great use in order to a preparation for a public instructing of others. And though, undoubtedly, an having the heart full of the powerful influences of the SPIRIT of GOD, may at sometimes 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 that method which tends greatly to help both the understanding and memory, may not be wholly neglected.

I beg of those that have a true zeal for promoting this work of GOD, that GOD has begun in the land, 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, yet will be of the same mind when they have had more experience.

51. One other thing that I would intreat the friends of this 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 on the persecution of opposers. If their persecution were ten times so great as it is, methinks it would not be best to say so much about it. It becomes Christians to be like lambs, not to be apt to complain and cry when they are hurt; to be dumb and not 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 fire 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," 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." (2 Tim. 2: 25, 26.)

Religious Reflections, By John Edwards, Part I-II

TO THE READER,

1. THE design of Mr. EDWARDS, in the Treatise from which the following Extract is made, seems to have been (chiefly, if not altogether) to serve his hypothesis. In three preceding tracts, he had given an account of a glorious work in New-England; of abundance of sinners of every sort and degree, who were in a short time converted to GOD. But in a few years, a considerable part of these "turned back as a dog to the vomit." What was the plain inference to be drawn from this? Why, that a true believer may "make shipwreck of the Faith." How then could he evade the force of this Truly by eating his own words, and proving, (as well as the nature of the thing would bear,) that they were no believers at all.

2. In order to this, he heaps together so many curious, subtle, metaphysical distinctions, as are sufficient to puzzle the brain, and confound the intellects, of all the plain men and women in the universe; and to make them doubt of, if not wholly deny, all the work which GOD had wrought in their souls.

3. Out of this dangerous heap, wherein much wholesome food is mixed with much deadly poison, I have selected many remarks and admonitions, which may be of great use to the children of GOD. May GOD write them in the hearts of all that desire to walk as CHRIST also walked!

RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS.

PART 1:

Concerning the Nature of the Affections, and their Importance in Religion.

Whom having not seen ye love: In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."1
PETER 1: 8.

IN these words, the Apostle represents the state of mind of the Christians to whom he wrote, under the persecutions they then suffered. These persecutions are what he has respect to in the two preceding verses, when he speaks of "the trial of their faith," and of "their being in heaviness through manifold temptations."

Such trials are of three-fold benefit to true religion.

1. The truth of it is manifested by them. They, above all things, have a tendency to distinguish between true and false religion.

2. They serve to discover its beauty and amiableness. True virtue never appears so lovely, as when it is most oppressed: And the excellency of Christianity is never exhibited with such advantage, as when under the greatest trials.

3. They purify it from evil mixtures. They increase its beauty, by freeing it from those things that obscured its glory.

In the text, the Apostle observes how religion operated, in those he wrote to, under their persecutions, whereby these benefits of persecution appeared. And there are two kinds of exercise in them, he takes notice of, wherein the above-mentioned benefits appeared.

1. Love to CHRIST; "whom having not seen ye love." The world wondered what a principle it was, that influenced them to-, expose themselves to so great sufferings. There was nothing visible that could induce them thus to suffer, and could carry them through such trials. But though there was nothing that the world saw, or that they themselves saw with their bodily eyes, that thus supported them, yet they had a supernatural principle of love to something unseen; they loved JESUS CHRIST, whom they saw spiritually.

2. Joy in CHRIST. Though their outward sufferings were grievous, their inward joys were greater.

There are two things which the Apostle takes notice of concerning this joy. 1. The manner in which it rises, the way in which CHRIST, though unseen, is the foundation of it, name, by faith; "in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice." 2. The nature of it, "unspeakable and full of glory." "Unspeakable," in its kind, being supernatural and Divine, and so ineffably excellent; the sublimity and excellent sweetness of which, there were no words to set forth. "In its degree; it pleasing GOD to give them this holy joy in a large measure, in their state of persecution. And then it was "full of glory: "although it was unspeakable, something might be said of it, that it was "full of glory;" or, as it is in the original. "glorified joy." It was a prelibation of the joy of heaven, that filled them with the light of GOD'S glory.

The doctrine I would raise from these words is this, namely, True Religion, in great part, consists in Holy Affections. We see, the Apostle, in observing those exercises of religion in the Christians he wrote to, which discovered it to be true and excellent, singles out the affections of love and joy.

Here I would,

I. Show what is intended by the affections.

II. Observe some things which make it evident, that a great part of true religion lies in them.

I. It may be inquired what are the affections - I answer, they are no other than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the will.

GOD has endued the soul with two faculties: One is, that by which it discerns, views, and judges of things; which is called the understanding. The other is, that by which the soul is some way inclined with respect to the things it views; either is inclined to them, or is disinclined from them. This faculty is variously named: Sometimes it is called the inclination; sometimes the will. The mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the heart.

The exercises of this faculty are of two sorts; either those by which the soul is carried out towards things in approving them, being pleased with and inclined to them; or those in which it opposes them, in disapproving them, and in being displeased with and averse from, them.

As the exercises of the will are various in their kinds, so they are in their degrees. There are some exercises, wherein the soul is carried but a little beyond a state of perfect indifference. There are others wherein the approbation or dislike are stronger; wherein we may rise higher and higher, till the soul comes to act so vigorously, that (through the laws of the union which the Creator had fixed between soul and body the motion of the blood and animal spirits begins to be sensibly altered. And they are these more vigorous and sensible exercises of this faculty, that are called the affections.

The will and the affections are not two faculties; the latter not being essentially distinct from the former. In every act of the will the soul either likes or dislikes; that liking, if it be in any high degree, is the same with love; and that disliking, if in any great degree the very same with hatred. In every act of the will for or towards something not present, the soul is in some degree inclined to that thing; and that inclination is the same with desire.

Such seems to be our nature, that there never is any vigorous exercise of the will, without some effect upon the body, in some alteration of the motion of its fluids, especially of the animal spirits. And on the other band, the constitution of the body, and the motion of its fluids, may promote the exercise of the affections; but yet it is not the body, but the mind only, that is the proper seat of them.

The affections and passions are frequently spoken of as the same; and yet there is some difference: Affection is a word, that, in its ordinary signification, is more extensive than passion, being used for all vigorous actings of the will; but passion for those that are more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and by which the mind is less in its own command.

The Second Thing proposed, was to show that a great part of true religion lies in the affections. And here, 1. What has been said of the nature of the affections, might put the matter out of doubt: For who can deny that true religion consists in a great measure, in vigorous actings of the will, or the fervent exercises of the heart

That religion which GOD requires, does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wishes: He insists that we be in good earnest, "fervent in spirit," and that our hearts be vigorously engaged. If our wills and inclinations are not strongly exercised, we are nothing. The things of religion are so great, that there can be no suitableness in the exercises of the heart, unless they be lively and powerful. True religion is evermore a powerful thing; and the power of it appears, in the First place, in the inward exercises of it in the heart. Hence it is called "the power of godliness," in distinction from the external appearances of it, that are "the form." (2 Tim. 3: 5.) The business of religion is from time to time compared to those exercises, wherein men are wont to have their hearts and strength greatly engaged, such as running, wrestling, fighting, and warring. And though true grace has various degrees; yet, every one that has the power of godliness, has his heart so exercised towards Divine things, that these holy exercises prevail in him above all natural affections: For every true disciple of CHRIST, "loves him above father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, houses and lands, yea, his own life."

2. The Author of human nature has not only given affections to men, but has made them the spring of their actions. As the affections not only belong to the human nature, but are a great part of it; so holy affections do not only belong to true religion, but are a very great part of it. And as true religion is of a practical nature, and the affections are the spring of men's actions, it must consist very much in them. The affections we see are the springs that set men a going in all the affairs of life. Take away these, and there would be no activity among mankind, or any earnest pursuit whatsoever. And as in worldly things, worldly affections are the spring of men's actions; so in religious matters, the spring of their actions are religious affections. He that has knowledge only, without affection, never is engaged in the business of religion.

3. Nothing is more manifest in fact, than that the things of religion take hold of men's souls, no further than they affect them. There are multitudes that often hear of the Divine perfections, of the unspeakable love of GOD and CHRIST, of heaven and hell, and yet remain as they were before, with no sensible alteration, either in heart or practice, because they are not affected with what they hear. Yea, there never was any considerable change wrought in the mind or conversation of any one that had not his affections moved. Never was there a natural man engaged earnestly to seek salvation, while the heart remained unaffected.

4. The holy Scriptures place religion very much in the affections: Such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion, and zeal: They place so much in godly fear, that it is often spoken of, as the character of those that are truly religious, that "they tremble at God's word," "fear before him," "are afraid of his judgments;" and a compellation commonly given them in Scripture, is, "fearers of GOD," "they that fear the LORD." And true godliness in general is very often called "the fear of GOD." So hope in GOD and his promises, is often spoken of, as a considerable part of religion. It is mentioned as one of the three great things of which

religion consists. (1 Cor. 13: 13.) It is so great a part, that the Apostle says, we are saved by hope. (Rom. viii. 24.) Hope in the LORD is also frequently mentioned as the character of good men; and this and religious fear are, once and again, joined together, as jointly descriptive of the godly man. In like manner, much is placed in love, love to GOD, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and to the people of GOD, and to mankind. The contrary affection of hatred also, as having sin for its object, is spoken of as no inconsiderable part of religion. It is spoken of as that by which true religion may be distinguished: "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil." (Prov. viii. 13.) And accordingly, the saints are called upon to give evidence of their sincerity by this: "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil." (Psalm xcvi. 10.) So holy desire exercised in hungerings and thirstings after GOD and holiness, is mentioned as one of those great things which denotes a man truly blessed; "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5: 6.) So holy joy, as an important part of religion, is often pressed, with great earnestness: And it is mentioned among the principal fruits of the SPIRIT. (Gal. 5: 22.)

Religious sorrow, mourning, and brokenness of heart, are also frequently spoken of as a great part of religion. Again, the holy Scriptures frequently speak of "compassion," "mercy," as an essential thing, insomuch that a merciful man, and a good man, are equivalent terms in the Bible. Zeal is also spoken of as an essential part of religion. It is spoken of as a great thing CHRIST had in view, in giving himself for our redemption: "Who gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Tit. 2: 11.) And this is spoken of, as the great thing wanting in the lukewarm Laodiceans. (Sev. 3: 15,16,19.)

They then who would deny that much of true religion lies in the affections, must throw away the Bible, and get some other rule by which to judge of the nature of religion.

5. The Scriptures represent religion, as summarily comprehended in love, the chief of the affections. So our blessed SAVIOR in answer to the lawyer, who asked him, which was the greatest commandment of the law, "JESUS said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first, and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets: (Mat. 22: 37, 38, 39, 40:) Which last words signify that these two commandments comprehend all the duty prescribed, and the religion taught in the law and the Prophets. The Apostle PAUL from time to time makes the same representation. He speaks of love as the greatest thing in religion, without which, the greatest knowledge and gifts are vain and worthless. (1 Cor. 13:)

Now though it be true, that the love thus spoken of includes the whole of a right temper, towards GOD and man; yet it may be considered that this, when in vigorous exercise, is no other than affectionate love. And surely it is such love which CHRIST speaks of as the sum of all religion. Indeed it cannot be supposed, when this is spoken of as the sum of all religion, that hereby is meant the act, exclusive of the habit, or that the exercise of the understanding is excluded. But it is evident from Scripture, that the essence of all true religion lies in "holy love;" and that in this Divine affection, and an habitual disposition to it, and those things which are the fruits of it, consists the whole of religion.

From hence it clearly appears, that a great part of religion consists in the affections; for love is the first and chief of them, and the fountain of all the rest. From love arises hatred of those things which are contrary to what we love; and from the various exercises of love and hatred, according to the circumstances of their objects, arise all other affections.

