



THE CHRISTIAN'S GREAT INTEREST



**Part One: The Trial of a
Saving Interest in Christ
Booklet Two – Chapters III & IV**



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Chapter III

Evidences of a Believing State

We come now to speak of some more clear and sure marks by which men may discover their gracious state and interest in Christ.

The first thing whereby men may know it is, their closing with Christ in the gospel wherein He is held forth. This is believing, or faith, which is the condition of the covenant: *"It is of faith, that it might be by grace"* (Rom. 4:16). *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31). Now, although, in propriety of speech, it is hard to prove an interest by faith, it being one very interest in Him; yet the heart's closing with Christ Jesus is so discernible in itself, that we may well place it amongst the marks of a gracious state: and if a man can make out this, that he believeth on and in Christ Jesus, he thereby proves a very true interest in Him.

I. Mistakes as to what faith is

Many object to this as a mark, upon one of these three grounds:

1. Some conceive faith to be a difficult, mysterious thing, hardly attainable. To these I say, Do not mistake: faith is not so difficult as many apprehend it to be. I grant true faith in the lowest degree is the gift of God, and above the power of flesh and blood; for God must draw men to Christ. *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him"* (John 6:44). *"Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ to believe on Him"* (Phil. 1:29). Yet it were a reflection upon Christ, and all He hath done, to say it were a matter of insuperable difficulty; as is clear: *"The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be*

saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed" (Rom. 10:6-11). It were, according to that Scriptures as much upon the matter as to say, Christ came not from heaven, is not risen from the dead, nor ascended victorious to heaven. I say, He hath made the way to heaven most easy; and faith, which is the condition required on our part, more easy than men do imagine. For the better understanding of this, consider that justifying faith is not to believe that I am elected, or to believe that God loveth me, or that Christ died for me, or the like: these things are indeed very difficult, and almost impossible to be attained at the first by those who are serious; whilst natural atheists and deluded hypocrites find no difficulty in asserting all those things: I say, true justifying faith is not any of the aforesaid things; neither is it simply the believing of any sentence that is written, or that can be thought upon. I grant, he that believeth on Christ Jesus, believeth what God hath said concerning man's sinful, miserable condition by nature; and he believeth that to be true, that "*there is life in the Son, who was slain, and is risen again from the dead,*" etc.: but none of these, nor the believing of many such truths, evinces justifying faith, or that believing on the Son of God spoken of in Scripture; for then it were simply an act of the understanding; but true justifying faith, which we now seek after, as a good mark of an interest in Christ, is chiefly and principally an act or work of the heart and will; having presupposed sundry things about truth in the understanding - "*With the heart man believeth unto righteousness*" (Rom. 10:10). And although it seem (verse 9), that a man is saved upon condition that he believes this truth, namely, that "*God raised Christ from the dead,*" yet we must understand another thing there, and verse 10, than the believing the truth of that proposition; for besides that all devils have that faith, whereby they believe that God raised Christ from the dead; so the Scripture hath clearly resolved justifying faith into a receiving of Christ: "*as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name*" (John 1:12). The receiving of Christ is there explained to be the believing on His name. It is also called a staying on the Lord (Isa. 26:3); a trusting in God, often mentioned in the Psalms, and the

word is a leaning on Him. It is a believing on Christ: *“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent”* (John 6:29), and often so expressed in the New Testament.

When God maketh men believe savingly, He is said to draw them unto Christ; and when the Lord inviteth them to believe, He calleth them to come to Him. *“All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him”* (John 6:37, 44). The kingdom of heaven is like a man finding a jewel, with which he falleth in love: *“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it”* (Matt. 13:44-46). Now, I say, this acting of the heart on Christ Jesus is not so difficult a thing as is conceived. Shall that be judged a mysterious difficult thing which doth consist much in desire? If men have but an appetite, they have it; for they are *“blessed that hunger after righteousness”* (Matt. 5:6). *“If you will,”* you are welcome (Rev. 22:17). Is it a matter of such intricacy and insuperable difficulty, earnestly to look to that exalted Saviour: *“Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth”* (Isa. 45:22). And to receive a thing that is offered, held forth, and declared to be mine, if I will but accept and take it, and in a manner *“open my mouth,”* and give way to it? *“Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it”* (Psa. 81:10). Such a thing is faith, if not less. Oh, if I could persuade people what justifying faith is, which appropriateth Christ to me! We often drive people from their just rest and quiet, by making them apprehend faith to be some deep, mysterious thing, and by exciting unnecessary doubts about it, whereby it is needlessly darkened.

2. Some make no use of this mark, as judging it a high presumptuous crime to pretend to so excellent a thing as is the very condition of the new covenant. To these I say, you need not startle so much at it, as if it were high pride to pretend to it; for whatsoever true faith be, men must resolve to have it, or nothing at all: all other marks are in vain without it: a thousand things besides will not do

the business: unless a man believe, he abideth in the state of condemnation. *“He that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him”* (John 3:18, 36).

3. Others do not meddle with this noble mark of faith, because they judge it a work of the greatest difficulty to find out where faith is. To these I say, it is not so difficult to find it out, since *“he that believeth, hath the witness in himself”* (1 John 5:10). It is a thing which by some serious search may be known. Not only may we do much to find it out by the preparatory work going before it in many, as the apprehending and believing of a man’s lost estate, and that he cannot work out his own salvation, and that there is a satisfying fullness in Christ, very desirable if he could obtain it; - a serious minding of this, with a heart laid open for relief; as also by the ordinary companions and concomitants of it, namely, the liking of Christ’s dominion, His kingly and prophetic office, a desire to resign myself wholly up to Him, to be at His disposing; as also by the native consequences of it, namely, the acquitting of the word, the acquitting of my own conscience according to the word, a heart purifying work, a working by love, etc.; I say, not only may we know faith by these things, but it is discernible by itself and of its own nature.

Although I deny not but there must be some help of God’s Spirit, *“by which we know what is freely given unto us of God”* (1 Cor. 2:12); as also, that God hath allowed many evidences and marks as precious helps, whereby men may clear up faith more fully to themselves - *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life;”* (1 John 5:13); yet I still say that faith, or believing, which is some acting of the heart upon Christ in the gospel, and the transacting with Him there, is discernible of itself, and by itself, to a judicious understanding person, with an ordinary influence of the Spirit: unless the Lord, for reasons known to Himself, overcloud a man’s reflex light, by which he should perceive what is in him.

II. True saving faith described

This justifying faith, which we assert to be so discernible, is, in the Lord’s deep wisdom and gracious condescension, variously

expressed in Scripture, according to the different actings of it upon God, and outgoings after Him; so that every one who hath it may find and take it up in his own mould. It sometimes acts by a desire of union with Him in Christ; this is that looking to Him in Isaiah – *“Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth”* (Isa. 45:22). This seems to be a weak act of faith, and far below other acting of it at other times perhaps in that same person. Men will look to what they dare not approach (in their apprehension), which they dare not touch or embrace; they may look to one to whom they dare not speak: yet God hath made the promise to faith in that acting, as the fore-cited Scripture shows: and this He hath done mercifully and wisely; for this is the only discernible way of the acting of faith in some. Such are the actings or outgoings of faith expressed in Scripture by *“hungering and thirsting after righteousness”* (Matt. 5:6), and that expressed by willing – *“And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”* (Rev. 22:17). Again, this faith goes out sometimes in the act of recumbency, or leaning on the Lord, the soul taking up Christ then as a resting stone, and God hath so held him out, although he be a stumbling-stone to others (Rom. 9:33). This acting of it is hinted in the expressions of trusting and staying on God, so often mentioned in Scripture; and precious promises are made to this acting of faith – *“God will keep them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on Him; because such do trust in Him. Trust in the Lord: for with Him is everlasting strength”* (Isa. 26:3, 4). *“They that trust in the lord shall be as Mount Zion, which abideth for ever”* (Psa. 125:1). I say, the Lord hath made promises to this way of faith’s acting, as knowing it will often go out after Him in this way with many persons; and this way of its acting will be most discernible to them. It goes out after God sometimes by an act of waiting. When the soul hath somewhat depending before God, and hath not clearly discovered his mind concerning it, then faith doth wait; and so it hath the promise – *“They shall not be ashamed that wait for me”* (Isa. 49:23).