6. He whom GOD sent into the world to be the light of the world, and the perfect example of true religion, even the LORD JESUS CHRIST, was a person of a remarkably tender and affectionate heart; and his virtue was expressed very much in the exercise of holy affections. He was the greatest instance of ardency and strength of love, to both GOD and man, that ever was. These affections got the victory in that mighty conflict, when "he prayed more earnestly, and offered strong cries and tears;" and wrestled in tears and in blood. Such was the power of the exercises of his holy love, that they were stronger than death, and in that great struggle, overcame the natural affections of fear and grief, when he was sore amazed, and his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. And he also appeared to be full of affection in the whole course of his life. We read of his great zeal, of his grief for the sins of men, and of his pity and compassion. How ineffably affectionate was that last dying conversation, which JESUS had with his eleven disciples the evening before he was crucified! Of all the discourses ever uttered by man, this was the most affectionate and affecting.

In heaven, true religion is in its utmost purity and perfection: But according to the Scripture representation, the religion of heaven consists chiefly in holy love and joy, and the expression of these in fervent and exalted praises.

It is an evidence that true religion lies much in the affections, that the Scriptures place the sin of the heart much in "hardness of heart." It was hardness of heart that excited grief and displeasure in CHRIST towards the Jews. (Matth. 23: 5.) The reason given why the house of Israel would not obey GOD, was that they were "hard hearted." (Jerem. 3: 7.) And that great work of God, in conversion, is expressed once and again, by GOD'S "taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh."

Now by a "hard heart," is plainly meant, a heart not easy to be moved with virtuous affections; like a stone, it is insensible and hard to be impressed. Hence, the hard heart is called "stony heart," and is opposed to "heart of flesh," which is sensibly touched and moved. We read of "hard heart," and "tender heart: " And doubtless we are to understand these, as contrary to each other. But what is a tender heart, but one that is easily impressed with what ought to affect it without holy affections, there is no true religion; and no light in the understanding is good which does not produce holy affection in the heart; no habit, principle, or external fruit is good, unless it proceeds from such exercises.

We may hence learn how great their error is, who are for discarding all religious affections. Because some who seemingly had great religious affections, have not manifested a right temper of mind, and have run into many errors, religious affections, in general, are grown out of credit, as though religion did not at all consist in them. Thus we run from one extreme to another. Some time ago, we were in the other extreme; there was a prevalent disposition to look upon all high religious affections, as eminent exercises of high grace. If persons did but appear to be much moved, so as to be full of religious talk, without further examination, we concluded them to be full of the SPIRIT of GOD. But of late, instead of admiring, we are in danger of rejecting all religious affections, without distinction. Indeed, to true religion, there must be something besides affections; yet it consists so much in the affections, that there can be no true religion without them. He who has no religious affection, is in a state of spiritual death, and is wholly destitute of the saving influences of the SPIRIT of GOD.

The manner of slighting all religious affections, is the way exceedingly to harden the hearts of men, and to encourage them in their stupidity and senselessness. Prejudice against holy affections has a tendency to destroy the life and power of religion. And for persons to despise and cry them all down, is the way to shut all religion out of their own hearts. They who condemn high affections in others, are not like to have them in themselves. And they who have but little religious affection, have certainly but little religion; and they who condemn others for their religious affections, and have none themselves, have no religion at all.

There are false affections, and there are true. A man's having much affection does not prove that he has religion; but his having no affection proves that he has not. The right way is not to reject all affections, nor to approve all; but to distinguish between them, approving some, and rejecting others.

2. If true religion lies much in the affections, such means are to be desired as have a tendency to move the affections. Such books, and such a way of preaching the word, administering the ordinances, worshipping GOD in prayer, and singing praises, all have a tendency to affect the heart, are much to be desired.

Indeed, such means may be used as have a tendency to stir up the passions of ignorant persons, and yet no tendency to benefit their souls: For they may have a tendency to excite affections, but little or none to excite gracious affections. But undoubtedly, if the things of religion are exhibited truly, so as to convey just apprehensions of them, the more they have a tendency to move the affections the better.

3. If true religion lies much in the affections, what cause have we to be ashamed, that we are no more affected with the great things of religion! GOD has given to us affections for the same purpose which he has given all our faculties, namely, that they might be subservient to religion. And yet how common is it among mankind, that their affections are much more exercised in other matters than in the things belonging to their everlasting peace! How insensible are most men about another world! How dull are their affections! How cold their love, languid their desires, and small their gratitude! How can they sit and hear of the infinite height and depth, length and breadth of the love of GOD in CHRIST JESUS, and yet be cold, heavy, and insensible! Where are the exercises of our affections proper, if not here? What is it that does not require them? Can any thing be set in our view greater and more important?

If we ought ever to exercise our affections at all; they ought to be exercised about those objects which are most worthy of them. But is there any thing which men can find in heaven or earth, so worthy to be the objects of their admiration and love, their earnest and longing desires, their hope and their rejoicing, and their fervent zeal, as those things that are held forth to us in the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST GOD has so disposed things, in his glorious dispensations, revealed to us in the Gospel, as though every thing was contrived to have the

greatest possible tendency to reach our hearts in the most tender part, and move our affections most sensibly. How great cause, therefore, have we to be humbled to the dust, that we are no more affected!

PART 2:

Showing- what are no certain Signs that Religious Affections are truly gracious, or that they are not.

IF any one, on reading what has been said, is ready to acquit himself, and say, "I am not one of those who have no religious affections, I am often greatly moved with the consideration of the great things of religion;" let him not conclude from this, that he has religious affections. We have already observed, that as we ought not to condemn all affections, so we ought not to approve of all, as though every one that was religiously affected, had the saving influence of the SPIRIT of GOD; but to distinguish among religious affections between one sort and another. Now in order to this, I would, "Observe some things which are no signs one way or other, either that affections are such as religion consists in, or that they are otherwise.

I would observe some things, wherein those affections which are spiritual, differ from those which are not.

First, I would take notice of some things which are no signs that affections are gracious, or that they are not. 1: It is no sign, either one way or other, that religious affections are raised very high.

Some are ready to condemn all high affections. If persons appear to have their religious affections raised to an extraordinary pitch, they are prejudiced against them, and determine that they are delusions, without any farther inquiry. But if true religion lies much in religious affections, then there will be great religious affections where there is a great deal of true religion.

Love is an affection, but will any CHRISTIAN, men ought not to love GOD in a high degree And will any say, that we ought not to have a great hatred of sin, and a deep sorrow for it Or that we should not have very strong desires after holiness Who is there that will go and bless GOD, that he is affected enough with what he has read and heard of the wonderful love of GOD to rebels in giving his only begotten SON to die for them, and of the dying love of CHRIST; and will pray that he may not be affected with them in any higher degree, because high affections are enthusiastical and ruinous to religion

Our text speaks of high affections, when it speaks of "rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Here the most superlative expressions are used, that language will afford. And the Scriptures often require -us to exercise very high affections; thus in the first and great commandment of the law: There is an accumulation of expressions, as though words were wanting to express the degree, in which we ought to love GOD; "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." We find the most eminent saints in Scripture often professing high affections. Thus the Psalmist again and again. The Apostle PAUL the same. He expresses the exercise of pity and concern for others, even to "anguish of heart;" and speaks of the exultation and triumphs of his soul. It is often foretold of the Church in her happy seasons on earth, that she shall exceedingly rejoice. The angels in heaven are exceedingly affected with what they behold and contemplate. They are all as a pure flame of fire, in their love, and in the greatness of their joy and gratitude: Their praises are represented, "as the voice of many waters, and the voice of a great thunder."

From these things it appears that religious affections being very high, is no evidence that they have not the nature of true religion. Therefore they greatly err who condemn persons as enthusiasts, merely because their affections are very high.

On the other hand, it is no evidence that religious affections are of a spiritual nature, because they are great. Great multitudes, who were affected with the miracle of raising LAZARUS from the dead, were elevated to a high degree, when JESUS entered into Jerusalem, and cried, with loud voices, "Hosanna to the Son of DAVID! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest!" But how quickly was this at an end When this JESUS stands bound, it is not then "Hosannah," but "Crucify, crucify."

II. It is no sign that affections have the nature of true religion, or that they have not, when they have great effects on the body.

Such are the laws of union of soul and body, that the mind can have no vigorous exercise, without some effect upon the body. Yea, it is questionable, whether an embodied soul ever so much as thinks one thought, or has any exercise at all, but there is some corresponding motion in some part of the body. Universal experience shows, that the exercise of the affections has in a special manner an effect on the body. And it is not to be wondered at, that very great exercises of the affections, should have great effects on the body; and that as there are very great affections, both common and spiritual, great effects on the body should arise from both these kinds of affections. However, great effects on the body are no sure evidences that affections are spiritual: For we see that such effects often arise from great affections about temporal things; and if great affections about secular things may have these effects, I know not why we should determine that high affections about religious things cannot have the like effect.

Nor on the other hand, do I know of any reason to determine, that gracious and holy affections, when raised as high as any natural affections, cannot have a great effect on the body. I know of no reason, why being affected with a view of GOD'S glory, should not cause the body to faint, as well as being affected with a view of SOLOMON'S glory. There is a great power in spiritual affections: We read of the power which worketh in Christians, and of the effectual working of GOD'S power in them. The text we are upon speaks of "joy unspeakable and full of glory." And who that considers what man's nature is, and what the nature of the affections is, can reasonably doubt but that such unutterable joys may be too mighty for weak dust and ashes

The Psalmist, speaking of the vehement religious affections he had, speaks of an effect on his flesh or body, besides what was on his soul, expressly distinguishing one from the other, "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." (Psalm lxxiii. 1.)

The Prophet HABAKKUK speaks of his body's being overborne, by a sense of the majesty of GOD: "When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself." (Hab. iii, 16.)

That such ideas of GOD'S glory, as are sometimes given in this world, have a tendency to overbear the body, is evident, because the Scripture gives us an account, that this has actually been the effect of those external manifestations, GOD has made to some for that end, to give them an idea of his majesty and glory. Such instances we have in the Prophet DANIEL and the Apostle JOHN. DANIEL, giving an account of an external representation of the glory of CHRIST, says, "And there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength." (Dan. 10: 8.) And the Apostle JOHN, giving an account of a like manifestation made to him, says, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." (Rev. 1: 17.) It is in vain to say here, these were only external manifestations of the glory of CHRIST; for though it be true, yet the end of them was to give an idea of the thing represented, the Divine glory and majesty of CHRIST; and thus undoubtedly they improved them, and were affected by them. According to the end, for which GOD intended these outward signs, they received by them a great and lively apprehension of the real glory and majesty of GOD'S nature, which they were signs of; and thus were greatly affected, their souls being swallowed up, and then-bodies overborne. And I think they are very bold and daring, who will say, GOD cannot, or will not give the like clear and affecting apprehensions of the same glory and "majesty of his nature, to any of his saints, without the intervention of such external shadows of it.

Before I leave this head, I would further observe, that the Scripture often makes use of bodily effects, to express the strength of holy and spiritual affections; such as "Trembling," (Psalm cxix. 120,) "Groaning;" (Rom. viiiL 26,) "Being sick," (Cant. 2: 5,) "Crying out," (Psalm lxxiv. 2,) "Panting," (Psalm xxxvii. 10,) and "Fainting." (Psalm lxxiv. 2.) Now if it be supposed that these are only figurative expressions, to represent the degree of affections; yet I hope all will allow, that they are suitable figures. Which how could they be, if those spiritual affections they are designed to represent, have no tendency to any such thing I cannot think GOD would commonly make use of things which are very alien from spiritual affections, and are shrewd marks of the hand of SATAN, as figures, to represent the high degree of holy and heavenly affections.

III. It is no sign that affections are truly gracious, or that they are not, that they cause those who have them, to be fluent, fervent, and abundant in talking of the things of religion.

There are many, who if they see this in others, are greatly prejudiced against them: Their being so full of talk, is, with them, a sufficient ground to condemn them as Pharisees or hypocrites. On the other hand, there are many, who, if they see this effect in any, are forward to determine that they are under the influences of GOD'S SPIRIT. More especially are they persuaded of this, if they are not only abundant, but very affectionate and earnest in their talk.

But this it, the fruit of little judgment, as events abundantly show. That persons are disposed to be abundant in talking of religion, may be from a good cause, and it may be from a bad one. It may be because their hearts are full of holy affections; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and it may be because they are full of that affection that is not holy. It is the nature of affections, of whatever kind, if they are strong, to dispose persons to be much in speaking of that which they are affected with, and to speak earnestly. And therefore persons talking abundantly and fervently about religious things, can be an evidence of no more than this, that they are much affected with them, which may be, and yet there be no great grace.

A person may be full of talk of his own experience, falling upon it, in all companies; and when it is so, it is rather a dark sign than a good one; as a tree that is overfull of leaves seldom bears much fruit.

IV. It is no sign that affections are gracious, or that they are otherwise, that persons did not make them themselves, or excite them of their own contrivance, and by their own strength.

There are many that condemn all affections which are excited in a way that the subjects of them can give no account of, as not seeming to be the natural consequence of the principles of human nature, in such circumstances; but to be from the influence of some extrinsic power upon their minds. How greatly has the doctrine of sensibly perceiving the immediate power of the SPIRIT of GOD, been ridiculed! Many say, the manner of the SPIRIT of GOD is to co-operate in a silent, secret, and undiscernible way, with the use of means and our own endeavors; so that there is no distinguishing between the influences of the SPIRIT of GOD, and the natural operations of our own minds.

And it is true, that for any to expect the influences of the SPIRIT, without a diligent improvement of the appointed means, is presumption: And to expect that he will operate upon their minds, without means* subservient to the effect, is enthusiastical. It is also undoubtedly true, that the SPIRIT of GOD is very various in the manner and circumstances of his operations, and that sometimes he operates in a way more secret, and gradual, than at others.

But if there be indeed a power, different from the power of all means and instruments, and above the power of nature, which is requisite in order to the production of saving grace in the heart; then it is not unreasonable to suppose, that this should frequently be produced after such a manner, as to make it manifest, that it is so. If grace be indeed owing to an intrinsic agent, why is it unreasonable to suppose it should seem to be so to them who are the subjects of it? Is it a strange thing, that it should seem to be as it is? When grace is the workmanship of the Almighty, is it strange that it should seem to them who are subjects of it, agreeable to truth? And if persons tell of effects in their own minds, that seem to them not to be from the natural operation of their minds, but from the supernatural power of some other agent, should it at once be looked upon as a sure evidence of delusion, because things, seem to them to be as they are? Yet this is the objection which is made; It is looked upon as a clear evidence that the affections many persons have, are not from such a cause, because they seem to them to be from that cause: They declare that what they are conscious of, seems to them to be not from themselves, but from the mighty power of GOD; and others from hence determine what they experience is not from GOD, but from themselves, or from the Devil.

If grace in the soul is so the effect of GOD'S power, that it is fitly compared to those effects, which are farthest from being owing to any strength in the subject, such as a, generation, or a being begotten, and a resurrection, or a being raised from the dead, and a creation, or a being brought out of nothing into being; then why should the Almighty, in so great a work of his power, so carefully hide his power, that the subjects of it should be able to discern nothing of it? Or what reason have any to determine that he does so? It is frequently GOD'S manner to make his hand visible, that he alone might be exalted, and that the excellency of the power might be of GOD and not of man. So it was among other works, in that great one, his converting the Heathen world, after all the endeavors of philosophers had proved in vain, for many ages, and it was become abundantly evident that the world was utterly helpless, by any thing but the mighty power of GOD. And so it was in most of the conversions of particular persons we have an account of in the New Testament: They were not wrought on in a silent, secret, gradual, and insensible manner; but with those manifest evidences of a supernatural power, wonderfully and suddenly causing a great change, which in these days are looked upon as certain signs of delusion.

The Apostle, in Eph. 1: 18, 19, speaks of GOD'S enlightening the minds of Christians, and so bringing them to believe in CHRIST, that they might know the exceeding greatness of his power to them who believe. He can mean, nothing else than that they might know by experience. But if Christians know this power by experience, then they feel it, and discern it, as sensibly distinguishable from the natural operations of their own minds; which is not agreeable to the notion of GOD'S operating always so secretly and undiscernibly, that it cannot be known to be the influence of any extrinsic power, any otherwise than as they may argue it from Scripture.

So that it is unreasonable and unscriptural, to determine that affections are not from GOD'S SPIRIT, because they are not sensibly from the persons themselves, that are the subjects of them.

On the other hand, it is no evidence that affections are gracious, that they are not purposely produced by those who are the subjects of them, or that they arise in their minds in a manner they cannot account for.

There are some who make this an argument in their own favor; they say, I am sure I did not make it myself; it was no contrivance of mine; it came when I thought nothing of it; if I might have the world for it, I cannot make it again when I please.' And hence they determine that what they have experienced, must be from the influence of the SPIRIT of GOD; but this does not follow. There are other spirits who have influence on the minds of men, besides the HOLY GHOST. There are many false spirits, who with great subtlety and power, mimic the operations of the SPIRIT of GOD. And there are many of SATAN'S operations, which are distinguishable from the voluntary exercises of men's own minds. They are so in those dreadful and horrid suggestions, with which he follows many persons. And the power of SATAN may be as immediate in false comforts and joys; and often is so in fact.

And where neither a good nor evil spirit has any immediate hand, persons, of a weak and vapory habit of body may have strong apprehensions and strong affections unaccountably arising, which are not voluntarily produced by themselves.

V. It is no sign that religious affections are truly spiritual, or they are not, that they come with texts of Scripture, remarkably brought to the mind.

It is no sign that affections are not gracious, that they are occasioned by Scriptures so coming to the mind.

On the other hand, neither is it any sign that affections are gracious, that they arise on occasion of Scriptures brought suddenly and wonderfully to the mind. Some seem to look upon this as a good evidence; and will say, 'There were such and such sweet promises brought to my mind; they came suddenly as if they were spoken to me: I had no hand in it: I was not thinking of it: I did not know at first that it was Scripture.' And it may be they will add, 'One Scripture came flowing in after another, and so texts all over the Bible, the most sweet and pleasant, the most apt and suitable which could be devised.' Thus they think they have undoubted evidence that their state is good. But where is there any such rule to be found in the Bible

What evidence is there that the Devil cannot bring texts to the mind, and misapply them, to deceive persons? If he has power to bring any words at all to persons' minds, he may have power to bring words contained in the Bible. If he was permitted to put CHRIST himself in mind of texts of Scripture to tempt him, what reason have we to determine that he may not do the same to men? And if he may abuse one text of scripture, so he may another. And if he can bring one comfortable text to the mind, so he may a thousand; and may choose out such as tend most to serve his purpose, and may heap up Scripture promises, tending according to the perverse application he makes of them, wonderfully to remove the rising doubts, and to confirm the false joy and confidence of a poor deluded sinner.

VI. It is no evidence that religious affection is saving, or that they are otherwise, that there is an appearance of love in them. No Christians pretend, that this is an argument against the saving nature of religious affections. But on the other hand, there are some who suppose, it is a good evidence, that affections are from the saving influences of the Holy GHOST. Their argument is, that SATAN cannot love, this affection being directly contrary to his nature. And it is true, nothing is more excellent than a spirit of Christian love; it is that by which we are most conformed to heaven, and most contrary to hell and the Devil. But yet it is ill arguing from hence, that there are no counterfeits of it. And the subtlety of SATAN, and men's deceitful hearts, are wont chiefly to be exercised in counterfeiting those virtues and graces that are in highest repute. And there are none, it may be, that have more counterfeits than love and humility.

VII. Persons having religious affections of many kinds, accompanying one another, is not sufficient to determine whether they are real believers or no.

Though false religion is wont to be maimed and monstrous, and not to have that entireness and symmetry of parts, which is to be seen in true religion; yet there may be a great variety of false affections together, that may resemble gracious ones.

There are slight touches of all kinds of gracious affections, as of love to GOD, and love to the brethren, so of godly sorrow for sin, as in the children of ISRAEL in the wilderness; so of spiritual joy, as in the stony ground hearers. So unbelievers may have earnest religious desires, like BALAAM'S, which he expresses under an extraordinary view that he had of the estate of GOD'S people, as distinguished from all the rest of the world. (Numb, 23: 9, 10.)

And as men, while in a state of nature, are capable of a resemblance of all kinds of religious affections, so nothing hinders but that they may have many of them together.

VIII. Nothing can certainly be determined concerning the nature of the affections by this, that comforts and joys follow awakenings and convictions of conscience.

Many persons seem to be prejudiced against affections and experiences, that come in such a method, as has been much insisted on by many divines; first such awakenings, fears and awful apprehensions, followed with such humblings, in a sense of total sinfulness and helplessness, and then such light and comfort: They look upon all such schemes, laying down such methods and steps, to be of men's devising: And particularly if high affections of joy follow great distress and terror, it is made by many an argument against those affections. But such prejudices and objections are without reason, or Scripture. Surely it cannot be unreasonable to suppose, that before GOD delivers persons from a state of sin, and exposedness to eternal destruction, he should give them some sense of the evil he delivers them from; and that they should be first sensible of their absolute necessity, and afterwards of CHRIST'S sufficiency, and GOD'S mercy through Him.

And that it is GOD'S manner of dealing with men, to -lead them into a wilderness, before he speaks comfortably to them, and so to order it, that they be brought into distress, and made to see their own helplessness, and absolute dependence on his grace, before he works any great deliverance for them, is abundantly manifest by the Scripture. Backsliding Israel, before GOD heals them, are brought to acknowledge, "æœ that they have sinned, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD;" and to see "æœ that they lie down in their shame, and that confusion covers them;" and that in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains," and that GOD only can save them. (Jer. 3: 23, 24, 25.)

But there are many things in Scripture which directly show that this is GOD'S ordinary manner in working salvation for the souls of men, and in the manifestations he makes of himself and of his mercy in CHRIST in the ordinary works of his grace on the hearts of sinners. An old inveterate wound must be searched to the bottom, in order to healing; and the Scripture compares sin, the wound of the soul, to this, and speaks of healing this wound without searching it, as vain and deceitful. (Jer. viii. 11.) When John the Baptist came to prepare the way for CHRIST, and prepare men's hearts for his reception, he did it, by showing men their sins, and by bringing the self-righteous Jews off from their own righteousness, telling them that they were "æœ generation of vipers," and showing them their danger of "æœ the wrath to come."

And if it be indeed GOD'S manner, (as the foregoing considerations show,) before he gives men the comfort of a deliverance from their sin and misery, to give them a considerable sense of the greatness and dreadfulfulness of those evils, and their extreme wretchedness by reason of them; surely it is not unreasonable to suppose, that persons, at least often, while under these views, should have great distress of mind; especially if it be considered what these evils are, that they have a view of, which are no other than great and manifold sins, against the infinite majesty of the great Jehovah, and the suffering of the fierceness of his wrath to all eternity. And we have many plain instances in Scripture, of persons that have been actually brought into extreme distress, by such convictions, before they have received saving consolations: As the multitude at Jerusalem, who were "æœ pricked in their heart, and said unto PETER, and the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do" And the Apostle PAUL, who "æœ trembled and was astonished," before he was comforted; and the Jailor,

when he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before PAUL and SILAS, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

From these things it appears unreasonable, to make this an objection against the truth and spiritual nature of the comfortable and joyful affections which any have, that they follow awful apprehensions and distresses. And on the other hand, it is no evidence that comforts and joys are right because they succeed great terrors, and fears of hell. This seems to be what some persons lay great weight upon; esteeming great terrors an evidence of a great work wrought on the heart, well preparing the way for solid comfort; not considering that terror, and a conviction of conscience, are different things: For though convictions of conscience do often cause terror, yet they do not consist in it; and terrors do often arise from other causes. Convictions of conscience, through the influences of GOD'S Spirit, consist in conviction of sinfulness of heart and practice, and of the dreadfulness of sin, as committed against a God of terrible majesty, infinite holiness, and hatred of sin, and strict justice in punishing of it. But there are some persons that have frightful apprehensions of hell, a dreadful pit ready to swallow them up, and flames just ready to lay hold of them, who at the same time seem to have very little enlightening of conscience, really convincing them of their sinfulness of heart and life. Nay, some speak of a great sight they have of their wickedness, who really, when the matter comes to be well examined, are found to have little or no convictions of conscience. They tell of a dreadful hard heart, when they have none of those things in their thoughts, wherein the hardness of men's hearts consists. They tell of a dreadful load and sink of sin within them, when if the matter is carefully enquired into, they have not in view any thing wherein the corruption of nature does, truly consist, nor any thought of any particular thing wherein their hearts are sinfully defective.