Sometimes it acteth in a wilful way upon the Lord, when the soul apprehendeth God thrusting it away, and threatening its ruin – *“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”* (Job 13:15). The faith of that poor woman of Canaan (Matt. 15), so highly commended by

Christ, went out in this way of wilful acting over difficulties: and the Lord speaketh much good of it, and to it, because some will be at times called upon to exercise faith in that way, and so they have that for their encouragement. It were tedious to instance all the several ways of the acting of faith upon, and its exercise about, and outgoings after Christ, - I may say, according to the various conditions of man. And accordingly, faith, which God hath appointed to traffic and travel between Christ and man, as the instrument of conveyance of His fullness unto man, and of maintaining union and communion with Him, acteth variously and differently upon God in Christ: for faith is the very shaping out of a man's heart according to God's device of salvation by Christ Jesus, "*in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell*" (Col. 1:19); so that, let Christ turn what way He will, faith turneth and pointeth that way. Now He turns all ways in which He can be useful to poor man; and therefore faith acts accordingly on Him for drawing out of that fullness, according to a man's case and condition. As for example, The soul is naked, destitute of a covering to keep it from the storm of God's wrath; Christ is fine raiment (Rev. 3:17, 18); then accordingly faith's work here is to "*put on the Lord Jesus*" (Rom. 13:14).

The soul is hungry and thirsty after somewhat that may everlastingly satisfy; Christ Jesus is "*milk, wine, water, the bread of life, and the true manna*" (Isa. 55:1, 2; John 6:48, 51). He is "*the feast of fat things, and of wines on the lees well refined*" (Isa. 25:6): then the work and exercise of faith is to "*go, buy, eat, and drink abundantly*" (John 6:53, 57; Isa. 40:1). The soul is pursued for guilt more or less, and is not able to withstand the charge: Christ Jesus is the city of refuge, and the high-priest there, during whose priesthood, that is, forever, the poor man who escapes thither is safe; then the work and exercise of faith is "*to flee thither for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us*" (Heb. 6:18).

In a word, whatsoever way He may benefit poor man, He declares Himself able to do. And as He holdeth out Himself in the Scriptures, so faith doth point towards Him. If He be a Bridegroom, faith will go out in a marriage relation; if He be a Father, faith pleadeth the man to be a child; if He be a Shepherd, faith pleads the man may be one of His sheep; if He be a Lord, faith calleth Him so,

which none can do but by the Spirit of Jesus; if He be dead, and risen again for our justification, faith "*believeth God hath raised Him*" on that account (Rom. 10:9). Wheresoever He be, there would faith be; and whatsoever He is, faith would be somewhat like Him.

His heart is laid out in breadth and length for Him; yea, when the fame and report of Him goes abroad in His truth, although faith sees not much, yet it "*believeth on His name,*" upon the very fame He hath sent abroad of Himself (John 1:12).

III. Farther explanatory remarks concerning saving faith

But here, for avoiding mistakes, consider

1. That although justifying faith acts so variously, yet every believer who hath a good title to Christ Jesus hath not all these various actings and exercises of faith; for his condition requires them not; and also the Master is sometimes pleased not to lead out the faith of some persons, in all these particular ways, for reasons known to Himself, even when their necessity (to their apprehension) calleth for such an acting of faith. Surely, every one dare not say, "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him*" (Job 13:15). Many would not have gone up with the woman of Canaan, spoken of in Matt. 15: but would have been discouraged, and have given up the pursuit. It is on this account that Christ highly commends the faith of some beyond the faith of others; as of the centurion, and the woman of Canaan (Matt. 8:10). Many good people are much disquieted about their faith, because it goes not out in all those ways we find recorded in Scripture; but there is hardly any one to be found whose faith hath acted all these ways.

2. Many of these actings of faith are much intended and remitted. They are sometimes strong and vigorous, and discernible; and sometime they fail, and unbelief prevails, so it were an uncertain thing to judge of a man's state by these. We find the saints at times very different from themselves in regard of the acting of faith, as we showed before.

3. Each one of these actings of faith speaks good to the person in whom it is, and hath promises annexed unto it, as we have said. Yet

4. Although these acting of faith have promises annexed to them, they are not, on that account, the condition of the new covenant; for then every one behoved to have each one of them, which is not true,

as we said before. A promise is made to him who overcometh: but perseverance is not the condition of the new covenant, though it supposeth it. There are promises made to the exercise of all graces in Scripture; but faith only is the condition of the covenant. I say, then, these promises are made to these workings of faith, not as such, but as they imply justifying faith, which is the condition of the covenant. All these are acting of faith, but not as it is justifying. Therefore –

5. There is something common to all gracious persons, which may be supposed by all the aforesaid acting of faith, wherein the nature and essence of justifying faith consist: and this is the heart's satisfaction with God's plan of salvation by Christ. When man is pleased with God's method of satisfaction to justice, through Christ Jesus, in whom all fullness now dwells, by the Father's pleasure; when the soul and heart of man acquiesce in that, then it believeth unto salvation. As at first the Lord made man suitable to the covenant of works, by creating him perfect, and so putting him in a capacity to perform his will in that covenant: so, under the new covenant, when God giveth the new heart to man, He puts the idea and stamp of all His device in the new covenant upon the man, so as there is a consonance to God's will there: thus he bears the image of the second Adam, Christ Jesus, on him. This is a great part of the new heart, and is most opposed to works: since now the man absolutely falls from works, "*becoming dead to the law,*" as to the point of justification, "*by the body of Christ*" (Rom. 7:4). Man perceiving that God hath devised a way of satisfying Divine justice, and recovering lost man by the incarnation of Christ, he thinks this so good and sure a way, that he absolutely gives up with the law, as I said before, and closes with this device; and this is believing or faith, very opposite to works, and all resting thereupon. This cannot fail to be in all gracious persons, in whom many of the acting of faith are not to be found. This doth clearly suppose known distress in a man, without any relief in himself: this supposes known fullness in Christ, as the alone sufficient relief: this imports a sort of appropriation; for the heart, being pleased with that device, in so far swayeth towards it. This is a thing clearly supposed in all the acting of faith spoken of before.

He that greedily hungereth, hath this; and he that leaneth hath

this, etc. This is to esteem *“Christ the wisdom and power of God”* to salvation, as He is said to be to all that believe (1 Cor. 1:24). They esteem that device wise and sure, becoming God; and that is to believe. On this account, Christ, who is the stone rejected by many, is *“precious to them who believe;”* a fit stone to recover, fortify, and beautify the tottering building and fabric of lost man – *“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious; ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore it is also contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, which believe He is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner; and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed”* (1 Peter 2:4-8). *“The kingdom of God is like a man finding a treasure, for which with joy he selleth all”* (Matt. 13:44). These words hold out the very way of believing, namely, salvation is discovered in the gospel to be by Christ; the heart valueth that method as satisfying. This is to believe on the Son of God lifted up; which is compared with looking to the brazen serpent (John 3:14). It was man’s approbation of that device which made it effectual for his healing; so is it here, *“He that so believeth, setteth to his seal that God is true”* (John 3:33). True! Wherein? In that record He hath borne, that God hath provided life for men, and placed it all in Christ. *“He that believeth not maketh God a liar”* (1 John 5:10). Wherein? In His saying that Christ is a safe and sure way to heaven. This is being pleased and acquiescing in that device; and it is consonant to all I know spoken of justifying faith in Scripture. This is the believing on Christ and on His name, the receiving of Him, and resting on Him for salvation, in our Catechism; the believing that Jesus is the Christ, that is, the anointed one, whom the Father hath sealed and set apart, and qualified for the work of reconciling man unto God; and *“he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God”* (1 John 5:1). This is to *“believe with the heart that God hath raised Christ from the dead”* (Acts 8:37). The man believeth Christ died

and rose on the account of satisfaction for man's transgression.

Devils may believe that - nay, but the man I speak of, "*believeth it with the heart*" (which no natural man doth, until a new heart be given unto him); that is, he is cordially pleased, and satisfied with, and acquiesceth in, this glorious method. And thus faith layeth out itself now and then in its acting, outgoings, and exercise, according to all the covenant relations under which Christ is held forth in the Scripture. Now, I say, this faith is discernible, not only in these actings; - many times a man may know if his heart doth hunger after Christ, and flee for refuge to Him when pursued, and if he doth commit himself unto God, etc.-but also in its very nature; as it is justifying, it is discernible, and may be known. A man may clearly know, if from known distress in himself, upon the report and fame of Christ's fullness, his heart is pleased with God's device in the new covenant; if it goes after Christ in that discovery, and approveth Him as Lord of the life of men, terminating and resting there, and nowhere else, acquiescing in that contrivance with desire and complacency. This is a discernible thing; therefore I call upon men impartially to examine themselves, and if they find that their heart hath closed so with that device of salvation, and is gone out after Him as precious, that thereupon they conclude a sure and true interest in Jesus Christ, and a good claim and title to the crown, since "*he that believeth shall never perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16, 36).

IV. Difficulties as to what seems to be faith removed

Objection. Hypocrites and reprobates have a sort of faith, and are said to believe; and cannot choose but go out after Christ, and that device of salvation, when they hear of it; and they profess they do so, yet are deluded, and so may I. "*Many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men*" (John 2:23, 24). "*Then Simon the sorcerer himself believed also*" (Acts 8:13).