And if persons have had great terrors, which really have been from the convincing influences of the SPIRIT, it does not thence follow that their terrors must needs end in true comfort. The unmortified corruption of the heart may quench the SPIRIT of GOD, (after he has been striving,) by leading men to presumptuous, and self-exalting hopes and joys, as well as otherwise.

And as seeming distinctness, as to steps and method, is no certain sign that a person is converted; so the being without it, is no evidence that a person is not converted! For though it might be made evident on Scripture principles, that a sinner cannot heartily receive CHRIST as his Savior, who is not convinced of his sin and misery, and of his own emptiness and helplessness, and his just desert of eternal condemnation; and that therefore such convictions must be someway implied in what is wrought in his soul; yet it is not necessary that all those things which are implied in an act of faith in CHRIST, must be distinctly wrought in the soul, in so many successive works of the SPIRIT that shall be, each one, plain and manifest, in all who are truly converted.

On the contrary, sometimes the change made at first is like a confused chaos, so that we know not what to make of it. The manner of the SPIRIT'S proceeding in them that are born of the SPIRIT, is very often exceeding mysterious; we, as it were, hear the sound of it, the effect of it is discernible, but no man can tell whence it came, or whither it went. It is oftentimes as difficult to know the way of the SPIRIT in the new birth, as in the first birth: "As thou knowest not what is the way of the SPIRIT, or how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: Even so thou knowest not the work of GOD, that worketh all." (Eccl. 11: 5.)

What we have principally to do with, in our inquiries into our own state, or in the directions we give to others, is the nature of the effect that GOD has brought to pass in the soul. As to the steps which the SPIRIT of GOD took to bring that effect to pass, we may leave them to him. We are often in Scripture expressly directed to try ourselves by the nature of the fruits of the SPIRIT; but no where by the SPIRIT'S method of producing them. Many greatly err in their notions of a clear work of conversion, calling that a clear work, where the successive steps of influence, and method of experience is clear: Whereas that indeed is the clearest work, (not where the order of doing is clearest, but) where the spiritual and Divine nature of the work done, and effect wrought, is most clear.

IX. It is no certain sign that religious affections have the nature of true religion, or have not, that they dispose persons to spend much time in religion, and to be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship. This has very unreasonably been looked upon as an argument against the religious affections which some have had, that they spend so much time in reading, praying, singing, hearing sermons, and the like. It is plain from Scripture that the tendency of true grace is to cause persons much to delight in such exercises. Grace had this effect upon the primitive Christians in Jerusalem: "And they continuing daily, with one accord, in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart, praising GOD." (Acts 2: 46, 47.) It made DANIEL and DAVID delight in prayer, and solemnly attend it three times a day. It makes the saints delight in singing praises to GOD: "Praise ye the LORD, for it is good to sing praises unto our GOD, for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." (Ps. cxlvii. 1.) It makes them delight to hear the word of GOD, and leads them to love public worship.

This is the nature of true grace. But yet on the other hand, persons being disposed to abound, and to be zealously engaged in the external exercises of religion, and to spend much time in them, is no sure evidence of grace. So it was with the Pharisees, who made long

prayers, and fasted twice a Week." And EZEKIEL'S hearers delighted in hearing him, and with their mouth showed much love, while they did not the things he said, and their hearts went after their covetousness." (Ezek. xxxiii.)

Experience shows that persons, from false religion, may be inclined to be abundant in the external exercises of religion; yea to give themselves up to them, and devote almost their whole time to them.

X. Nothing can be certainly known of the nature of religious affections by this, that they much dispose persons with their mouths to praise and glorify GOD. This is implied in what has been just now observed; but because many look upon it as a bright evidence of gracious affections, when persons appear greatly disposed to praise GOD, and affectionately to call on others to do it, I thought it deserved a more particular consideration.

No Christian will make it an argument against a person, that he seems to have such a disposition. Nor can it reasonably be looked upon as an evidence, if those things that have been already observed be considered. But it will appear more evidently that this is no certain sign of grace, if we consider what instances the Scripture gives us of it; we often have an account of this in the multitude that were present when CHRIST preached and wrought miracles: They glorified GOD, saying, We never saw it on this fashion;" (Mark 2: 12;) the children of Israel at the Red Sea, sang GOD'S praise, but soon forgot his works. And the Jews, in EZEKIEL'S time, with their mouth showed much love, while their heart went after their covetousness."

XI. It is no sign that affections are right, or that they are wrong, that the persons that have them, are exceeding confident that what they experience is Divine, and that they are in a good estate.

It is an argument with some against persons that they are deluded, if they pretend to be assured of their good estate, and to be carried beyond all doubting of the favor of GOD; supposing that there is no such thing to be expected in the Church of GOD, as a full assurance of hope; unless it be in some very extraordinary circumstances, as in the ease of martyrdom; contrary to the plainest Scripture evidence. It is manifest that it was a common thing for the saints, that we have a particular account of in Scripture to be assured. GOD, in the plainest manner, revealed and testified his special favor to NOAH, ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, MOSES, DAVID, and others. JOB often speaks with the greatest assurance. DAVID, throughout the book of Psalms, almost everywhere speaks in the most positive manner of GOD as his GOD. HEZEKIAH appeals to GOD, as one that knew, he had walked before him in truth and with a perfect heart;" (2 Kings 20: 3;) the Apostle PAUL, through all his epistles, speaks in an assured strain, ever speaking positively of his special relation to CHRIST, and his interest in, and expectation of, the future reward.

The nature of the covenant of grace and GOD'S declared ends in that covenant, plainly show it to be GOD'S design, to make ample provision for having an assured hope of eternal life, while upon earth. The promises are full, often repeated, and various ways exhibited; and there are many witnesses and many seals; and GOD has confirmed his promises with an oath. And his declared design in all this is, that the heirs of the promises might have an undoubted hope, and full assurance of their future glory.

Moreover, all Christians are directed to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, and are told how they may do it. (2 Pet. 1: 5-8.) And it is spoken of as a thing very unbecoming Christians, not to know whether CHRIST be in them or no. (2 Cor. 13: 5.) To add no more, it is manifest, that Christians knowing their interests in the saving benefits of Christianity, is a thing ordinarily attainable, because the Apostles tell us by what means common Christians (and not only Apostles and Martyrs) were wont to know this. See 1 Cor. 2: 12; 1 John 2: 3, 5; 3: 14, 19, 24; 4: 13; and 5: 2, 19. Therefore it must needs be very unreasonable to determine, that persons are hypocrites, because they seem to be out of doubt of their salvation.

On the other hand, it is no sufficient reason to determine that men are saints, because they have an exceeding confidence that their state is good. Nothing can certainly be argued from their confidence, how great and strong so ever it be. If we see a man that commonly speaks in the most bold language in prayer, with whom it is common to use the most confident expressions, such as, "I know certainly that GOD is my Father; I know I shall go to heaven as well as if I was there," and that seems to have done for ever with any examination into his state, as a thing sufficiently known, and to contemn all that so much as intimate, there is some reason to doubt whether all is right; such things are no signs at all that it is indeed so. Such an overbearing and violent sort of confidence as this, has not the countenance of a true Christian assurance: It savors more of the spirit of the Pharisees, who never doubted but that they were saints. If they had more of the spirit of the Publican with their confidence, it would have more of the aspect of one that has no confidence in himself.

There are two sorts of self-deceivers, one that are deceived with their outward morality and external religion; the other are those who are deceived with discoveries and elevations, who often cry down works, and men's own righteousness, and talk much of free grace; but at the same time make a righteousness of their discoveries, and of their humiliation, and exalt themselves to heaven with them. Of these two, the latter are the worst; for they are commonly by far the most confident, and with the most difficulty brought off from it. I have scarcely known an instance of such a one in my life, that has been undeceived. The chief grounds of the confidence of many of them are impulses and supposed revelations, sometimes with texts of Scripture, and sometimes without. These impulses they have called the witness of the SPIRIT. And it is found by abundant experience, that those who are led away by impulses and imagined revelations are extremely confident; for they suppose that the great JEHOVAH has declared these things to them, and that having his immediate testimony, a strong confidence is the highest virtue. Hence they are bold to say, "I know this or that; I know certainly: I am as sure as that I have a being;" and they despise all argument and inquiry in the case. And above all things else, it is easy to be accounted for that impressions and impulses about that which is so pleasing, so suiting their self-love and pride, as their being the dear children of GOD, should make them strongly confident; especially when they have with their impulses and revelations high affections, which they take to be the most eminent exercises of grace.

The confidence of many of this sort of men, is like the confidence of some mad men who think they are kings: They will maintain it against all manner of reason and evidence. And in one sense, it is much more immovable than a truly gracious assurance, which is not upheld, but by the soul's being kept in a holy frame, and grace maintained in a lively exercise. If the Christian falls into a lifeless frame, and grace decays, he loses his assurance: But this confidence will not be shaken by sin; and some maintain their boldness in their hope in the most wicked ways, which is a sure evidence of their delusions.

Here I cannot but observe, that there are certain doctrines often preached which need to be delivered with more caution and explanation than they frequently are: For as they are by many understood, they tend greatly to establish this false confidence. The doctrines I speak of are those of Christians living by faith not by sight; their giving glory to GOD by trusting him in the dark; living upon CHRIST, and not upon experiences; not making their good frames the foundation of their faith; which are excellent doctrines when rightly understood, but corrupt and destructive as many understand them: The Scripture speaks of living, or walking by faith, and not by sight, in no other way than these, namely, a being governed by a respect to eternal things, that are the objects of faith and are not seen, and not by a respect to temporal things, which are seen; a believing things revealed that we never saw with bodily eyes; and also living by faith in the promise of future things, without yet hearing or enjoying the things promised. This will be evident to any one that looks over the Scriptures which speak of faith in opposition to sight; as 2 Cor. 4: 18; and 5: 7; Heb. 11: 1, 8, 13, 17, 27, 29; Rom. viii. 24; John 20: 29.

But this doctrine, as it is understood by many, is, that Christians ought firmly to believe and trust in GOD without spiritual sight or light, and although they are in a dark dead frame, and for the present have no spiritual discoveries. It is truly the duty of those who are thus in darkness, to come out of darkness into light and believe. But that they should confidently believe, while they remain without spiritual light or sight, is an anti-scriptural and absurd doctrine. The Scripture is ignorant of any faith in CHRIST of the operation of GOD, that is not founded in a spiritual sight of CHRIST. True faith in CHRIST is never exercised any further than persons "behold as in a glass, the glory of the LORD," and have "the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST." (2 Cor. 3: 18. and 4: 6.) That faith which is without spiritual light, is not the faith of the children of light, but the presumption of the children of darkness. And therefore to press persons to believe, without any spiritual light or sight, greatly helps forward the delusions of the prince of darkness. Men not only cannot exercise faith without spiritual light; but they can exercise faith only just in such proportion as they have spiritual light. Men will trust in GOD no further than they know him; and they cannot be in the exercise of faith in him one ace further than they have a sight of his fullness and faithfulness in exercise. Nor can they have the exercise of trust in GOD, any further than they are in a gracious frame. They that are in a dead carnal frame, doubtless ought to trust in GOD; because that would be the same thing as coming out of their bad frame, and turning to GOD: But to exhort them confidently to trust in GOD, and so hold up their hope and peace, though they are not in a gracious frame, and continue not to be in it, is the same thing in effect as to exhort them confidently to trust in GOD, but not with a gracious trust; and what is that but a wicked presumption

It is true, it is the duty of GOD'S people to trust in him, when in darkness; in this sense they ought to trust in GOD when the aspects of his Providence are dark, and look as though GOD had forsaken them, and when many clouds gather, and many enemies surround them with a formidable appearance, and when all circumstances seem to render the promises of GOD difficult to be Fulfilled. And GOD must be trusted out of sight, when we cannot see which way it is possible for him to Fulfill his word, as every thing but GOD'S mere word makes it look unlikely, so that if persons believe, they must hope against hope. Thus the ancient Patriarchs, thus JOB, DAVID, JEREMIAH, DANIEL, SHADRACH, MESHECH, ABENDEGO, and the Apostle PAUL, gave glory to GOD, by trusting in him in darkness. But how different a thing is this from trusting in GOD without spiritual sight, and being at the same time in a dead and carnal frame!

There is also such a thing as spiritual light being let into the soul, in one way, when it is not in another; and so there is such a thing as believers trusting in GOD, and also knowing 'their good estate, when they are destitute of some kinds of experience. As for instance, they

may have clear views of GOD'S sufficiency and faithfulness, and so confidently trust in him, and know that they are his children, and at the same time not have those clear ideas of his love, as at other times: For it was thus with CHRIST himself in his last passion. But how different things are these from confidently trusting in God without spiritual light or experience!

Those that thus insist on persons living by faith, when they have no experience and are in very bad frames, are also very absurd in their notions of faith. What they mean by faith is, believing that they are in a good estate. Hence they count it a dreadful sin for them to doubt of their estate, whatever frames they are in, and whatever things they do, because it is the great and heinous sin of unbelief; and he is the best man, and puts most honor upon GOD, that maintains his hope of his good estate the most confidently, when he has the least light or experience; that is to say, when he is in the worst frame; because, forsooth, that is a sign that he is strong in faith, giving glory to GOD, and against hope believes in hope. But what Bible do they learn this notion of faith out of, that it is a man's confidently believing that he is in a good estate? If this be faith, the Pharisees had faith in an eminent degree. The Scripture represents faith, as that by which men are brought into a good estate, and therefore it cannot be the same thing, as believing that they are already in one. To suppose that faith consists in persons' believing that they are in a good estate, is in effect the same thing, as to suppose that faith consists in a person's believing that he has faith, or in believing that he believes.

Men are doubtless to blame for being in a dead carnal frame; but when they are in such a frame, when they have no sensible experience of the exercises of grace, but on the contrary, are under the prevalency of their lusts, and an unchristian spirit, they are not to blame for doubting of their state. It is as impossible in the nature of things, that a holy and Christian hope should be kept alive, in its clearness and strength, in such circumstances, as it is to maintain the bright sunshine in the air, when the sun is gone down. Distant experiences, when darkened by present prevailing corruption, will never keep alive a gracious confidence, for it sickens and decays upon it.

Nor is it at all to be lamented that persons doubt of their state in such circumstances; but on the contrary, it is desirable, and every way best that they should. It is agreeable to that wise and merciful constitution of things, which GOD has established, that it should be so. For so has GOD constituted things in his dispensations towards his people, that when their love decays, and the exercises of it fail, or become weak, fear should arise; for then they need it to restrain them from sin, and to excite them to care for their souls, and to watchfulness and diligence in religion. But GOD has so ordered, that when love rises and is vigorous, then fear should vanish; for then they need it not, being actuated by a more excellent principle. There are no other principles, which human nature is under the influence of, that will ever make men conscientious, but one of these two, fear or love: And therefore if one of these should not prevail as the other decayed, when love is asleep we should be exposed indeed: And therefore GOD has wisely ordained, that these two opposite principles should rise and fall, like the two opposite scales of a balance. Love is the Spirit of adoption, or the childlike principle; if that slumbers, men fall under fear, which is the spirit of bondage, or the servile principle: And so on the contrary. And if love, or the spirit of adoption, be carried to a great height, it drives away all fear; agreeable to that of the Apostle: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." (1 John 4: 18.) The two opposite principles of sin and holy love, bring hope and fear into the hearts of GOD'S children, in proportion as they prevail; that is, without something accidental intervening, as melancholy, ignorance, prejudices of education, wrong instruction, false principles, or peculiar temptations.

Fear is cast out by the SPIRIT of GOD, no other way than by the prevailing of love; nor is peace ever maintained by his SPIRIT when love is asleep. At such a time, in vain are all our self-examinations, and poring on past experiences, in order to get assurance: For it is contrary to the nature of things, as GOD has constituted them, that we should have assurance at such a time.

They therefore directly thwart GOD'S wise constitution: of things, who exhort others to be confident in their hope when in dead frames, under a notion of living by faith, and not by sight, and trusting in GOD in the dark, and living upon CHRIST and not upon experiences; and warn them not to doubt of their good estate, lest they should be guilty of the dreadful sin of unbelief. And it has a direct tendency to prevent their ever calling their state in question, how much soever wickedness reigns in their hearts or lives, under a notion of honoring GOD by "hoping against hope," and confidently trusting in GOD. But to return from this digression, I would mention one thing more under this general head.

XII. Nothing can be certainly concluded concerning the nature of religious affections, from this, that the outward manifestations of them, and the relation persons give of them, are very affecting, and such as greatly win the heart. Even true saints have not such a spirit of discerning, that they can certainly determine who are godly, and who are not: For though they know experimentally what true religion is, in the external exercises of it; yet these are what they can neither feel nor see, in the heart of another. There is nothing in others, that comes within their view, but outward appearance; but the Scripture plainly intimates that judging by outward appearances, is at best uncertain.

Before I finish this head, I would speak something to a strange notion some have given into, of certainly knowing the good estate that others are in, as though it Was immediately revealed to them from heaven, by their love flowing out to them in an extraordinary manner. They argue thus, that their love being very sensible, may be certainly known by them who feel it, to be a true Christian love; and if it be a true Christian love, the SPIRIT of GOD must be the Author of it; and inasmuch as the SPIRIT of GOD, who knows certainly whether others are the children of GOD or no; it must needs be that this infallible SPIRIT who deceives none, knows that person is a child of GOD. But such persons might be convinced of the falseness of their reasoning, if they would consider whether it be not their duty, to love those as the children of GOD who they think are so, and whom they have no reason to think otherwise, though GOD who searches the hearts knows them not to be his children If it be their duty, then it is good, and the want of it is sin; and therefore, the SPIRIT of GOD may be the Author of it: The SPIRIT of GOD, without being a spirit of falsehood, may in such a case assist a person to do his duty, and keep him from sin.

Religious Reflections, By John Edwards, Part III-Conclusion

PART 3:

Showing what are distinguishing Signs of truly gracious and holy Affections.

I COME now to the Second thing appertaining to the trial of religious affections, namely, To take notice of some things, wherein those affections that are spiritual and gracious, differ from those that are not so.

I. Affections truly spiritual and gracious, arise from those influences and operations on the heart, which are spiritual, Divine, and supernatural. We find that those who are sanctified by the SPIRIT of GOD. are in the New Testament called "spiritual" persons; and their being "spiritual," is spoken of as their spiritual sense in the mind, or an entirely new kind of perception or spiritual sensation, which is in its whole nature different from any former kinds of sensation; and something is perceived by a true saint, in the exercise of this new sense, in spiritual and Divine things, as entirely diverse from any thing that is perceived in them, by natural men, as the taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men get of honey by only looking on and feeling it. So that the spiritual perceptions which a spiritual person has, are not only diverse from all that natural men have, after the manner that the ideas or perceptions of the same sense may differ one from another, but rather as the ideas and sensations of different senses differ.

II. Truly gracious affections are attended with a conviction of the reality and certainty of Divine things.

This seems to be implied in the text that was laid as the foundation of this discourse, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him yet believing, ye rejoice with joy of glory."

All truly gracious persons have conviction of the truth of the great things of the Gospel. They no longer halt between two opinions; the great doctrines of the Gospel cease to be any longer doubtful things, but with them are settled and determined points, so that they are not afraid to venture their all upon them. Their conviction is effectual, so that the invisible things of the Gospel, have the influence of real and certain things upon them, have the weight and power of real things on their hearts, and accordingly rule in their affections, and govern them through the course of their lives. They have not only an opinion that these things are true, but they see that it is really so, their eyes being opened: And therefore these things are of great weight with them, and have a mighty power upon their hearts, and influence over their practice.

There are many religious affections which are not attended with such a conviction of the judgment. There are many apprehensions which some have, that they call Divine discoveries, which are affecting, but not convincing. Though for a little while, they may seem to be persuaded of the truth of the things of religion, yet they have no thorough effectual conviction, or at least there is no remarkable alteration: They live not under the influence of a realizing conviction of the infinite things which the Gospel reveals; if they did, it would be impossible for them to live as they do.

But how do men attain this thorough conviction of the truth of the Gospel By the internal evidences of it, by a sight of its glory; otherwise it is impossible that those who are illiterate, and unacquainted with history, should have any effectual conviction of it at all. They may without this, see a great probability of it: But it is impossible that men who have not something of a general view of the historical world, or the series of history from age to age, should come at the force of arguments for the truth of Christianity, drawn from liberty, to that degree, as effectually to induce them to venture their all upon it. After all that learned men have said to them, there will remain innumerable doubts on their minds. Now the Gospel was not given only for learned men. There are at least nineteen in twenty, if not ninety-nine in a hundred, of those for whom the Scriptures were written, that are not capable of any certain conviction of the Divine authority of Scripture, by such arguments as learned men make use of. If men who have been brought up in Heathenism, must wait for a clear conviction of the truth of Christianity, till they have learning and acquaintance with the history of politer nations, enough to see the force of such kind of arguments; it will make the evidence of the Gospel to them immensely cumbersome, and will render its propagation among them infinitely difficult.

It is unreasonable to suppose, that GOD has provided for his people no more than probable evidences of the truth of the Gospel. There is certainly some sort of evidence which GOD has given, that the Christian religion is true, and that the Gospel is his word, beyond mere probability. Doubtless there are some grounds of assurance held forth, which, if we are not blind to them, tend to give an higher persuasion, than any arguing from history and human tradition, which the illiterate are capable of; yea, that which is good ground of the highest assurance, that mankind have in any case whatsoever.

If we come to fact and experience, there is not the least reason to suppose, that one in an hundred of those who have been sincere Christians, have come by their conviction of the truth of the Gospel, by arguments fetched from ancient traditions, histories, and monuments. Among the many thousands that died martyrs for CHRIST since the beginning of the Reformation, how few came by their assured persuasion this way The greatest part of them were illiterate persons, many of whom were brought up in Popish darkness, and lived when such arguments were but very imperfectly handled. It is but lately that these arguments have been set in a clear light, even by learned men themselves. And since it has been done, there never were fewer thorough believers, among those who have been educated in the true religion. Infidelity never prevailed so much in any age, as in this wherein these arguments are handled to the greatest advantage.

The true martyrs of JESUS CHRIST, are not those who have only been strong in opinion that the Gospel of CHRIST is true, but those that have seen the truth of it; as the very name of martyrs or witnesses (by which they are called in Scripture) implies. Those are very improperly called witnesses of the truth of any thing, who only declare they are of opinion, such a thing is true. Those only are proper witnesses who testify that they have seen the truth of the thing they assert. But yet it must be noted, that among those who have a spiritual sight of the Divine glory of the Gospel, there is a great variety of degrees of strength of faith, as there is a vast variety of the degrees of clearness of views of this glory. But there is no true and saving faith, or spiritual conviction of the truth of the Gospel, that has not this manifestation of its internal evidence, in some degree.

The Gospel does not go abroad a begging for its evidence, so much as some think; it has its highest evidence in itself. Still great use may be made of external arguments, and they are not to be neglected, for they may be serviceable to awaken unbelievers, and bring them to serious consideration, and to confirm the faith of true saints; yea, they may be in some respects subservient to the begetting of saving faith in men. And yet it remains true, that there is no spiritual conviction but what arises from an apprehension of the spiritual beauty and glory of Divine things. But I proceed to another distinguishing sign of gracious affections.