Answer. To say nothing of that thought of your heart, whereby you wonder that any man should not approve of the device of salvation by Christ, and be led out towards Him, as a very promising thing, and implying that justifying faith is in your bosom; and, to say nothing in contradiction to that which you think, that a

natural man, whilst such, and before he gets a new heart, can be pleased with that device, and affectionately believe with his heart, and that which perfectly overthrows the covenant of works, and abaseth man in the point of self righteousness already attained, or that can be attained by him, which is inconsistent with many scriptural truths; I shall notice the following differences between the faith of all hypocrites or reprobates, and that true saving justifying faith, whereof we have spoken.

1. They never close with Christ Jesus in that device, and Him alone, as a sufficient covering of the eyes, as is said of Abraham to Sarah (Gen. 20:16); they still hold fast somewhat of their own, at least to help to procure God's favour and salvation; their heart doth still speak, as that young man in Luke insinuates, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" (Luke 10:25; 18:18). Besides that, they still retain their former lovers, and will not break their covenants with hell and death, imagining they may have Christ with these things equally sharing in their heart; contrary to that, "*A man cannot serve two masters*" (Matt. 6:24). Either Christ must be judged absolute Lord, and worthy to be so, or nothing at all; and so it is clear their heart is not prepared for that device of salvation by Christ, whom God hath alone made Lord here, in whom all fullness shall dwell. But where justifying faith is, the soul of a man and his heart doth close with Christ, and Him alone, "*having no confidence in the flesh,*" and trusting only in God (Phil. 3:3; Psa. 62:5). Also the man here giveth up all other lovers; as they compete with Christ, he resolves "*not to be for another*" (Hos. 3:3). He calls Him Lord, which a man can only do by the Spirit of Christ.

2. As hypocrites and reprobates never close with Christ alone, so they never fully close with Christ as anointed to be a King, to rule over a man in all things; a Priest, to procure pardon and to make peace for man upon all occasions; a Prophet, to be wisdom, and a teacher and counsellor in all cases to man: so they do not receive Christ, especially in the first and third offices. But where true justifying faith is, a man closeth wholly with Christ in all His offices, judging all His will "*good, holy, just, and spiritual*" (Rom. 7:12); and "*right concerning all things*" (Psa. 119:128); "*making mention of His righteousness only*" (Psa. 71:16). The man also giveth up himself to be taught of Him – "*Learn of me*" (Matt.

11:29). So that “*Christ is made,*” to the true believer, with His own consent, “*wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Cor. 1:30). And although he hath not all these things formally in exercise when his heart goes out after Christ, yet, upon search and trial, it will be found with him as I have said.

3. Hypocrites and reprobates never close with Christ, and all the inconveniences that may follow Him; they stick at that, with the scribe - “*And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head*” (Matt. 8:19, 20). But where true justifying faith is, a man closes with Him at all hazards; he resolves to forego all rather than forego Christ. “*We have left all and followed Thee*” (Mark 10:28); “*he reckoned all to be loss and dung for the excellency of Christ Jesus, as his Lord, and to be found in Him*” (Phil. 3:8). We might point out other differences also, as that true faith is operative, “*purifying the heart*” (Acts 15:9); “*working by love*” (Gal. 5:6); whilst hypocrites do only cleanse the “*outside of the platter*” (Matt. 23:25); and “*do all to be seen of men*” (Matt. 23:5); “*not seeking the honour that is of God only*” (John 5:44), and so cannot believe. We might also show, that true faith is never alone in a man, but attended with other saving graces. But because these things will coincide with what follows, and as we are showing here that a man may determine his gracious state by his faith, and the acting thereof on Christ, we pass these things for the present.

Chapter IV

Evidences of a Renewed State

The second great mark of a gracious state, and true saving interest in Jesus Christ, is the new creature – “*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*” (2 Cor. 5:17). This new creation or renovation of man, is a very sensible change; although not in those who are effectually called from the womb, or in their younger years; because those have had this new creature from that time in them, so that this change in after-periods of time is not so discernible as in those who have been regenerated and brought unto Christ after they were come to greater age, and so have more palpably been under the “*power of*

darkness,” before they were “*translated into the kingdom of Christ*” (Col. 1:13). But in all who do warrantable pretend to Christ, this new creature must be; although some do not know experimentally the contraries of every part of it as others do; because they have not been equally, in regard of practice, under the power of darkness. This new creature is called the “*new man*” (Gal. 3:10), which points out the extent of it. It is not simply a new tongue or new hand, but a new man. There is a principle of new life and motion put in the man, which is the new heart; which new principle of life sendeth forth acts of life, or of “*conformity to the image*” of Him who created it, so that the party is renewed in some measure every way (Col. 3:10). This renovation of the man who is in Christ may be reduced into these two great heads: -

I. The whole man must be to some extent renewed

There is a renovation of the man’s person, soul and body, in some measure.

1. His understanding is renewed, so that he judgeth “*Christ preached*” in the gospel to be “*the wisdom and power of God,*” a wise and strong device beseeming God. (1 Cor. 1:23, 24). He knoweth the things of God really and solidly, not to be yea and nay, and uncertain fancies; but all to be yea and amen, solid, certain, substantial things, having a desirable accomplishment in Christ, and resolving much in Him. “*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned: but he that is spiritual judgeth all things*” (1 Cor. 2:14, 15). “*As God is true, our word towards you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us*” (2 Cor. 1:18-20). Natural men, educated under gospel ordinances, although they have some notional knowledge of God, Christ, the promises, the motions of the Holy Spirit, etc., so that they may confer, preach, and dispute about these things; yet they look on them as common received maxims of Christianity, from which to recede were a singularity and disgrace; but not as real, solid, substantial truths, so as to venture their souls

and everlasting being on them. The understanding is renewed also, to understand somewhat of God in the creatures, as bearing marks of His glorious attributes (Psa. 19:1); they see the heavens declaring His glory and power; and somewhat of God in the providence, and the dispensations that fall out: His wondrous works declare that His name is near (Psa. 75:1). The understanding also perceives the conditions and cases of the soul otherwise than it was wont to do; as we find the saints usually speaking in Scripture – *“O my soul, thou hast said unto the lord, Thou art my Lord”* (Psa. 16:2). *“My soul said, Thy face will I seek”* (Psa. 27:8). *“Why art thou cast down, O my soul.”* *“Return unto thy rest, O my soul”* (Psa. 42:5; 116:7).

2. The heart and affections are renewed. The heart is made a new heart, a heart of flesh, capable of impressions, having a copy of His law stamped on it, and the fear of God put into it, whereby the man’s duty becomes in a manner native and kindly to the man - *“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them”* (Ezek. 36:26, 27). It was before a heart of stone, void of the fear of God. The affections are now renewed: the love is renewed in a good measure; it goes out after God, after His law, and after those who have God’s image in them, *“I will love the Lord”* (Psa. 18:1); - after His law, *“O how love I thy law!”* (Psa. 119:97); - after those who have had God’s image in them, *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:35). *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren”* (1 John 3:14). This love to God’s people is purely on the account that they are the children of God, and keep His statutes: it is with a *“pure heart fervently”* (1 Peter 1:22); and therefore it goes towards all those whom the man knows or apprehends to be such. *“I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts”* (Psa. 119:63); - in all cases and conditions, even where there is nothing to beautify or commend but the image of God. And this love is so fervent many times, that it putteth itself out in all relations; so that a man seeks a godly wife, a godly master, a godly servant, a godly counsellor, in preference to all others - *“Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the*

land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me" (Psa. 101:6). And *"it is not quenched by many waters"* (Cant. 8:7). Many imperfections and infirmities, differences in opinion, wrongs received, will not altogether quench love. Also it is communicative of good according to its measure, and as the case of the godly poor requires - *"Thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints,"* etc. (Psa. 16:2). *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him"* (1 John 3:17-19).

The man's hatred is also renewed, and is now directed against sin, *"I hate vain thoughts"* (Psa. 119:113); against God's enemies, as such, *"Do not I hate them that hate Thee?"* (Psa. 139:21, 22). The joy or delight is renewed, for it runneth towards God, *"Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee"* (Psa. 73:25); - towards His law and will, *"His delight is in the law of the Lord"* (Psa. 1:2); - and towards the godly and their fellowship, *"To the saints in whom is all my delight"* (Psa. 16:3). The sorrow is turned against sin which hath wronged Christ - *"Looking to Him whom they have pierced, they mourn"* (Zech. 12:10). The sorrow is godly there, and against what encroacheth upon God's honour - *"They are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of that is their burden"* (Zeph. 3:18). There is some renovation in all the affections, as in every other part of the soul, pointing now towards God.