III. Gracious affections are attended with evangelical humiliation. Evangelical humiliation is a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odious-ness, with an answerable frame of heart, arising from a discovery of GOD'S holiness.

They that are destitute of this, have not true religion, whatever profession they may make. GOD has abundantly manifested in his Word, that nothing is acceptable to him without it. As we would make the Holy Scriptures our rule in judging of our own state, it concerns us greatly to look at this humiliation, as one of the most essential things pertaining to real Christianity.

It is true, that many professors make great pretences to humility, as well as other graces; they are often declaring that they are humble, and telling how they were humbled to the dust at such and such times, and abounding in very bad expressions about themselves; such as, "I am a poor vile creature! Oh, I have a dreadful wicked heart! My heart is worse than the Devil! Oh, this cursed heart of mine!" Such expressions are frequently used, not with a heart that is broken, not with spiritual mourning; but with a light air, with smiles in the countenance; and we must believe that they are humble, upon the credit of their say so;

that is truly gracious: For he has his eye upon the rule of his duty; a conformity to that is what he aims at; and it is by that he judges of what he does, and has. To a gracious soul, especially if eminently so, that holiness appears little, which is little of what it should be; little of what he sees infinite reason for, and obligation to. If his holiness appears to him to be at a vast distance from this, it naturally appears little in his eyes.

True grace opens to a person's view the infinite reason there is, that he should be holy in a high degree. And the more grace he has, the more this is opened to his view; the greater sense he has of the obligations he is under to love GOD and CHRIST. The more he apprehends, the more the smallness of his grace and love appears; and therefore he is more ready to think that others are beyond him. Wondering at the littleness of his own grace, he can scarce believe that so strange a thing happens to other saints. It is amazing to him,

that one that is really a child of GOD, should love no more; and he is apt to look, upon it as a thing peculiar to himself; for he sees only the outside of other Christians, but he sees his own inside.

Grace and love in the most eminent saints, are truly very little in comparison of what they might be: Because the highest love that any attain to, is poor, and not worthy to be named, in comparison of what our obligations appear to be, from the joint consideration of these two things, namely, 1. The reasons GOD has given us to love him, in the manifestations he has made of his glory: And 2. The capacity there is in the soul, by those intellectual faculties which GOD has given it, of seeing and understanding these reasons. He that has much grace, estimates his love by the whole height of his duty, and hence it appears astonishingly little and low in his eyes.

The more eminent saints are, and the more they have of the light of heaven in their souls, the more do they appear to themselves, as the most eminent saints in this world do, to the angels in heaven. Now we can suppose no other than, that the highest attainments of the former appear mean to the latter, because these dwell in the light of GOD'S glory, and see him as he is.

I would not be understood, that the saints on earth have in all respects the worst opinion of themselves, when they have most grace. In many respects it is otherwise. With respect to positive corruption, they may appear to themselves freest when grace is most in exercise. But yet it is true, that the children of GOD never have so much conviction of their deformity, and so abasing a sense of their present vileness, as when they are highest in the exercise of grace.

True humility is attended with a change of nature. As all gracious affections arise from a spiritual understanding, -in which the soul has the excellency of Divine things discovered to it; so all spiritual discoveries are transforming; and not only make an alteration of the present sensation of the soul, but in the very nature of it. Such power as this is properly Divine, and is peculiar to the SPIRIT of the LORD. Other power may make a great alteration in men's present tempers, but it is the power of a Creator only that can change the nature. And no discoveries but those that are supernatural, will have this supernatural effect. But this effect all these discoveries have, that are truly Divine. The soul is deeply affected by these discoveries, and so affected as to be transformed.

Therefore if there be no such change in persons that think they have experienced a work of conversion, vain are all their imaginations, however they have been affected. Conversion is a great and universal change of the man, turning him from sin to GOD. If therefore, after a person's supposed conversion, there is no sensible or remarkable alteration in him, as to those bad qualities and evil habits, which before were visible in him, and he is ordinarily under the prevalence of the same dispositions that he used to be, if he appears as selfish, as stupid, and perverse, as unchristian, and unsavory as ever; it is a greater evidence against him, than the brightest story of experiences that ever was told, is for him.

Indeed allowances must be made for the natural temper. Those sins which a man was most inclined to before his conversion, him may be most apt to fall into still; but yet conversion will make a great alteration even with respect to these. If a man before his conversion, was by his constitution inclined to lasciviousness, or drunkenness, or maliciousness; converting grace will make a great alteration in him, so that they shall no longer have dominion over him.

There is a sort of affections that some have from time to time, that leave them without any abiding effect. They go off suddenly: So that from the very height of their emotion, they pass at once to be quite dead. It surely is not wont to be thus with high gracious affections; they, leave a sweet relish of Divine things on the heart, and a stronger bent of soul towards GOD and holiness.

V. Truly gracious affections differ from those that are false, in that they naturally beget and promote such a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy, as appeared in CHRIST.

The evidence of this in the Scripture is very abundant. If we judge of the proper spirit of the gospel, by the word of GOD, this spirit is what may, by way of eminence, be called the Christian spirit; and may be looked upon as the true, and distinguishing disposition of Christians. When some of the disciples of CHRIST said something that was not agreeable to such a spirit, CHRIST told them that they "knew not what manner of spirit they were of;" (Luke 9: 55;) implying that this spirit is the proper spirit of his religion. All that are truly godly are of this spirit; it is the spirit by which they are so governed, that it is their true and proper character.

Every thing that appertains to holiness of heart, does indeed belong to the nature of true Christianity; but a spirit of holiness appearing in some particular graces, may more especially be called the Christian spirit. There are some amiable qualities that more especially agree with the nature of the Gospel; such are humility, meekness, love, forgiveness, and mercy. These therefore especially belong to the character of Christians.

These things are spoken of, as what are especially the character of CHRIST himself, the great Head of the Christian church. And as these are especially the character of CHRIST, so they are also of Christians. Christians are CHRISTlike: None deserve the name of Christians who are not so in their prevailing character.

Meekness is so much the character of the saints, that the meek, and the godly, are used as synonymous terms in Scripture.

But some may say, "Is there no such thing as Christian fortitude, boldness for CHRIST, being good soldiers in the Christian warfare?"

I answer, There is. The whole Christian life is compared to a warfare. And the most eminent Christians are the best soldiers, endowed with the greatest degrees of fortitude. But many persons seem to be quite mistaken concerning the nature of Christian fortitude. It is not brutal fierceness. True Christian fortitude consists in strength of mind, through grace, exerted in two things; (1.) In ruling and suppressing of evil, and unruly passions; and (2.) In steadfastly following good affections, without being hindered by sinful fear, or the opposition of enemies: But the passions that are restrained, in this Christian fortitude, are those very passions that are vigorously exerted in false boldness; and those affections that are vigorously exerted in true fortitude, are those holy affections that are directly contrary to them.

Though Christian fortitude appears, in withstanding the enemies that are without us; yet it is much more evident, in resisting the enemies that are within us. The strength of the good soldier of JESUS CHRIST, appears in nothing more than in steadfastly maintaining the holy calm, meekness, sweetness, and benevolence of his mind, amidst all the storms, injuries, and surprising events of this evil world. The Scripture intimates that true fortitude consists chiefly in this: "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." (Pro-v. 16: 32.)

The way to make a right judgment, what holy fortitude is, in fighting with GOD'S enemies, is to look to the Captain of our Salvation, even to JESUS in the time of his last sufferings, when his enemies made their most violent attack on him. How did he show his boldness Not in any fiery passions; not in fierce and violent speeches, and crying out of the wickedness of opposers; but in not opening his mouth in reproaches, praying that the FATHER would forgive his murderers; not in shedding the blood of others, but with all-conquering patience and love, shedding his own. Indeed one of his disciples, that made a pretence to boldness for CHRIST, began to lay about him with his sword; but CHRIST quickly rebuked him, and healed the wound he gave. And never was the patience, meekness, love, and forgiveness of CHRIST in so glorious a manifestation, as at that time.

When persons are fierce and violent, and exert their sharp and bitter passions, it shows weakness instead of strength. "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions; are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

There is a pretended boldness for CHRIST that arises from no better principle than pride. Men may be forward to expose themselves to the dislike of the world, and even to provoke their displeasure out of pride, that they may be more highly exalted among their own party. That duty which tries whether a man is willing to be despised by them that are of his own party, is a much more proper trial of his boldness for CHRIST, than his being forward to expose himself to the reproach of opposers. He is bold for CHRIST, that has Christian fortitude to confess his fault openly, when he has committed one that requires it, and as it were to come down upon his knees before opposers. Such things as these are far greater evidences of holy boldness, than resolutely and fiercely confronting opposers.

As some are much mistaken concerning the nature of true boldness for CHRIST, so they are concerning Christian zeal. It is indeed a flame, but a sweet one; or rather it is the heat and fervor of a sweet flame; for the flame of which it is the heat, is no other than that of Divine love. Zeal is the fervor of this flame, as it vigorously goes out towards the good that is its object, in desires of it, and consequently in

opposition to the evil that is contrary to it. There is indeed opposition, and vigorous opposition, that is an attendant upon it; but it is against things, and not persons. Bitterness against the persons of men is no part of it, but is contrary to it. And as to what opposition there is in it, to things, it is first and chiefly, against the evil things in the person himself who has this zeal, against the enemies of GOD and holiness, that are in his own heart; and but secondarily, against the sins of others. And therefore there is nothing in true Christian zeal, that is contrary to the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and love; but it is entirely agreeable to it, and tends to promote it.

But to say something particularly concerning this Christian spirit I have been speaking of, as exercised in these three things, forgiveness, love, and mercy: I would observe that the Scripture is very clear and express concerning the absolute necessity of each of these, as belonging to the temper of every Christian. It is so as to a forgiving spirit, or a disposition to overlook and forgive injuries. CHRIST gives it to us both as a negative and positive evidence, and is express in teaching us, that if we are of such a spirit, it is a sign that we are in a state of forgiveness ourselves, and that if we are not of such a spirit, we are not forgiven of GOD.

And the Scripture is as plain as possible, that none areTM true saints, but those that are of a disposition to pity and relieve their fellow-creatures. • If a brother or sister be naked, and one of you say, Depart in peace, notwithstanding ye give them not those things that are needful to the body, what doth it profit" (James 3: 15, 16.) • Whoso has the world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of GOD in him" (1 John 3:17.)

CHRIST, in that description he gives of the day of judgment, (Matt. xxv.) represents, that judgment will be passed at that day, according as men have been found to have been of a merciful spirit and practice, or otherwise.

Some place religion so much in certain transient illuminations, (especially if they are in such a particular method and order,) and so little in the spirit and temper persons are of, that they greatly deform religion, and form notions of Christianity quite different from the Scriptures. The Scripture knows of no such Christians, as are of a sordid, selfish, cross and contentious spirit. Nothing can be invented that is a greater absurdity, than a morose, hard, close, high-spirited, spiteful Christian. We must learn the way of bringing men to rules, and not rules to men* and so strain the rules of GOD'S word, to take in ourselves, and some of our neighbors, till we make them wholly of none effect.

VI. Gracious affections soften the heart, and are attended" and followed with a Christian tenderness of spirit. False affections tend to stupify the mind; and the effect of them at last is, that persons become less affected with their present and past sins, and less conscientious with respect to future sins, less moved with the cautions of GOD'S word, or GOD'S chastisements in his providences, less afraid of the appearance of evil, than they were while under legal awakenings. Now they have looked on their state to be safe, they can be more easy than before in the neglect of duties that are troublesome, and are not so alarmed at their own defects. Formerly, under convictions, they took much pains in religion, and denied themselves in many things; but now they think themselves out of danger, they put off this burden of the cross, and allow themselves more of the enjoyment of their ease and their lusts.