3. The very outward members of the man are renewed, as the Scripture speaks - the tongue, the eye, the ear, the hand, and the foot, so that those members which once were abused as weapons of unrighteousness unto sin, are now improved as weapons of righteousness unto holiness (Rom. 6:19).

II. He must be, to some extent, renewed in all his ways

A man who is in Christ is renewed in some measure in all his ways - *"Behold all things are become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17). The man becometh new.

1. In the way of his interest. He was set upon any good before, though but apparent and at best but external. "*Many say, who will show us any good?*" (Psa. 4:6); but now his interest and business is, how to "*be found in Christ, in that day*" (Phil. 3:9); or how to be obedient to Him, and "*walk before Him in the light of the living*" (Psa. 56:13); which He would choose among all the mercies that fill this earth – "*The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy, teach me Thy statutes*" (Psa. 119:64). The interest of Christ also becomes the man's interest, as appears in the song of Hannah and of Mary. (1 Sam. 2; Luke 1). It is strange to see people newly converted, and having reached but the beginnings of knowledge, concern and interest themselves in the public matters of Christ's kingdom, so desirous to have Him riding prosperously and subduing the people under Him.

2. The man that is in Christ is renewed in the way of his worship. He was wont to "*serve God in the oldness of the letter*" (Rom. 7:6); according to custom, answering the letter of the command in outward duty which one in whom the old man hath absolute dominion can do; but now he worshippeth God in newness of spirit, in a new way, wherein He is "*helped by the Spirit of God*" (Rom. 8:26); beyond the reach of flesh and blood. He "*serveth now the true and living God*" (1 Thess. 1:9); "*in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23). Having spiritual apprehensions of God, and engaged in his very soul in that work, doing and saying truly and not feignedly when he worshippeth; still desiring to approach unto Him as a living God, who heareth and seeth Him, and can accept His service (Psa. 62:1, 2). I grant he fails of this many times; yet I may say, such worship he intends, and sometimes overtakes, and doth not much reckon that worship which is not so performed unto God; and the iniquity of his holy things is not the least part of His burden and exercise. To such a worship natural men are strangers, whilst they babble out their vainglorious boastings, like the Pharisee – "*Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men*" (Luke 18:11, 12); or the Athenians, who worshipped an "*unknown God*" (Acts 17:23).

3. The man that is in Christ is renewed in the way of his outward calling and employments in the world; he now resolves to be diligent in it, because God hath so commanded - "*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*" (Rom. 12:11); and to

reward God in it as the last end, doing it to *“His glory”* (1 Cor. 10:31); and studying to keep some intercourse with God in the exercise of his outward employments, as Jacob on his dying bed - *“I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord”* (Gen. 49:18); and as Nehemiah did *“Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven”* (Neh. 2:4); so that the man resolves to walk with God, and *“set Him always before him”* (Psa. 16:8); wherein I deny not that he often faileth.

4. He becomes new in the way of his relations; - he becomes a more dutiful husband, father, brother, master, servant, neighbour, etc. Herein doth he exercise himself to keep a conscience void of offense towards men as well as towards God, *“becoming all things to all men”* (Acts 24:16; 1 Cor. 9:22).

5. He becomes new in the way of lawful liberties. He studies to make use of meat, drink, sleep, recreations, apparel, with an eye to God, labouring not to come under the power of any lawful thing - *“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any”* (1 Cor. 6:12); nor to give offence to others in the use of these things - *“For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak”* (Rom. 14:20, 21). *“Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification”* (Rom. 15:2), - not using *“liberty as an occasion to the flesh”* (Gal. 5:13). Yea, he laboureth to use all these things as a stranger on earth, so that his moderation may appear: *“Let your moderation be known unto all men”* (Phil. 4:5). And he regards God as the last end in these things, *“doing all to the glory of God;”* so that we may say of that man, *“Old things are”* much *“passed away, all things are”* in some measure *“become new”* (2 Cor. 5:17). He that is so a new creature is undoubtedly in Christ. This renovation of a man in all manner of conversation, and this being under the law to God in all things, is that *“holiness without which no man shall see the Lord”* (Heb. 12:14). Men may fancy things to themselves, but unless they study to approve themselves unto God in all well-pleasing, and attain some inward testimony of sincerity that way, they shall not assure their hearts before Him. The

testimony of men's conscience is their rejoicing (2 Cor. 1:12). *"By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments"* (1 John 2:3). *"And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God"* (1 John 3:19-21). No confidence if the heart condemn. This is the new creature, having a principle of new spiritual life infused by God into the heart, whereby it becometh new, and putteth forth acts of new life throughout the whole man, as we have said, so that he pointeth towards the whole law

(1). Towards those commands which forbid sin; so he resolves to contend against secret sins, *"not to lay a stumbling-block before the blind"* (Lev. 19:14), - little sins, which are judged so by many, the least things of the law - *"Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 5:19), - spiritual sins, filthiness of the spirit - *"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* (2 Cor. 7:1); - sins of omission as well as of commission, since men are to be judged by these - *"Then shall He say unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink"* (Matt. 25:42, 44). Yea, sins that are wrought into his natural humour and constitution, and thus are as a right eye or hand to him - *"If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee"* (Matt. 5:29). This new principle of life, by the good hand of God, makes the man set himself against every known sin, so far as not to allow peaceful abode to any known darkness - *"What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?"* (2 Cor. 6:14).

2. As also he pointeth towards those commands which relate to duty, and the quickening of grace in man. It maketh a man respect all God's known commands (Psa. 119:6); to *"live godly, righteously, and soberly"* (Titus. 2:12); yea, and to study a right and sincere way and manner of doing things, resolving not to give over

this study of conformity to God's will whilst he liveth on earth, but still to "*press forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:13,14). This is true holiness, every way becoming all those who pretend to be heirs of that holy habitation, in the immediate company and fellowship of a holy God – "*We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him*" (1 John 3:2).

III. The supposed unattainableness of such evidences considered

Some may think these things high attainments, and very hard to be got at. I grant it is true. But -

First, Remember that there is a very large allowance in the covenant, promised to His people, which maketh things more easy. The Lord hath engaged "*to take away the stony heart, to give a heart of flesh, a new heart, a heart to fear Him for ever;*" He hath engaged to "*put His law in men's heart; to put His fear in their heart, to make them keep that law; to put His Spirit in them, to cause them to keep it.*" He hath promised "*to satisfy the priests with fatness,*" that the souls of "*the people may be satisfied with His goodness: and to keep and water them continually every moment*" (Ezek. 36:26, 27; Jer. 31:12, 13, 14, 33; 32:32, 36, 40; Isa. 27:3). And if He must be "*inquired of to do all these things unto men,*" He engageth to pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication on them, and so to teach them how to seek these things, and how to put Him to it, to do all for them (Zech. 12:10).

Secondly, For the satisfaction of weaker Christians, I grant this new creature, as we have circumscribed and enlarged it, will not be found in all the degrees of it in every gracious person. But it is well if -

1. There be a new man. We cannot grant less - "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;*" and that is the new man which all must put on who are savingly taught of Christ - "*If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true*

holiness” (Ephes. 4:21-24). There must be some renewing after the image of God in a man’s soul and body; there must be somewhat of every part of the man pointing towards God. Although I grant every one cannot instruct this to others, neither discern it in himself, because many know not the distinct parts of the soul, nor the reformation competent to every part of the soul and body; yet it will be found there is some such thing in them, yea, they have a witness of it within them, if you make the thing plain and clear to them what it is.

2. There must be such a respect unto God’s known commands, that a man do not allow peaceably any known iniquity to dwell in him; for *“what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”* He must not regard iniquity – *“Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all Thy commandments.”* *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”* (2 Cor. 6:14-16; Psa. 119:6; 66:18). I grant men may be ignorant of many commands and many sins, and may imagine, in some cases, that some sins are not hateful to God; but supposing that they are instructed in these things, there can be no agreement between righteousness and unrighteousness.

3. Men must point towards all the law of God in their honest resolutions; for this is nothing else than to give up the heart unto God, to put His law in it without exception, which is a part of the covenant we are to make with God - *“This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel - I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts”* (Heb. 8:10). I grant many know not how to have respect to God’s law in all their ways; but if it be made manifest to them how that should be done, they will point at it. And it is true, they will many times fail of their resolutions in their practice; yet when they have failed, they can say they did resolve otherwise; and will again honestly, and without guile, resolve to do otherwise; and it will prove their affliction to have failed of their resolution, when the Lord discovers it to them, which He will do in due time.

4. When we are to judge of our state by the new creature, we must do it at a convenient time, when we are in good case; at least, not when we are in the worst case; for *“the flesh and spirit do lust and fight against each other”* (Gal. 5:17); and sometimes the one, and

sometimes the other doth prevail. Now, I say, we must choose a convenient time when the spiritual part is not by some temptation worsted and overpowered by the flesh; for in that case the new creature is driven back in its streams, and much returned to the fountain and the habits, except in some small things not easily discernible, whereby it maketh opposition to the flesh, according to the foresaid scripture. For now it is the time of winter in the soul, and we may not expect fruit; yea, not leaves, as in some other seasons. Only here, lest profane atheists should take advantage of this, we will say, that the spirit doth often prevail over the flesh in a godly man, and that the scope, aim, tenor, and main drift of his way is in the law of the Lord; that is his walk (Psa. 119:1); whereas the pathway and ordinary course of the wicked is sin, as is often hinted in the book of the Proverbs of Solomon. And if it happen that a godly man be overcome by any transgression, ordinarily it is his sad vexation: and we suppose he keeps it still in dependency before God to have it rectified, as David speaketh, "*Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?*" (Psa. 56:13).

IV. The special attainments of hypocrites considered

Objection. Atheists and hypocrites may have great changes and renovations wrought upon them, and in them, and I fear such may be the case with me.

Answer. I grant that atheists and hypocrites have many things in them which look like the new creature.

First, in regard of the parts of the man, they may –

1. Come to much knowledge, as (Heb. 6:4) "*They are enlightened*"

2. There may be an exciting of their affections, as "*They receive the word with joy,*" as he that received the seed into stony places (Matt. 13:20).

3. They may effect a great deal of reformation in the outward man, both as to freedom from sin, and engagement to positive duty, as the Pharisee did "*God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess*" (Luke 18:11, 12). Yea –

4. In regard of their practical understanding, they may judge some

things of God to be excellent: the officers said that *“never man spake as Christ”* (John 7:46).

Secondly, Hypocrites may have a great deal of profession.

1. They may talk of the law and gospel, and of the covenant: as the wicked do - *“What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou should’st take my covenant in thy mouth?”* (Psa. 50:16).

2. They may confess sin openly to their own shame, as King Saul did - *“Then said Saul, I have sinned: Return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly”* (1 Sam. 26:21).

3. They may humble themselves in sackcloth, with Ahab - *“And it came to pass, when Ahab heard these words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly”* (1 Kings 21:27).

4. They may inquire busily after duty, and come cheerfully to receive it - *“Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God”* (Isa. 58:2).

5. They may join with God’s interest in a hard and difficult time, as Demas and other hypocrites, who afterwards fell away.

6. They may give much of their goods to God and to the saints, as Ananias, if not all their goods - *“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing”* (Acts 5:1, 2; 1 Cor. 13:3). Yea -

7. It is not impossible for some such, being straitly engaged in their credit, to *“give their bodies to be burned,”* as in the last cited place.

Thirdly, Hypocrites may advance far in the common and ordinary steps of a Christian work; such as the elect have when God leads them captive. As -

1. They may be under great convictions of sin, as Judas was - *“Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple,*

and departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matt. 27:3-5). So was King Saul often.

2. They may tremble at the word of God, and be under much terror, as Felix was – *“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25).*

3. They may rejoice in *“receiving of the truth, as he that received the seed into stony places” (Matt. 13:20).*

4. They may be in some peace and quiet, in expectation of salvation by Christ, as the foolish virgins were. (Matt. 25).

5. All this may be backed and followed with some good measure of reformation, as the Pharisee – *“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” “The unclean spirit may go out of them” (Matt. 12:43; Luke 18:11, 12).*

6. This work may seem to be confirmed by some special experiences and *“tastings of the good word of God” (Heb. 6:4).*

Fourthly, Hypocrites may have some things very like the saving graces of the Spirit; as –

1. They may have a sort of faith, like Simon Magus – *“Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done” (Acts 8:13).*

2. They may have a sort of repentance, and may walk mournfully – *“What profit is it that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?” (Mal. 3:14).*

3. They may have a great fear of God, such as Baalam had, who, for a house full of gold, would not go with the messengers of Balak, without leave asked of God and given. (Num. 22:18).

4. They have a sort of hope – *“The hypocrite’s hope shall perish” (Job. 8:13).*

5. They may have some love, as had Herod to John – *“And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath’s sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her” (Mark 6:26).* I need not insist, as it is out of all question, they have counterfeits of all saving graces.

Fifthly, They have somewhat like the special communications of God, and the witnessing of His Spirit, and somewhat like *“the powers of the world to come, working powerfully on them, with some flashes of joy arising thence,”* as Heb. 6:4, 5 - *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.”* Notwithstanding of all which, they are but *“almost persuaded,”* with Agrippa, to *“become Christians”* (Acts 26:28). It were tedious to speak particularly to each of these things, and to clear it up, that they are all unsound; I shall point out some few things, wherein a truly renewed man, who is in Christ, doth differ from hypocrites and reprobates.

1. Whatever changes be in hypocrites, yet their heart is not changed, and made new. The new heart is only given to the elect, when they are converted and brought under the bond of the covenant - *“I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever.”* *“A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh”* (Jer. 32:39; Ezek. 36:26). Hypocrites never apprehend Christ as the only satisfying good in all the world, for which with joy they would quit all; for then the kingdom of God were entered into them. *“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goes and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field”* (Matt. 13:44). The truly renewed man dare, and can upon good ground say, and hath a testimony of it from on high, that his heart hath been changed in taking up with Christ, and hath been led out after Him, as the only enriching treasure, in whom *“to be found he accounteth all things else loss and dung”* (Phil. 3:8, 9).

2. Whatever reformation or profession hypocrites attain unto, as it comes not from a new heart, and pure principle of zeal for God, so it is always for some wicked or base end; as, *“to be seen of men”* (Matt. 6:5), or to evade and shun some outward strait, to be freed from God’s wrath, and the trouble of their own conscience - *“Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou sees not? Wherefore*

have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge?” (Isa. 58:3). *“What profit is it that we have kept His ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?”* (Mal. 3:14). In testimony of this, they never have respect to all known commands, else they should *“never be ashamed”* (Psa. 119:6); nor do they, without guile in their own heart, resolve against every known iniquity, else they were free of heart-condemning, and so might justly *“have confidence before God”* (1 John 3:21). If from a principle of love unto, and of zeal for Christ, and for a right end, they did, in ever so small a degree, confess and profess Him, Christ were obliged by His own word to confess them before His Father. (Matt. 10:32).

3. Whatever length hypocrites advance in that work, by which people are led on unto Christ, yet they never *“seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”* (Matt. 6:33). *“The one thing that is necessary,”* namely, Christ’s friendship and fellowship, is never their one thing and heart-satisfying choice, else that *“better part would never be taken from them”* (Luke 10:42).

4. Whatever counterfeits of grace are in hypocrites, yet they are all produced without any saving work of the Spirit of Christ; and it is enough to exclude them from the benefit of this mark, that they are never denied to these things, nor emptied of them, but still do rest on them as their Saviour, so that they *“submit not unto the righteousness of God”* (Rom. 10:3); and that is enough to keep them at a distance from Christ, who will never mend that old garment of hypocrites with His fine new linen, nor *“put His new wine in these old bottles”* (Matt. 9:16, 17).

5. We may say, Let hypocrites, reprobates, or atheists, have what they can, they want the three great essentials of religion and true Christianity –

(1). They are not broken in heart, and emptied of their own righteousness, so as to loathe themselves. Such *“lost ones Christ came to seek and save”* (Luke 19:10).

(2). They never took up Christ Jesus as the only treasure and jewel that can enrich and satisfy; and therefore, have never cordially agreed unto God’s device in the covenant, and so are not worthy of Him: neither hath the kingdom of God savingly entered into their heart – *“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a*

field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Matt. 13:44).

(3). They never in earnest close with Christ’s whole yoke without exception, judging all His *“will just and good, holy and spiritual”* (Rom. 7:12); and therefore no rest is given to them by Christ – *“Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls”* (Matt. 11:29). Therefore, whosoever thou art, who can lay clear and just claim to these three aforesaid things, Thou art beyond the reach of all atheists, hypocrites, and reprobates in the world, as having answered the great ends and intents of the law and gospel.

V. Doubts because of prevailing sin considered

Objection. I am clear sometimes, I think, to lay claim to that mark of the new creature; yet at other times sin doth so prevail over me, that I am made to question all the work within me.