Such persons as these, instead of embracing CHRIST as their Savior from sin, trust in him as the Savior of their sins. They trust in him, to preserve to them the quiet enjoyment of their sins, and to be their shield to defend them from GOD'S displeasure, while they come close to him to fight against him: However, some of these, at the same time, make a great profession of love to GOD, and assurance of his favor.

Gracious affections are of a contrary tendency, turning a heart of stone, more and more, into a heart of flesh. An holy love and hope are more efficacious upon the heart, to make it tender and fill it with a dread of sin, or whatever might displease GOD, and to engage it to watchfulness and care and strictness, than a slavish fear of hell. And let it be observed, that holy fear is so much the nature of true godliness, that it is called in Scripture by no other name more frequently, than there are of GOD.

Hence gracious affections do not tend to make men bold, forward, noisy and boisterous, but rather to speak trembling.

But some may object. TM Is there no such thing as a holy boldness in prayer, and the duties of Divine worship' I answer, There is doubtless such a thing. But this is not opposite to reverence, though it be to servility. No boldness in poor sinful worms, that have a right sight of GOD and themselves, will prompt them to approach GOD with less fear and reverence, than glorious angels in heaven, who cover their faces before his throne. There is in some persons, a most unsufferable boldness, in their addresses to the great Jehovah, in an

affectation of an holy boldness, and ostentation of eminent nearness and familiarity; the very thoughts of which would make them shrink into nothing, with horror and confusion, if they saw the distance that is between GOD and them. It becomes such sinful creatures as we, to approach a holy GOD, (although with 'faith, and without terror, yet) with contrition, and penitent shame and confusion of face.

One reason why gracious affections are attended with tenderness of spirit, is, that true grace tends to promote convictions of conscience. Persons are wont to have convictions before they believe; and afterwards peace in believing, has a tendency to put an end to terrors, but not to convictions of sin. It does not stupify a man's conscience, to the souls of men. Others pretend a great love to men's souls, but are not compassionate toward their bodies. The making a great show of love for souls, costs them nothing; but in order to show mercy to men's bodies, they must part with money out of their pockets. But Christian love to our brethren, extends both to their souls and bodies; and herein is like the love of JESUS CHRIST.

Here by the way, I would observe, it may be laid down as a general rule, that if persons pretend they are come to high attainments in religion, but have never yet arrived to the less, it is a bad sign. As if persons pretend that they have got beyond mere morality, to live a spiritual and Divine life; but really have not come to be so much as moral persons: Or pretend to be greatly affected with the wickedness of their hearts, and are not affected with the palpable violations of GOD'S commands in their practice: Or pretend that they are not afraid to venture their souls upon. CHRIST for their eternal welfare, but at the same time have not confidence enough in GOD to trust him with a little of their estates, for pious and charitable uses: I say, when it is thus with persons, their pretences are manifestly vain.

The same that has been observed of the affection of love, is also to be observed of other religious affections. Those that are true, extend in some proportion, to the various things that are their proper objects: But when they are false, they are commonly strangely disproportionate. So it is with religious desires: These in true believers are to those things that are excellent in general, and that in some proportion to their excellency: But in false longings, it is often far otherwise. They will run with vehemence, after something of less importance, when other things, of greater importance, are neglected.

And so as to zeal; when it is from right principles, it is against sin in general, in some proportion to the degree of sinfulness; but false zeal against sin, is against some particular sin only. Thus some seem to be very zealous against profaneness, and pride in apparel, who themselves are notorious for covetousness, and it may be backbiting, envy, turbulence of spirit, or ill-will to them that have injured them.

False zeal is against the sins of others, while men have no zeal against their own sins: But he that has true zeal, exercises it chiefly against his own sins, though he shows also a proper zeal against dangerous iniquity in others.

VIII. Another distinguishing difference between gracious affections, and others, is, that the higher they are raised, the more is the appetite and longing after spiritual attainments increased.

The more a true Christian loves GOD, the more he desires to love Him; the more he hates sin, the more he desires to hate it. The kindling of gracious affections is like kindling a flame; the higher it is raised, the more ardent it is. So the appetite after holiness is much more lively and keen in those that are eminent in holiness, than in others.

But with mixed, or degenerating religious affections it is otherwise. If before, there was a great desire after grace, as these affections rise, that desire ceases, or is abated. It may be before, while the man was afraid of hell, he earnestly longed that he might obtain faith in CHRIST and love to GOD; but now, that he is confident he is converted, there are no more earnest longings after light and grace: He is confident that his sins are forgiven him, and that he shall go to heaven, and so is satisfied.

Lastly. Gracious affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice. But what is implied in this

1. That men should be universally obedient. • Every man that has this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not: Whosoever sinneth has not seen him, neither known him." (1 John m. 3, &c.) • Ye are my friends if ye do

whatsoever I command you." (John 15: 14.) "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2: 10.) If one member only be corrupt, and we do not cut it off, it will carry the whole body to hell. (Matt. 5: 29, 30.)

In order to our being true Christians, it is necessary that we prosecute the business of religion with earnestness and diligence. All CHRIST'S peculiar people, are zealous of good works.¹ (Tit. 2: 14.) Christians are not called to idleness, but to labor in GOD'S vineyard: Their work is every where compared in the New Testament to those exercises, wherein men are wont to exert their strength with the greatest earnestness; as running, wrestling, fighting. The kingdom of heaven is not to be taken, but by violence. without earnestness there is no getting along in that narrow way that leads to life; no ascending the steep and high hill of Zion; and so, no arriving at the heavenly-city on the top of it. There is need, that we should "watch and pray always;" that we should "put on the whole armor of GOD;" that we should "forget the things which are behind, and be reaching forth to the things, that are before." Slothfulness in the service of GOD is as damning as open rebellion. For the slothful servant is a wicked servant, and shall be cast into outer darkness, among GOD'S enemies. (Matt, 25: 26, 30.) They that are slothful, are not followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

A true Christian perseveres in this way of universal obedience, through all the various trials he meets with. That all those who obtain eternal life, persevere in the practice of religion and the service of GOD, is a doctrine abundantly taught in Scripture.

The tendency of grace in the heart to holy practice, is direct; and the connection close and necessary. True grace is not an inactive, barren thing, for it is, in its very nature, a principle of holy action. Regeneration has a direct relation to practice; for it is the end of it, with a view to which the whole work is wrought: All is framed in this mighty change, so as directly to tend to this end: "For we are his workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works." (Eph. 2: 10.) Yea it is the very end of the redemption of CHRIST; "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Tit. 2: 14.) Holy practice is as much the end of all that GOD does about his saints, as fruit is the end of all that the husbandman does about the growth of his field: And therefore every thing in a true Christian is calculated to reach this end. This fruit of holy practice, is what every grace, and every discovery, and every individual thing which belongs to Christian experience, has a direct tendency to.

From what has been said, it is manifest, that Christian practice, or a holy life, is a distinguishing sign of true grace. But I may further assert, that it is, the chief of all the signs of grace, both as an evidence of the sincerity of Christians to others, and also to their own consciences. But then it is necessary that it be well understood, in what sense Christian practice is the greatest sign of grace.

And it is so as a manifestation of the sincerity of a Christian to his neighbors. Now that this is the chief sign of grace in this respect, is very evident from the word of GOD. CHRIST, who knew best how to give us rules to judge of others, has repeated it, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matt. 7: 16.) CHRIST nowhere says, Ye shall know the tree by its leaves or flowers, or Ye shall know men by their talk, or by the manner and air of their speaking, or by their speaking feelingly, or by their tears and affectionate expressions, or by the affections ye feel in your hearts towards them; but "By their fruits shall ye know them."

And as this is the evidence that CHRIST has directed us chiefly to look at in others, so it is the evidence that CHRIST has chiefly directed us to give to others. "Let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your FATHER, which is in heaven." CHRIST does not say, that hearing your good words, but that others seeing your good works, may glorify your FATHER which is in heaven."

And as the Scripture teaches that practice is the best evidence of sincerity, so reason teaches the same thing. Reason shows that men's deeds are more faithful interpreters of their minds, than their words. The common sense of mankind teaches them to judge of men's hearts chiefly by their practice in other matters; as whether a man be a loyal subject, a true lover, a dutiful child, or a faithful servant. A wise man will trust to practical evidences of the sincerity -of friendship, further than a thousand earnest professions. Now there is equal reason why practice should be looked upon as the best evidence of friendship towards CHRIST, Reason says the same that CHRIST said, "He that has my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loves me." (John 14: 21.)

If a man, in declaring his experiences, tells how he found his heart weaned from the world, and saw the vanity of it at such and such times, and professes that he gives up all to GOD, yet in his practice is violent in pursuing the world, and what he gets he keeps close: If there is another that says not a great deal, yet appears ready to forsake the world, whenever it stands in the way of his duty, we believe this man to be weaned from it; not the former.

And as Christian practice is the best evidence of our sincerity to others, so it is a sure evidence of grace to a person's own conscience. This is very plain in 1 John 2: 8, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." And, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, (in the original it is , * , in work,) and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." (1 John 3: 18, 19.)

For the greater clearness in this matter, I would First, Show how Christian practice, or keeping CHRIST'S commandments, is to be taken, when the Scripture represents it as a sure evidence to our own consciences, that we are sincere Christians: And Secondly, prove that this is the chief of all evidences, that men can have, of their own sincere godliness.

We cannot reasonably suppose, that when the Scripture, in this case, speaks of good works, the keeping CHRIST'S commandments, it has respect merely to what is external, or the action of the body, without regard to the intention of the agent, or any act of his understanding or will. The actions of the body, taken thus, are neither acts of obedience nor disobedience.

But obedience and good works, are given in Scripture as a sure evidence to our own consciences of true grace; and include the obedience and practice of the soul, as preceding and governing the actions of the body. So when we are told that men shall be judged at the last day, "according to their works," and "all shall receive according to the things done in the body," it is not to be understood only of outward acts; for if so, why is GOD so often spoken of as searching the hearts and trying the reins, "that he may render to every one according to his works" If only the actions of the body are meant, what need "of searching the heart and reins," in order to know them

A common acquaintance with the Scripture, together with a little attention, will show to any one, that this is ten times more insisted on as a mark of true piety, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, than any thing else. In the New Testament, where CHRIST and his Apostles expressly lay down signs of true godliness, this is almost wholly insisted upon. Indeed in many of these places, "love to the brethren," is spoken of as a sign of godliness, and there is no one virtuous affection so often spoken of as a sign of true grace, as our having love one to another: But then the Scriptures explain themselves to intend chiefly this love as exercised in practice. So that "when the Scripture so much insists on our loving one another, as a great sign of godliness, we are not thereby to understand the workings of affection which men feel, so much as the practicing all the duties of the second table: All which, "the New Testament tells us again and again, a true love comprehends. Holy practice is the mark chosen out from all others to be insisted on: Which is an invincible argument, that it is the chief of all the evidences of godliness. And surely those things which CHRIST and his Apostles chiefly insisted on in the rules they gave, Ministers ought chiefly to regard in the rules they give. To insist much on those things that the Scripture insists little on, and to insist very little on those things on which the Scripture insists much, is a dangerous thing: because this is to judge ourselves, and guide others, in an unscriptural manner.

GOD knew which way of leading souls was safest; this is the reason, why he insisted so much on some things, and let others more alone. The Scriptures were made for man; we should therefore make them our guide in all things: For us to make that great which the Scripture makes little, and that little which the Scripture makes great, tends to give us a monstrous idea of religion; and (at least indirectly and gradually) to lead us wholly away from the right rule, and to establish delusions.