Answer. It is much to be lamented, that people professing the name of Christ should be so abused and enslaved by transgression, as many are. Yet, in answer to the objection, if it be seriously proposed, we say, The saints are found in Scripture justly laying claim to God and His covenant, when iniquity did prevail over them, as we find – *“Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away”* (Psa. 65:3). Thus Paul thanks God through Christ, even while lamenting that a law in his members leads him captive unto sin. (Rom. 7:25). But for the right understanding, and safe application of such truths, we must make a difference betwixt gross outbreakings and ordinary infirmities or heart-evils, or sins that come unawares upon a man, without forethought or any deliberation. As for the former sort, it is hard for a man, whilst he is under the power of them, to see his gracious change, although it be in him: and very hard to draw any comfort from it, until the man be in some measure recovered, and begin seriously to resent such sins, and to resolve against them. We find David calling himself God’s servant, quickly after his numbering of God’s people; but he was then under the serious resentment of his sin – *“And David’s heart smote him after he had numbered the people. David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now I beseech Thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done foolishly”* (2 Sam. 24:10). Jonah

layeth claim to God as his Master under his rebellion; but he is then repenting it, and in a spirit of revenge against himself for his sin (Jonah 1:9-12).

Next, as for those sins of infirmity, and daily incursions of heart-evils, such as those whereof (it is like) Paul doth complain; we shall draw out some things from the seventh chapter to the Romans, upon which Paul maintains his interest in Christ, and if you can apply them it is well.

1. When Paul finds that he doth much fail, and cannot reach conformity to God's law, he doth not blame the law, as being too strict, so that men cannot keep it, as hypocrites use to speak; but he blames himself as being carnal; and he saith of the law, "*that it is good, holy, and spiritual*" (Rom. 7:12,14).

2. He can say, he failed of a good which he intended, and did outshoot himself, and he had often honestly resolved against the sin into which he fell – "*For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do*" (Rom. 7:15, 18, 19).

3. He saith that the prevailing of sin over him is his burden, so that he judgeth himself wretched because of such a body of death, from which he longeth to be delivered. (Rom. 7:24).

4. He saith, that whilst he is under the power and law of sin, there is somewhat in the bottom of his heart opposing it, although overcome by it, which would be another way, and when that gets the upper hand it is a delightsome thing (Rom. 7:22-25). Upon these things he "*thanks God in Christ that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:1). Now, then, see if you can lay claim to these things.

(1). If you blame yourself, and approve the law, whilst you fail.

(2). If you can say that you often resolve against sin honestly, and without known guile; and do so resolve the contrary good before the evil break in upon you.

(3). If you can say, that you are so far exercised with your failings, as to judge yourself wretched because of such things, and a

body of death, which is the root and fountain of such things.

(4). If you can say, that there is a party within you opposing these evils, which would be at the right way, and, as it were, is in its element when it is in God's way, it is well: only be advised not to take rest, until, in some good measure, you be rid of the ground of this objection, or, at least, until you can very clearly say, you are waging war with these things. Now, a good help against the prevailing power of sin is to cleave close to Christ Jesus by faith, which, as it is a desirable part of sanctification, and a high degree of conformity to God's will, and most subservient unto His design in the gospel, should be much endeavoured by people, as a world pleasing unto God – *“The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God”* (Gal. 2:21). *“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent”* (John 6:29). This is the ready way to draw life and sap from Christ, the blessed root, for fruitfulness in all cases, as in John 15:4, 5 – *“Abide in Me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.”*

VI. Doubts arising out of a want of Christian experience considered

Objection. I do not partake of those special communications of God mentioned in the Scripture, and of those actings and outgoings of His Spirit, of which gracious people are often speaking, and whereunto they attain. The want of these things maketh me much suspect my state.

Answer. I shall shortly point out some of these excellent communications, and I hope, upon a right discovery of them, there will be but small ground left for the jealous complaints of many gracious people.

1. Besides those convictions of the Spirit of God, which usually usher Christ's way into the souls of men, and those also which afterwards do ordinarily attend them, there is a seal of the Spirit of God spoken of in Scripture, the principal thing whereof is the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, imprinting the draughts and lineaments of God's image and revealed will upon a man, as a seal

or signet doth leave the impression and stamp of its likeness upon the thing sealed. So it is – *“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”* (2 Tim. 2:19). And thus I conceive the seal to be called a witness – *“He that believeth hath the witness in himself”* (1 John 5:10); that is, the grounds upon which an interest in Christ is to be made out and proved, are in every believer; for he hath somewhat of the sanctifying work of God’s Spirit in him, which is a sure, although not always a clear and manifest witness.

2. There is communion with God much talked of among Christians, whereby they understand the sensible presence of God refreshing the soul exceedingly. But if we speak properly, communion with God is a mutual interest between God and a man, who hath closed with him in Christ. It is a commonness, or a common interest between God and a man: not only as a man interested in God Himself, but in all that is the Lord’s; so the Lord hath a special interest in the man, and also all that belongs to him. There is a communion between husband and wife, whereby they have a special interest in each other’s persons, goods, and concerns: so it is here. There is such a communion with God; He is our God, and all things are ours, because He is ours. This communion with God all true believers have at all times, as we shall show afterwards. I grant there is an actual improvement of that communion, whereby men do boldly approach unto God and converse with Him as their God with holy familiarity; especially in worship, when the soul doth converse with a living God, partaking of the divine nature, growing like unto Him, and sweetly travelling through His attributes, and, with some confidence of interest, viewing these things as the man’s own goods and property: this we call communion with God in ordinances. This indeed is not so ordinarily nor frequently made out to men, and all His people do not equally partake of it: and it is true that what is in God, goes not out for the benefit of the man to his apprehension equally at all times: yet certainly communion with God, properly so called, namely, that commonness of interest between God and a man who is savingly in covenant with Him, doth always stand firm and sure; and so much of communion with God in ordinances have all believers, as that their heart converseth with a

living God there, now and then, and is, in some measure, changed into that same image; and there needeth not be any further doubt about it.

3. There is also fellowship with God, which is often mistaken amongst believers. If by fellowship be meant the walking in our duty, as in the sight of a living God, who sees and hears us, and is witness to all our carriage, it is a thing common unto all gracious men; they all have it habitually, and in design – *“I have set the Lord always before me”* (Psa. 16:8). Yea, and often they have it actually in exercise, when their spirit is in any good frame: they walk as if they saw God standing by them, and have some thought of His favour through Christ – *“Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ”* (1 John 1:3). If by fellowship we mean a sweet, refreshing, familiar, sensible, conversing with God, which doth delight and refresh the soul (besides what the conscience of duty doth); it is then a walking in the light of His countenance, and a good part of sensible presence: and although it seemeth Enoch had much of it, whilst it is said, *“He walked with God”* (Gen. 5:24); yet it is not so ordinary as the former, nor so common to all Christians; for here the soul is filled as with marrow and fatness, following hard after its guide, and singularly upheld by His right hand – *“My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness: and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips. My soul followeth hard after Thee, Thy right hand upholdeth me”* (Psa. 63:5, 8).

4. There is also access unto God; and this I take to be the removing of obstructions out of the way between a man and God, so that the man is admitted to come near. We are said to have access to a great person when the doors are cast open, the guards removed from about him, and we admitted to come close to him: so it is here. Now this access, in Scripture, is sometimes taken for Christ’s preparing of the way, the removing of enmity between God and sinners, so as men now have an open way to come unto God through Christ – *“For through Him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father”* (Eph. 2:18). Sometimes it is taken for the actual improvement of that access purchased by Christ, when a man finds all obstructions and differences which do ordinarily fall in between him and God removed: God doth not act towards him as a

stranger, keeping up Himself from him, or frowning on him, but the man is admitted to *“come even to His seat”* (Job 23:3). Of the want of which he complains, whilst he saith, *“Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him”* (Job 23:8, 9). The first sort of access is common to all believers: they are brought near by the blood of the covenant, and are no more afar off, as the deadly enmity between God and them is removed; but access in the other sense is dispensed more according to the Lord’s absolute sovereignty and pleasure, and it is left in the power of believers to obstruct it to themselves, until it please the Lord mercifully and freely to grant it unto them again; so it is up and down; and there needs be no question as to a man’s state about it.

5. There is also liberty before God; and this properly is freedom, or free speaking unto God. Many do much question their state, because of the want of this now and then, since the Scripture hath said, *“where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,”* (2 Cor. 3:17); but they do unjustly confine that liberty spoken of there unto this free speaking before God. I grant, where the Spirit of the Lord savingly discovers God’s will in the Scriptures to a man, there is liberty from any obligation to the ceremonial law, and from the condemning power of the moral law, and from much of that gross darkness and ignorance which is naturally on men’s hearts as a veil hiding Christ in the gospel from them. I grant also, that sometimes even this liberty, which is a free communing with God, and *“ordering of our cause before Him, and filling of our mouths with arguments”* (Job 23:4), is granted to the godly, but not as liberty taken in the former senses. Although the Lord hath obliged Himself to *“pour out the spirit of prayer upon all the house of David”* (Zech. 12:10), in some measure, yet this communication of the Spirit, which we call liberty or free speaking unto God, dependeth much on the Lord’s absolute pleasure, when, and in what measure to allow it. This liberty, which we call freedom or free speaking with God in prayer, is sometimes much withdrawn as to any great confidence in the time of prayer, at least until it draw towards the close of it. It standeth much in a vivacity of the understanding to take up the case which a man is to speak before

God, so that he can order his cause; and next there be words, or verbal expressions, elegant, suitable, and very emphatical, or powerful and pithy. There is also joined a fervency of spirit in prayer, of which the Scripture speaks; the soul is warm and bended, and very intent. There is also ordinarily in this liberty a special melting of the heart often joined with a great measure of the "*spirit of grace and supplication*" (Zech. 12:10). So the soul is poured out before God as for a firstborn. Such is the liberty which many saints get before God, whilst, in much brokenness of heart and fervency of spirit, they are admitted to speak their mind fully to God, as a living God, noticing (at least) their prayer. Sometimes this liberty is joined with confidence: and then it is not only a free, but also a bold speaking before God. It is that "*boldness with confidence*" (Eph. 3:12) – "*In whom we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of Him.*" This is more rarely imparted unto men than the former, yet it is ordinary: it hath in it, besides what we mentioned before, some influence of the Spirit upon faith, making it put forth some vigorous acting in prayer. There is a sweet mournful frame of spirit, by which a man poureth out his heart in God's bosom, and with some confidence of His favour and goodwill, pleadeth his cause before Him as a living God; and this is all the sensible presence that many saints do attain unto. There is no ground of doubt concerning a man's state in the point of liberty before God, in this last sense, because there is nothing essential to the making up of a gracious state here: some have it, some want it; some have it at sometimes, and not at others; so that it is much up and down; yet I may say gracious men may do much, by a very ordinary influence, in contributing towards the attaining and retaining, or keeping of such a frame of spirit.

6. There is also an influence, or breathing of the Spirit. This gracious influence (for of such only do I now speak) is either ordinary: and this is the operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul, and the habits of grace there, whereby they are still kept alive, and in some exercise and acting, although not very discernible. This influence, I concede, doth always attend believers, and is that "*keeping and watering night and day, and every moment,*" promised in Isaiah 27:3. Or, this influence is more singular and special, and is the same to a gracious, although a withered soul, as

the “*wind and breath to the dry bones*” (Ezek. 37:9, 10); putting them in good case, and “*as the dew or rain to the grass,*” or newly-mown field and parched ground (Psa. 72:6). Such influence is meant by the “*blowing of the south-wind, making the spices to flow out*” (Cant. 4:16). When the Spirit moveth thus, there is an edge put upon the graces of God in the soul, and they are made to act more vigorously. This is the “*enlarging of the heart,*” by which “*a man doth run in the ways of God*” (Psa. 119:32). This influence is more discernible than the former, and not so ordinarily communicated. Also here sometimes the wind bloweth more upon one grace, and sometimes more discernible upon another, and often upon many of the graces together; and, according to the lesser or greater measure of this influence, the soul acteth more or less vigorously towards God; and since faith is a created grace in the soul, this influence of the Spirit is upon it, sometimes less, sometimes more, and accordingly is the assurance of faith small or great.

7. There is the hearing of prayer, often spoken of in Scripture; and many vex themselves about it, alleging that they know nothing of it experimentally. I grant there is a favourable hearing of prayer; but we must remember it is twofold. Either,

(1). It is such as a man is simply to believe by way of argument on scriptural grounds; as if I had fled unto Christ; and approached unto God in Him, praying according to His will, not regarding iniquity in my heart, exercising faith about the thing I pray for absolutely or conditionally, according to the nature of the thing and promises concerning it; I am obliged to believe that God heareth my prayer, and will give what is good, according to these scriptures – “*Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it*” (John 14:13). “*This is our confidence, that whatsoever we ask according to His will He heareth us*” (1 John 5:14). “*Believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*” (Mark 11:24). “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me*” (Psa. 66:18). Then, if I regard not iniquity, I may believe that He doth hear me. Or,

(2). A man doth sensibly perceive that God heareth his prayer; it is made out to his heart, without any syllogistical deduction. Such a hearing of prayer Hannah obtained - “*Her countenance was no more sad*” (1 Sam. 1:18). Surely the Lord did breathe upon her faith, and made her believe she was heard: she could not make it out

by any argument; for she had not grounds whereupon to build the premises of the argument, according to Scripture, in that particular: God did stamp it some way upon her heart sensibly, and so made her believe it. This is but rarely granted, especially in cases clearly deducible in Scripture; therefore people ought to be much occupied in exercising their faith about the other, and ought to leave it to God to give of this latter what He pleaseth. A man's gracious state should not be brought into debate upon the account of such hearing of prayer.

8. There is assurance of God's favour by the witnessing of our own spirits; which assurance is adduced by way of argument syllogistically, thus - Whosoever believeth on Christ shall never perish: but I do believe on Christ; therefore I shall never perish. Whose hath respect unto all God's commandments shall never be ashamed; but I have respect unto all His commandments; therefore I shall never be ashamed. I say, by reasoning thus, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual things, a man may attain unto a good certainty of his gracious state. It is supposed (1 John 3:18, 19) that by loving the brethren in deed and in truth, we may "*assure our hearts before God;*" and that a man may rejoice upon the testimony of a good conscience (2 Cor. 1:12). A man may have "*confidence towards God, if his heart do not condemn him*" (1 John 3:21). We may then attain unto some assurance, although not full assurance, by the witness of our own spirits. I do not deny, that in this witnessing of our spirits concerning assurance, there is some concurrence of the Spirit of God: but, I conceive, there needeth but a very ordinary influence, without which we can do nothing. Now this assurance, such as it is, may be reached by intelligent believers, who keep a good conscience in their walk. So, I hope, there needs by no debate about it, as to a man's gracious state; for if a man will clear himself of heart-condemnings, he will speedily reach this assurance.

9. There is a witnessing of God's Spirit, mentioned as "*bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*" (Rom. 8:16). This operation of the Spirit is best understood, if we produce any syllogism by which our spirit doth witness our sonship; as for example, Whosoever loveth the brethren is passed from death to life, and consequently is in Christ: but I love the brethren; therefore

I am passed from death to life. Here there is a threefold operation of the Spirit, or three operations rather.

The first is a beam of divine light upon the first proposition, evincing the divine authority of it, as the word of God. The Spirit of the Lord must witness the divinity of the Scriptures, and that it is the infallible word of God, far beyond all other arguments that can be used for it.

The second operation is a glorious beam of light from the Spirit, shining upon the second proposition, and so upon His own graces in the soul, discovering them to be true graces, and such as the Scripture calleth so. Thus we are said to "*know by His Spirit the things that are freely given unto us of God*" (1 Cor. 2:13).

The third operation is connected with the third proposition of the argument, or the conclusion, and this I conceive to be nothing else but an influence upon faith, strengthening it to draw a conclusion of full assurance upon the foresaid premises.

Now, with submission to others, who have greater light in the Scripture, and more experience of these precious communications, I do conceive the witness of the Spirit, or witnessing of it, which is mentioned, "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*" (Rom. 8:16), is not that first operation upon the first proposition; for that operation is that testimony of the Spirit by which He beareth witness to the divinity of the whole Scripture, and asserts the divine authority of it unto the souls of gracious men; and such an operation may be upon a truth of Scripture, which doth not relate to a man's sonship or interest in Christ at all. The Spirit may so shine upon any truth, relating to duty, or any other fundamental truth, impressing the divinity of it upon and unto the soul, and speak nothing relating to a man's interest in Christ. Neither is the third operation of the Spirit, by which He makes faith boldly draw the conclusion, this witnessing of the Spirit; for that operation is nothing else but an influence upon faith, bringing it out to full assurance; but that upon which this full assurance is drawn or put out, is somewhat confirmed and witnessed already. Therefore I conceive the second operation of the Spirit, upon the second proposition, and so upon the graces in the man, is that witness of God's Spirit, that beam of divine light shining upon those graces, whereby they are made very conspicuous to the

understanding. That is the witness, the shining so on them is His witnessing: for, only here, in this proposition, and in this operation, doth the Spirit of God prove a co-witness with our spirit: for the main thing wherein lies the witness of our spirit is in the second proposition, and so the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits is also in that same proposition.

So these two witnesses having confirmed and witnessed one and the same thing, namely, the truth and reality of such and such graces in the man, which our own spirit or conscience doth depone according to its knowledge, and the Spirit of the Lord doth certainly affirm and witness to be so, there is a sentence drawn forth, and a conclusion of the man's sonship by the man's faith, breathed upon by the Spirit for that purpose; and this conclusion beareth the full assurance of a man's sonship. It may be presumed that some true saints do not partake of this all their days – *“And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Heb. 2:15).