Another thing which makes it evident that holy practice is the chief of all the signs of sincerity, not only to the world, but to our own consciences, is, that this is the grand evidence which will hereafter be made use of, before the judgment-seat of GOD; according to which his judgment will be regulated, and the state of every professor unalterably determined. In the future judgment, there will be an open trial of all, and evidences will be made use of: For GOD'S future judging of men, in order to their eternal retribution, will not be his passing a judgment upon them in his own mind; but it will be the manifestation of his judgment, and the righteousness of it, to men's own consciences, and to the world. And therefore, though GOD needs no medium, whereby to make the truth evident to himself, yet evidences will be made use of in his future judging of men. And doubtless the evidences that will be made use of in their trial, will be such as are best fitted to serve the ends of the judgment, namely, the manifestation of the righteous judgment of GOD, not only to the world, but to men's own consciences. But the Scriptures abundantly teach, that the grand evidence, which the Judge will make use of, will be men works, or practice, here in this world. "For GOD will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Hence we may undoubtedly infer, that men's works are the highest evidences, by which they ought to try themselves. Certainly that which our supreme Judge will chiefly make use of, to judge us by, when we come to stand before Him, we should chiefly make use of to judge ourselves by.

Now from all that has been said, it is abundantly manifest, that Christian practice is the most proper evidence of our gracious sincerity, to ourselves and others, and the chief of all the marks of grace. I had rather have the testimony of my conscience, that I have such a saying of my supreme Judge on my side, as that, "He that has my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loves me;" (John 14: 21;) than the fullest approbation, of all the wise and experienced Divines, that have lived this thousand years, on the most exact and critical examination of my experiences.

Christian practice is the sign of signs; it is the great evidence which confirms and crowns all other signs of godliness. There is no one grace of the SPIRIT of GOD, but Christian practice is the most proper evidence of the truth of it.

Holy practice is the proper proof of the true and saving knowledge of GOD. "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." (1 John 2: 3.) It is also of repentance. JOHN, when the Jews professed repentance upon coming to his baptism, directed them to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." In like manner, of a saving faith, as appears from the Apostle JAMES speaking of works, as what do eminently prove faith, and manifest our sincerity. It is, of a saving belief of the truth."

That is spoken of as the proper evidence of the truth's being in a Christian, that "he walks in the truth." It is the most proper evidence of a true coming to CHRIST, and accepting of, and closing with him. A true and saving coming to CHRIST, is (as CHRIST often teaches) a coming so, as to forsake all for him. To forsake all for CHRIST in heart, is the same thing as to have a heart actually to forsake all; but the proper evidence of having such a heart, is indeed actually to forsake all, so far as called to it. CHRIST and other things, are set before us together, for us to cleave to the one, and forsake the other: In such a case, a practical cleaving to CHRIST, is an acceptance of him.

Practice is the most proper evidence of trusting in CHRIST for salvation. The proper signification of the word trust, both in common speech, and in the holy Scriptures, is the encouragement of a person to run some venture on the credit of another's sufficiency and faithfulness: And therefore the proper evidence of his trusting, is the venture he runs in what he does. Hence it is, that persons complying with the difficulties and dangers of Christian practice, in a dependence on CHRIST'S sufficiency and faithfulness, are said to venture themselves upon CHRIST, and trust in him for happiness and life. They depend on such promises as that, "He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." (Matt. x, 39.) He that on the credit of what he hears of a future world, forsakes all, at least as far as there is occasion, making every thing give place to his eternal interest; he, and he only, may probably be said to venture himself on the Gospel. And this is the proper evidence of a true trust in CHRIST for salvation.

Practice is the proper evidence of love, both to GOD and men. It is also of humility: For that manifestation of heart-humility, which GOD speaks of, consists in walking humbly. It is likewise of the true fear of GOD; "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil." "By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil." So practice, in rendering again according to benefits received, is the proper evidence of true thankfulness. "What shall I render to the LORD, for all his benefits towards me" The proper evidence of gracious desires and longings, is, that they are effectual in practice, to stir up persons earnestly to seek the things they long for: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after."

Practice is the proper evidence of a gracious hope: "Every man that has this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Patient continuance in well-doing, through the difficulties of the Christian course, is often mentioned as the proper expression of a Christian hope. A cheerful practice of our duty, and doing the will of GOD, is the proper evidence of a truly holy joy: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness." "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart: I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end"

And as holy practice is the chief evidence of the truth of grace; so the degree in which experience influences a person's practice, is the surest evidence of the degree of that which is spiritual and Divine in his experiences. Whatever pretences persons may make to great discoveries, great love and joy, they are no further to be regarded, than they have influence on their practice. Not but that allowances must be made for the natural temper: But that does not hinder, but that the degree of grace is justly measured, by the degree of the effect in practice; for the effect of grace is as great, and the alteration as remarkable, in a person of a very ill natural temper, as another. although a person of such a temper, will not behave himself so well, with the same degree of grace as another, the diversity from what was before conversion may be as great; because a person of good natural temper did not behave himself so ill before conversion. Thus I have endeavored to represent the evidence there is, that Christian practice is the chief of all the signs of saving grace. But, before I conclude, I would say something, briefly, in answer to two objections.

1. Some may say, "This seems to be contrary to that opinion, so much received among good people, that we should judge of our state chiefly by our inward experience, and that spiritual experiences are the main evidences of true grace." I answer, It is doubtless a true opinion, and justly much received, that we should chiefly judge of our state by our experience. But it is a great mistake, that what has been said is at all contrary to that opinion. Christian practice is spiritual practice; the practice of spirit and body jointly, or the practice of a spirit, animating, commanding, and actuating a body to which it is united. And therefore the main thing in this holy practice, is the holy acts of the mind, directing and governing the motions of the body; and the motions of the body are to be looked upon as belonging to Christian practice, only as they are dependant on the acts of the soul.

The exercises of grace that Christians find within themselves, are what they experience within themselves; and herein therefore lies Christian experience; and this Christian experience consists as much in those exercises of grace in the will, that are immediately concerned in the behavior of the body, as in other exercises. These inward exercises are not the less a part of Christian experience, because they have outward behavior connected with them.

To speak of Christian experience and practice, as if they were two things, entirely distinct, is to make a distinction without all reason. Indeed all Christian experience is not properly called practice: But all Christian practice is properly experience; and the distinction that is made between them, is not only an unreasonable, but an unscriptural distinction. Holy practice is one part of Christian experience; and both reason and Scripture represent it as the chief and most important part of it. So it is represented in Jer. 22: 15, 16: "Did not thy father eat and drink, and do justice and judgment?" He judged the cause of the poor and needy: Was not this to know me says the LORD." "Our inward acquaintance with GOD surely belongs to the head of experimental religion: But these the Scriptures represent as consisting chiefly in practice. The exercises of those graces of the love of GOD, and the fear of GOD, are a part of experimental religion; but these the Scriptures represent as consisting chiefly in practice. (1 John 5: 3; 2 John 6; Psalm xxxiv. 11, &c.) Such experiences as these the Psalmist chiefly insists on. Such the Apostle PAUL mainly insists upon, when he speaks of his experiences in his Epistles. And such as these they were, that this blessed Apostle chiefly comforted himself in the consideration of, when he was going to martyrdom: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. 4: 6, 7.)

And not only does the most important part of Christian experience lie in spiritual practice, but nothing is so properly called by the name of experimental religion: For that experience which is in these exercises of grace, that prove effectual at the very point of trial, are the proper experiment of the truth of our godliness, wherein its victorious power is found by experience. This is properly Christian experience, wherein we have opportunity to see, by actual experience and trial, whether we have a heart to do the will of GOD, and to forsake other things for CHRIST, or no.

There is a sort of external religious practice, wherein is no inward experience; but this is good for nothing: And there is what is called experience, that is without practice, and this is worse than nothing. Many persons seem to have wrong notions of Christian experience and spiritual light and discoveries. Whenever a person finds a heart to trust GOD as GOD, at the time that he has the trial, and finds his disposition effectual in the experiment, that is the most proper and distinguishing experience: And to have at such a time that sense of Divine things, which governs his heart and hands; this is the most excellent spiritual light, and these are the most distinguishing discoveries.

Indeed the witness or seal of the SPIRIT, consists in the effect of the SPIRIT of GOD in the heart, in the implantation and exercises of grace there, and so consists in experience: And it is beyond doubt, that this seal of the SPIRIT is the highest kind of evidence of our adoption, that ever we obtain: But in these exercises of grace in practice, GOD gives witness, and sets to his seal, in the most conspicuous, eminent and evident manner. It has been abundantly found to be true in fact, by the experience of the Christian Church, that CHRIST commonly gives by his SPIRIT, the greatest and most joyful evidences of sonship, in those effectual exercises of grace, under trials, which have been spoken of; as is manifest in the full assurance and unspeakable joys of many of the Martyrs.

2. Some may object, "That this is legal doctrine; and that making practice of such great importance in religion, magnifies works, and leads men to make too much of their own doings, to the diminution of the glory of free grace; yea, does not well consist with that great Gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone."

But this objection is altogether without reason. "Which way is it inconsistent with the freeness of GOD'S grace, that holy practice should be a sign of GOD'S grace It is our works being the price of GOD'S favor, and not their being a sign of it, that is inconsistent with the

freeness of that favor. Surely the beggar's looking on the money he has in his hand, as a sign of the kindness of him who gave it, is in no respect inconsistent with the freeness of that kindness.

The notion of the freeness of GOD'S grace, is not that no holy qualifications or actions in us shall be a fruit, and so a sign of that grace; but that it is not the worthiness of any qualification or action of ours which recommends us to that grace; that kindness is shown to the unworthy; that there is great excellence in the benefit bestowed, and no excellence in the subject, as the price of it. And this is the notion of justification without works, that it is not the worthiness of our works, or any thing in us, which is accepted with GOD as a balance for the guilt of sin, or a recommendation of sinners to his acceptance. Thus we are justified only by the righteousness of CHRIST, and not by our righteousness. And when works are opposed to faith in this affair, and it is said that we are justified by faith and not by works; thereby is meant, that it is not the worthiness of our works, or any thing in us, which recommends us to an interest in CHRIST; but that we have this interest only by faith, or by our soul's receiving CHRIST. But that the worthiness of nothing in us brings us to an interest in CHRIST, is no argument that nothing in us is a sign of an interest in CHRIST.

If the doctrines of free grace, and justification by faith alone, be inconsistent with the importance of holy practice as a sign of grace; then they are equally inconsistent with the importance of any thing whatsoever in us as a sign of grace and holiness, or any of our experiences of religion: For it is as contrary to the doctrines of free grace, that any of these should be the righteousness which we are justified by, as that holy practice should be so. It is with holy qualifications, as it is with holy works; it is inconsistent with the freeness of Gospel grace, that a title to salvation should be given to men for any of their holy qualifications, as much as that it should be given for the holiness of their work; and yet this does not hinder the importance of these things as evidences of an interest in CHRIST. Just so it is with respect to holy works. To make light of works, because we be not justified by works, is the same thing in effect, as to make light of all religion, all holiness, and all gracious experience; for all is included, when the Scripture says, we are not justified by works: For by works in this case, is meant all our own righteousness, holiness, and every thing that is in us, all the good we do, and all the good we are conscious of, and all those holy things, wherein the very essence of religion consists, and even faith itself, considered as a part of our holiness; for we are justified by none of these things; and if we were, we should, in a Scripture sense, be justified by works. And therefore if it be not legal to insist on any of these, as evidences of an interest in CHRIST; any more than it is, thus to insist upon the importance of holy practice; it would be legal to suppose that holy practice justifies by bringing us to a title to CHRIST'S benefits, as the price of it; but it is not legal to suppose that holy practice justifies the sincerity of a believer, as the proper evidence of it.

So that in what has been said of the importance of holy practice, as the main sign of sincerity, there is nothing legal, nothing derogatory to the freedom of Gospel grace, nothing clashing with the Gospel doctrine of justification by faith, nothing in the least tending to lessen the glory of the Mediator, and our dependance on his righteousness; nothing detracting from the glory of GOD and his mercy, or exalting man. If then any are against such an importance of holy practice, it must be only from a senseless aversion to the letters and sound of the word works; when there is no reason in the world to be given for it, but what oral* be given with equal force, why they should have an aversion to the words holiness, godliness, religion, experience, and even faith itself: For to trust in any of these, is as legal, and as inconsistent with the way of the new covenant, as to trust in holy practice.

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