10. I speak with the experience of many saints, and, I hope, according to Scripture, if I say there is a communication of the Spirit of God which is sometimes vouchsafed to some of His people that is somewhat besides, if not beyond, that witnessing of a sonship spoken of before. It is a glorious divine manifestation of God unto the soul, shedding abroad God's love in the heart; it is a thing better felt than spoken of: it is no audible voice, but it is a ray of glory filling the soul with God, as He is life, light, love, and liberty, corresponding to that audible voice, *“O man, greatly beloved”* (Dan. 9:23); putting a man in a transport with this on his heart, *“It is good to be here”* (Matt. 17:4). It is that which went out from Christ to Mary, when He but mentioned her name - *“Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master”* (John 20:16). He had spoken some words to her before, and she understood not that it was He: but when He uttereth this one word *“Mary,”* there was some admirable divine conveyance and manifestation made out unto her heart, by which she was so satisfyingly filled, that there was no place for arguing and disputing whether or no that was Christ, and if she had any interest in Him. That manifestation wrought faith to itself, and did purchase credit and trust to itself, and was equivalent

with, *“Thus saith the Lord.”* This is such a glance of glory, that it may in the highest sense be called *“the earnest,”* or first-fruits *“of the inheritance”* (Eph. 1:14); for it is a present, and, as it were, sensible discovery of the holy God, almost wholly conforming the man unto His likeness; so swallowing him up, that he forgetteth all things except the present manifestation. O how glorious is this manifestation of the Spirit! Faith here riseth to so full an assurance, that it resolveth wholly into the sensible presence of God. This is the thing which doth best deserve the title of sensible presence; and is not given unto all believers, some whereof *“are all their days under bondage, and in fear”* (Heb. 2:15); but here *“love, almost perfect, casteth out fear”* (1 John 4:18). This is so absolutely let out upon the Master’s pleasure, and so transient or passing, or quickly gone when it is, that no man may bring his gracious state into debate for want of it.

11. There is what we call peace, about which many do vex themselves. This peace is either concerning a man’s state, that he is reconciled unto God by Jesus Christ; or it is relating to his present case and condition, that he is walking so as approved of God, at least so far as there is no quarrel or controversy between God and him threatening a stroke. Both of these are either such in the court of Scripture, and consequently in God’s account, or in the court of a man’s own conscience. Peace with respect to a man’s state, as being in Christ, is sure in the court of Scripture and of heaven, when a man doth by faith close with Christ and the new covenant. *“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God”* (Rom. 5:1). It being sure and solid in the court of Scripture, it should hold sure in the court of a man’s conscience, if it be rightly informed; for, in that case, it still speaks according to Scripture. But because often the conscience is misinformed and in the dark, therefore there is often peace as to a man’s state according to Scripture, whilst his conscience threatens the contrary, and doth still condemn, and refuseth to acquit the man, as being reconciled unto God through Christ. In this case, the conscience must be informed, and the man’s gracious state made out by the marks of grace, as we showed before; and here the witness of my own spirit will do much to allay the cry of the conscience; and if the Spirit of the Lord join His witness and testimony, the conscience is perfectly satisfied, and

proclaimeth peace to the man.

The other peace, as to a man's present case or condition, namely, that it is approved of God in a gospel sense, may be awaiting, and justly wanting, although the peace concerning a man's state be sure. This peace as to a man's case and condition, is either such in the court of Scripture, and this is when a man is not regarding iniquity, and respecting the commands of God without exception: then the Scripture saith, he stands in an even place, and he need fear no stated quarrel between God and him in order to a temporary stroke: and when it is thus, his conscience should also acquit him that same way, and would do so if it were rightly informed. But because the conscience is often in the dark, therefore a man may be alarmed with evil in the court of conscience, as if he were justly to expect a stroke from God because of his sin, and some quarrel God hath at him, although He intend salvation for him. This is enough to keep a man in disquiet, and to prohibit him from the rejoicing allowed him whilst he is walking in his integrity; therefore a man must here also inform his conscience, and receive no accusations nor condemnings from it, unless it make them clear by Scripture. At that bar let every man stand, both as to his state, and his condition or case; and let him appeal from all other courts to that, and not receive any indictment, unless conformed to the truth of God, by which the conscience is to be regulated in all things. And if this were well looked unto, there would not be so many groundless suspicions amongst the Lord's people, either as to their state or their condition, upon every thought which entereth their mind.

12. There is the joy of the Holy Ghost; and this is when the Spirit breathes upon our rejoicing in God, which is a grace very little in exercise with many, and maketh it set out sensibly and vigorously; and when He excites and stirs the passion of joy and of delight in the soul, so that there is an unspeakable and glorious joy in the soul, in the apprehension of God's friendship and nearness unto him – *“In whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Peter 1:8). This joy followeth upon peace, and peace followeth upon righteousness – *“The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”* (Rom. 14:17). This joy will in general not fail to be according to the measure of the assurance of faith, as 1 Peter 1:8 –

“In whom believing ye rejoice.” So that the removal of mistakes about other things will allay doubts as to this.

Now, because some of these excellent communications of the Spirit, after they are gone, are brought into question as delusions of Satan: for vindication of them, we say that the special operations of God’s Spirit in any high degree, usually are communicated to people after much brokenness of spirit – *“Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice”* (Psa. 51:8), - after singular pains in religious duty – *“And I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: and whiles I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin, the man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me”* (Dan. 9:3, 21), - or in time of great suffering for righteousness *“Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you”* (1 Peter 4:14); - or if they break in as the rain that waiteth not for man, then they do so humble and abase the person - *“Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts”* (Isa. 6:5), - and there are found so many evidences of grace in the man – *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”* (Rom. 8:16), - or these things do so provoke unto holiness, and to have every thing answerable and conformable to these manifestations of God - *“Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity”* (2 Tim. 2:19). The person under them loathes all things besides God’s friendship and fellowship – *“Peter said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here”* (Matt. 17:4). And these things carry on them and with them so much authority and divine superscription, whilst they are in the soul, that afterwards they do appear sufficiently to be special communications of God, and singular gracious operations of His Spirit, and no delusion of *“Satan transforming himself into an angel of light”* (2 Cor. 11:14); nor such common flashes of the Spirit as may afterwards admit of irrecoverable apostasy from God - *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and*

were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance” (Heb. 6:4, 5, 6).

Now, then, to conclude this part of the work that relates to the trial: I say to all those who complain of the want of the precious outpourings of the Spirit, -

1. Bless God if you want nothing essential for the making out of a saving interest in Christ. God hath given unto you Christ Jesus, the greatest gift He had; and since your heart is laid out for Him, He will, with Him, give you all things that are good for you in their season.

2. I do believe, upon a strict search and trial, after you have understood the communications of the Spirit, you are not so great a stranger to many things as you suspected yourselves to be. But,

3. Remember, the promises of life and of peace with God, are nowhere in Scripture made unto those special things whereof you allege the want: the promises are made unto faith, followed with holiness; and it may be presumed, that many heirs of glory do not in this life partake of some of these things, but “*are in bondage all their days through fear of death*” (Heb. 2:15); so that there shall be no mistake about these things; we may seek after them, but God is free to give or withhold them.

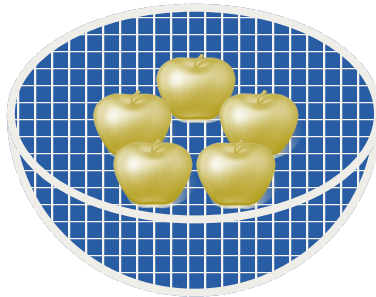
4. Many do seek after such manifestations before they give credit by faith unto God’s word. He hath borne record that there is life enough for men in Christ Jesus; and if men would by believing, set to their seal that God is true, they should partake of more of these excellent things.

5. I may say many have not honourable apprehensions and thoughts of the Spirit of God, whose proper work it is to put forth the aforesaid noble operations. They do not adore Him as God, but vex, grieve, quench, and resist Him: and many people, complaining of the want of these things, are not at the pains to seek the Spirit in His outgoings, and few do set themselves apart for such precious receptions: therefore be at more pains in religion, give more credit to His word, and esteem more highly the grace of the Spirit of God, and so you may find more of these excellent things.

The second of four booklets.

THE CHRISTIAN'S GREAT INTEREST

William Guthrie was the minister of Fenwick, Ayrshire from 1650 to 1664. 'The Christian's Great Interest' was his only book, which has passed through more than eighty editions.



Pulling a copy of Guthrie's book from his pocket, John Owen once declared: "That Author I take to have been one of the greatest divines that ever wrote. It is my vade mecum [Latin: go with me. A useful thing that one constantly carries about]."

